Lesson Idea:

There is a wealth of resources for teaching about Shannen’s Dream. Many teachers and students have created poems, songs, videos and other projects inspired by Shannen’s story. There are a diverse range of lesson plans, social justice actions and writing activities for all grade levels. For example with younger students, focusing on questions like “What make a safe and comfy school?”, “What do students need in their environment to learn and grow?”

Some educators and school staff with students have been inspired to create “Shannen’s Dream Club” to get involved with projects to support education funding equity, and/or to share the story with others. This extra-curricular approach is a great way to nurture students who are more passionate about the issue, as well as to create student leadership and mentorship between different age levels.

Educators often follow up on Shannen’s Dream activities with ‘Have a Heart’ or ‘Our Dreams Matter Too” activities – letter writing and community walks on the topic of education equity for First Nations.

Related resources, links etc…

Be inspired by examples of classroom activities from across the country: http://www.fncaringsociety.com/shannens-dream-media-gallery

With older students we’d highly recommend the feature length documentary about Shannen and the movement. You can rent it through NFB for $2.95. Note! You have to watch it within 48 hours of renting. https://www.nfb.ca/film/hi-ho_mistahey_en/clip/hi_ho_mistahey_clip2

Further Resources:

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
(Several ready-made lesson plans for you to use!)
http://www.fncaringsociety.ca/shannens-dream-school-resources

CBC Eight Fire
(Profile of Shannen Koostachin and other powerful Aboriginal Leaders.)
**Heartspeak Documentary**  
(A very short, educational documentary about Shannen and the campaign for a new school.)  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Gy38grr35c

**Shannen and the Dream for a New School**  
(A book by author Janet Wilson on the inspiring story of Shannen’s Dream)  
http://www.janetwilson.ca/shannen-and-the-dream-for-a-school.html

**Newspaper Articles**

Here are just a few links to a multitude of articles about Shannen and the campaign for Equal Education  

**Background Info:**

Shannen Koostachin is a contemporary Canadian hero. She was from the Attawapiskat First Nation, a Cree community on the shores of James Bay. Shannen never had the opportunity to go to a real school. The communities school was contaminated by a diesel spill had to be torn down. Shannen and many children like her had grown up with the stories of promises from the federal government to fund a new school.

Promise after promise had been broken, and by the time Shannen was twelve, she began speaking out about the situation. Shannen convinced her classmates and community members that they deserved a real school- not the shifting, cold, boarded up potables they had been going to school in. They began a campaign calling on Kids across Canada to get involved. They were tired of being “Canada’s Forgotten Children” or the children at the “back of the bus.” Koostachin spoke out about the experiences of her community in newspapers, at conferences, and on the steps of Parliament Hill in 2008. At the age of 14, in 2009 she was nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize

Shannen died in a horrific car crash in June 2010, just before her sixteenth birthday. Out of the grief, a movement that had begun in Attawapiskat swept across the country. Students and teachers joined together to make Shannen’s Dream come true. Like all heroes, Shannen’s story is courageous, passionate and inspiring.

**About the Shannen’s Dream movement – funding equity for First Nation schools**

Shannen Koostachin, youth education advocate from the Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario, had a dream: safe and comfy schools and culturally based education for First Nations children and youth.
Shannen worked tirelessly to try to convince the Federal government to give First Nations children a proper education. Named in her memory, the campaign engages Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to better understand the education inequities and to take action to ensure all First Nations children and young people attend good schools and receive a proper education that prepares them to achieve their dreams and be proud of their distinct cultures and languages.

First Nations schools receive less funding per student than Provincial and Territorial schools, and zero dollars for things like libraries, computers, languages or extracurricular activities. Many schools are plagued by serious health concerns such as extreme black mold contamination, high carbon dioxide levels, rodent and reptile infestations, sewage fumes in schools and unheated portables.

The movement has seen two major successes:

1) Attawapiskat was granted funds for a new school. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/charlie-angus/attawapiskat-crisis_b_1625382.html?

   2) Timmins-James Bay MP Charlie Angus became involved and reintroduced Shannen's Dream as Motion 201 to the House of Commons of Canada on September 26, 2011.[15] On February 27, 2012, the House of Commons unanimously voted in favour of the motion*.

Now the movement has broadened to focus on equitable funding and safe schools for ALL First Nation schools, i.e. the attention shifting off Attawapiskat specifically. Unfortunately, although the Shannen’s Dream Bill was passed by parliament, no major changes have occurred in actual budgetary policy.

*Text of the Motion:
"Pursuant to Order made Thursday, February 16, 2012, the House proceeded to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of Mr. Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan), seconded by Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona), — That, in the opinion of the House, the government should adopt Shannen's Dream by: (a) declaring that all First Nation children have an equal right to high-quality, culturally-relevant education; (b) committing to provide the necessary financial and policy supports for First Nations education systems; (c) providing funding that will put reserve schools on par with non-reserve provincial schools; (d) developing transparent methodologies for school construction, operation, maintenance and replacement; (e) working collaboratively with First Nation leaders to establish equitable norms and formulas for determining class sizes and for the funding of educational resources, staff salaries, special education services and indigenous language instruction; and (f) implementing policies to make the First Nation education system, at a minimum, of equal quality to provincial school systems."