

CIS PTSA News

**Merry Christmas,
one and all!**

Christmas 2010



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In this edition...

On behalf of the CIS PTSA, we would like to begin by wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!

In this edition of the CIS PTSA News, we will be talking a bit about what Christmas is all about. Many families have their own traditions. The ones presented here are just a few of the more typical ones.

In Talking with Teachers, we are happy to share an interview with the newest elementary teacher – Jaime Goodfellow.

Aiko Shigeta interviewed Mr. Morrison about attending the University of Guelph (BA) in "University Corner".

Finally, in "Talking to Students", new this issue, we investigate a question brought up by the grade 6 students: "What can we expect in April when we become Junior High School students at CIS?".

We'd like to invite you to sit back, relax and enjoy a steaming mug of hot chocolate as you read the Christmas edition of the CIS PTSA News!

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome!

Join us!

Please join us on December 12 for this year's Christmas Fiesta!

Please join us on January 7, 2011 for English Rakugo at CIS

Please visit our revised website, ready soon! www.cisptsa.jp



Christmas

Christmas is traditionally a Christian holiday. However, many non-Christians now celebrate parts of Christmas.

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ who is said to be the son of God. It is literally a "mass" for "Christ" hence "Christmas".

Christmas is a major public holiday for Christian countries. Many non-Christians also celebrate the secular (non-religious) aspects such as gift giving and decorating.

Most of the countries which celebrate Christmas do so on December 25. This may have been a date selected by the Church in the fourth century.

However, countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Egypt, for example, celebrate Christmas on January 7 since they use the old Julian calendar.

Christmas is sometimes called Noel, Yule or Xmas. "X" is a common abbreviation for Christ. It comes from the Greek word for Christ in which the first letter is "X" or "Chi".

Christ's birth is celebrated as the fulfillment of a central prophecy from the Bible's Old Testament.

According to the Christmas story,

Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary in a stable in Bethlehem. Shepherds were told about his birth by an angel and were the first people to visit him. Three wise men followed the Star of Bethlehem to the stable where Jesus was born. They had been told that the new King of the Jews would be born there. They brought gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense.

Christmas celebrations have evolved (changed) over the centuries. At one point, about 150 years ago, some people believed

"A Christmas Carol" & A Typical Christmas Dinner Menu

Christmas was dying out. Charles Dickens and others wrote stories to try to revive (bring back) the weak Christmas spirit. Dickens' story was called "The Christmas Carol". It is a wonderful story which many people read or watch each year at Christmas.

It showed Christmas as a holiday emphasizing family, goodwill and

generosity in contrast to church-centered ceremonies.

These stories influenced many modern aspects of Christmas such as family gatherings, seasonal food and drink, singing and a generous spirit.

The following is a typical North American menu enjoyed on Christmas Day:

A Typical Christmas Menu:

Roast turkey with gravy, cranberry sauce and stuffing

Mashed potatoes

Vegetables (e.g. corn, Brussels sprouts, carrots, sweet potato)

Pumpkin & mincemeat pies, Christmas pudding, fruitcake and shortbread or sugar cookies

Hot mulled cider



A Few Christmas Traditions

Popular modern customs include writing letters to Santa, sitting on Santa's lap and telling him Christmas wishes, decorating Christmas trees, setting out cookies and hot chocolate for Santa and carrots for his reindeer, gift-giving, singing carols, sending cards, going to church, enjoying a special meal with family and displaying decorations such as lights, wreaths, mistletoe, nativity scenes and holly.

Santa Claus is a popular figure who is said to bring gifts made by elves to well-behaved children. He brings the gifts around the world using his sleigh which is pulled by flying reindeer.

For many Christians, being part of a religious service is an important part of Christmas. In fact, Christmas and Easter are the two times of the year with the highest attendance at church. In many Catholic countries, there are religious processions (parades) before Christmas Day. In other places, Santa Claus parades are more common.



