

# 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!

## The End of an Era

At the end of January, the MECCS board made the difficult decision to request permission from the Minister of Education to close the school and give up our charter. The main factor for this decision was the decreased enrolment we have had for the last few years. Fewer students meant less revenue. This ultimately meant it was no longer economically viable to continue.

After 21 years we could have gone quietly into the night, but MECCS staff decided to give our loyal students and their families the best effort we could to make the remaining months memorable. We have done a number of things to keep that promise.

MECCS has long emphasized our partnerships with other schools and community groups, and also exposing our students to new adventures. In 2024, those partnerships started with a **drum-making session** for our boys (making drums is a traditional male activity). Glen Chamakese from Pelican Lake First Nation spent two days with the boys, teaching them every step to make their own drums.



*Glen Chamakese leading a detailed drum-making session for our boys at MECCS.*



Above, left: Students gathering drum-making materials from outside.

Above, right: Trying out the finished drums in our museum classroom.



Left, top: Glen Chamakese cutting hide.

Left, bottom: Devonte Bearhead and Takoda Bearhead.

We hosted the **Mother Earth Spring Classic 2024**, a World Cubing Association (WCA) event that attracted 125 of the best Rubik's Cube competitors in Alberta. We had nearly 300 people here at the school for the day, with competitors, officials, relatives and guests. This made it the largest gathering in the school's history.

The WCA governs competitions for mechanical puzzles and holds events around the world each weekend. There are several WCA competitions in Alberta each year. This partnership with the WCA started last year. Five of the Ultimate Cubing League members, including two of our superintendent Ed Wittchen's grandsons, came to the school and provided demonstrations for our students so they could learn how to solve these cubes.



Clockwise from immediate left:

Mother Earth Spring Classic 2024 hosts welcoming guests to the competition.



An overhead view of the competition and spectator area.



Miles Wright judging a top competitor.

Volunteer Peggy Wilmott at registration.

We continued our partnership with Connect Charter School. Maxine and Mark Hildebrandt took our students in grades 5 to 9 to join students from Connect and Calgary Arts Academy at **Camp Connect** at Sibbald Lake, about an hour west of Calgary. Connect strives to reinforce the value of outdoor, experiential and environmental education through various activities. This was the second year of our partnership with Connect and our first with Calgary Arts Academy.

Next, two groups of students, staff and volunteers from **Connect Charter School** visited **MECCS** to further enhance the partnership. The first group of 55 arrived Monday morning and left Wednesday afternoon. The second group of 55 arrived Wednesday afternoon and left Friday afternoon. Their visits included time in our Cultural Interpretive Museum Classroom and at our Outdoor Culture Camp. They also spent a day at the Science Centre, the Alberta Legislature and the West Edmonton Mall Waterpark.

A new partner emerged this month when students from grades 5 and 6 from **Thrive Charter School** visited **MECCS**. They spent a day with Maxine, our well-known and respected cultural program instructor.

The morning focused on lessons in the Cultural Interpretive Museum Classroom. Students learned about Canada's history and relationships with Indigenous Peoples through topics such as the fur trade era, numbered treaties, the Indian Act, the legacy of residential schools, land claim agreements, self-determination models and relationships with other cultures that played prominent roles in the settlement of the West. Visiting students and staff also learned about the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.



*Above: Enjoying the view at Camp Connect.*



*Left (top, middle, bottom): Students exploring the rope course at Camp Connect.*

*Below: MECCS, Connect and Calgary Arts Academy students in the classroom at Camp Connect.*



*Right, top: Connect students explore the model village in our museum classroom.*

*Right, bottom: A Connect student tries out a model of a traditional tipi backrest.*



*Below: Maxine Hildebrandt teaching visiting students from Connect Charter School.*





Above: Playing Indigenous games.

Left: Connect visitors relaxing on buffalo and bear robes.

Right, top: Mark Ehnes teaching Indigenous games outside.

Right: On the archery course.

Left: Takoda Bearhead and Eric Thompson with new friends.



Below, clockwise:

Melissa Abrams, Mattayah Kimiksana, Azarie Rain and Azarielle Kimiksana.

Maxine Hildebrandt holds a rabbit.

Sheep and lambs.

Students learning parts of a steer.



History came alive for students through displays of authentic historical objects and photos, fur pelts, models, maps and timelines.



We provided lunch for all of our guests at *Oski Kisikaw Ena Mahkochih* (New Day for Mother Earth), where students explored the tipi and other elements of the Outdoor Culture Camp. That was followed by what was probably the highlight of the day: a lesson at our outdoor archery course.



