

**Overview**

The following is a project plan to create a more inclusive student community by creating a more inclusive staff community. The plan is formatted as a professional development day. The plan entails activities based upon storytelling and community building; which will help school staff create a more inclusive community amongst themselves and with the school's students.

**Context**

The school is a kindergarten to grade eight school with a student population of about 450 students in 19 classrooms working with 40 staff. In the past three years 20 new staff members have come to the school.

**Objectives**

To create a more inclusive school community by creating a more inclusive school staff community. Sapon-Shevin (1999) states that "...time spent building community is never wasted."

**Rationale**

How can we expect students to create a more inclusive school culture if the staff is not able to do the same? I believe that children change and learn when they want to become like the people they respect and/or love. For the students, the staff members are the models of the school community. If the school staff can model a peaceful community, then not only have we laid the foundation for the school community, but we have created a powerful support team for teaching. To bring about community, we must first bring about peace. Chödrön (2006) gives a definition of peace

as softening what is rigid in our hearts. Through the use of stories, this project plan will help staff regain or soften their hearts with help from their strengthened school community.

The use of stories is very relevant to school culture, for their common use in the classroom and its indirect approach to illustrating problems. Also, stories, for me, come with an innate feeling of a “happy ending.” That is the hope I have for our school community. The characteristics of having a “happy” school community are: security, open communication, mutual liking, shared goals or objectives, connectedness and trust (Sapon-Shevin, 1999). If these characteristics are modeled in our staff, then it will be reflected in our school community, and the school community will then reflect it back to the staff, and so forth, creating a beneficial community cycle.

### **The Plan**

Time: 1 ½ days

Place: Resort and Conference Centre (*ensoko* –Japanese Field Trip)

Supplies:

- Digital Camera for video and photo documentation, sharing and discourse.
- Notebooks for journaling, and recording
- Black paint
- Paint brushes
- 8 ½ x 11 white paper
- Picture frames
- Paper lantern supplies
- Japanese Dictionaries
- Fables

**Agenda** (*Activity descriptions on page 7-14*)

**Part 1**-Getting to know each other

- a) Coffee and continental breakfast (importance of food)
- b) Welcome, Overview, Introduction
  - a. Story: “Everything is connected”
  - b. Write in your journal, “How do you want to contribute to our school community?”
- c) Name tags (Importance of Identity)
  - a. Choosing of animals (sharing of yourself)
- d) Honoring of the space
- e) Bowing: To honor each other (Description to follow)
  - a. Sharing of animal: To honoring yourself
- f) Writing down of what you want to leave behind in Winnipeg
- g) Writing of, “the story of when you knew you wanted to work in education”
  - a. Share with the group/discuss

Break: Coffee and snacks

- h) Writing of a story when you knew you just became better as a professional.
  - a. Sharing circle/discuss
- i) Balloon Game: Discussion questions (Cormier, 2008)
  - a. Names of fables
  - b. Practice the fables to share with the group
  - c. Share/discuss with the group, “What did you like/not like about this exercise? How can this pertain to your practice?”

Catered lunch

**Part 2-Community**

- a) Chair Yoga (led by Staff member)
- b) *Suki's Kimono* (Uegaki, 2005) (Read story)
  - a. Write down a time and place where you felt different. Write down why you felt different. Write down how you felt. Write down how the other people felt.
  - b. Sharing/discussion: What would you do to support differences?
- c) Story of *Obon* (Description to follow)
  - a. Share Legend of *Obon* (Japanese Festival honouring Deceased Family members)
    - i. Who of your deceased family members would you want to meet? Describe them. Why would you want to meet them? Share/Discuss.
- d) Japanese Paper Lanterns (*toro-nagashi*) (In groups of four)
  - a. Explain story of paper lanterns. (Description to follow)
  - b. Make lanterns in memory of deceased family member. Lanterns will be placed on the water to float away. Have all four members of the group write something on the lantern in memory for those who passed away.
- e) *Obon odori* (Festival Dance)
  - i. Play music, read aloud lyrics in English (Description to follow)
  - ii. Write down what you think the lyrics are about. Share/Discuss responses.
  - iii. *Tanko Bushi* (Group Dance)
    1. explain purpose of *obon odori* (Description to follow)
    2. Show dance to the group. Have them write they think the dance is about, and teach it to the group.
- f) Bowing (Honoring of each other)

