

Via the Seine

Report to the Community

Weaving history



▲ Grade 6 EIDC students Evangeline G., Arabella L. and Gabriela R. weave a *ceinture fléchée* on a replica of a traditional loom.

French Immersion students in Grade 5/6 at École Ile Des Chenes School each have a unique new accessory that shows both their French heritage and their talent: a colourful Métis sash – or *ceinture fléchée* – that they wove themselves.

Brigitte Rondeau's and Korrie Watt's two Grade 5/6 classes both learned about the *ceinture fléchée* as part of their studies for Festival du Voyageur.

"After learning about the Voyageurs and the many uses of the *ceinture fléchée*, we talked about its importance, the significance of the colours chosen and the art of weaving. Students created their own symmetrical patterns on paper, keeping in mind the reason they chose each colour," says Rondeau, who was inspired to introduce the project to continue the tradition of her own mother and grandmother, who taught her to weave at school. "We borrowed the looms or *métiers* that my mother built to replicate the original ones made years ago by the *Comité culturel*. The students then recreated their patterns on the loom with yarn, weaving back and forth and pulling until they had woven through the entire length."

The hands-on element to the project promoted student engagement, and each student's sash will be a keepsake they can identify with and be proud to wear for years to come during Festival du Voyageur week each February, Rondeau says.

"Projects like this help students identify with the francophone community and culture as well as the role of the First Nations peoples during the fur trade. When we teach about the Voyageur, it goes hand in hand with the importance of First Nations peoples with whom the Voyageurs traded." ●

Not too cold for us

When winter temperatures plummet and schools call for "indoor recess," a handful of students at La Salle School (LSS) pay no mind – venturing out to brave the cold instead.

Teacher Eric Lindquist started the group, called the Polar Bear Club, in November, allowing the students in his Grade 5/6 class to bundle up and head outside when the temperature is between -27°C and -40°C . To join, his students need to get their parents' permission and bring extra warm, appropriate winter clothing. More than a dozen students have signed up so far, and it's always their choice whether to go outside – or come back in – when it's beyond chilly out.

Polar Bear Clubs at schools across Canada recognize how valuable outdoor play is for student health and readiness to learn, as long as they are dressed appropriately for the weather, Lindquist says.

"Getting fresh air, natural light, exercise, unstructured play time, time away from a screen and a chance to take their masks off has a positive impact on their mental health," Lindquist says. "The kids love it. A lot of them say they prefer recess this way – we have tons of space and the whole place to ourselves, we all play together, there's no fighting or arguing and it's more peaceful." ●



▲ A few of the brave members of La Salle School's Polar Bear Club enjoy a chilly recess with the playground to themselves.

Indigenous guests bring perspective

Reading about Indigenous culture, history and traditions is one thing. But for two teachers and their students at Collège Lorette Collegiate, that's just not enough.

Nicole Marr has been welcoming Indigenous guests almost weekly to visit her Grade 12 Current Topics in First Nations, Métis & Inuit Studies class, either in person or virtually, in partnership with Kelsey James' Grade 11 History and Grade 12 Global Issues classes. They've invited Indigenous Elders, artists and knowledge keepers to connect with their students, with inspiring results.

"Part of the Indigenous way of teaching is through oral history," Marr explains. "Our guest speakers are sharing their firsthand knowledge, bringing authentic teachings to the students in a way that honours the Indigenous traditional ways."

Marr and James have welcomed guests including Peatr Thomas, an artist who spoke about the role of Indigenous art in reconciliation and history, and Elder Harry Bone, who shared virtually the history of the Numbered Treaties and talked about reconciliation. Marr's class has also been visited by guests including

Elder Stan Kipling, who turns discarded animal carcasses into beautiful works of art to be used in ceremonies and for healing; Meg Olmstead, a jingle dress dancer who performed for the students and taught them about her dress and the significance behind it; and Marlene

Gallagher, a knowledge keeper from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"Marlene is a residential school survivor and a '60s Scoop survivor, and her virtual presentation was very powerful. Her personal story was moving and informative, so it really hit the students on many levels," says Marr, who has also taken some of her students to a Learning Sweat Lodge and to volunteer with the Bear Clan Patrol in

Winnipeg, handing out food and warm winter clothing the students donated themselves to people in need.

"Having people visit and bring that personal connection motivates the students to learn more and explore further," James says. "They form an emotional reaction to what they have experienced, thinking critically about our history and how that history has affected the way we live today." 🍌



🍌 CLC students watch Jingle Dancer Meg Olmstead, who performed and share details about the jingle dress's history and significance in Indigenous culture.

Sweet support



🍌 The ESAI student Leadership group was happy to donate food items, wooden ornaments and \$322 from their fundraiser to the local food bank.

