

CIS PTSA News

The PTSA wishes you...
All the best in 2012!



December 2011- January 2012

Contents

- Page 2 New Years
- Pages 3-4 Talking to Teachers
- Page 5 University Corner
- Page 6 PTSA Current Events



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 how people celebrate New Years in North America. Many families have their own traditions. The ones here are just a few typical ones.

In Talking with Teachers, we are happy to share interviews with two teachers – Mr. Bentz who teaches Grade 4 and Ms. MacDonald who teaches high school biology and is a grade 9 homeroom teacher.

Mr. McKay shares some of his thoughts about attending Earlham College (Indiana, USA) in “University Corner”.

Finally, in “PTSA Current Events” we will focus on books and literacy.

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

As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome!

Please share your ideas on the PTSA Blog! <http://ptsa.columbia-ca.co.jp/>



Happy New Year!

New Years is a time to reflect on the past year and to make plans for the coming year.

Around the world, the New Year is a cause for celebration as we remember the year just past and think about our hopes for the coming year. In North America, New Year's Eve is a time for big celebrations. On New Year's Day, it is usually a quieter celebration with parades, football or hockey games and family time. Some of the common ways we celebrate New Years Eve are:

1. Making New Year's Resolutions – these are the promises we make to ourselves for the New Year
2. Having a party or going to a party at someone's home, a restaurant, a hotel or another place (often wearing "fancy clothes" and enjoying music, dancing and eating delicious appetizers)
3. Having a 60 second countdown to midnight – some people watch the countdown on TV.
4. Toasting the New Year at midnight (with ginger ale, sparkling apple juice or champagne, for example) and singing "Auld Lang Syne". Auld Lang Syne is an old Scottish phrase which means "Old, long ago". Auld Lang Syne is a song written by the poet, Robert Burns, in the 1700's and is about friendships from long ago. Traditionally, people hold hands in a big circle when singing this song.
5. Watching fireworks and
6. Calling (phoning) family and good friends at midnight to wish them a Happy New Year!

These are the parts of "Auld Lang Syne" which are most commonly sung:

Auld Lang Syne Lyrics:

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
and never brought to mind?

Should auld acquaintance be forgot
and auld lang syne?

For auld lang syne, my dear,
for auld lang syne,
we'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
for auld lang syne.

One popular countdown is the one which takes place in Times Square, New York City. In Times Square, a crystal ball is slowly lowered starting at 11:59 pm.

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Auld Lang Syne

Happy New Year, Everyone!





Talking to Teachers:

Mr. Simon Bentz

Seibu Ikebukuro line. Kieran is 5 and Kyle is 3.

•Did you have any pets growing up?

I had 2 dogs. I had a big, black, mean mutt in elementary school. I also had a crazy Jack Russell terrier when in my 20s. My family now has a cat.

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

I love lots of sports but soccer, of course, is my number 1 sport and hobby. I've played it since I was six and still play now. I play for a "teacher" team in the Tokyo Metropolis league. A few past and present Columbia teachers have also played for the same team.

Also, before we had kids, eating out in Tokyo was an (expensive) hobby for us.

•When did you come to Japan?

In 1997, I spent a few days in Fukuoka during a stopover. For real, in 2003, I came to the Kanto region and have been here ever since.

•What surprised you the most when you first came to Japan?

That there was no Shinkansen connecting Narita to central Tokyo. I really wanted to take one right after getting off the plane and, for some reason, was shocked when I couldn't.

•Did you have many international experiences before coming to Japan?

Sure. It seems like a long time ago, but I have visited, backpacked, and/or taught English in countries in Europe, North America, and Asia.

•What is the one place you have always wanted to visit?

There are lots of places I want to visit. I have wanted to visit Mt Kilimanjaro since my 6th grade science teacher showed us pictures of his trips there.

•What advice can you give to Columbia students?

While at Columbia, immerse yourselves in the English-speaking environment the school has to offer. In an international context, having natural fluency in English will make parts of your lives and, in some cases, your goals, easier.

When pursuing your dreams, I would suggest, aside from the usual "do your best", that you take things in stride and stay positive when (inevitable) setbacks happen.

•Can you tell me about the area of Canada that you called home?

I am definitely a west coast BC (British Columbia) boy. It's the closest area of Canada to Japan--just an ocean away. It has lots of mountains right next the Pacific Ocean. It rains constant drizzle throughout the year, except summer, yet I think I can count the times I used an umbrella on one hand.

I grew up in (North) Vancouver, spent my university years in Victoria, taught English in downtown Vancouver and, now, when I go "home", I visit my family in the Sunshine Coast—a relaxed coastal community with more rain than sunshine a short ferry ride from Vancouver.

•How many people are in your family?

I am the only child of German immigrants who came to Canada in their early 20s.

My family in Saitama is bigger. About 8 years ago I followed my then girlfriend, now wife, Saori, back to Japan. We now have 2 sons and live in Hanno city at the end of the

Talking to Teachers: *Ms. Daniella MacDonald*

- **Can you tell me about the area of Canada/the world that you called home?**

I was born in Taipei, Taiwan and moved to Surrey, BC (Canada) at the age of 6. I have gone back to Taiwan often throughout the years. Taipei is a lot like Tokyo, but it was dirtier and there was less public transit when I was young. Now it is much cleaner and there is a rapid transit system that is like the JR and Metro in Japan. There are also fewer cars on the road and fewer buses, too. Taipei is surrounded by mountains, so it is easy to get out to the parks and go climbing. Everything is cheap and convenient. People tend to be very friendly and helpful. It's rarely quiet there. Day markets run until early afternoon and night markets run until fairly late at night. People often go out to eat, visit family and friends, etc. because everything is fairly close.