- a. Sharing of place where you knew you wanted to work in education (Honoring of yourself)

Dinner

Hot Breakfast

**Part 3: Bringing it home**

- a) Honoring of the space
- b) Bowing
  - a. Sharing of place where you knew you wanted to work in education.
  - b. Sharing your animal.
- c) Read the story: *The Great Python: A Bantu Tale from East Africa* (Simms, 2001)
  - a. Write how we can relate this story to our teaching. Discuss.
- d) Write about the significant teacher in your life and why you remember them.
- e) Think about one thing you want to be remembered for in teaching. Write it down.
  - a. Kanji (Japanese characters) (Description to follow)
    - i. Think of one word that you want to be remembered for in your teaching
    - ii. Translate the word from English to its Japanese character (kanji) equivalent.
    - iii. Paint the character onto 8 ½ x 11 sheet. Title it.
    - iv. Frame it (Put up in the staff room, classroom, school)

Break

- f) Write stories of good or bad teaching moments, but don't write the ending.
  - a. Practice stories for performance in school assemblies for students. (Empathy)
  - b. Students respond in any medium they like (poem, story, drawing, etc.).
- g) Create a dance performance for an assembly

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- a. Snake style: Everyone stands shoulder to shoulder. “Head” does a move, then the person to the right copies the person to the left. Then the tail becomes the head.
  - h) Meditation (led by a staff member)
  - i) Bowing
    - a. Sharing of one wish for the partner

**The End**

### Japanese Bowing:

Standing bow

Girls' hands are on the thighs and boys' hands are at the side.

Deeper and lower the bow for more respect.

Keep eyes looking at the ground and do not make eye contact.

### Legend of Obon and Obon odori

Obon is a shortened form of the legendary Urabonne/Urabanna. (Sanskrit for "hanging upside down in hell and suffering"). The Japanese believe they should alleviate the suffering of the "Urabanna", people hanging upside down in hell. In the time of Buddha; one of his followers Mokuren saw the image of his dead mother suffering in hell. Mokuren was desperate to relieve her pain and asked Buddha for help. Buddha answered, "On 15th of July, provide a big feast for the past seven generations of dead. Mokuren did as he was told, and thankfully, his mother's suffering was relieved. This is the inception of the tradition of festivities for Obon.

- A. State that Japan has many festivals throughout the year. One of the most popular festival seasons is **Obon**, Buddhist All Souls' Day, a summer festival where all communities celebrate respect for their elders and ancestors that have past away.
- B. State that Obon is a Buddhist (religion) festival that has been transformed into a family reunion holiday during which people from the big cities return to their home towns and visit and clean their ancestors' burial ground. **In Japan, people believe the spirits of their ancestors visit each of their houses during Obon, which is from August 13 to August 17 (the dates vary from year to year).**

- C. At Obon festivals, the community performs an *odori*, originally a dance to welcome the spirits of the ancestors to their home, but nowadays people just dance Obon odori for fun. Usually people wear Japanese traditional clothes called “kimono” at the dance.
- D. Introduce the book, *Suki's Kimono* by Chieri Uegaki, and read it. Tell them to look for when they do an Obon odori. Now teach the Tanko Bushi. Have everyone form a circle to perform the dance.



**Obon Odori**

**Tanko Bushi-Lyrics**

(Japanese)

Tsuki ga deta deta tsuki ga deta

Uchi no oyama no ueni deta

Anmari entotsu ga takai node

Sazoya otsukisama kemutakaro

Sano yoi yoi

Anata ga sonoki de yuno nara

Omoi kiri masu wakare masu

Moto no musume no juhachi ni

Kaeshite kure tara wakare masu

Sano yoi yoi

Osatsu o makura ni neru yori mo

Tsuki ga sashikomu barak ku de

Nushi no kaina ni honnorito

Watasha dakare te kurashitai

Sano yoi yoi

(English)

Here comes the moon,

Over our mountain.

Is the chimney too high?

