

Kells Elementary

WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER



Celebrating Winter

Fun at Parc du Mont Royal

The wildly fluctuating weather patterns this winter forced us to postpone our winter day outing originally scheduled for January 25th. After this disappointing cancellation due to freezing rain, students were especially excited to board the bus for Parc du Mont-Royal ten days later on February 6th. This time, the weather cooperated and the sun was shining for a glorious Winter Day trip. The senior grades left for the Parc at the start of the day where they enjoyed skating on the artificially frozen Beaver Lake. Later in the morning, Grades 1-4 joined them to go snow-tubing down the hill on lanes that had been specially reserved for us. It was an exhilarating winter outing and a good time was had by all!



The 2023 Elementary School Graduation

Celebrating the first lap!

Graduations mark the culmination of a journey, the attainment of a goal and the start of another journey. They are some of the most memorable days in a student's life.

The Grade 6 Convocation took place on a bright and sunny afternoon on June 15th. The hall was filled to capacity with parents and family members who were waiting with anticipation for the ceremony to start. The Grade 6 students, buzzing with excitement, took a symbolic walk from the Elementary School building to the Middle School. The music of Edward Elgar's graduation march, Pomp and Circumstance, heralded the arrival of the students as they took their seats.

After a warm welcome and brief introductions by the Principal of Kells Elementary, Marla Perlman, the ceremony began with the elementary awards. Enriched math students Kamal Hoteit, Ghasan Kitana, and Bennett Talwar-Looseley, received Certificates of Distinction, all of whom surpassed the national average in the Mathematica Centrum Competition.



Zachary Botbol



Rose Zara

Some of the other award recipients included Heidi Rajoub for Achievement in English Language Arts and Kevin Torkzadeh for Achievement in French. Physical Education teacher Jennifer Chapman presented Moagi Diseko the award for Achievement in Physical Education, and the award for Achievement in Visual Arts was presented to Ashley Candappa. Learning Specialist, Cristina Farid presented the award for Academic Perseverance to Rose Zara.

Finally, the coveted Principal's Award was announced. This prize is given each year to a graduating student who has demonstrated commendable personal strength, academic excellence and school spirit, and has consistently exemplified the values of responsibility, respect and care that defines Kells Elementary. Amid thunderous applause, the 2022-2023 prize was jointly awarded to Heidi Rajoub and Ghasan Kitana.

The Elementary Farewell address was also delivered by both of them. Heidi spoke about the supportive teachers and encouraging classmates who had made Kells a “second home and family” for many students. She and Ghasan recounted the graduating class’s most memorable experiences. Ghasan also spoke about the supportive environment at Kells and advised his fellow graduates to “live the life you want, never give up and be resilient”.



Ghasan Kitana & Heidi Rajoub



Moagi Diseko

A highlight of the afternoon was a video message from Solene Phund, a Kells Academy alumna and Customer Services Manager at OneFootball, a European team media company headquartered in Berlin. She shared some profound life lessons and spoke of the impact that Kells Elementary had on her educational journey. She encouraged graduates to recognize the type of working environment needed to achieve their personal best, and to remain open to all possibilities.

The climax of the ceremony was when the students excitedly walked across the stage to receive their Diplomas from Marla Perlman.

Marla Perlman, concluded the ceremony with an address to the audience. She advised the new graduates to reflect on two powerful words - “Change and Resilience”. She encouraged them to believe in themselves, face changes and challenges, and to always remember that true strength lies in the ability to overcome these challenges.

The Convocation ended with the traditional ceremony of throwing the graduation caps but the celebrations continued as the new graduates and their proud parents returned to the Elementary School to create even more cherished memories at a special graduation party.



We are the Champions!

Our Incredible Soccer Season

Congratulations to our outstanding soccer team for their superb play and sportsmanship during the mid-Sept to mid-October soccer season where we won 7 of the 9 games in total! Our 17 soccer players participated in the Soccer Jamboree held at LCC with teams from Solomon Schechter, LCC, Kuper Academy and Selwyn House. The highlight of the event were our two back-to-back games against LCC and one against Kuper Academy where we won all three! Kudos to Coach Grunberg who motivated the players to do their best and have fun, and thanks to parents for cheering the team on.



