

# 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](http://www.meccs.org)**

## New Year, New Partners, New Adventures

Welcome back to MECCS for another exciting year! Since last spring, our staff members have spent a lot of time planning ways to enhance our programming that support our charter. We have also been looking at ways to engage students, parents and partners.

We have one new staff member this year. Jennifer Saulteaux is our new Kitchen Assistant. She is a resident of Paul Band and grandmother to four of our students. Janet House has taken over as Head Cook in addition to her other duties as Family Liaison. Everyone else has returned to their usual roles. This offers a degree of stability for our students.

We have some new partners as we return to a more normal type of school term. Principal Erin Danforth and teacher Maxine Hildebrandt went to Medicine Hat over the summer to meet with our charter school colleagues at the Centre for

*Our new Kitchen Assistant Jennifer Saulteaux (front) with Janet Cook, Head Cook and Family Liaison.*





*Scenes from our first few days back to school.*



Academic and Personal Excellence (CAPE) Charter School. CAPE School focuses on achieving academic excellence through its personalized integrated program. This program is supported through community partnerships, partnerships with parents, collaboration with external services and a counselling approach to discipline. CAPE School also focuses on achieving personal excellence through classroom meetings, projects to link school and community, and a collaborative discipline plan.



We are hoping to share information and possibly set up student exchange visits between MECCS and CAPE School during the year. Mrs. Hildebrandt's students have already started sharing activities with teacher Sara Fairbrother's students at CAPE by exchanging All About Me posters to let them get to know each other.



We have also established a new corporate partnership with Kopala Towers from Bonnyville. It resulted from communication between Superintendent Ed Wittchen and a former student of his, Bryan Kopala, President of Kopala Towers.

Kopala Towers is an Alberta-based business that manufactures stand-alone wash stations and unique portable washrooms. The



*CAPE Charter School students making their All About Me posters and visiting their outdoor learning space.*

hands-free wash stations use a special no-rinse disinfecting soap to protect against germs. Its revolutionary portable bathrooms combine all the comforts of home with rugged durability and extreme weather resistance. Built to withstand arctic temperatures of up to -45°C, the washroom units are fully lit inside and out and fully heated. They feature stainless steel sinks with running water, flush toilets, full size mirrors and spacious interiors. Easy to maintain, they have a 65-gallon water storage tank and 160-gallon heated septic storage. They run off 220-volt/30-amp and 110-volt/15-amp seasonal power connects. They also feature collapsible stairs with no-slip treads and heavy-duty forklift pockets, and they are skidsteer-friendly for easy moving.

To start the partnership, Bryan has donated 1,500 triple-filter, surgical-style masks for our students and staff, one of the hands-free wash stations for the school and one of the portable washrooms for our new culture camp for a year, with the intent of repeating the donation in future years.

Another of our colleague charter schools has a new initiative that they are willing to share with other schools. Connect Charter School in Calgary recently purchased the former Calgary Boys and Girls Club Camp, a 64-acre site at Sibbald Lake approximately 40 minutes west of Calgary. The camp has several buildings, including bunkhouses, an outdoor classroom, and an industrial-style kitchen and dining room. It has gone unused for several years so it requires some maintenance and repairs before Connect can start involving other schools. MECCS is interested in holding a fall, winter or spring camp there in the future, perhaps with our other partner schools. Our students would focus on outdoor, environmental and cultural education issues.

*Our new corporate partner Kopala Towers will be providing our school's new cultural camp with a high-end portable washroom.*





*Clockwise from above:*  
 1. Connect Camp Outdoor Learning Space.  
 2. Connect Superintendent Chris Gilmour showing how the Outdoor Learning Space opens up.  
 3. Coordinator Rob Pegg showing a tipi base.  
 4. Chris showing Maxine Hildebrandt some of the Connect Camp buildings.  
 5. The interior of the Outdoor Learning Space.  
 6. MECCS Superintendent Ed Wittchen, Chris Gilmour, Maxine Hildebrandt and Erin Danforth.  
 7. Maxine and Mark Hildebrandt discuss MECCS cultural camp construction with Dale LeMoignan.



It also has an Indigenous cultural camp with tipi sites and a sweat lodge. This cultural site is a result of Connect working with Miskanawah, a Calgary-based social services group. Miskanawah, which means “little roads and paths” in Cree, has served as the camp caretakers for several years, working with Elders and holding sweats at the camp.

Construction is starting on our own cultural camp. Staff discussions in the spring showed us this was a project everyone supported to help refocus our staff and student cultural connections. Ms. Danforth and Mrs. Hildebrandt developed a basic concept, and Mrs. Hildebrandt made a detailed plan that included supplier quotes. We broke ground in late August and expect to finish the camp by early November. Our next two newsletters will chronicle this exciting development.