

MECCS

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

Mother Earth's Children's Charter School
Box 42, Site 2, RR 1
Warburg, AB T0C 2T0

780-702-7531 school office
780-232-4481 family liaison

Principal Erin Danforth - edanforth@meccs.org
Family Liaison Janet House - jhouse@meccs.org

MECCS is on Facebook!



Find driving directions and more at www.meccs.org

Connecting with Connect

Our partnership with Connect Charter School in Calgary has been developing for about a year. It culminated with a weeklong visit by over 100 students, staff and parents to experience our cultural camp.

It started in 2021 with a conversation between MECCS superintendent Ed Wittchen and Connect superintendent Chris Gilmour. That was followed by an onsite visit to the recently purchased Field Experience Centre west of Calgary by our superintendent, our principal Erin Danforth, and Maxine and Mark Hildebrandt, the driving forces in creating our culture camp and outdoor classrooms. The next step was an onsite visit to Connect Charter School by Maxine and Mark. As a result of this preliminary work, staff at both schools felt there was a natural fit for future exchanges.

Socializing in the culture camp.





Clockwise from above:

Connect students relaxing.

Connect parent supervisors.

Amira Bird with new friends.

Sorting into groups.

Supper at the culture camp.



Maxine and Evan Ferguson, Connect’s place-based education coordinator, developed a program that saw two groups of Connect students visit MECCS for two and a half days each.

The first group left Connect at 8am on a Monday morning and arrived at MECCS around noon, when they settled into the dorms. That was followed by a full afternoon and evening of activities. Tuesday saw the group go to the TELUS World of Science and the Alberta Legislature, ending at the Terwilliger Recreation Centre for swimming and a pizza party. Wednesday morning, the group learned about elements of Indigenous culture like making medicine pouches and trying our 3D archery course. At noon, they packed their bus and headed home. A second group soon arrived at MECCS and followed the same agenda until Friday.

This experience was made possible thanks to supervision help from Connect assistant principal Andrea Friesen, grade 6 teachers, Brett Toner, Terran Fong, Chris Dittman and Kevin Sonico, and place-based education coordinator Evan Ferguson.

“It has been a privilege to witness the transformative our grade 6 students had during their recent visit to the MECCS campus,” said Evan. “During their time at MECCS, our students had the opportunity to immerse themselves in



Top row, left to right:

Making medicine pouches.

Teaching Connect students how to make medicine pouches.

Modelling a medicine pouch.

Right: Medicine pouches really taking shape.



Indigenous ways of knowing. Connect students enjoyed learning about animal furs and medicine pouch making. These experiences helped them gain a better understanding of the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous communities and discover the healing properties of nature.”

He noted one of the most cherished aspects of this partnership was the chance for Connect students to stay in the dorms at MECCS.

Above: Maxine Hildebrandt with Evan Ferguson and Andrea Friesen (top), with Evan Ferguson (middle), and with Mark Hildebrandt and Connect superintendent Chris Gilmour (bottom).

Above, left: Connect students visiting our school’s tipi.



Clockwise from top left:

Hide tanning display.

Connect students exploring the hide tanning display.

Learning about hand drums.

Taking aim during the archery lesson.

Drawing back the arrow.

Maxine Hildebrandt teaching archery.

Even the supervisors tried their hand at the archery lessons.

Connect students thanking Nancee Tompkins-Bird.



“This facilitated the formation of deep and meaningful connections between students that transcended cultural boundaries,” he added. “Looking ahead, we are excited to renew this partnership. We hope to have MECCS visit Connect Charter School’s Field Experience Centre soon.”



A Great Exchange with CAPE



MECCS teacher Maxine Hildebrandt and Sara Fairbrother, a teacher from Medicine Hat's Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE), recently facilitated a great partner exchange between the two schools.

On Friday, May 26, the grade 4/5 class from CAPE School set out from Medicine Hat to engage in a weekend of connecting, sharing and fun at MECCS.

Due to bus trouble in Strathmore, the anticipated six-hour journey ended up taking nine. This setback did not, however, dampen the positive attitudes and excitement of the CAPE students and parent volunteers.

The CAPE group arrived at MECCS at 4pm and was warmly welcomed by Maxine and six of her students. After dorm rooms were assigned and luggage safely stowed, the CAPE students were grouped with MECCS

Clockwise from top left:

Brian Rice leading CAPE students on a nature walk.

Learning to make fire.

Trying to light a candle.

Students from both schools learn to prep materials for making fire.

Students making fire.



Clockwise from right:

Tasting plants on the guided nature walk.

Time for a group photo.

Supervisors for this student exchange—we couldn't do it without them.

A CAPE student and mother on the nature walk.



McKenna Roan-House and Azarie Rain with Tannya Couzens.

Learning about the various uses of plants found on the nature walk with Brian Rice.



host students and explored the beautiful wilderness that makes up the grounds of the school.

A delicious wiener roast and picnic in the outdoor classroom ensured everyone had full bellies. The rest of the evening was spent playing, exploring and getting dirty outside! All the visiting students and



adults alike were fast falling in love with the natural beauty of the woods.

Once everyone was cleaned up (more or less) and in their jammies, it was time for milk, cookies...and sleep!

Rise and shine! After a good breakfast on Saturday morning, it was time to learn. The students were split into two groups and the day's activities commenced.

For each group, the day was divided into two learning opportunities. Half the day was spent with Brian Rice learning the evolution of fire-starting and taking a hands-on plant walk. Students learned about wild edible plants and medicinal plants during this walk.

Brian went over all the plants nearby that could be used for medicine, like the willow for pain, or yummy edible plants like new spruce tips in the spring. The kids from both schools really seemed to enjoy the plant walk—it seemed harder to get them to not eat plants than to eat them. They learned that we do, in fact, have poisonous plants in our boreal forest and that it would be hard to survive off just plants and why protein is so valuable.

The other half of the day was spent with Maxine. This started with a classroom session where CAPE students were able to learn, firsthand, about the lasting impacts of assimilation and residential schools. Then, with an amazing display, Maxine went through the process of treating and preparing an animal hide.

This session finished at the outdoor archery range with Maxine. The students and adults were all thrilled to experience this wonderful sport, many for the first time.

After a full day, everyone was treated to a delicious taco-in-a-bag dinner with all



*Above and right:
Taking part in the archery lesson.*



*Below:
Time for lunch.*





the sides. Once dinner was finished, the students wanted to test out the fantastic MECCS gymnasium. A fast-paced game of popcorn tag ensued! This was a time for all the students to connect, share and just be kids.

Once it got dark on Saturday night, the CAPE students were introduced to flashlight hide and seek. All the lights in the school were turned off and the students, in small groups, scattered into hiding places. The adults, with a few helpers, then had to seek. This was so much fun!

After a good sleep, everyone woke up on Sunday morning, ready for more. Students were given a choice: more archery time or creating artistic pieces in the outdoor classroom. This allowed the students to engage in activities in line with their personal interests.

After a full lunch, it was time to pack, tidy up and bid farewell. It was sad for our new friends from CAPE to leave. After a flurry of hugs and last-minute pictures, our guests boarded their bus and started the long drive south.

Clockwise from top left:

Maxine leading a hands-on lesson in hide art.

Exploring the materials used in the hide art program.

Lots of colours to choose from.

Making unique creations.