

October 2021



Selkirk Montessori School E-Newsletter

From Selkirk Montessori Graduate, Evelyn (Thompson) George

Orange Shirt Day was created in 2013 to educate and raise awareness about the horrific events that took place in the Indian Residential Schools of Canada. Upon Colonization, the First Nations people of Canada experienced many forms of genocide. The institutions that held thousands of children were among the worst cases of cultural genocide that was experienced.

Orange shirt day was inspired by a true story from a former Residential School Survivor named Phyllis Jack Webstad. When Phyllis arrived at the St. Joseph Mission Residential School, she was heartbroken to realize that the institution would be starting this process of entry by removing their clothing and belongings from them. At six, she was beside herself when she was told she had to give them her brand new orange shirt she received from her grandmother. The orange shirt is forever a symbol of exactly what this institution did to many children, ripping every bit of who they were away from them.

The Residential School system was developed in the 1880's. The goal when upon opening their

doors was to educate and assimilate "Indian" children into Canadian society. The last school that closed their doors was in 1996; this was a federally funded Residential school. This is very important to understand. This history is within our lifetime. I was 8 when the last school closed their doors. These schools had long term effects on thousands of children, and the children they were going to raise one day. Attendance was mandatory.

These institutions were incredibly abusive. These institutions were prisons for children. They were set to "kill the Indian" in the child. These children were physically, emotionally, mentally, nutritionally, sexually, and culturally abused. These children were of mixed ages between 5-18. It hurts to write those words, and it hurts feeling as if I should hold back from sharing. What hurts about those feelings is that I'm trying to spare any children of understanding that heartache. What hurts more is knowing that those children that went through those institutions did not have a choice. What I know to be true is this history needs to be shared.

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From Evelyn (Thompson) George (cont'd)

My father's name was Tsaqwasupp, and his English name was Art Thompson. I am a Selkirk Montessori graduate; my name is Evelyn George (Thompson). My parents enrolled me in Montessori when it was called Pacific Montessori at the end of Morley Street beside Oakland's elementary.

In 1995, my father was one of 18 men who pursued and won a supreme court case against one of their abusers, and a dormitory supervisor of Alberni Indian Residential School, Arthur Henry Plint. My father chose to be the face of this legal battle. He stood in front of a man that ripped his childhood away to have the chance to have his trauma recorded in Canadian history. He wanted to be sure that someone paid for the life that was taken away from him at such a young age. They won that court case, and Plint would spend the rest of his days confined to a jail cell.

Following his 1995 supreme court case against Plint, in 1999 he took the Queen, her majesty, and Canada to supreme court to further his written history. He wanted Canada to be made responsible for the horrors he experienced as a child. After his testimony, he also went on to win this case as well.

For me, I want the outward world to understand that these institutions took those children's humanity and treated them less than. They were children who were forcefully taken and raised 10 months out of the year by essentially, monsters.

If you were lucky, you were allowed to spend summer break with your family. When they took children, they did not just place them in local schools, they staggered children throughout BC to ensure that not every child could communicate with their language because each Nation has different dialects.

To end, education is the best step forward. Learning about our Canadian history with First Nations people is going to be a very long and delicate learning process for us all. Please understand that these institutions effected each Nation and every First Nations Family. Please understand that each First Nations person you come across, was in fact effected by these institutions one way or another. I am 33, and my father was a former resident of this house of horrors. My husband, who's nation resides in North Vancouver, both of his paternal grandparents are survivors from both St. Paul's Indian Residential School and Kamloops Indian Residential School.

The ripple effects of these institutions are heavy and have been passed down in unhealthy cycles and added trauma. Many of these children would either go on to numb their pain with alcohol or drugs, attempt and sometimes succeed in suicide. Many, many families are still actively working on healing from these traumas today.

Provincial Government Employees—TAKE NOTE!

You can donate directly from your payroll! Automatic payroll deductions make giving easy.

Choose to donate through PECSF, you will make a difference at Selkirk Montessori!

Choices include up to 10 of your favourite charities (Donor Choice) or the Fund Supported Pool. Each Fund Supported Pool is made up of local programs and services unique to your own community (PECSF region).