Nadine Abdullah, Namirah Ahmed, Sam Aljundi, Adnan Al Matrouk, Arnau Boira Canete, Nathan Lemaitre, Leo Lucero-Kolb, Luna Lucero-Kolb, Tahaniente McComber, Hugo McNeil, Marie Ogundayo, Alexander Popovic, Talia Prupas, Mariana Quevedo Hernandez, Aksel Rodríguez Jimenez, Jayden Sabbagh, Seioh Sano

The Art of Beatboxing

The fun Beatbox Workshop!

Elisii, whose full name is Giancarlo Luigi Elissi, is a Montrealer and a two-time Canadian champion beatboxer who learned to beatbox by imitation. He has won a number of awards both in Canadian and International competitions.

Elissi showcased not only his beatboxing skills but also shared his knowledge about this genre. The auditorium buzzed with excitement as Elisii demonstrated the artistry of beatboxing. The students were captivated by his rhythmic beats and the incredible sounds he so effortlessly produced by only using his mouth, lips and tongue to create music.

In addition to his performance, he took the time to teach the students the three basic sounds of beatboxing – the base drum and hi-hat and snare and how to creatively combine them. The atmosphere was electric as students eagerly embraced the challenge, discovering their own rhythmic potential under Elisii's expert guidance.

This fun visit not only enriched our students' artistic experience but also opened their eyes to the diverse world of music and self-expression. Thank you Elisii for sharing your passion, talent, and knowledge with our school community!

Just before the holidays, we welcomed a very special guest, Elisii, for an unforgettable experience – a workshop in Beatboxing!

This genre of music is connected with hip-hop culture. Often called 'vocal percussion', it is the art of making "music with your mouth" by imitating drum machines.



Giancarlo Luigi Elisii

Who said the moon is made of cheese?

It is made of Oreo cookies!

Ms. Miller's Science classes can be a lot of fun! One of them particularly sparked keen interest and excitement when her Grade 3/4 science class found they were to study the phases of the moon using Oreo cookies! They separated the two sides of the cookies to create a visual representation of the moon cycle by cutting the white icing on each half to represent a different phase of the moon. Following this celestial adventure, they delved into the realm of stars and constellations, where each student received glow in the dark star stickers to craft their constellations. They created a pattern for their unique constellations with the stickers on paper which they then hung on the wall. The highlight of the activity? The magical moment when the lights were turned off, and their personally designed constellations illuminated the darkness, creating an enchanting and memorable experience for all.



A Day for Awareness and Remembrance Orange Shirt Day !

September 25 to 30 is Truth and Reconciliation week across Canada – a public commemoration to mark the tragic history of residential indigenous schools in Canada. The orange shirt is a reminder and symbolic of the great loss experienced by Indigenous children over generations, in the hope that this awareness will lead to truth, justice and reconciliation with Canada's First Nations.

The Elementary School spent the week learning about the residential schools, the Orange shirt story and Indigenous Art and Culture that culminated with a special assembly for Grades 3-6 on September 29. The ceremony commenced with a land acknowledgement read by Luna Lucero-Kolb. This was followed by a number of Grade 5 and 6 students of the Spirit Committee, reading from a script that they had prepared on some basic facts pertaining to residential schools. This included topics like why we wear orange shirts, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the 94 calls to action, and the meaning of "Every Child Matters". We were also fortunate to welcome Chief Jessica Lazare of the Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke that day to address the students. She narrated the story of her grandfather who had attended a residential school and about his life as an indigenous child of that generation. She was impressed with our students' knowledge of indigenous history and fielded many thoughtful questions. Chief Jessica Lazare's dynamic presence, her interesting stories and interaction with the students, enraptured her audience. She truly lived up to the meaning of her indigenous name – Bright Star.

Finally, the recitation of Jen Whiffin's poem "300 Sleeps" at the conclusion of the assembly had a great impact on the audience. Congratulations to the Spirit Committee for conducting the assembly with the respect and solemnity befitting the occasion.



