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# Sask. teacher keeping land-based learning alive online during pandemic

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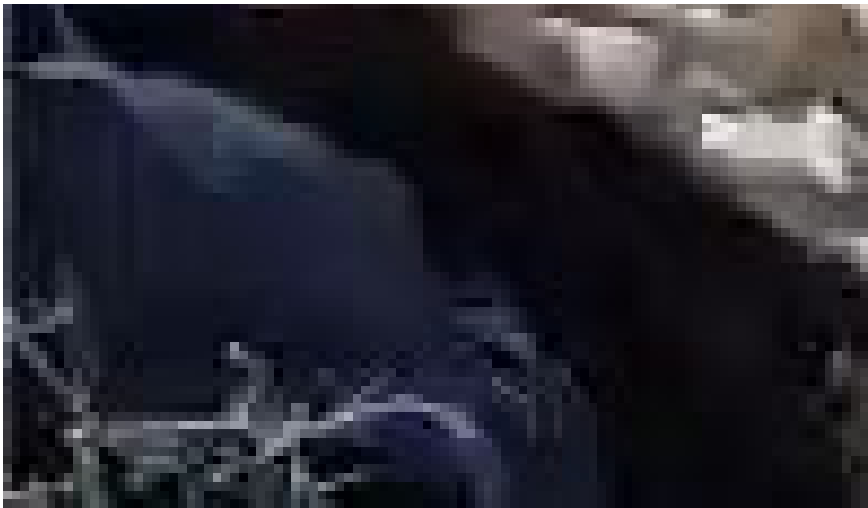
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Lynn Giesbrecht • Regina Leader-Post

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*Garrick Schmidt teaches Grade 8 at Kakisiwew School on Ochapowace First Nation and integrates land-based learning into his classes. Garrick Schmidt / Submitted*

Garrick Schmidt has always valued learning from the land and teaching his students to do the same, but he wasn't expecting to be sharing these lessons exclusively through a camera.

Growing up in the Qu'Appelle Valley, Schmidt has many fond memories of days spent hunting with his family or learning from elders about local plants and medicines.

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**Sask. teacher keeping land-based learning alive online during pandemic**

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"I try to learn something new every time that I'm out there in the valley," he said in a recent interview.

While getting his education degree at the University of Regina through the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP), Garrick realized how much the hands-on outdoor learning he loved could be combined with classroom studies.

He spent the fall of 2019 interning at Seven Stones Community School in Regina. With the support of the school, he taught his Grade 4 and 5 students how to tan a moose hide and began sharing about the project on his social media.

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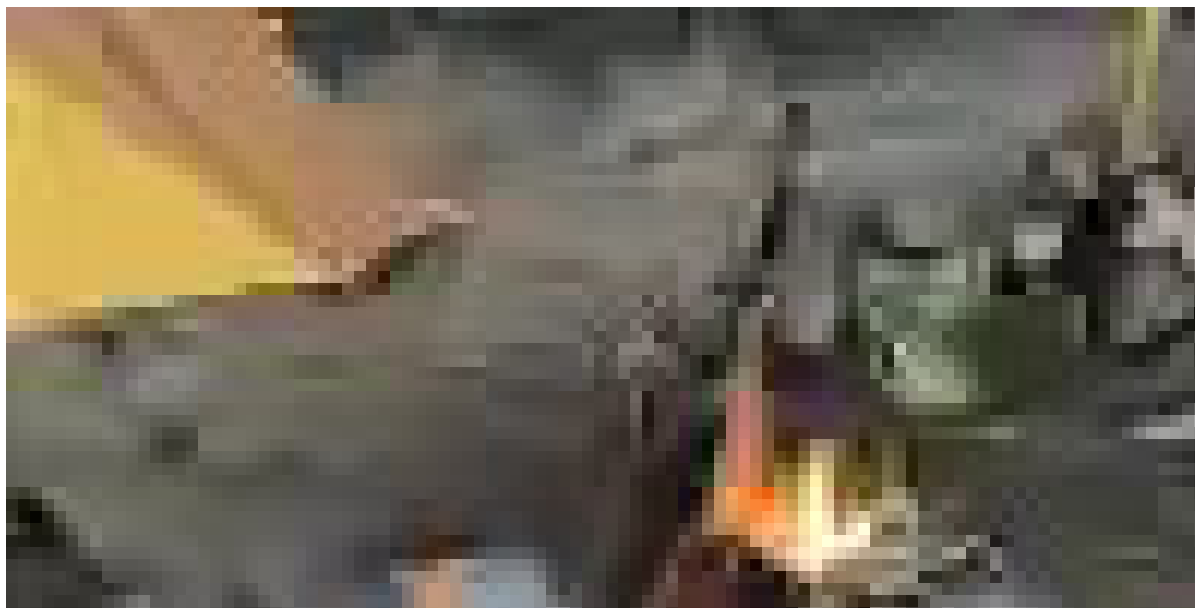
Encouraged by the positive feedback, Schmidt hoped to continue doing land-based education when he started his first job as a Grade 8 teacher at Kakisiwew School on Ochapowace First Nation.