All CRA registered charities are eligible. Your donations will appear automatically on your T4 slip, making tax time a breeze!

For more information and to donate, check out:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/careers-myhr/about-the-bc-public-service/corporate-social-responsibility/pecsf/donate>

First Day of Truth & Reconciliation



“Reconciliation is a way of life, continuous, with no end date. It is learning from our lived experiences and understanding one another. It is creating the necessary space for us to heal. It is planting seeds of hope and respect so that our garden blooms for our children.



As we strive to acknowledge the horrors of the past, the suffering inflicted on Indigenous peoples, let us all stand side-by-side with grace and humility, and work together to build a better future for all.”



Gov. Gen. Mary May Simon

Annual General Meeting Information



NOVEMBER 10th
6:00 PM
(ZOOM LINK TO COME)

The annual general meeting of the Pacific Montessori Society will be held on **Wednesday, November 10th on Zoom. We will send a link with a variety of documents closer to the date.**

Board treasurer, Francis Rowe, will go over the financial statements for the 2020-21 school year and the approved budget for 2021-2022 will be provided as well. Directors will also have prepared reports for your review

Thank You

Many thanks to our ‘retiring’ board chair, Dina Wood. Dina joined the board while her son, Chase, was at the school and came back when Erin and I asked her long after Chase was graduated! Her calm, steady hand at the helm has made such a difference at the board table. There’s no one who can keep a meeting moving like our Dina!

We would also like to offer our thanks to Amanda Provan as she steps down from the board. We appreciate all the ways you have supported us!

Election

Francis will be running for a second term at this AGM. We appreciate his continued support of the school. Keep an eye out for the June 2022 newsletter when we make the call out for folks who are interested in positions on the board for the 2022-2023 slate.



MEETING KAREN COLUSSI

by Susie Rialp

“You can’t wear that dress,” Amabel de Lara warned me. My university buddy asked me to come to Canada to fill this teaching position at Pacific Montessori School and wanted to make sure I did everything right. I flew halfway around the world to get this job and it would be sad if I wasn’t hired.

“Why not?” I straightened my rose and lavender plaid suit. It still smelled like the air conditioner in the designer shop of Manila.

“People here are very casual. Karen Colussi will wear her jeans,” Amabel said. “She’s a volunteer, not an executive.”

“But this is an interview. I need to impress them,” I argued.

“Your resume will do that,” she said. “Wear your white jeans instead. You’ll still out-dress her.”

Amabel dropped me off by an old wood-frame building, tucked at the back of the Oaklands Elementary School complex beside an enchanting rock garden. A carpet of crunchy maple leaves led me to a small entrance. Creaky wide stairs led to the office on the main floor. A lingering smell of dusty books and mimeographing ink welcomed me.

As I walked through the spacious halls, the pitter-patter of my blue flats echoed through the empty classrooms. I peeked into one of them. Tatty bedsheets wrapped shelves bulging with Montessori materials. Its large wooden-framed windows and high ceiling let the sunshine drench the rooms. A cozy blue rug rested at the corner.

I quickly realized Amabel was right as soon as I met Karen Colussi. Her faded blue jeans and cotton t-shirt hugged her curvy figure. Yet her bouncy, golden hair and bright smile made up for her attire. Standing tall at six feet, she towered over me. Karen was as radiant as the sun.

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Meeting Karen Colussi (cont'd)



Charming me with her disarming and sincere greeting, Karen shook my hand vigorously. Linda Birley, a member of the Board, joined us. She, too, was dressed informally in her flower-printed blouse and slacks. There was no scrutiny of my resume, no apprehensive interrogations, no drill of expectations. Just a warm, wholesome conversation of how wonderful their small school was. And, yes, they'd love to have me join them.

As giggles and jokes filled our exchange, I wondered why these ladies were volunteers. Their steadily growing enrolment reflected a healthy financial standing. Renovations were evident as expansion demanded. Although it was a non-profit society, surely some money could be set aside for the administrator.

While touring the school, Karen's fierce devotion to the children and the school seeped through her words, unmatched by anyone I've met. She talked about her four children and loving husband, a source of her strength, she claimed. Karen pitched anecdotes of children, impressing me by knowing all the students' names, as well as the names of their parents, grandparents, and siblings. She boasted of the talents and dedication of her teachers.