When the student Leadership group at École Ste-Anne Immersion (ESAI) ran a candy-gram fundraiser in December, they were overwhelmed by its success and the resulting amount of work ahead of them – but it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

The Leadership group of Grade 7 and 8 students meet weekly to brainstorm, organise and implement activities to help build a better community at ESAI. They ran the candy-gram sale before the holidays, inviting students to

write a note of kindness for another student for 50 cents each. The group then attached the messages to candy canes and delivered them to their intended recipients around the school, says teacher Katlynn Allard.

"The group was overwhelmed because we sold so many more candy canes than we thought we would. But once we finished putting together the candy-grams and they saw how much we raised, they were overcome with relief and joy," Allard says. "They saw that all our hard work paid off, and that however big or small a project is, you can make a difference in someone's life."

The group raised \$322.50 from the sales to donate to the Accueil Kateri Centre, which runs the local food bank. They also collected an entire truckload of non-perishable food items for the centre through a school-wide food drive, and made wooden ornaments for Accueil Kateri to add to gifts for children.

"We chose to donate to Accueil Kateri because we wanted to support our own community," says Alexis A., a leadership group member in Grade 7.

"Kids in the school really enjoyed the candy-grams, but it was also very nice to do something for the community," adds Grade 7 member Kaydance S. 🍌

Creating connections en français



Grade 7/8 EIDC students, from left, Simon P-L., Nathan L. and Carlos R. act out a scene from their video about their French identities.

With French Immersion students spread out across the division from St. Norbert to Ste. Anne, it can be tricky for students to feel like part of a larger French community. With the pandemic still preventing in-person gatherings, finding creative ways to help forge connections has been crucial.

Administrators from our five K-8 French Immersion schools met in the fall to develop virtual connection

opportunities for students to speak French, says Mireille Bazin-Berryman, Divisional Principal of Curriculum, who worked with the group.

“A big part of our French Immersion curriculum is about identity,” Bazin-Berryman explains. “Those authentic opportunities for students to use their French in settings outside the classroom are so important for their experience and their confidence.”

In November, Grade 7 and 8 classes participated in virtual French debates between schools. Every Tuesday afternoon, teams of Grade 8 French Immersion students connected via online video meetings to debate topics they had researched, while Grade 7 students observed and took a stand on each topic.

All Maternelle (Kindergarten), Grade 1 and Grade 2 classes participated in “BINGO FrancoFun” in December, checking off French-language activities they did at school or home such as reading a French book, singing a French song or watching a French TV show.

“This showed them there are things they can do to build their French identity and culture outside the school, and they knew students their age in other schools were doing the same thing,” Bazin-Berryman says.

In January and February, Grade 5-8 students teamed up to create 30-second videos about their French identity as part of a national Challenge from the *Association Canadien de Professeurs d’Immersion* (ACPI). They shared their videos within their schools and across the division, and can submit them to the national challenge if they wish.

“The video challenge has given them an opportunity to prepare something in advance and put it into action, making sure they’re using the correct French vocabulary to express themselves,” Bazin-Berryman says.

A multi-school assembly for the division’s Grade 3 and 4 students is being planned for spring, to be held in one location if possible, so students in each school can see each other and connect. ●

Back in tune, on stage

Students in music, band, choir and theatre programs are excited to know they could be taking the stage again soon.

While they’ve been able to get back to playing instruments and rehearsing this year – and have had some virtual concerts – students have been yearning to perform again for live, in-person audiences, says Michelle Archibald, Collège St. Norbert Collegiate’s (CSNC) teacher for musical theatre, choir, vocal jazz and band.

“In the music program, we’re always working towards the next performance – so not having those live audiences is a big piece that’s been missing. Those opportunities to excel are really crucial to their school experience.”

The school musical in particular has helped give CSNC students some forward momentum, Archibald says, adding she’s hopeful their April production of the

musical *Annie* can happen in person. Musical theatre is a credit course at CSNC, with about 100 students involved this year as stagehands, artists, technical crew, audio crew, lighting crew, props, pit band and cast.

While students recognize the importance of safety measures, they have impacted the learning capability of the school’s entire music community, says Jonathan B., a Grade 11 CSNC student in band, choir, vocal jazz choir and musical theatre. “The lack of musicals has been hard. It’s meant fewer learning opportunities and less collaboration between grades and between areas like art, music and woodworking, and a loss of community and relationship building. The musical means so much to us, and I’m really looking forward to performances, regardless of how they appear.”



CSNC students rehearse for the musical *Annie*, which they hope to perform to a live audience this spring.

Performing live and showcasing their work boosts students’ spirits and gives them a sense of confidence, accomplishment and pride, Archibald says.

“The students are very invested and want to work hard to make it happen, both on stage and behind the scenes.” ●