PARKLAND COLLEGE

PEP at Parkland College

Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, Canada

Special Report

Parkland College is Saskatchewan's oldest regional college and offers a wide variety of learning opportunities for adults, including high school classes, courses in the trades, business training and university classes. The large majority of students who attend the Fort Qu'Appelle campus are First Nations people (In Canada people of aboriginal communities are referred to as First Nations).

The photograph of the PEP team standing in front of the teepees was taken in September at the annual Treaty 4 Days across the street from the college. Treaty 4 Days is a week in which First Nations from Canada's southern plains area gather to mark the signing of the first treaty between the First Nations and Queen Victoria in 1874.

Annelies Bertsch had just retired and was excited to learn that PEP was something that she could do in her home community. She introduced the PEP to four staff members at Parkland College. They were very interested in the program, and Annelies easily got the approval by the director for offering PEP at Parkland. The program assistant at the college, Jill Whiting, wanted to help facilitate it and was happy to become part of the PEP team along with Annelies and her husband, Daryl Hogan.

PEP was offered to students at the college who were working on completing high school. Because of the time flexibility in their schedules, the program could be offered during school hours. Attendance varied from 4 to 13 participants with a core group of 7. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 60 and included one of the Parkland teachers as well as the school counselor. The 10 workshops were offered twice a week for 5 weeks from mid September to mid October.

Annelies commented: "This PEP was offered to adults who are attending Parkland College to get their high school diplomas, but the participants include both students and staff members. The most talkative people during the reflection times have been the teachers, so it is wonderful to see the written expressions of some of the quieter attendees!"

What Participants Say

"I notice that I look at life different now. I appreciate it more. My thoughts are now just trying to find that inner peace and to love myself and others. I feel joy just knowing that when there's an end, there's also a beginning."

"I like that the class opens my eyes about stuff that I would never think about. It's all understanding and awesome stuff that he talks about."

"I'm able to be more assertive to myself and the people in my circle through the stimulation of knowledge and wisdom I receive from the videos. I appreciate the class as it gives me time in my busy day to deal with the reality of life: myself."

"My outlook has changed because I see things more clearly now. There is no dead end when I feel like I cannot go on any further. I will remind myself when times get rough that if I feel like my journey has ended, I will turn around and keep going because a new journey is waiting to begin."

"I enjoy the class because when I sit in on it I feel like I am brought back down to earth and become more relaxed."

"I think the greatest reminder is to live in the present and to 'embrace the moment.' Today I noticed the autumn colors of the larch trees on my way to work instead of just focusing on the road."

"The speaker seems to embody that of which he speaks. It is a moment of peace in my day. It offers hope for better ways of engaging with others."

"I am kind of looking for directions or a plan to move closer to the 'clarity' and 'contentment' that Rawat speaks of.

"I noticed that I never saw the beauty of fall because I am always trying to catch up with the world. I never really stopped to take that moment to see how beautiful the world is.
What I like about these classes is listening to Prem Rawat. He really makes it understandable to learn. He talks about change, and it makes me think about what every man and woman did not know about change."

"When I first came into this class, this Peace Education Program, I didn't know what I was walking into. I sat there and watched Prem Rawat talk about change and how we all could find change if we look in our hearts. He says there is nothing in this world that we can't change. It just has to start with you and only you. You have the choice to change yourself and to believe in your heart."