Chief Jessica Lazare

Kells Elementary Remembrance Day Assembly Honoring our Heroes

In a deeply moving assembly on Friday, November 10th, our student body came together to pay tribute to the brave men and women who have sacrificed so much for our freedom. The Remembrance Day ceremony was a powerful event that demonstrated the compassion and respect our students hold for those who have served our country and the peacekeepers who continue to do so.

The Spirit Committee set the tone for the assembly by opening with a dedicated Remembrance Day video that the Grade 5 and 6 Spirit Committee students wrote and filmed. With a script written by Luna Luce-ro-Kolb and creative input from Namirah Ahmed, Sam Aljundi, Alzain Alqahtani, Rainbow Fang, Laila Haddad, Mariana Quevedo Hernandez, Marie Ogundayo and Talia Prupas, this video not only showcased the imagination of our students but also served as a reminder of the significance of the day.



Each grade played their part during the Assembly.

Grades 1 and 2 laid a wreath that they had created out of colored paper adorned with poppies and together recited an emotional poem Little Poppy. Grade 3-4 students used the prompt from the book "A Poppy is to Remember," to express their

individual thoughts on the symbolism of the poppy and who it helps us remember.

Some of the Grades 5 and 6 students added a personal touch and elaborated on the phrase, "We remember because ____" and shared their thoughts and feelings in highly creative ways.

Others in Grade 6 paid homage by showcasing their artistic talents through their posters highlighting their unique perspectives on this solemn occasion of Remembrance Day. Mariana Quevedo Hernandez shared interesting information about her grandfather's courageous service as a soldier in Colombia protecting his country. In sharing this personal narrative, Mariana not only honored her grandfather's legacy but also reminded us all of the profound impact that individuals have on shaping the world we live in today.

A respectful moment of silence was observed in memory of all veterans and all those who served/serve and protect us. The commemoration closed with a reading of John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields," by the Spirit Committee.

We extend our gratitude to all the students, teachers, and the Spirit Committee for their contributions to this important assembly as we continue to learn from the lessons of history.

Teaching Generosity

The Art of Giving

Community services play a big role at Kells. From an early age, students are introduced to the act of giving through various fun events that foster empathy, gratitude, compassion and community engagement.

Socktober is a nationwide movement that aims to provide warmth and comfort to those in need during the colder months. Throughout the month of October, we collected new, warm socks to distribute to local shelters and organizations. We shared with our students the importance of socks for homeless individuals, especially during the winter months. To motivate the students and celebrate the spirit of giving, we held a "Crazy Sock Day" when students were encouraged to wear their wackiest, quirkiest, and most colorful socks to school.

We are proud of our grades 5 and 6 Spirit Committee members who scripted and filmed a video introducing **Socktober** to the school community and thank all those who generously donated to the cause.

Another important community event was our annual collection of non-perishable food items from mid-November to mid-December. It was hugely successful as we collected box after box of non-perishable items for the Share The Warmth food bank. Our students were inspired to contribute to make a difference in their community knowing that this food bank was servicing two-and-a-half times more individuals and families than before the pandemic.

A scrumptious bake sale for the N.D.G. Depot Community Food Centre was held before Christmas in December. This organization addresses issues of food insecurity in N.D.G. and surrounding areas by increasing access to healthy food, reducing social isolation, and providing educational programs nutrition and gardening. Kells Elementary has a proud history of both volunteering and raising funds for the Depot.



Magic Potions, Slithery Toads and Candy Towers

Maison Symphonique de Montreal

It was a Halloween to remember! From a field trip to the magnificent Maison Symphonique, a visit from the Eco Museum and exciting themed STEM activities, this was no humdrum Halloween at Kells Elementary.

Students in Grades 5 and 6 enjoyed a magical field trip on Halloween Day to the Maison Symphonique de Montreal. The theme of the performance was Magic Potions with Quebec actor Olivier Morin, playing the wizard. He guided the acting and the narration of the French production to the sounds of a symphony orchestra! Enhanced by the superb acoustics of the Maison Symphonique de Montréal, students enjoyed a real treat of magical music ranging from John Williams' Hedwig's Theme from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, to the music of Wagner, Saint-Saëns, Dukas, Moussorgski, and Berlioz.