I wonder if smoke stings the moon,

Ah, Ah

If you want to leave me,

I'll give you up, let you go

If replace me in my youth,

I'll leave you,

Ah, Ah.

Then I will sleep with a pillow full of money,

I prefer to sleep in the barracks where the moon shines

in With my darling, holding me his arms,

I want to have such a life,

Ah,Ah

## Kanji (Japanese characters)

festival

power

mountain

wood/tree

book/source

sun

fire

water

wind

## Obon Odori

### I. Introduce Japan

- E. Ask to watch you and try to figure out what kind of story you are telling. Perform the *Tanko Bushi*.

#### **Tanko Bushi** (Japanese Folk Dance - Coal Miner's Dance)

- a) Step forward on your right foot, pointing your right foot into the ground; use your hands to make a shoveling motion to the right; repeat.
- b) Repeat to the left.
- c) Step forward on your right foot and pretend to throw a shovel load of coal over your right shoulder.
- d) Repeat to the left.
- e) Step back on your left foot; raise your right hand in front of your face (as wiping the sweat from your brow) and lower your left hand down beside your left leg.
- f) Repeat to the right.
- g) Step forward on your right foot and use your hands to push forward (as if pushing a coal hopper).
- h) Repeat to the left.
- i) Step forward on your right foot and cross your arms over each other in front of your body in a scissors motions.
- j) Clap three times, fast-fast, slow. (As cleaning your hands of dust)
- k) Repeat entire sequence.

- F. Ask what the story was about. Write down responses on the board. Tell them that the dance you were doing is called **Tanko Bushi**, *tanko* means “coal mine” and *bushi* means “song”. So Tanko Bushi was a kind of work song for people working in the coal mines.
- G. Ask if they know where the Tanko Bushi comes from. Write down responses on the board. Tell them it comes from Japan, that Tanko Bushi is one of the most popular Japanese summer festival dances, and that there are many dance stories like this in Japan. These Japanese dance stories are for summer festivals and are called **Obon odori**, Buddhist All Souls’ Day Dance.

## **Japanese Lanterns (Toro-nagashi)**

In Japan, it is popular during festivals to make floating paper lanterns, also known as toro-nagashi. They are lit and placed on the river or ocean to float down to help their deceased ancestors find their way back into the world of the dead. Making these paper lanterns to respect the dead was common in Japan, however it has passed onto American tradition to make fancy ones for wedding receptions or American affairs.

First, you will need a good, sturdy floating base. You can buy a nice Styrofoam at most craft stores, which come pre-cut in just about any shape you need. Make sure it is a nice wide base for your lantern, as you will not want something which tips over easily in the wind while in the water. Make sure the base is actually Styrofoam and not the florist type for flower arrangements, as that will sink.

You will need some heavy wire to construct a frame. Wooden dowels can also be used. Wooden dowels are easiest if you wish to make a square paper lantern, but I recommend the heavy wire so you can be creative and make wonderful shapes for your lantern. Either cut the dowels to the size you need and put one in each corner or use the wire. If you're using the wire, try to make it even all around. Either placing one in each corner or evenly spaced on a round base. Curve the wire to the shape you want it to be. Make sure, however, when you put one on each corner not to place the dowels or wire too close to the edge, as it might help the lantern tip over.

If you're using dowels, you will want to attach more dowels on the top to make it much like a naked 'wall' like building a house. You can attach these with masking tape. If you used the heavy wire, I'm sure you already built the tops and sides of your paper lantern. If your frame is made to your liking, use a glue paste or stick to attach colored rice paper to the sides. If you do not have rice paper, tissue

paper is a great alternative and very colorful. Use some of the paper on the top of your lantern but leave space to put your lantern in. This will help keep the light in and make a beautiful glow when it is floating in your water.

Use small tea light candles to put in your lantern. There are also small press-lights you can buy at hardware stores. Unlike the bigger ones used to light hallways, these are a great size for your lovely paper lanterns. This is also a great alternative in case you're worried about catching the paper on fire, which normally should not be a problem. Sometimes it's good just to be safe and get the small battery-powered lights.

Now, just place your candle or light in the paper lantern. Light your candle or press your light. Set the lantern afloat on a river, lake, ocean or a bowl filled with water.



## References

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