

ADEC Conference 5th – 7th October 2012

After nine months of extensive preparation, the excitement was building for the actual conference. Pine Community School members had been anticipating the ADEC conference since 2010 with many conversations, brainstorming sessions and discussions about possible themes and activities. During the months leading up to the conference we had engaged with the children as to how they wanted to participate and the main theme that came across was for everyone to have fun and join in with our games. Discussions with families and staff at Pine also indicated a desire to share our enthusiasm for our school with the ADEC participants and the theme of the conference became, “communities and collaboration”. Many Pine families offered to billet participants but this proved unnecessary as most attendees organised their own accommodation. The community spirit was running high and our families not only were keen participants at the conference, they organised morning and afternoon teas and supper on Friday night. Our wonderful Patty (who organised the food for our 2003 conference) was responsible for providing lunches and an awesome feast on the Saturday night.

The unofficial start to the conference was Friday night with participants able to wander around the school and “settle in” and enjoy the energetic dancing. This was our first opportunity to make some real connections with the ADEC participants and the atmosphere was really “buzzing”. It set the mood for the whole conference – great family involvement, lots of energy and enthusiasm, a wonderful sense of community and friendship and a real desire to share knowledge, ideas, create and explore together.

Saturday morning our conference was officially “opened” by Cecelia (ADEC President) and Barbara (Pine Chairperson) and the fun began. Our keynote speakers were well received, offering very diverse and interesting topics.

“Growing new stories for schools and their communities: Reclaiming our right to be learning communities. What makes a healthy and vibrant community?” – Dr Marcus Bussey provided us with an open, honest, funny and thought-provoking look at a topic that is relevant to all of us.

Dr Sue Walker’s keynote address “Practices for teaching moral values in the early years: A call for a pedagogy of participation” examined a research project

conducted in 2009 which looked at social and moral values and active citizenship education in the early years of school. The address and subsequent Q & A gave an insight into the implications for teachers and school communities.

After lunch ADEC participants entered the “portal” to Planet ENIP. Crawling through the tunnel into a darkened, lavender-scented room with the insistent heartbeat throbbing in the background we were given a coloured arm-band and led to a seated position on the floor. When all were present, the last of the Guardians of the planet ENIP told us of its history and the cataclysmic events that led to the planet being torn apart and the peoples divided into four distinct lands. Participants then followed the pennant bearer for their matching arm-band and became a member of the respective communities – The Blue, water people; the Orange, plains people; the Purple, mountain people and the Green, rainforest people.

Pine children led the participants through the game and many varied activities resulting in the creation of “gifts” for the Oracle that helped to heal the planet – weaving grass adornments, encoding messages, creating clay beasts, making potions, adding to the “liquid energy barrier”. The game ended with a lengthy gathering for discussion and questions.

A “community canvas” was available throughout the week-end allowing ADEC participants to create a visual reminder of their journey.

Dinner was a huge success with many Pine families joining for the celebration. After dinner, Luke led us through an “Ambient Playground: a communal listening and playing space”, a feast for the senses. There was ample opportunity for making new friends and engaging in meaningful conversations.

Day 2 of the conference provided us with a number of individual workshops. Patrick talked about the use of open software to enhance digital learning environments; Tina talked about our community at Pine – personal journeys through shared spaces; Miriam gave us practical ideas for making our own dance; and Brett lead us through a series of questions and small discussions reflecting on parents in the classroom.

After lunch the conference finished with the ADEC AGM and the election of a new committee.

When asked to reflect upon the conference the feed-back we received included –

- “Full-on” conference but very energising
- Great collaboration
- Good mix of head and heart and hands
- Environment very comfortable
- “Creating” something all week-end
- Sharing and supportive
- Authentic and able to make “real” connections
- Fun, exciting, new ideas
- Very yummy food.....

The children that “presented” the game to the conference participants were excited and happy to be a part of the week-end and reported positively to whole school meeting about their experiences.

Pine Community School really enjoyed being able to host the 2012 conference and hope that the participants took away from the conference a greater sense what it means to be a part of an engaging community.