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EcoMuseum Zoo

Slobbering toads and cobwebs! The same morning, our Grade 1-4 students welcomed a special guest to our school - Zoologist Ariane from the EcoMuseum Zoo who brought amphibians, reptiles and rodents - the perfect Halloween selections!

Ariane's presentation provided an excellent insight into the world of biodiversity by emphasizing its critical role in the food chain. Students learned many facts about amphibians and discovered that American toads are nocturnal creatures, that yellow spotted salamanders are poisonous, that their unique eye movement helps them push food down into their bellies and that there are eight different turtle species in our region, of which six are endangered. Students had the opportunity to see and touch a wood turtle - terrestrial creatures residing in the forests of Quebec whose shells are an integral part of their bodies since their spines are attached to them. To the squeals of her audience, Ariane brought out a 10-year old grey rat snake that was 1.5 meters long and is one of the 8 species of snakes in Quebec. Students also learned the difference between venomous and poisonous animals.





The visit concluded on a playful note as Ariane shared two three-year-old rats with our students. Rats, as it turns out, have a unique way of staying cool in the summer—they dip their long tails in water. These intelligent rodents enjoyed a tasty treat of soy butter while our students observed them. Ariane's visit helped students understand the diverse creatures that share our world and also highlighted the importance of preserving biodiversity and protecting endangered species.

To round off a magical day, the entire Elementary School enjoyed an afternoon of challenging STEM tasks designed to stretch their critical thinking and creativity. Candy was the theme as younger students engineered stable candy towers using only gumdrops and toothpicks, while older students enjoyed building, and then testing, candy catapults!

An Interesting Workshop held at school by the McCord Museum

Understanding our History

In mid-November, the Grade 3-4 students immersed themselves in indigenous culture when facilitators from the McCord Stewart Museum visited the classroom to conduct a hands-on workshop entitled “Objects tell their Stories”. Using the Museum’s indigenous collection like a drum, a fur pelt and the wampun or basket, and helped by the Museum’s facilitators, students explored how objects tell their stories and how community members view their traditions, values, and culture! This interactive and participative approach, helped the Cycle 2 students tremendously as they learned about various facets of indigenous society.



An Indoor Winter Wonderland

The Winter Music Showcase

The spirit of the season came alive at our recent Winter Music Showcase on December 13th, a full-school extravaganza that transformed our cafeteria into an enchanting winter wonderland.

The Elementary students enthusiastically embraced the challenge of decorating the venue by crafting intricate, six-piece giant snowflakes to adorn the school with festive charm in preparation for the occasion. With enthusiasm and creativity, they transformed plain white paper into works of winter wonder. The process of crafting these six-piece giant snowflakes not only brought out their creativity but also fostered a sense of collaboration and teamwork.



The final musical journey was a delightful ride through a variety of genres - from timeless standards like "Auld Lang Syne" and "Jingle Bells" to centuries-old carols and modern winter-themed tunes. Our showcase also paid homage to French Canadian culture with a traditional song "Bonhomme! Bonhomme!" dating back to 17th-century Quebec. The audience was treated to exceptional instrumental performances by Rainbow Fang on the violin, Deborah Kim on the piano and the violin, Yumi Zhang and Jake Yun both on piano and Timofey Demenchuk on drums.

Leading the ensemble during the grand finale were Hugo McNeil, Nathan Lemaitre, Leo Lucero-Kolb, Mariana Quevedo Hernandez, Eloise Carter, and Jayden Sabbagh. In addition, our vocal soloists Mariana Quevedo Hernandez, Eloise Carter, Leonie Thomas and Karina Kianfar performed beautifully, as did Pietro Camelo Gobbo who showcased his original composition.



We were especially thrilled to witness a full house of parents and relatives enjoying the performance. The success of this festive event was testament to the talent and collaborative efforts of our students, and our music teacher, Mr. Heyenga who organized and brought the entire show together.

