

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

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MECCS is on Facebook!



Find driving directions and more at www.meccs.org

Reasons Students Want to Attend MECCS

As parents and grandparents, we all want the same things for our children and grandchildren when they go to school.

We want them to learn and succeed in their academic subjects. We want them to graduate from high school and then compete and succeed in the work world as adults.

We want them to experience as many things as they can while they are growing up. We want school to be fun for them.

Students like being at Mother Earth for a variety of reasons. They like the small classes, the personal attention they get from staff, the extra programs they are getting, and the hot breakfast and lunch program.

Students also like to succeed academically. They know that the results we are getting at MECCS give them an excellent chance to succeed in the future. They know they are building an excellent foundation.



From left to right: River Rain-Kootenay, Amber Anderson, Katerie Bull and Briann Awasis work on their beading. PHOTO BY ERIN DANFORTH

An important part of the school charter calls for us to deliver a strong cultural component. Two afternoons per week are dedicated to that idea. This newsletter explores the cultural options currently available at our school.



MECCS currently offers its students one language option and five cultural options, including drumming.

Stoney Language

On Wednesdays, we offer students the chance to learn the Stoney language. The Stoney language is in danger of disappearing. It is only spoken by about 3,000 people (mostly Elders) and only in Alberta. It is a challenging language to learn, as it is very difficult to write.

Theresa Bird, a respected grandmother from the Paul First Nation, joins us every Wednesday to work with our young people. She is teaching students conversational Stoney so that they can make more meaningful connections to the grandmothers and grandfathers in the community. This is an excellent way to preserve their own family and cultural history. Many of Mrs. Bird's own grandchildren attend or have attended MECCS. To see her interact with them in this way is very special.

Aboriginal Fine Arts Options

On Mondays, we offer students a choice of five Aboriginal fine arts options: Drumming, Aboriginal Land Stewardship, Traditional Flute, Traditional Dance and Beading.

Drumming

Terrence Paskemin, Sr., leads our drumming option along with Darcy Paul, Jr. Terrence has led the renowned drum group the Blackstone Singers since the late 1980s. They perform regularly throughout western Canada and the United States.



Top photo, clockwise: Making a joyful noise with drumming instructor Terrence Paskemin, Sr. (in glasses and cap), TJ Paskemin, Neil Adams, Trevez Bird, Tannon Rain, Jalen Paskemin, Jayden Lewis, Storm Mackinaw and Shawn Bird.

Bottom photo, clockwise: Drumming instructor Terrence Paskemin, Sr., and drumming assistant Darcy Paul, Jr., Trevez Bird, Nakoda Paul, Tannon Rain, Jalen Paskemin, Jayden Lewis and Storm Mackinaw.

DRUMMING PHOTOS BY VICTOR TANG

Terrence is originally from Sweetgrass, Saskatchewan, but has lived in the Paul First Nation community for a number of years. Terrence's children have attended MECCS for the past three years. His oldest is in grade 9 and his youngest is in kindergarten.

The Blackstone Singers are one of the elite powwow groups in North America. The group began performing and competing together in 1987. It took its name in honour of the members' grandfather Blackstone. In 1996, the group won the World Championship Powwow competition in Hartford, Connecticut. Since 1990, the Blackstone Singers have made over 20 recordings of their powwow songs and round dances.

Our students are very fortunate to be able to learn drumming from a performer as distinguished and successful as Terrence.

Aboriginal Land Stewardship

We are fortunate to have Paul First Nation member Donny Rain teach our students about how their connection to the land can be a symbiotic relationship.

Donny leads them on outdoor excursions to explore the 160-acre parcel of land that MECCS stands on.

During these outdoor sessions, Donny discusses how the land can provide for us. He also demonstrates methods of tracking, reading natural signs and trapping, all the while reminding the children that they have a responsibility to the natural world around us.

Traditional Flute

Garett Strawberry serves on the MECCS board and hails from O'Chiese. Garett generously volunteers his time to spend every other Monday with our students, instructing them in the art of traditional flute music.

Thanks to a generous donation of flutes, instruction booklets and other materials from Odell Borg at High Spirits Flutes, we are able to provide 12 students with this experience.

Traditional Dance

Stephanie Burnstick of Alexander is instructing our girls in the art of traditional dance. Stephanie has been dancing



Top photo, from left to right: Serenity Bird, Zaida McLean and Raquel Oar taking part in the Aboriginal Land Stewardship option. Additional photos: Donny Rain teaching how to trap marten (right) and other traditional outdoor skills.

TOP PHOTO BY VICTOR TANG; BOTTOM PHOTOS BY JANET HOUSE



since she was at the Tiny Tot level. She has won many accolades for her performances at gatherings, powwows and other events throughout western Canada.

Stephanie works with our female dancers to help them practise and perfect their form, just in time for our powwow season to begin.

Beading

Our school principal Erin Danforth leads the beading. She doesn't see herself as an instructor but more of a mentor or facilitator. Most of the students in the group know how to bead already or have at least attempted to do it on their own.

Erin will help her students to explore different techniques like loom beading, peyote stitch and lazy stitch. The students will have the opportunity to complete at least one project.



Top photo, clockwise: Flute instructor Garrett Strawberry teaches Tyrrel Bigchild, Jerry Saulteaux-Lightning, Jr., and Katerie Bull. Bottom photos: Jerry Saulteaux-Lightning, Jr.,(right) and Katerie Bull and River Rain-Kootenay (left) work on developing their beading skills. FLUTE PHOTO BY VICTOR TANG; BEADING PHOTOS BY ERIN DANFORTH