I lived in a farming area of Surrey. Everyone had a large property, usually with farm animals, and there were very few children in the area. There was no public transit and you had to drive to get anywhere. It's very hilly and there weren't many roads (though there are a few more now). A walk around the 'block' would take 45 minutes to complete. There are many parks nearby and lots of blackberry and salmonberry bushes growing on the side of the road for people to pick from. It's very quiet and people are friendly, but they rarely see each other due to the travelling distance.

- **How many people are in your family?** Three – my mother, father and younger brother.
- **Did you have any pets growing up?** I've had 7 dogs over the years: a German shepherd, a ¾ wolf-¼ malamute mix and 5 others of various mixed backgrounds.
- **What sport do you enjoy playing the most and/or what is your hobby?** I played volleyball and basketball from elementary to high school, as well as badminton in high school and soccer in elementary. I enjoy volleyball the most. My hobbies are reading, writing, and going to rock concerts.
- **When did you first come to Japan?** I visited Japan on holiday when I was in high school, but I first came to live in Japan in 2007.
- **What surprised you the most when you first came here?** The amount of English used in the language (i.e. combini for convenience store, pasacon for personal computer).
- **Did you have many international experiences before coming to Japan?** I worked in South Korea and China for 1 year each. I've also been to Belize and Mexico, but only for vacation.
- **What is the one place in the world you have always wanted to visit?** The MacDonald clan castle in Scotland.
- **What advice can you give to Columbia students to help them realize their goals and achieve their dreams?** If you know your strengths and weaknesses and you work hard, you can realize your goals. Never be afraid to ask others for help. Never be afraid to try anything.

Mr. Brian McKay Recommends...

“Earlham College is a small, liberal arts school located in Richmond, Indiana about 90 minutes from Cincinnati, Ohio and about 60 minutes from Indianapolis. There are just over 1,000 students there and it has a spacious, beautiful campus.

I attended there for two years and studied economics.

I think it’s a great school for our students because it isn’t super close to any big cities, and is surrounded by a peaceful, safe community. All of the faculty are highly qualified and really push their students to achieve.

There is also a great Japanese program there that I didn’t take part in and really regret not doing so now. There are over 40 programs students can study and many sports to participate in.

I played on their football team and track team and also played intramural basketball and softball.

The students come from all over the world and it was very rewarding to meet and make friends with so many different people and experience their culture.

I would definitely recommend this to any student who wants a challenge. It’s a bit difficult to get into so students should have good grades and an active life outside of school as well like participating in community events, volunteering and playing on some kind of team.”

Famous Alumni

University Corner Introducing Earlham College

“If every college and university sharpened young minds and consciences as effectively as Earlham does, this country would approach utopia.” Loren Pope, Colleges that Change Lives

Fast Facts

Student Body - 1,181 undergraduates with a 16% international student population (77 countries represented)

Average SAT & ACT score - 1170/26 median SAT/ACT scores

A Safe & Beautiful Location – Located in a rural area situated between 2 urban centers in Richmond, Indiana the 800-acre campus includes 600-acre stretch of woods, streams, ponds, old fields and prairie used for scientific research and recreation.

Average GPA percentile of high school graduates to enter- 29% in top 10th percentile of high school graduating class & 55% in top 25th percentile of high school graduating class

Post-Graduate Rate - Earlham is ranked 29th (in the 98th percentile) among 1,533 institutions of higher learning in the U.S. in the percentage of graduates who go on to receive Ph.D.s.

Focusing on More Than Financial Security - About 30% of the graduates from each decade (1960-2000) have jobs in which they believe most or all of their work is oriented to social change.

A Personalized & Quality Learning Experience - 12:1 student/faculty ratio with 96% of faculty having received terminal degrees in their fields

Degrees Granted - Bachelor of Arts Master of Arts in Teaching Master of Education

Total Cost per year - Total \$45,854

Life is More Than Academics – There are 16 varsity teams offering a variety of team sport experiences

A Link to Japan - Earlham College is known nationwide as one of the finest undergraduate institutions for the study of Japanese language and culture. nearly two dozen Japanese students enroll and study here each year, and many faculty members have lived, worked, and studied in Japan



PTSA Current Events

SPEAKING OF BOOKS & READING....

IMAGINE THIS!!!

Students benefit greatly from the many activities and lessons they enjoy at CIS but the PTSA survey found that there is something many people would like to improve to enhance students' daily school life. Can you guess what that might be? A LIBRARY!

It is time to start our PTSA Library Campaign. Soon after the new year we will begin asking for volunteers to help us come up with fund-raising ideas and to begin planning for the future CIS DREAM LIBRARY.

WHAT CAN YOU IMAGINE? Please make the decision to support the library and English literacy at CIS! Contact Ellen (Japanese & English at ellenmoto@yahoo.com) if you are interested OR let us know through the PTSA Website.



A Visit From Deborah Ellis

On November 11th the CIS PTSA invited famed Canadian young adult author, Deborah Ellis to come speak to our community about her thought-provoking books based on the real life experiences of young people living in the developing world. She spoke about her experiences traveling to countries like Afghanistan and Mexico where she conducted research and spoke with children about their lives and experiences in their countries. She recreates the harrowing and very human stories she heard from these children about their experiences living in regions of the world torn apart by war, corruption, poverty and social unrest.

She helped our community better understand the many great privileges we experience living in the developed world, and yet was able to connect our lives to those of others living in such distant corners of the earth, so far removed from our daily lives and concerns. Ms. Ellis commented on what a wonderful group of students we have at CIS and was impressed by their intelligent and insightful questions. Way to go CIS students! Many children had their own copies of some of Ms. Ellis' books that they enjoyed having her sign. Keep up the good work and reading and thank you PTSA for bring such an inspirational speaker for us to enjoy!

