

Samantha Martin-Bird (S.M.B.)

I'm Samantha Martin-Bird and I am sitting here in my friend Amanda's living room at George Gordon. Amanda, do you want to introduce yourself?

Amanda Moosemay (AM)

My name is Amanda Moosemay. I teach Grade 4 for George Gordon Education Centre. I live in George Gordon First Nation, Saskatchewan.

S.M.B.

You were telling me earlier about how your Grade 4 is putting on some sort of play. Can you tell us more about that?

A.M.

From one of my Social Studies units, I did a treaty play. We had reenacted the signing of Treaty 4. We had lots of costumes and roles that they played. It was called Treaty for all and it was the signing of Treaty 4.

S.M.B.

So tell us a little bit about the history of Treaty 4.

A.M.

When the Canadian government was signing the numbered treaties with the First Nations people in southeastern Saskatchewan, which covers about a third of the province, there was a signing of Treaty 4. It happened in 1874, with a commissioner that came out of the name of Alexander Morris. Now one of my students has played him, played his role along with the Queen and the British Crown being there.

So that interactive that they had experience from it not only helped them with their identity and helped them understand the Canadian history. They had tons of questions and it just an inquiry-based learning mechanism for all my students. We started it, it very small and it kind of gained interest throughout our, our community of George Gordon that we ended up having a dinner play. And inside the dinner and a play, we had served our community supper and they came out to watch my students perform. I had one guy that was a narrator and did four scenes. In the four scenes, they had even talked about how the women played roles in the signing of the treaties and yet it was only our male chiefs but the significance of the pipe and the significance of all of the people in the involved in signing of the treaty was more understood from my students.

Within our play, in between each four scenes, we had our audience holding a wand and it had true or false. So my narrator would read true or false questions to them about the signing of the treaty and the long days of discussion right down to the actual day of signing and how long the treaties are supposed to last and understanding the concept of "as long as the sun shines" or the grass grows and the rivers flow." And so not only was I teaching my community members, I was teaching my students all at the same

time. So it became an engaging, interactive evening of laughs, understanding and most importantly learning.

S.M.B.

Amazing, amazing. And so you're telling me that tomorrow is Treaty Day for George Gordon. What is a Treaty Day?

A.M.

Treaty Day is when the people from the government come out and hand out annuity payments. An annuity payment is the five dollars received from every band, every band member of George Gordon First Nation. They come out and they do that every year as a part of, as a treaty agreement between the Crown and First Nations people.

S.M.B.

Can you tell me more about the five dollars? That doesn't seem like a whole lot of money.

A.M.

Remember that it was signed in 1874 so that's the time era that, back then it was a lot of money to them, the First Nations people so that's kind of what they agreed, and it's still that same amount today.

S.M.B.

So the five dollars doesn't account for inflation at all?

A.M.

No.

S.M.B.

How do you feel about that?

A.M.

It's hard to explain, especially to children that don't understand and we try to make it still a celebration, still understanding and learning day of understanding what treaties are, how it all evolved and it's changing. And we still want to teach our children to fight for their treaty rights.

S.M.B.

How do you feel about that?

So when you're creating the play for your students, and when you're preparing full curriculum to teach Treaty N to your Grade 4 students here at George Gordon, what resources were the most helpful for you in developing that?

A.M.

I went onto the Saskatchewan curriculum and alongside with the Saskatchewan curriculum there's actually Treaty N outcomes and indicators that have been provided

for us. So I used those as my guide to help know what outcomes I needed to learn specifically for my Grade 4 students. So that was very helpful. But not only that, I also in Saskatchewan we have what's called the Office of Treaty Commissioner and I phoned them and asked them for resources and told them exactly what I was doing. They have a whole kit provided for K-12 students, all levels of education to teach about the treaties and I used a lot of their resources. They have a great library full of material and books available specifically to teach treaties in the classroom.

S.M.B.

