Meet ‘Bubbles’
Rapid City Elementary hosts and studies a young sturgeon

RAPID CITY – Some classrooms get hamsters. Some classrooms get turtles. The classrooms at Rapid City Elementary got a sturgeon.

The school collaborated with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB), Grand Traverse Stewardship Initiative, and the SEEDS After School program to host a juvenile sturgeon until it was ready to be released into the Black River.

The Nme Teachings curriculum is designed by the LTBB; nme means Lake Sturgeon in Anishinaabemowin. “We want students and educators alike to gain knowledge on the cultural significance of Nwe through time,” explained Amanda Weinert, the LTBB curriculum specialist.

“This project connects Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with Western STEM/STEAM goals by caring for a Nwe, a Lake Sturgeon fingerling. Students learn about the history and importance of treaties, and treaty rights of tribal citizens, as well as critical thinking and problem solving skills,” she added. And school personnel are embracing the effort.

“Our students will be weighing and measuring the sturgeon each week and testing the water quality in the fish tank,” said Rapid City Elementary Principal Laura Kwekel.

“We’ll incorporate the cultural study of the sturgeon with our Michigan history lessons,” she added.

“The kids love it!” said Brett Bontrager, SEEDS After School Coordinator at Rapid City Elementary. “The students were very excited to meet the sturgeon and help take care of it. They prepared for weeks, meeting their benchmarks for tank water quality.”

Bontrager said that he is excited to host more fish in the future.

“Now that we have everything set up, we’ll be doing it again next year. They will have a fish ready for us in the fall,” he said.

Named by the students, ‘Bubbles’ will be released with other juvenile sturgeon this summer into the Black River. The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians has been building the Nme Teachings Unit since 2013. This year, Pellston High School and the Traverse City Children’s House are also participating in the program.

“This is exciting, authentic learning!” added Kwekel. “Our students will get to explore real-world issues such as air and water quality, threatened and endangered species, and the importance of stewardship.”

Classroom fish “Bubbles” is an early stage juvenile sturgeon, or a “fingerling.” Now less than a foot in length, Bubbles could grow to be as long as eight feet and weigh nearly 300 pounds.

NMC to offer lifelong learning classes

REGION – The new summer catalog of Northwestern Michigan College lifelong learning classes is now available at nmc.edu/ees and by mail. There are 317 enrichment opportunities for adults and children this summer.

The informal, short classes are taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness, taught by local experts on topics ranging from cooking to fitness.

Two popular classes delve into local history of the Anishinabe people and the ghost towns of Sleeping Bear Dunes. New art classes include Painting with Watercolors, woodworking, fiction writing, QuickBooks and more. According to organizers, classes are affordable priced.

The popular Northern Naturalist classes explore area habitats, wildlife, mushroom and tree identification, birding and more. Four new Botany Tours highlight ecosystems at Port Oneida, Lost Lake Bog, Kehl Lake Natural Area and Good Harbor Beach.

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