

Pikangikum – Eenchokay Birchstick School

Students living in this First Nation community face numerous obstacles throughout their lives that students in the south either take for granted or simply unaware of. Solvent abuse, frustrations set about by boredom and a lack of social opportunities, additional struggles with academic achievement when compared to the provincial standard, overcrowding in homes, suicide, a lack of running water, poverty and many more all add to form an often insurmountable barrier which can affect our students outlook on, not only their education but, their lives and future.

From a fly in reserve in Northern Ontario called Pikangikum, 18 students along with their teachers set out for their school trip to Toronto. The students were 12 & 13 years of age. Some of the students in attendance have never left the reserve before. They were about to embark on a whole new experience for most of them. Imagine the butterflies, excitement and anxiety they all felt as they boarded the plane to leave the Pikangikum reserve.

With the help of the Dreamcatcher Fund, we were able to help fund these students for their trip to Toronto. To see the students witness first hand, what is available to them, see the smile on their faces, watch them open up and have fun. The students conducted themselves in a mature manner as they visited attractions such as the Hockey Hall of Fame, Marineland, Toronto Blue Jays Baseball game, CN Tower, a tour of the Provincial Legislature, Ontario Science Centre, The Royal Ontario Museum, Ontario Place. They also participated in some leisure activities such as Canada's Wonderland, glow in the dark mini putt, air hockey, Drop Zone and other amusement rides. For most, this was a first time experience I'm sure they will never forget.

When the students returned to Pikangikum, I'm sure they couldn't wait to tell everyone what they had accomplished while in Toronto. The dreams that have been instilled in these students will give them a much better outlook at life. It had to make them aware that there is so much available to them if they work hard to achieve their dreams.