MECCS students and staff spent a day at **New Humble Charter School**, where they learned about the school's focus on agriculture literacy. Highlights included learning how New Humble students care for all the different animals on site, including a couple of steers, sheep and baby lambs, ducks, rabbits and chickens. Our staff and students loved getting to hold and touch the farm animals.



*Another partnership in action, this time with visiting students and staff from Thrive Charter School. Clockwise from above:*

*Aiming for the bear target on our archery course.*

*Enjoying time at the firepit at Oski Kisikaw Ena Mahkochih.*

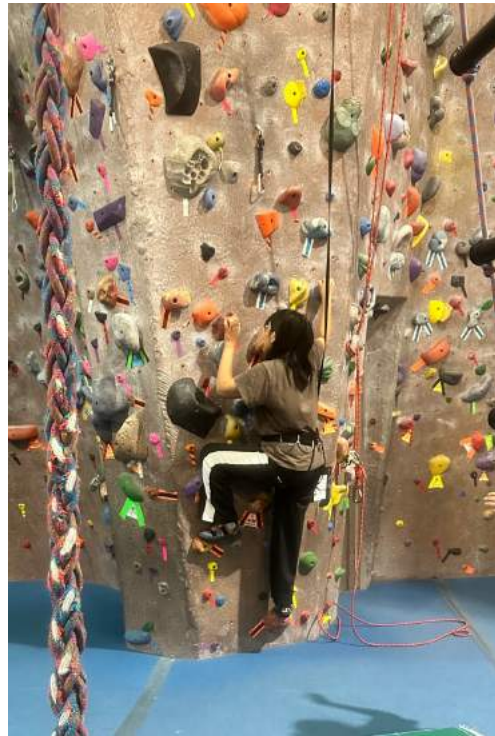
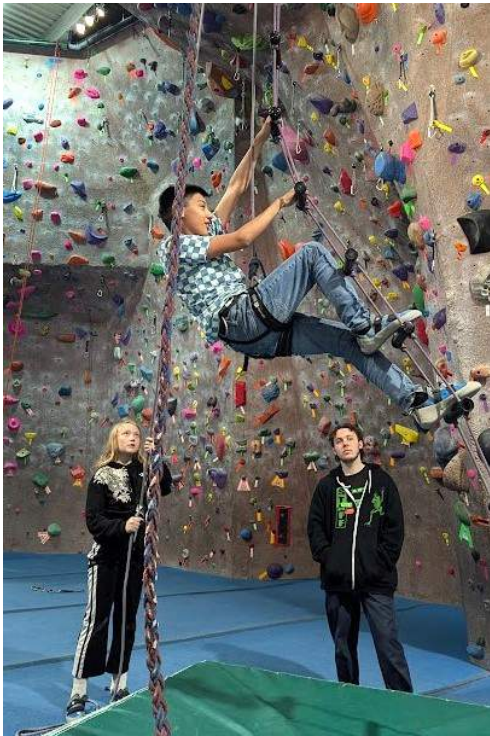
*Time for some lunch around the firepit.*

*Exploring our Cultural Interpretive Museum Classroom. MECCS and Thrive students working on a museum project.*

Staff then took the students to see the latest exhibits at the Telus World of Science, followed by a visit to Activate, an active laser-based game facility. Students became players in the various dynamic game rooms, each with interactive technology. They enjoyed moving between challenges, jumping, climbing, problem solving and competing in their adrenaline-filled adventures.

Teacher Mark Ehnes and our principal Erin Danforth took the students to the Spruce Grove Tri-Leisure Centre for a week of swimming lessons. This continues one of our school's long-standing traditions, as we feel it is in the best interest of our students to help them get ready for summer activities at the many lakes in the area. We want all of our students to be prepared and safe in and near the water.

Another of our longtime partners is Spirit North. For several years, under the direction of Spirit North's community program manager Leah Reid, they have been teaching our students to cross-country ski and enjoy outdoor pursuits. To conclude this successful partnership, we donated a number of sports equipment items that they can use in other schools.



*Celebrating our partnership with Spirit North with a day of rock climbing adventures at Vertically Inclined.*

Spirit North also purchased all of our archery equipment and treated our students to a day of **rock climbing at Vertically Inclined.**

The last day of school before we send our students off to new schools and adventures will see the staff take them to West Edmonton Mall Galaxyland. We have passes for all the students to try the rides of their choice. We'll finish with a farewell dinner and a movie.

It has been a great 21 years but as the saying goes, "all good things must come to an end." Thanks to every student, parent, staff member, board member, supporter, partner and colleague who helped us over the years.

**Each and every one of you made a difference.**

