Eagle pupils see how their ancestors lived off the land

Editor's note: This story marks another installment of Today's Lesson, which chronicles class-room activities in Farmington

Buffalo skins and beaver skulls stared the Eagle Elementary School students in the face as they listened with amazement to out-doorsman tim Miller.
Miller, a native of Port Huron.

His stuff's been lin the movies

Outdoorsman and writer Jim Miller is one of the intion's leading advocates of the study and application of traditional wilderness skills and crafts.

He's best known for his all-natural brain tanning method of producing buckskin without the use of toxic chemicals. Skin tanned using the process was used in movies such as "Thunder Heart" and "Legends of the Fall." of the Full

of the Fall."
He also holds diverse workshops out of his Willow Winds Traditional Tanning and Primitive Skills Workshops, near Alpena, Mich. He visits schools all over the United States, including Alaska.

recently wowed three fifth-grade classes with his show-and-tell feast for the senses. His day-long presentation in the media center illustrated why Americans should be thankful for the natural resources-laden country they live in – and why they should respect how their ancestors lived off the land.

live in - and why they should respect how their ancestors lived off the land.

The Friday, Nov. 21, program at the Parmington district school culminated a unit on Native Americans taught by fifth grade teachers Colleen Kowalske, Sarah Hensien and Kay Carlson, said Eagle Principal Susan John-son.

sand Lagge Frincipal Susain John-Flet's pretend that it's me and the beaver, said Miller, describ-ing a trapping scenario to Kowalsko's class, sitting on the floor in what was a virtual muso-um of artifacts collected in the woods and streams of Michigan. "If I take his life, I better use it well."

He then took a twig and placed

He then took a twig and placed it into a nearby trap, to show the kids that killing an animal is serious business. The trap slammed shut and Miller's audi-

slammed shut and Miller's audi-ence jumped.
Miller followed with an exam-ple of what "using it well" entails. He took a deer tenden and, with a stone, pounded it over a log.
"It turns white," he said, the displaying how the tenden split into thin, thread-like fibers.

fire. Before continuing his demon-

Holding up one of the strands, Miller detailed how similar tendon threads were used to sew buttons onto one of his coats.

Miller, answering a student's question, said hunters and trappers have mixed emotions about taking the life of an animal.

"It's a beautiful animal," Miller explained. "When you get a deer or a raccoon it's food for your family, skins, things you can use.

But you feel had. "So, we make a few things from the animal that are part of celebration."

He then held up a percussion instrument, called a shaker, primarily made from a deer. Our ancestors, he continued, used such instruments to sing songs about the earth, and to be thankful about the things that came to us."

Miller next broke down the process of how to create a leak-proof water container, made out of birch bark. Sap from a pine tree scale up holes and cracks. The same kind of container and many of his other creations ser on display at Fort Mackinaw.

Unquestionably the most-extin ing part of his presentation came pieces of wood.

"If you start a fire, you have to know what kind of wood to do it with," Miller said. In Michigan priced in the presentation came pieces of wood.

"If you start a fire, you have to know what kind of wood to do it with," Miller said. In Michigan charter that he had up a piece of code care tree bark and cannot de tit up into a "real cottuny" ball. That hall would be used to ignite the fire.

Before continuing his demon-



stration, Miller asked the stu-dents to rub their hands together

furiously.

"Rub faster and harder. Any-

furiously.

"Rub faster and harder. Anybody's hands smoking yet?"
He explained how that is exactly what happens when the right
two pieces of wood are rubbed
together in such a way.

"Rubbing two sticks together,
anybody can do it," Miller said.
"All of your ancestors did it and
all of your ancestors did it and
all of your ancestors lived close to
the earth and understood it.
That's how they took care of
themselves."

Miller notched a healthy chunk
of wood from the cedar tree and
then slotted into one of the
notches a fat, dried up piece of
cattail. He rapidly twisted and
turned the cattail with one hand
while holding down the other
piece of wood. Soon, there were

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enough sparks to drop into the ball of

crunched-up bark.
Cupping the ball in his hands, Miller blew on it until it burst into

flames. "Oh my God!" exclaimed several of the Eagle students, almost simultaneously. Following the class, fith grader Shannon Sabbag, 10, said she enjoyed learning about how people can use nature to live. "I learned that the world is not just stuff that is there to be pretty. It's stuff to be used."



Hot topic: Above, Out-doorsman Jim Miller, during his recent visit to Eagle Ele-mentary School, shows School, shows fifth graders how to start a fire using twigs and tree bark. Left, he blows into a ball of crumbled bark to help ignite a spark into spark into flames.

Final WL redistricting hearing set

Parents and students will have a chance to hear the final proposal of the Walled Lake schools redistricting committee at 7 p.m. Monday at Western High School.

The proposal will be presented to the Board of Education for review and possibly a decision

during the regular meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, at the Educational Services Center, 850 Ladd Road, Building D. All families whose students would be moved under the new proposal have been notified of the bearing by mail.

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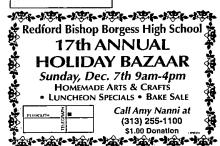
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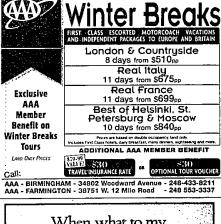
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