There are a lot of educators I think in Ontario who are always looking for more resources and how to teach treaty education so it's really helpful to learn that Saskatchewan has the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, has already developed so much in this area. I was noticing over on your bookshelf you have this book *Clearing the plains*. What's so great about this book?

A.M.

James Daschuk has written this book with, with the real account in the history.

S.M.B.

Does he sugar-coat things and make things really easy to swallow for White people?

S.M.B.

So as a Cree woman, reading this book, how does it make you feel?

A.M.

I had a lot of emotions reading this book. It was a tough read, it was understanding your ancestral ties and your own history and coming from knowing that when you're on First Nations land, how it all came to be.

S.M.B.

Do you feel like, "Oh like finally I'm reading a book that tells it as it is?"

A.M.

Exactly.

S.M.B.

I want to switch gears here a bit and talk about the Regina Public Library system. And so earlier today I was in Regina, and I went into North Central, also known as the Hood, because I wanted to check out what the community libraries look like there. And I came into the centre, I don't how to say it, can you say it for me?

A.M.

mâdawêyatitân centre.

S.M.B.

mâdawêyatitân centre. Can you share with us about that centre?

A.M.

I'm not really that familiar with it, I just know that their vision was to create a community space for First Nations and Indigenous because they're centred right of community that a lot of residents in that community are First Nations people. So they created a building that they had elders and community members came together with the vision to create this library and school and community centre. They host round dances and certain ceremonies, maybe dances and I know that for a fact that a lot them, of community members visit and it's almost like the heart of the community. It brings people together (Samantha, uh hum] in a good, positive way. It's almost like a healing centre for the community and right in the centre.

S.M.B.

I really enjoyed my visit there. I was really struck by how the library was one part of this like greater community centre. And there's like gyms there, there's other community rooms going on there, there's, the entire theme of the library section includes like a star blanket theme. The star blanket image is sort of the motif throughout all the logos, which is really cool how like Cree, Cree culture is being centred in that way. And of course, there's like Indigenous paintings everywhere, Indigenous kids everywhere. I thought it was a really cool space and I'm, I was really excited to see that in Regina.

A.M.

I think it's nice to for children to go to a place where they see their own culture. That's not very common in a lot of city centres, I guess, that they have created their own space where they see and feel part of something in their culture. And understand that they see their own face with them. I think that's the best thing for that community and the people that go there. And it really did bring the community together in a, a good way and where they can celebrate and dance and our ...

S.M.B.

It's a really cool resource that the community has. Earlier today we went over to the George Gordon Education Centre. So we went over and you were showing me your Grade 4 classroom, and you were showing me the library right in the reserve school and I was really fascinated with some of the history of it. Can you share a bit more about that?

A.M.

Our library is right in the centre of our school. And we dedicated our library to the First Nations veterans that served. It's called the Howard Anderson First Nations Veteran Library. It was dedicated to Howard Anderson because he was instrumental in helping First Nations veterans across Canada receive the proper compensation. He stood out as a hero in our First Nation of George Gordon. We have in our library hanging all the pictures of all the First Nation veterans from our First Nation.

S.M.B.

And are you guys related in any way?

A.M.

Howard Anderson is my grandfather [they laugh].

S.M.B.

Yeah, I think it's such a cool space and I really like the way the Indigenous veterans from this specific community, like I was astounded by how many George Gordon veterans, how they are honoured throughout. And then you were telling me that a friend of ours was the painter for the entrance and the other signs.

A.M.

Her name is Lindsay Bear. She's the Grade 6 teacher. She also went through the Indigenous education program at the First Nations University with myself and she had, was a librarian before she went to school and she had created the doorway and they had like, a, a grand opening and a ribbon cutting, the whole celebration day for opening of the library.

S.M.B.

I wanted to finish off by asking you a really light and breezy question [laughs]. What is one thing that you wish all Canadians understood about treaties?

A.M.

That when, at the signing of the treaties, the significance for us as First Nation people and saying that it was sacred covenant with the Creator, that we understood we brought our higher ups into the signing of the treaty. Which means you have to keep your promise.