

Jake's Story: SCEP centre connects youth with culture

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By JP Nikota



Things were going poorly for Jake.

He was only four years old, but already he was at risk of being suspended from his preschool program for a pattern of difficult behaviours. He hit, screamed, and disobeyed adults who supervised him. When anger took

hold of him, Jake became uncontrollable.

In a sad sort of way, the story made sense: Jake had been in foster care for two and a half years, and couldn't clearly remember the last time his family had all lived together. His two siblings were at a different foster home, and the three children only got the chance to spend time with their birth parents on an irregular basis. Every time a meeting got cancelled, Jake was understandably heartbroken - and angry.

Worse still was that his first days of school were only a few months away, and Jake was nowhere near ready for kindergarten.

Eventually, Jake was referred to the Socialization, Communication and Education Program Centre in Regina, Saskatchewan, and things began to turn around.

At the SCEP Centre, he got the chance to be with smaller groups of kids and interact with an array of trained professionals. Over the course of several months, Jake learned to express his anger in safe ways, and to help manage it with systems that he could understand and control himself. Slowly, he learned to trust the adults he worked with and could communicate openly about his feelings.

With the help of the Community Fund for Canada's 150th, the SCEP Centre was able to offer Jake the opportunity to try some fun things, too. One highlight was that the group of kids went to the Royal Saskatchewan museum to explore the Canada 150 exhibit. They learned about bugs and animals that live in Canada, saw some dinosaur bones and learned a lot

Other cultural activities were dances of different cultures,



such as those from the Philippines and Ukraine.

Perhaps the best part for Jake was that he was able to connect with his own culture through the activities sponsored by the Canada 150 grant and help restore some of the disrupted connection he had to his own family history. The more he learned, the more curious he became, and before long, Jake was interested in learning a lot of things that he wasn't before.

Fast forward to today: Jake is now five years old, and is doing very well in school without any additional support - he is no longer physically aggressive at all. He has a great sense of humour and his laugh is infectious. He loves to play with toy cars, trucks and superheroes. He loves hide and seek.

Things were going poorly for Jake. Today, things look just a little bit better.

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