

Camp aims to reconnect Indigenous youth with their culture

By **Zachary Roman**

Students with First Nation, Inuit and Métis ancestry can attend a free camp this summer.

The Peel District School Board's (PDSB) Indigenous Education Department has announced it is hosting an Indigenous Culture Camp for Indigenous students entering Grades Six to 12.

It's being held from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the G.W. Finlayson Field Centre in Alton on July 7, 12, 13, and 14 ? the camp also ran on July 5 and 6.

Transportation to and from the camp is available upon request.

?This is the first year the Peel District School Board is running an Indigenous Culture Camp. We are thrilled to be running this camp this summer,? said Malon Edwards, PDSB Communications Manager, in an email to the Citizen.

?After having run various youth and family events online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the first time we will be able to gather in person. It was one of the initiatives determined by our Indigenous Education Advisory Circle and supported by our Board Action Plan for Indigenous Education.?

Edwards said offering the free camp to Indigenous youth upholds the PDSB's obligations to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, so that Indigenous youth have access to their culture, language and ways of being in the education system.

?This camp will allow youth to learn from Indigenous Community Partners such as Elders, Knowledge Keepers and artists, on the land ? the original teacher. Students will engage in activities such as medicine walks, beaded medallion making, and traditional teachings that honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being,? said Edwards. ?Colonialism and imposed policies such as the residential school system removed Indigenous peoples' connection to culture, traditions, languages and ways of being. This camp is an opportunity for youth to reconnect with their heritage and celebrate their identities.?

According to the PDSB's website, the G.W. Finlayson Field Centre where the camp will be held has 194 acres of land on the south shore of Caledon Lake. Shaw's Creek runs through the site of the centre, and there's a bog, marshes, swamps, ponds, mature forests and open fields there.

?Our Field Centres provide safe, educational and entertaining programs,? say organizers.