

# 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 42, Site 2, RR 1**

**Warburg, AB T0C 2T0**

**780-702-7531 school office**

**780-340-1716 family liaison**

**Principal Erin Danforth - edanforth@meccs.org**

**Family Liaison Janet House - jhouse@meccs.org**

**MECCS is on Facebook!**



**Find driving directions and more at [www.meccs.org](http://www.meccs.org)**

## The 2017 MECCS Student Exchange

Over the past five years, MECCS students have participated in four student exchanges. These provide your children with the opportunity to experience diversity, gain self-confidence, and learn firsthand about the history and geography of Canada.

This past June, students went on what was probably the most challenging exchange yet: two weeks exploring the BC interior and Alberta. This was the first time we had experienced both our "away" week and our week as hosts back to back. It was a true test of our students' stamina and their sense of self-reliance, and they passed with flying colours.

We began our trip with a 14-hour drive to Kelowna on a small coach bus. Travelling by bus allowed us to take our time and find new scenery

to explore and appreciate. We arrived in Kelowna just in time to take our seats in the audience as our twin school, Studio 9 School of the Arts, took to the stage for the closing night of their production of *Into the Woods*. It was an



*Posing together at Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo Jump, a Unesco World Heritage Site in southern Alberta.*



*Clockwise from top left: 1. At the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller. 2. Tyrrel Bigchild, Storm Mackinaw, Shawn Bird and a “friend” who showed up for breakfast at the hotel in Drumheller. 3. Gathered at the Summerland Ornamental Gardens. 4. Simone Bearhead, Shelby Bull, Bethany Ochuschayoo and Jayden Lewis join their BC friend Dakota in ceremonial costumes at the Alberta Legislature. 5. In Merritt, BC.*

amazing way to be introduced to our twins and a great way to begin our week in the Okanagan. Our students enjoyed a weekend with their twins but they were ready to see us again on Monday morning!

Over the next four days, we undertook a walking tour of the waterfront in Kelowna; visited historic Davison Orchards, O’Keefe Ranch and the Kettle Valley Railway; and made exciting discoveries at the Nk’Mip

Desert Cultural Centre in Osoyoos. We spent a beautiful, sunny day exploring the desert surrounding the Cultural Centre learning about the Syilx people and about how many aspects of their culture was similar to the First Nations people of our Treaty 6 area.

All too soon it was time to head home to Alberta but we didn’t go straight back. We had some sightseeing planned for the southern part of our province,



*Clockwise from top left:*

1. Waiting for the Kettle Valley Railway train to arrive at the station in the BC interior.
2. Jayden Lewis enjoying the warm sunshine and prairie breezes at Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo Jump.
3. Students exploring the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre.
4. Jayden Lewis performs a grass dance for visitors back at the school; parent Simon House and former student Tuskonne Blais watch in the background.
5. A group photo in front of Edmonton City Hall.
6. Students gather in front of the Davis Concert Organ at the Francis Winspear Centre for Music in Edmonton.



specifically around Head-Smashed-in-Buffalo Jump and Drumheller. We spent the day on a tour of the lower trail with local Elder and teacher Conrad Little Leaf who patiently explained the history of the site and the people who inhabited it.

On our way to Drumheller, we made a short stop in the town of Vulcan to stretch our legs and check out the large replica of the *USS Enterprise*!

In Drumheller, we visited the Royal Tyrell Museum and went on a walking tour of the Badlands. This was a first for not only most of our visiting students from BC but also for most of our MECCS students, and there were lots of positive comments.

A little closer to home, we were able to spend a day at the school learning traditional Indigenous games. The students played Double Ball, Ring the Stick, and Run



*MECCS students Bethany Ochuschayoo, Jalen Paskemin and Nakoda Paul visiting animals at Kangaroo Creek Farm in Lake Country, BC.*

and Scream among other games. They even made their own Run and Scream sticks. We spent a day exploring the Winspear Centre, the Art Gallery of Alberta and Edmonton City Hall before finishing the day at the new Interpretive Centre at the Alberta Legislature.

After we arrived back at school, we invited our twins to enjoy a dance presentation by some of our MECCS students. The presentation included a special musical appearance by Terry Paskemin and members of the award-winning drum group Blackstone. Terry's son Jalen, a MECCS student, joined the group to sing too.

We spent a day east of Edmonton exploring the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village and Elk Island Park. The costumed historical interpreters kept trying to get our students to help them with their chores...and there are a lot of chores on these working farm sites! Elk

Island Park was a welcome change from the other places we had been. It gave the students a chance to explore the natural aspen parkland environment (and play on the giant playground). They thoroughly enjoyed their time.

Finishing off the two-week experience was our trip to West Edmonton Mall. You can't come to Edmonton and not see "The Mall." At the end of our day at WEM, our students were tired and we ended our day with a group meal at the Old Spaghetti Factory. Our MECCS students said their farewells and went home to their families, and we said goodbye to our Kelowna twins.

Making sure that we continue to offer these life-changing experiences to our children is hugely important. It not only gives them a chance to travel and see more of Canada but it also gives them the confidence to tackle any problem that might come their way.



*Left: Jalen Paskemin, Serenity Bird and some of the Studio 9 students getting ready to say goodbye with a few hugs.*

*Right: Some classic photobooth pictures of Georgia Bearhead, her twin Anjelina and Shelby Bull, taken just before having to say their goodbyes.*

