

## SDCF grants support cooking and fiddling



*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 2, 2019*

The After School Healthy Cooking Club at Robert Smith School served its debut dinner last month to parents and siblings, and by all accounts, the two young chefs whipped up a culinary masterpiece.

Malia Monkman and Jordan Baker were the first two students at Robert Smith School to cook a meal for their families as part of the After School Healthy Cooking Club.

Grade 3 & 4 teacher Melanie Scott, along with her last year's Grade 4 students, came up with the cooking club in large

part because the kids were drawn to everything about growing and preparing food.

"They were avid cooks and always a class that was wanting to do more," Scott said.

A \$1,500 grant from the Selkirk and District Community Foundation, along with \$100 from the school, has allowed the program to get off the ground in a really splendid way. Thirteen students will cook for their families this year, on a budget of \$30 per family, and Scott said there's enough money left over for the program to continue next school year.

Ten-year-olds Jordan Baker and Malia Monkman were the first two chefs who signed on to not only cook a meal at the school for their families, but to plan the menu, stick to a budget while shopping for the food, serve the meal and act as hosts for the dinner.

Both had experience helping out with cooking at home, so their families had some idea of their skills, but when they rolled out their four-course meal they say their families were impressed.

"They were like, 'wow, I did not expect this'," Monkman said.

The young chefs prepared spring roll wraps with sweet chilli Thai sauce for the appetizer and served meatballs and zucchini pasta with ricotta cheese for the main course. Desert was Jell-O with frozen berries and the evening's beverage was frozen berries in ice cubes and water.

Baker said there was only one slight glitch, and of course it had to do with the food that jiggles – the Jell-O.

“We put them in moulds, but the moulds didn’t really work,” Baker said.

“But the ones in cups did. And they still tasted good.”

The students’ first suggestion for dinner was spaghetti, Scott said, but she pushed them to cook something more challenging. The meatballs were from their own recipe, a combination of one they found and the Monkman family.

“They took a bit from Malia’s family recipe and one they found, along with a little bit of this, and a little bit of that, and it worked great,” Scott said.

The students had fun spiralizing the zucchini, which Monkman said was “really cool”, and they learned that cooking for your family on a budget forces you to make smart decisions.

“We went six dollars over,” Baker admitted.

“It’s pretty hard to make a meal, and prepare it and get all the right things when you’re shopping for the food,” Monkman added.

The Selkirk Friendship Centre’s Onashiwini Aboriginal Head Start program also received a \$3,452 grant from SDCF and the money is being used to enhance children’s musical abilities while learning about culture and history and fine-tuning numerous other skills.

Program coordinator Kathy Duncan said they’ve purchased 10 fiddles and 20, four-year-olds who attend the afternoon session of Head Start are learning to play them. Megan Mowatt, a Cree performer from Matheson Island who attended high school at the Comp, is their instructor.

“We are extremely excited to have her join our Head Start program and work her fiddle magic with the children,” she said.

Duncan said Head Start is a program for Indigenous children – First Nations, Metis and Inuit – ages 3 & 4. The preschool program aims to prepare the children for school and life with a balance of cultural and academic skills. So while they’re learning skills that will ready them for subjects they’ll soon take in school they also learn some Ojibwe, take part in a smudge every day at circle time and The Creators Prayer is said before snack time.

“This is the first time we have had the opportunity to introduce and implement a music lesson with an instrument in our program,” she said.

“We have a very high Metis enrolment in our program so we thought how beneficial is it to not only learn an instrument but touch on culture and history as well. Understanding the origins of music can give children a deeper understanding of what they are playing and the connection they have to that music.”

“The benefits of learning how to fiddle are endless. We are hoping this will increase memory skill, teach perseverance and create a sense of achievement, improve coordination, improve math skills, and create responsibility,” she said.

“Children learning to play an instrument can use it as a means of therapy and can express themselves on how they are feeling.”

The Cooking Club and Head Start fiddle grants were just two of 15 grants totalling \$97,108 handed out in November. The grants help programs supporting aging adults, children, dance and arts programs and much more.

If you'd like to apply for a SDCF grant, the deadline to apply is Feb. 28. Applications for the Community Grant Program and the Western Canada Games Legacy Fund will be accepted. Contact the Foundation office at 204-785-9755 for further information and applicant eligibility.

The Selkirk and District Community Foundation is a charitable organization that provides financial support to charitable causes and agencies in the region, which includes Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements. Gifts from donors enable the Foundation to support countless groups and individuals in our community. The Foundation has given in excess of \$2.4 million to more than 125 local charities and community organizations over its 23+ years. For more details contact SDCF Executive Director Bev Clegg at 204.785.0547.