Special mention goes to our fabulous student hosts, Leo Lucero-Kolb and Eloise Carter who masterfully facilitated the show with humor, energy, and positivity, making the event even more memorable.



Learning Adventures in the Forest!

Outdoor excursions to the Falaise

We are delighted to announce a series of ongoing outdoor education sessions led by Ingrid Birker, formerly of the Redpath Museum Public Education Program. Four sessions are planned where Grade 6 students will experience "Forest School" in the beautiful Falaise St. Jacques, gaining cognitive, physical, psychological, and social benefits associated with outdoor education.

The Falaise, once a neglected dumping ground, has been revitalized into a thriving community forest, spanning 3 km and covering over 49 acres. Home to more than 65 different bird species, some of which use it as a stop along their migratory flight route. During the first visit in mid-January, students explored the Falaise, examining both cut and living trees, counting tree rings, and learning about various tree species. Of particular interest was a dinosaur sculpture created by volunteers from car parts dumped in the area.

In mid-February, students returned to the Falaise to build shelters. In small groups, they used branches and sticks from pruned or storm-damaged trees to create forts and stable structures. Two more activities are planned. In mid-March, students will explore animal tracks in the snow, learning about footprints and creating secret pathways in the woods. In mid-April, Earth Day will be celebrated in the Falaise, with students searching for signs of spring.

Our spring detectives eagerly anticipate these upcoming excursions to the Falaise, marking engaging learning adventures in the forest!



Distinguished Performance: Students Excel in National Math Tests

A group of talented and determined students from Grades 4, 5, and 6 participated in the prestigious math competitions organized by the Canadian Mathematica Centrum in April. This demanding annual competition is an individual event, written by elementary students across Canada, testing logical thinking and problem-solving skills in Mathematics.



Due to their diligent preparation and weekly practice, all eleven students were awarded certificates of distinction for scoring higher than the Canadian average. Additionally, several students received medals. We have confidence in their continued excellence and anticipate further achievements in future math contests!

The Great Kindness Challenge

Creating a Culture of Kindness



The Great Kindness Challenge (GKC) was born in 2011 from the Kids for Peace movement that was started by a bunch of kids in California wanting to build a better, kinder and peaceful world through doing kind acts. Today the GKC has become a grassroots movement and the week of January 22-26 designated by schools for doing acts of kindness to help make schools, communities and the world a kinder and more compassionate place for all. At Kells Elementary, the week kicked off with students watching the Kids For Peace 2024 Great Kindness Challenge video and then reflecting on and discussing what kindness means and how they can demonstrate kindness.

During the entire week students were encouraged to perform random acts of kindness. As a start, the students created Kindness Flowers and, on the petals, wrote about the many ways they could be kind. Every Grade had special tasks to work on throughout the week. Grades 1 and 2 took part in discussions and activities related to the book *Kindness Is My Superpower*. Grades 3 and 4 were challenged to perform the actions that they had written about on the petals of their kindness flowers, by the end of the week. Grades 5 and 6 students learned about the kindness boomerang and completed written assignments about it. They also discussed kindness in expressing gratitude and wrote short notes to members of the school community. In addition, Grade 6 had discussions, wrote reflections, and apology letters to anyone they could have treated with more kindness. They also participated in discussions about how to sustain a culture of kindness in school and how they can support each other as classmates.



These activities, as well as our ongoing commitment to maintaining a peaceful environment, has once again earned us the title of a Kids For Peace Kindness Certified School. The Kindness Garden hanging in the hallway, containing all of the Kindness Flowers, continues to serve as a visual reminder that Kindness is Cool.

International Day at Kells

Showcasing 38 countries

International Day is a unique and cherished tradition at Kells Academy. This special event brings together our elementary community who showcase and honor the rich tapestry of their diverse cultural heritages.

This year we celebrated our annual festival of cultural diversity on the last day of January and this year 38 countries were represented. Students displayed and presented impressive aspects of their countries. A particularly interesting project was to select an inspirational figure – historical or current - from their home country who shaped positive societal change. It was a rich topic and some of the people that the student's presented included political activists, musicians, artists, athletes and technological entrepreneurs.