In some schools and churches, children perform plays about the Christmas Story. They also sing carols (songs). Often you'll see Nativity Scenes in front of churches or in people's homes. These are models with Jesus in

the manger (the wooden box where animals' hay is put), the Virgin Mary, Joseph, animals, the shepherds and the 3 wise men.

Many customs had their start before the birth of Christ. For example, decorating homes with evergreen in the winter was done in pre-Christian times. The green, healthy plants, like Jesus, were a sign of everlasting life. Wreaths (circles of evergreen decorated with various items) also had a circular form to show everlasting life. Holly is said to be used as a protection against evil because the red berries are like the blood drops of Christ and the leaves like his crown of thorns when he was crucified. Holly has the two traditional colors of Christmas - green and red.

Other traditional decorations include bells, candles, candy canes, stockings and angels. It is

common to decorate the outside of houses with coloured lights, Santa, sleighs, snowmen and other Christmasy symbols.

Communities may have a big tree and Christmas banners may be hung from street lights.

Groups of people may go caroling – knocking on doors and singing Christmas songs. Homeowners may offer hot drinks and Christmas treats to the carolers.

After Christmas, decorations are often taken down on Twelfth Night, the evening of January 5.

Since Christmas is a family time and a time for giving, it can be a difficult time for those with no family or who have limited incomes. Churches and other organizations try to help out.

- **Can you tell me about the area of Canada that you call home?**

Talking to Teachers – Ms Jaime Goodfellow

I spent part of my childhood in Mississauga which is just outside of Toronto but most of my time was in Windsor, Ontario. Windsor is on the border with Detroit so I remember going to the States a lot for shopping when I was young. My father and brothers all played hockey and still do, so I remember spending a lot of time in arenas, cheering for their teams.

- **How many people are in your family?**

Including me, I'm from a family of five. My mother and father and two younger brothers. My father is an accountant for a hospital in Windsor and my youngest brother is in charge of ordering supplies for another hospital. My other brother just got his nursing degree and is looking for a job with a hospital as well. My mother works for Chrysler's. Windsor is the automobile capital of Canada. A lot of Chrysler cars get built in Windsor.



- **Did you have any pets growing up?**

I had a Dalmation growing up. She was a loving and kind dog. I'm definitely a dog person. About 5 years ago my husband's parents were moving and had no space for their Golden Retriever in their new house. So I brought him to my home in Canada. He lived with my family and became bilingual. If anyone yelled "Shoes!" he would bring that person's shoes to them. He never learned "sit" in English though. He would only listen to sit in Japanese.

- **What sport do you enjoy playing the most and/or what is your hobby?**

I'm not very sporty but I love to dance. Growing up I did a lot of Ceili dancing which is Irish traditional dancing. In the last two years I've taken up Salsa dancing. I love to salsa!

- **When did you first come to Japan?**

I first came in 2001 and stayed for 2 years. I went home for a little while and then came back in 2006 and, after working in the Japanese school system for a while, I decided to get my teaching degree. I came back from getting my degree in 2008 and have been in Japan ever since.

- **What surprised you the most when you first came here?**

I was surprised by how humid it was! I thought my hometown was humid but I didn't really understand humidity until I came to Japan. After that I was surprised that everyone had cellphones. They were so colourful and cute. I immediately wanted one!

- **Did you have many international experiences before coming to Japan?**

My only international experiences before Japan were Disneyworld in Florida and a short family trip to South Carolina. Japan was my first big adventure.

- **What is the one place in the world you have always wanted to visit?**

I would love to go to Europe and see all the old ruins there. I've always loved history and I really want to see the places that I've studied about. Since I've started learning salsa, I've been wanting to go to Cuba and Peru where salsa is really popular.

