

MECCS

A newsletter for Mother Earth's Children's Charter School to share its successful traditional and innovative programming.

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MECCS is on Facebook!



Find driving directions and more at www.meccs.org

Student Exchanges with AKE

MECCS and Academy at King Edward (AKE) School in Edmonton Public Schools have been partners for four years. We have done several student exchange visits in that time.

These visits have been coordinated by Maxine Hildebrandt at MECCS and her AKE counterparts Nyles Varughese, curriculum coordinator, and Ellen McClary, intervention teacher.

Maxine has taught her students to be leaders during all of these activities. Over time, they have demonstrated increasing levels of these skills to our visiting groups from other schools.

Our MECCS partnership strategy recently received a significant boost, as Ellen shared the following story (on pages 2 and 3) with the Edmonton Public Schools weekly newsletter *Connect*.

Enjoying the view in Edmonton.





Clockwise from above:

Checking out the turtle mosaic artwork at the Indigenous Art Park in Edmonton.

Nancee Tompkins-Bird and McKenna Roan-House at the Indigenous Art Park sign.

Elder Theresa Bird teaching Academy at King Edward students how to make bannock.



During May, students from AKE and MECCS participated in two collaborative learning experiences to enhance Indigenous foundational knowledge and build relationships.

On May 11, grades 5 and 6 students from MECCS visited AKE, where they were hosted by junior high students who are part of the term 3 foods option.

The day began with a walk to ᐃᑦᑦᑦ (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11∞ Indigenous Art Park, where students viewed art by six Indigenous artists who created their works to “tell the story of this place.” After exploring, students returned to AKE to make bannock, taught in the traditional way by Maxine, Kookum Theresa Bird and the MECCS students.

AKE grade 5 students headed to MECCS on May 15 to spend a refreshing day in a beautiful outdoor setting. A highlight for the staff and students was the time spent at *Oski Kisikaw Ena Mahkochih*, the all-weather culture camp and outdoor classroom. Students took part in activities that included foundational knowledge building, traditional Medicine Wheel teachings, leather making, shelter building and learning hunting skills.

This collaborative cultural exchange provided students with the opportunity to learn authentically about Indigenous ways of living. It was a unique experience that the schools hope to continue in the future.

Maxine Hildebrandt’s grades 5 and 6 students showed their guests around the culture camp and guest instructor Brian Rice taught them about outdoor skills. Brian is the owner/operator of Three Ravens Bushcraft and a survival instructor/outdoor educator. He is a retired military firefighter, having served 25 years, and is currently a fire inspector in Strathcona County. Brian is very knowledgeable about plants and their medicinal uses. He delivers a winter camping course every year called Frostbite.



Brian started with us last month teaching outdoor living skills. The first session was all about what to bring before you even go outside, the 5 Cs of survival: cutting tool, cordage (rope), cover (shelter), combustible (fire) and container.

The kids were super interested in fire but given all the fire bans we had to be extra safe. Once outside, Brian demonstrated fire from the earliest humans with a hand drill and a bow drill, then got the kids involved with a true flint and steel and finally the most modern fire-lighting technique, a ferro rod.

During fire lighting class, they learned about the three sizes of fuel (tinder, kindling, fuel) and the Fire Triangle (air, heat, fuel), and how to apply those skills to create a fire with just a spark! Once they could successfully throw a spark, we moved on to a more difficult thing: to light a candle. Everyone was successful because these kids don't give up. They were awesome!

The next session was with kids from Academy at King Edward, who were guests of the school. We went over to the supershelter and the bushbed. Shelter is a huge part of survival so understanding how they worked and what to look for in site selection was talked about. We built a bushbed, and then completed making a mattress out of cattails and Phragmite grass, both commonly found around water sources. The mattresses were woven in a bush loom, and when we were complete each class had made a mattress from both grasses to put on the bed.

Since Nyles Varughese is the son-in-law of MECCS Superintendent Ed Wittchen and also a good friend of Maxine Hildebrandt, we are pretty sure this partnership will flourish even more next year.

Clockwise from top left:

Amira Bird with new friends from Academy at King Edward.

MECCS and AKE staff and students.

Brian Rice using a loom to make a grass mattress.

Brian discussing outdoor education and survival skills with MECCS and AKE students.