Pictures and artifacts, books, crafts, flags and traditional dress all contributed to enhancing the event. Parents, relatives and students enjoyed coming together to view the displays and sample all of the delightful traditional treats. The choir entertained our guests with a beautiful rendition of "All You Need is Love" accompanied by Mr. Heyenga, our music teacher. Thank you to all the parents and family members who attended and congratulations to our students for a job well done!

Celebrating Black History Month

A Dance Workshop with Justin Jackson

We were delighted to welcome a professional performing artist - dancer and speaker Justin Jackson - to Kells on February 2nd, for a Black History workshop. Justin is a dancer and speaker from Montreal who has trained in a variety of genres and with choreographers in both Canada and the USA. His forte is tap dancing and he has performed in a variety of shows like America's Got Talent, So you think you can Dance Canada and many more.

Justin last visited Kells at the age of 16, when his dance teacher, famed dancer Ethel Bruneau, led a Black History Workshop for our students. Now a professional dancer, he spoke of the profound connection between Black History and Dance and explained how dance served as a powerful form of expression during periods of slavery and adversity.

Justin's performances are heavily influenced by pop and black culture and this was apparent in the tap dance that he performed for the students. He followed this by speaking and teaching his young audience some basic dance moves. This turned his visit into both an interactive and educational experience! Justin's warm and engaging personality resonated well with the students who thoroughly enjoyed his workshop.



Inspiring the creative imagination

Author/Illustrator visits Kells

Michael Gayle's workshop at Kells Elementary in October was one of the highlights of the Fall semester for Grades 3-6. Students were asked to volunteer and read from his most recent book "Krumpps First State", which was then followed by a discussion and a short film about the illustration process. Mr. Gayle answered many of the students' questions about the art of writing and gave students the opportunity to critique his work, share their opinions and consider how they may have written the story. He gave the students a take-home activity to exercise their own creativity by drawing their own vision of the main character.

Needless to say, the students loved the author's interactive approach and greatly enjoyed the event.



Michael Gayle presenting to Grades 3 - 6

An Exciting Visit to L'École de Cirque de Verdun

Let's join the circus!

Who has not marvelled at the artistry of the performers at a circus?

Montreal actually has a school that teaches and trains people for the circus! The L'Ecole de Cirque Verdun was founded as a Non-Profit Organization in 1988 to introduce people of all ages to the circus arts in a recreational and non-competitive way. Through various training activities, the school introduces people of all ages to different circus techniques, like juggling, acrobatics, unicycling and high wire acts.

It was therefore very exciting for our elementary students to visit the L'Ecole de Cirque in February and immerse themselves in activities such as juggling, balancing exercises, acrobatics, trapeze, and trampoline. It was a day filled with exploration, skill development, and discovery as they experienced the many facets of circus arts.



Pink Shirt Day – February 20th

Promoting Kindness and Understanding at Kells!



Pink Shirt Day is a statement against bullying and recognized as a day for raising awareness about anti-bullying and promoting inclusivity and kindness. Kells Academy fully advocates the view that bullying has no place in society and fully endorses the Pink Shirt Day.

Pink Shirt Day started after an incident at a school in Nova Scotia when a new grade 9 student was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school. Two grade 12 students, David Shepherd and Travis Price, were determined to show support for this student. They bought fifty pink shirts and the next day, handed them out at school. The bullied boy walked in and as Price later said 'his face spoke volumes'. From that one act of kindness, Pink Shirt Day was born. Wednesday in February is the national Pink Shirt/anti-bullying day.

At Kells Elementary, Pink Shirt Day was held on February 20th. We distributed pink t-shirts to the entire student body and staff to wear at school and at a special assembly, held a school-wide discussion about bullying and acts of kindness. Grade 6 shared their unique poems centered around the theme of bullying, Grade 5 and 6 students expressed their thoughts on What Kindness Means to Me... and Grade 3 and 4 students recited lines from A Kindness Poem. The assembly concluded with a performance of The Kindness Song by the Grade 1 and 2 students who were supported by members of the Spirit Committee.



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