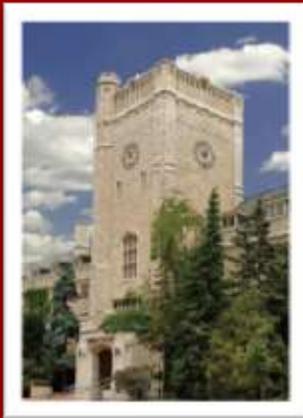
- **What advice can you give to Columbia students to help them realize their goals and achieve their dreams?**

Balance! Study hard and focus in school, but don't forget to get involved in clubs and activities and have some fun. There are a lot of great opportunities at Columbia, opportunities that we are often too busy for when we finish school. So grab onto them and experience all you can because those experiences can help you a lot in life!



Allan Morrison, MA BEd

“Decide what you want to study, then choose where you want to live. Get involved and make lots of good friends. Think about what career you are interested in and work towards that goal. Always try your best!”



The University of Guelph was established in 1964.

It has consistently ranked as a top comprehensive university in Canada and was given top marks for student satisfaction among medium-sized universities.

Famous Alumni

Roberta Bondar
(female astronaut)

Jane Urquhart
(famous author)

Jane Sibbery
(famous singer)

University Corner – University of Guelph

Interview with Mr. Morrison

Universities Attended: University of Guelph (Bachelor of Arts); McGill University (Master of Arts); University of Toronto (Bachelor of Education)

Subjects Studied: Political Science, International Development and Sociology

CIS Grades Taught: G7-12

CIS Subjects: Geography, Social Studies, Computers

CIS Club: Photography

Favourite University Attended: University of Guelph

Good Points: I really enjoyed the University of Guelph. It is much smaller than McGill or Toronto and therefore easier to meet new friends. It has a great atmosphere on campus and the city of Guelph is beautiful with lots to offer. In addition, it is close to Toronto (which is convenient) and has many great programs of study. It is linked to Toronto by train and bus routes.

Bad Points: University of Guelph does not have the same international reputation as McGill or Toronto but that's OK. Hard to think of a negative point when I enjoyed going there so much!

Scholarships: Many but not as many as the larger universities

TOEFL: IBT 89 (a minimum of 21 in each of the categories)

Areas of Strength: Agriculture, Social Sciences, Veterinarian, Nutrition, Human Kinetics, Landscape Architecture, Family and Child Studies

Size: Medium-sized

Facilities: “They have everything”

Special Events: All kinds of clubs and activities. Strong international and NGO focus.

Last Words: “Consider what you want to study, where you want to live and specific professors you may want to learn from. Get involved and make lots of good friends. Think about what career you are interested in and work towards that goal. Always try your best!”





Talking to Students

Grade 6 students and parents were interested in finding out what to expect in junior high school. The following information is from grade 7-9 students who very kindly completed surveys to help the grade 6 students...The PTSA says a BIG thank you to these grade 7-9 students!



1. What do you do on the weekends (in terms of homework and studying)? *Most students replied that they did homework, assignments or juku. If there is a quiz or test, they study for that and if there is nothing to study, they review what they did in class.*
2. What do you do about studying Japanese? *Students had many answers: Japanese class or juku, private Japanese teacher, Japanese PC games, Japanese books or magazines or talking with their family.*
3. How much homework is there? *Most students replied that the amount of homework is "normal" – everyday there is homework but it varies.*
4. We do not see the JHS students outside during lunch, what do you do? *For example, during lunch JHS students stay in the classroom, hang out and talk about many things.*

5. What do you think about the "3 subjects per term" system? *The good points are that students can concentrate more on each subject, there are only 3 exams and there is less to remember. Most other students like the system as well except that many said they would like to have exercise all year round for better health, for example. One student felt they would learn better if they had all of the subjects at the same time.*

6. What do you do when you have trouble during class? *The students ask the teacher.*

7. Have you decided your future career? If yes, how did you decide? *Most of the students have not yet decided. However, one student would like to do an MBA at Harvard and another would like to be a programmer.*

8. What were the biggest changes you noticed between Grade 6 and JHS? *One student had been in a Japanese elementary school so the study environment changing from Japanese to English was the biggest change. Other important changes were having different teachers for different subjects, moving classrooms, having midterms and exams and only having 3 subjects a term (English is every term but not other subjects like math or PE).*