Expecting it would take him a few years to become settled enough in his role to launch his ideas, Schmidt was surprised when other staff immediately encouraged him to integrate land-based education into his normal classes.

“It’s been fantastic to see the amount of support from the staff at our school ... Everybody has been really, really enjoying the stuff that I’ve been doing,” he said.

“To be able to teach like this right off the hop has been amazing.”

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*Garrick Schmidt, Grade 8 teacher at Kakisiwew School on Ochapowace First Nation, demonstrates how to cook a grouse on an open fire. Garrick Schmidt/Submitted*

He showed his students how to recognize different types of animal tracks, how to tell if an animal trail was still being used and how to lay a trap line for rabbits.

But his class trips were brought to a halt only two months after they had started, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Even with the school closed, Schmidt found a way to keep his students learning about the land.

“Once the pandemic hit and our school closed, I kind of wanted to keep some form of normalcy to my students and to the community,” he said.

“What better way than using my phone and doing what I love to do, getting out into the bush and teaching?”

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By posting videos for his students in their Google Classroom and also sharing them across his Facebook and Twitter accounts, Schmidt has kept the community learning right alongside him.

So far, his online lessons have included how to build a fire using traditional methods, survival skills, and cooking wild grouse. He also has a number of rabbit hides from the trap line he had set up with his students earlier, and is hoping to make a video on how to tan those hides in the next week or two.

“The families are communicating back to me like, ‘Hey, we’re doing this. We’re kind of following along with the things you’re doing too.’ So it’s great to see and hear that,” he said.

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But it’s not just his own students who have been tuning in. Schmidt said other educators from across Canada have been watching and sharing his lessons on their own social media.

As more and more schools seek to integrate traditional Indigenous knowledge into their classroom in the spirit of reconciliation, Schmidt is glad to see these lessons spread across the country.

“I think it’s vital that children, students, young adults learn these ways. Not a lot of people have had opportunities to learn things like this with things like the residential schools and the day school programs ... A lot of things were forgotten,” he said.

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“For our youth too, it’s really good to see them getting back out onto the land. It’s really fulfilling as an educator seeing that.”



*Garrick Schmidt, Grade 8 teacher at Kakisiwew School on Ochapowace First Nation, demonstrates how to set up an outdoor shelter and start a fire.*  
Garrick Schmidt/Submitted

## More On This Topic

[lgiesbrecht@postmedia.com](mailto:lgiesbrecht@postmedia.com)

**Note to readers:** We know the speed and volume of coronavirus-related news is overwhelming and a little frightening. To help with that, we have several reporters looking at different aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and are gathering all our stories, especially as

they relate to life in Regina and Saskatchewan, together on our website. All our coronavirus-related news can always be found here: [leaderpost.com/tag/coronavirus](https://leaderpost.com/tag/coronavirus).

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