I gathered Karen and a few parents embarked on a quest to continue the Montessori education of their children after a rewarding pre-school experience at Oak Bay. These parents were Montessori advocates, believers of the most successful method of learning. And nothing was going to stop them from providing the best education their child deserved.

As Karen reached the front of the building, I noticed freshly painted walls and a new door. "The school burned down one weekend. The teachers and parent volunteers painted and rebuilt this school. At least part of it," she said. "We're lucky to have a caring community or we wouldn't survive."

Volunteer, that word came up again.

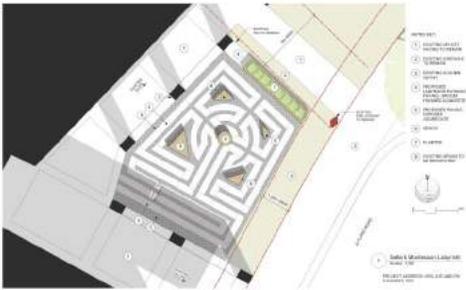
A caring community indeed, led by the most steadfast and devoted administrator. The generosity of the parents' time and hard work built this school, reinforced by the expertise and commitment of the staff. It was fueled by their love of children, ingredients that assured me this school was going to be here for a long time.

Now, that was one great school.

And I would do anything to be part of it.

Susie Rialp is a writer, a Montessori educator, a mother of two and a long-time teacher at Selkirk Montessori School (now retired). Thanks for sharing this memory with us, Susie!

40th Anniversary Update



There is still time to make a donation to our 40th Anniversary Fundraiser to install a labyrinth in front of the school.

As you know, we plan to do the project in two phases. The first phase is the preparation and installation of the labyrinth. The estimated cost for this phase is \$30,000 and, thanks to your generous donations, we have reached our first goal! We had to make a few adjustments to the design so permits have taken longer than we hoped (no surprise there, right?), but we hope to hear from Orca Masonry soon with good news from the City of Victoria.

The second phase will include wooden benches and plantings. The estimated cost for this phase is \$20,000 and we will complete it when the funds are available.

Please go to the following link to make your donation: [40th Anniversary](#). When you are finished, a tax receipt will automatically be sent to you. You are also welcome to e-transfer a donation to accounting@selkirkmontessori.ca. Help us celebrate our anniversary and make a difference at Selkirk Montessori School!

Very special thanks to the following corporate and individual donors for their support:

- Jawl Properties**
- Adax Management (Kees van Linden Tol)**
- Selkirk Parent Group**
- Amabel De Lara and family**
- Dodd's Furniture & Mattress**
- Shmunk Gatt Smith & Associates**
- Megson Fitzpatrick Insurance**
- Stan Garlick**
- Amandeep Pabla**
- Akomi Wellness Inc.**
- Catherine Scorey**

- Adriana Alvear
- Ah Shar Maya
- Alicia & David Shively
- Amalia Colussi
- Amanda Provan
- Amy Noonan
- Anastasia Cyprus
- Andrea Harbeck
- Angie Bull
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- Arezoo Zamany
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- Carmelle Hermoso
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- Lorena Miklenic
- Lorien Hammond
- Marcus Fedoruk
- Rich Poulin
- Mari Danice de Lara
- Marie Sykes
- Matthew Humphrey
- Natasha Reed
- Newhook Family
- Nicole Pan
- Novie Dodd
- Paul Whittaker
- Penny Barner
- Rich Poulin
- Richard Anthony
- Sandra Martel
- Sarah Pugh
- Sarah van Toorn
- Serena Pires
- Simon Owen
- Stella Castillo
- Susan Eddy
- Tanya Tan
- Trevor Walker
- Vivian Chenard
- Wenlong Xu

We have also received a number of anonymous donations. You know who you are!



Selkirk Parent Group (SPG) News

You Matter To Me Day

Thursday, October 7th marks the 11th annual You Matter to Me Day.

One day of the year when the sentiment of “you matter to me” is shared.

Individually and en masse.

In person and online.