Brian demonstrating how to build a loom from natural materials.

School at the Legislature

The teacher-driven School at the Legislature program for students in grade 6 and grade 9 invites teachers to move their classrooms to the Alberta Legislature for a week and watch as their lessons come to life. Due to our small class sizes, our MECCS students from grades 5 to 9 were able to take part.

There is no cost to schools for the program. Teachers participate in an orientation session in August, during which they meet the Education Coordinator and begin planning for their program week at the Legislature. Teachers prepare a week's worth of lessons and choose from available activities, interviews and presentations.

Learning at School at the Legislature provides meaning and context for units on government and the parliamentary process beyond what a classroom setting could.

The School at the Legislature program allows approximately 30 classes each year to learn the secrets of the Alberta Legislature and experience it from a unique perspective. The Alberta Legislature Building holds many secrets, from a 54-year-old hamburger to a special spot that, when you stand on it, sounds like you're standing under a waterfall.

On May 29, our grades 5 to 9 students attended a weeklong field trip to the Legislature. Under the guidance of Marlee Yule, one of the Education Program assistants, the students spent time exploring the historic Legislature Building and grounds, uncovering its mysteries, and meeting some of the people who make the building and our government run.

Daily trips into different parts of the 110-year-old building showed students artifacts like the Mace and the 54-year-old hamburger that was tabled by Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Clarence Copithorne during a session in 1969. Another unique thing they saw was the huge LEGO model of the Legislature Building.

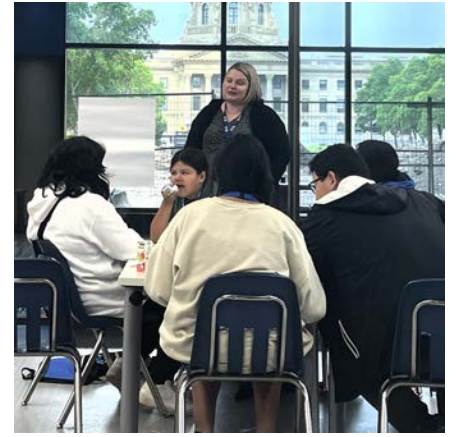


Above: MECCS students posing in front of the real Alberta Legislature Building (top) and behind a LEGO model of the building.

Below: Posing with Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Gareth Scott.



They explored its artwork, including a portrait of Ralph Steinhauer, Alberta’s first and so far only Indigenous Lieutenant Governor. He is depicted in buckskin with a ceremonial headdress. Students also had the opportunity to sit in the Chamber and view the beautiful art pieces *Sunrise* and *Sunset* by Alex Janvier that grace the north and south walls of the gallery.



Students also prepared interview questions for various members of the Legislature staff to get an idea of how the complex of government runs. They spoke to members of the team that plans all events at the Legislature, to the IT department and to the technician who runs the amazing 4D theatre experience.



On the last day of the field trip, the students had the opportunity to meet the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Gareth Scott and get a detailed lesson about the role of the Mace.

Since our school’s visit took place just after the Alberta provincial election and results were not officially finalized, MLAs were not going to be

Clockwise from top left:

This was our classroom for a week.

Erin from the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate with students.

Anika Stork, Claire Kosowan and Marlee Yule presenting.

Devonte Bearhead and Nancee Tompkins-Bird at our Leg classroom.

Vanessa Sztym teaching about the Legislature Library.

Sitting in the MLA chairs in the Chamber.





*Clockwise from top left:
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Gareth Scott explaining the
historic role of the mace.*

*Bradley Jolicouer, Jr., and
Alec Bird in front of the
LEGO model of the Alberta
Legislature Building.*

Alec as the Speaker.

on site. We reached out to Cree-Métis federal Member of Parliament Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach) to invite him to speak to the students about the role that Indigenous people can and should play in government. He graciously accepted the invitation.

The week was a whirlwind, with lots of walking, exploring and meeting many people. Students got to know their way around the Legislature and to understand the various roles of the people who work there to make the government work for and with us.

*Sitting in the Chamber, the
heart of the Legislature.*

*Exploring the gallery of
paintings of Lieutenant
Governors of Alberta.*

*Edmonton Griesbach
Member of Parliament
Blake Desjarlais posing
with our students.*

