

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 11, Site 504, RR 5

Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1X5

780-702-7531 school office

780-340-1716 family liaison

Principal Erin Danforth - edanforth@meccs.org

Family Liaison Janet House - jhouse@meccs.org

School Secretary Raquel House - rhouse@meccs.org

MECCS is on Facebook!



Find driving directions and more at www.meccs.org

The Power of Music and Dance at MECCS

If you are familiar at all with hoop dancing, the first person to come to mind when you think of this beautiful art form is three-time world champion hoop dancer Dallas Arcand.

Dallas earned his championship title through many years of hard work, determination and practice, and a deep and abiding respect for his culture. It was these skills and beliefs that he came to share with our children on a recent visit to our school.

He was joined by Juno-nominated, multi-award-winning singer/songwriter Tracy Bone. Together they've produced a holistic education enhancement program that reveals the power of the hoop dance, Indigenous cultural education and the healing gift of music.

He started dancing with the White Braid Society Dance Group when he was 14 years old. He also sang with the



World-class hoop dancer Dallas Arcand.

powwow drum and danced the men's fancy dance and the hoop dance.

Dallas began with eight hoops. Within a year, he had progressed to 10, 19 and finally 25 hoops.

He has danced at many powwows across Canada and has performed at conferences, festivals, fashion shows, theatre productions and more.

Dallas taught himself the intricate combinations that make up the hoop dance by watching other dancers. Several elements of his performances are uniquely his and are performed by no other hoop dancer in the world. Appropriate enough, when Dallas was born, he was given the Aboriginal name "Dancing Buffalo Man," or *Nimihto Paskwa Mostôs Napew*.



Above: The MECCS junior high ensemble with Dallas Arcand, Tracy Bone and Tracy's daughter Sierrah Morrissette-Bone, featuring Danielle Mackinaw in traditional dress.
 Right: Tracy and Sierrah exploring musical instruments with grades 3 and 4 students.



PHOTOS BY ERIN DANFORTH

Tracy Bone's debut album *No Lies* has received much praise, including a 2008 Western Canadian Music Award, a Native American Music Award, an Indian Summer Music Award, a North American Indigenous Image Award and a 2009 Juno Award nomination. At the 2009 Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards, Tracy also won the award for Aboriginal Songwriter of the Year.

During their time at MECCS, Dallas and Tracy condensed a program that was originally designed to include over 100 hours of instruction into just five school days. They also brought students together to present a performance for their families. Thanks to their infectious positivity, our students took on this mammoth task with no fears.

First, Dallas worked with the children to gather red willow on the school property. At the same time, he included teachings about the sounds of nature and uses of traditional indigenous plants.

Next, some of the students took part in making hoops, some created walking sticks and others worked on creating an original text to be performed. Students from grades 3 to 9 worked with Tracy and her daughter Sierrah Morrissette-Bone to learn how to coax music from a selection of musical instruments.

At the end of the week, the students helped to put on a wonderful performance. Dallas led our K-2 students in a spirited hoop dance. The grades 3 and 4 students explored rhythm with Tracy and presented a percussion circle. Our older students performed an original song they had composed. They also created an original ensemble featuring the traditional flute, ukulele, acoustic and electric guitar, bass, cajón and triangle, and a group of our boys who have been mentored by Terrence Paskemin played the drum. They were joined by three of our young women who sang their own original lyrics to the tune of "Seven Nation Army" by The White Stripes. To close out the show, Dallas, Tracy and Sierrah performed for us all.

Our vision of MECCS is to help our students discover their innate gifts. We believe their gifts come from the Creator. Dallas and Tracy's work with our students allowed these talents to bloom.

What I learned from Tracy is that if you want to pursue something in life you've got to keep pushing yourself.

~ Katerie Bull