Face to face. By voice and video calls. By texts and emails. By social media posts with #youmattertome.



You Matter To The SPG. Pass it on.

Thank you to the most wonderful Administration, Teachers and Staff a school could ask for. The SPG receives an amazing amount of encouragement, support, and hands-on assistance from our dedicated staff members. Without them, the SPG would not be able to function. The Administration, Teachers and Staff matter to the SPG.

Thank you to all of our volunteers, past and present, new and (ahem) old. We are so fortunate to have a passionate group of volunteers for positions big and small. Every bit helps to make our children's school the best it can be. Volunteers matter to the SPG.

Thank you to our dedicated school community. Each and every one of you makes our school better because you care. However you contribute – be it time, donations, emotional support, or just getting your kids to school! – know that your contributions make a difference. The school community matters to the SPG.

We continue to **seek volunteers** for the positions of: Vice Chair, Sports Liaison, Communications Coordinator, Volunteer Organiser, Hot Lunch Team Member, and Paradise Cheese Fundraising Coordinator. In light of our vacant Vice Chair seat, we are also seeking a Parent Education Coordinator to take on this valuable task.

Watch for upcoming Hot Lunch information, fundraising events, and community building opportunities. Your SPG is hard at work to launch the 2021/22 roster of activities. Better yet, join the fun! We are always open to new volunteers.

Our next SPG meeting is as follows:

Tuesday, October 12th 7-8pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84981133645?pwd=cTM2MW5KOTthGWm5qNVdQOWN1VGgrQT09>

Meeting ID: 849 8113 3645

Passcode: 419529

Contact the SPG at SPG@selkirkmontessori.ca

Counsellor's Corner

Wow, it's been a busy first month of school! September is typically filled with activities and lessons that help the teachers and students get acquainted with their new school routine, their classrooms, and their peer groups. All of these changes, in addition to the many changes and unknowns that the pandemic has brought, our children may be experiencing more worry and anxiety than usual. Thankfully, there have been a number of resources available for children and families, such as <https://www.anxietycanada.com/> which offer great tips and strategies to manage day to day anxiety. If you are a parent or caregiver of a child who shows signs and symptoms of anxiety that is beginning to interfere with daily activities, there are a few upcoming workshops with local Mental Health professionals this Fall. The cost of these workshops may be covered under most extended health plans.

Facilitated by Dr. Drew Halliday & Ms. Christina Robillard

for 4 weeks Starting November 2, 2021 Sessions will be held virtually

Tuesdays from 12:00-1:20 p.m.

<http://www.victoriachildpsychology.com/services>

WORRY WARRIORS: An Online Group Program for Families

Facilitated by Darcy Harbour, M.A., RCC

October 18 - December 6, 2021 (8 weeks)

Mondays from 6:15 - 7:00pm

<https://www.darcyharbourcounselling.ca/online-groups>

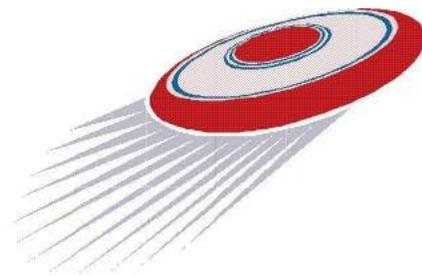
For any additional information or resources, please feel free to contact me via email at counsellor@selkirkmontessori.ca

Warmly,
Carmelle Hermoso, M.Ed., RCC
School Counsellor

Ultimate Frisbee



Our Ultimate Frisbee Club is up and running — literally! Special thanks to Shannon Paddon for coaching the team and to Sarah Scorey for the photos.





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We can make a difference!

www.selkirkmontessori.ca



Cross Country club is ‘up and running!’ Thanks to teachers Danielle and Jacqueline for coaching. Fingers are crossed for good weather for all our meets this year.

Dates to Remember

October 11th—Thanksgiving Day (school closed)

October 12th—Individual Student photos

October 21—Great BC Shakeout

October 22—Non-Instructional Day (no school for students)

October 25-28—Child Hosted Visits

Selkirk Montessori School is located on the traditional territories of the Ləkʷəŋən people, today known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. We extend our appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn on this territory.