

Students learn about major global issues

Generating Momentum for Our World conference held in Strathclair on March 15

By **DARRELL NESBITT**
Crossroads This Week

Each year, conferences sponsored by the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) engage hundreds of students from communities across Manitoba on the challenges facing our world.

The final conference in a series of six held throughout the province from October to March took place in Strathclair on Wednesday, March 9. Generating Momentum for Our World - Making the Grade: Girls and Boys in the Global Classroom attracted 51 middle years students from schools in both the Park West and Rolling River school divisions.

The MCIC strives to organize the conferences in various regions, so as many schools and students as possible have an opportunity to attend without having to travel too far. As for why Strathclair was selected in this region over a larger centre goes back to last year.

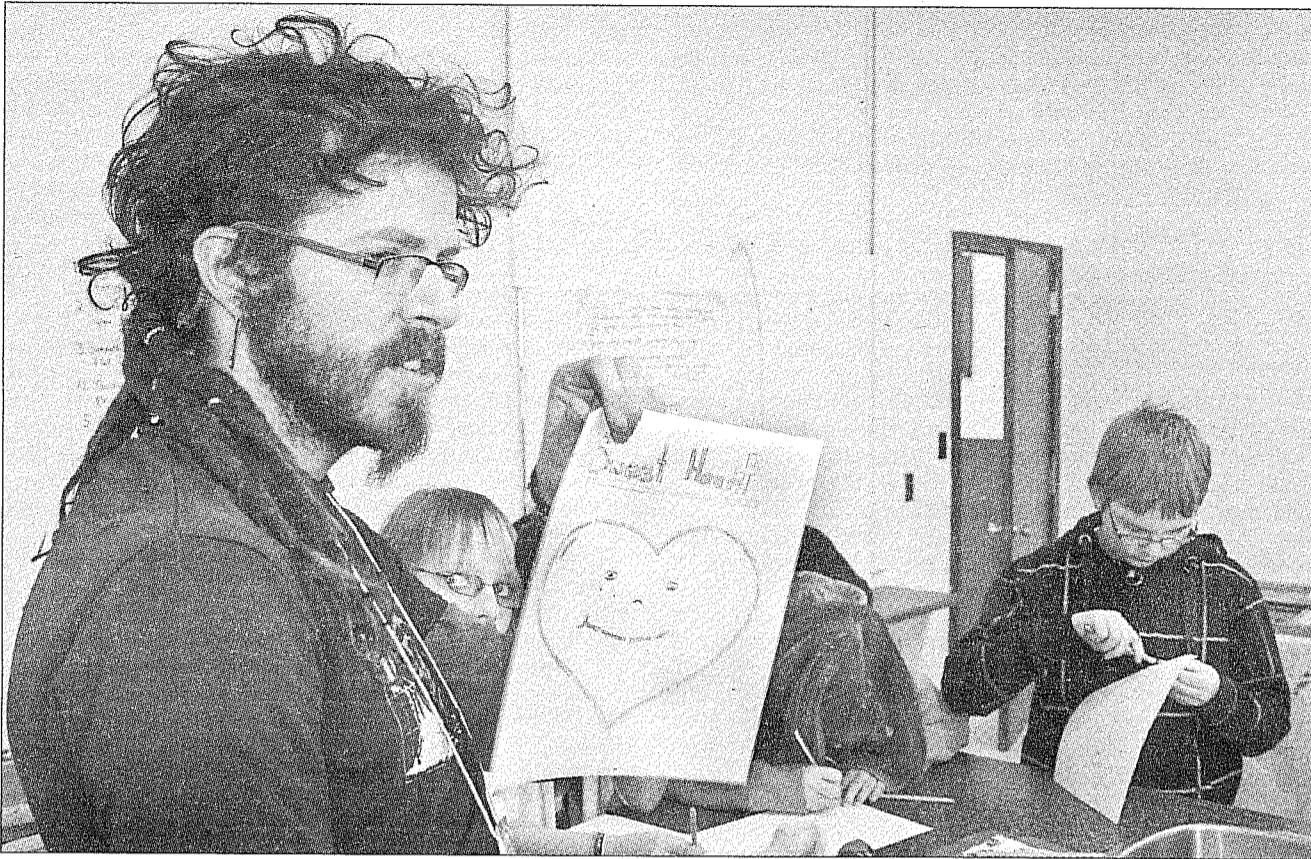
"Strathclair seems to be in a central location for a number of schools to get to," said Janice Hamilton, MCIC Executive Director. "We held the conference in Strathclair in 2010 and it worked well, so we decided to come back again."

The aim of the Generating Momentum for Our World conferences held for the past six years is to raise awareness about international issues and encourage students to go back to their school and community and organize an event to tell others what they learned.

Strathclair was one of eight schools attending the conference held at the Strathclair Municipal Hall, where through a series of simulation games, circuit sessions and creative workshops, students learned why not all girls and boys get to go to school, because of issues such as poverty, child labour and water and sanitation. Along with Strathclair, students from Erickson Collegiate, Inglis School, Major Pratt School (Russell), Neepawa Collegiate, Rivers Collegiate, Shoal Lake School, and Waywayseecappo School participated.

The morning session included an opening plenary at which Leanne Rowat, MLA for Minnedosa, addressed the students. Circuit sessions highlighted public speaking, planning and promoting, and leadership. After lunch, the boys and girls, participated in one of the four creative workshops - digital photography, silk screening, theatre or video - while the teachers had a workshop of their own.

"The conference was really fun and inspiring," said Dorothy Courchene, among the Erickson grade 8



MCIC facilitator "Dandy" showcases a student's drawing during a silk screening workshop as part of the day's activities

students expressing themselves in the theatre workshop. "Being involved really makes you want to make a difference."

Conferences were also held in Morden, Beausejour, Gimli, and two in Winnipeg due to demand.

Youth in action

Youth of yesterday and today in Manitoba are doing their part as global citizens by raising awareness on international issues and taking action to help improve the lives of others. Examples of extraordinary acts of global citizenship happening right here at home are posted on the MCIC's website, www.mcic.ca, including actions by students at two local schools.

Strathclair Community

School - Students from Strathclair Community School organized a trivia poster game about world water issues. The entire high school participated in the game which was played during Earth Week in April. A winner was drawn each day and they received a reusable water bottle. Their goal is to reduce the amount of bottled water that is sold at the school. The canteen has now stopped selling bottled water and is instead selling reusable water bottles. The school also purchased a water cooler which is filled with regular tap water. The cooler ensures that the water is cold so students do not have to purchase bottled water for its temperature.

Waywayseecappo Community School - A blossoming

photographer and past participant of the Generating Momentum for Our World: Water for All middle years

conference, Bernard Chief has been taking photographs in Waywayseecappo First Nation of everything that has to

do with community water sources. He is in the process of creating a special photo exhibit that will help raise awareness about local water sources. The photo exhibit will potentially be displayed in the school and other locations in the community.

It's not only through student conferences that the MCIC - a coalition of over 40 Manitoba-based organizations involved in international development - builds a network of active global citizens, as the MCIC works with Manitobans of all ages who are concerned about building a better world.

"MCIC's mission as a coordinating structure is to promote public awareness of international issues, to foster member interaction, and to administer funds for international development," stated Hamilton.

Along with promoting public awareness, the MCIC, according to Hamilton, encourages dialogue on global issues and helps empower Manitobans to become active global citizens - individuals who understand that their actions here make a difference around the world.

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