

# Drumming up support for the environment

*First Nations art students to exhibit work this Saturday*



*Aidan LoMascolo, left, and Daniel Hill, hold up the painted drums they made at this summer's third annual First Nations, Metis and Inuit art camp at Catholic Central High School. Students from the camp will exhibit their work at Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre.*

(Windsor, Ontario, Sept. 4, 2014) – Like many people his age, Aidan LoMascolo worries about the current state of the environment, but he also believes he can change the world for the better with his art work.

“There’s a lot of garbage everywhere,” the Grade 5 student at St. Bernard Catholic Elementary School in Windsor said when asked what it is about the environment that troubles him most. “And they’re taking homes away from animals to build stuff that we don’t really need.”

LoMascolo was one of about 20 students from both local school boards who took part in a summer art camp at Catholic Central High School for self-identified First Nations, Metis and

Inuit pupils. Their work will be on display at the Mackenzie Hall Cultural Centre in an exhibit called *Keepers of the Earth*. There will be an opening ceremony for the exhibit **this Saturday from 1-3 p.m.**

Much of the instructional content in the camp – a partnership with the Turtle Island Aboriginal Education Centre at the University of Windsor and the Can Am Indian Friendship Centre, whose aim was to spark the students' interest in environmental issues through art work – was taught by guest instructors from the local art and First Nations communities.

“This is the way our students learn best, when they're working with cultural leaders who have experience in this area,” said Elaine Carr, a consultant in Arts, Social Science, First Nations, Metis and Inuit learning for the WECDSD. “Learning through the arts, they learn focus, and they bring that back with them when they go back to school.”

LoMascolo created a number of works for the exhibit including a painting of smokestacks spewing out pollution, a native headdress, a photograph of a flower, a painting of a turtle on a rain barrel, and another painting of an eagle on a native drum that he made with the assistance of Russell Nahdee, director of the Turtle Island Aboriginal Education Centre at the University of Windsor.

“What we really value is the relationships we establish with the kids,” said Nahdee, adding that part of the mandate of his centre is to encourage students of aboriginal backgrounds to identify themselves as such and to take pride in their cultural background. “Identity is so powerful, and it's important for them to connect with that.”

This Saturday's ceremony is open to interested members of the public.