

NPSS students dive under the sea

The Little Mermaid continues this weekend

EMILY BRADY

For Alaska Highway News

Hans Christian Andersen wrote many classic fairy tales in his time, among them were: *Thumbelina*, *The Ugly Duckling*, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *The Snow Queen*. However, out of all his stories, *The Little Mermaid* resembles most the life of this famous author.

The original fairy tale, published in 1837, had a sense of a longing to be together with a loved one but unable to be; much can be said the same of Andersen, who fell in love with his friend, Edvard Collin. He wrote in a letter to his unrequited love, "I long for you as though you were a beautiful Calabrian girl."

Edvard Collin, however, did not feel the same and instead married a woman.

Like the mute Little Mermaid, Andersen could not speak of his love out loud. Thus, when he lost the love of his life, he wrote *The Little Mermaid*; a story of unrequited love for someone who could not openly express their feelings to the one they loved; a story many people could relate to.

It's this story being brought to the stage in Fort St. John. North Peace secondary students who are involved in this play have read the original story as part of bringing this show together.

Incorporating the Little Mermaid's desire to be with her Prince and losing him into the play has brought a challenge to the actors.

Yet, with the help of director Emry Mika and musical director Nadine Aulin, the cast of *The Little Mermaid* has analyzed the original fairy tale, literally, inferentially, and critically, to improve their performances. With a small yet mighty cast, musical theatre students have spent more than 300 hours working on this classic tale, building brightly-coloured sets and making astounding costumes.

Today, the message of *The Little Mermaid* may seem a little outdated, as we are living in a "modern" society. However, Andersen wrote his story because he was unable to openly proclaim that he loved Edvard because of law, religion, and hatred.

Yet, in this very moment, law, religion, and hatred still demand control over someone's love life.

It's vicious cycle. Nevertheless, a simple message remains: let others be with who they love. In this version of the story, *The Little Mermaid* will triumph over those who seek to control who she loves and be part of his world.

The Little Mermaid runs Dec. 14 to 16 at the North Peace Cultural Centre.

Call 250 785-1992 for more.

CULTURE



EVE PETFORD PHOTOS

Mia Zoerb, as Ariel, set the stage for *The Little Mermaid* during its opening weekend Dec. 8 and 9.



Flounder (played by Tyler Pauls) and Ariel (Zoerb) discuss the importance of the Dinglehopper with Scuttle (Camryn Mannoly) on the surface of the seas.



Ursula, the villain (played by Katea Nelson), sings her woes to Flotsam (Meggan Bueckert) and Jetsam (Chandra Mahon).



Jordan Bourgeois (as Atina), Whitney Troyer (as Adella), Abi Ryder (as Allana), Bailey West (as Aquata), Jasmine Stanway (as Andrina), Iris Wenger (as Arista) are directed by Sebastian the Crab, played boldly and vividly by Elysia Cruz, perform for King Trident (Sean Robertson)... Oh dear, where is Ariel?

BASSO CONTINUO

DEC 1, 2017



EVE PETFORD PHOTO

Hailey Johnson on the stand up bass during Bert Bowes Middle School's choir and band performance of Christmas classics at the North Peace Cultural Centre on Dec. 1.

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EVE PETFORD PHOTO

The Bert Bowes Middle School band and choir performed an evening of Christmas classics at NPCC on Dec. 1

THE MIGHT OF MOOSE HIDE

JUNE 1, 2017



MATT PREPOST PHOTO

Grade 4 students from School District 60 were challenged to tug at this moose hide to see if they could break it as part of Doig Days festivities on Thursday, May 25. None could. **For more on this year's Doig Days, see story on A10.**



HALEY LABOUCANE PHOTO

The North Peace Cultural Centre was filled with the most delightful sounds Thursday, May 4, for School District 60's annual spring concert.

COOL COLOURS

MAY 4, 2017



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Pink, blue and yellow clouds swirled over hundreds of students gathered out front of Ecole Central Elementary School on April 28. Inspired by the annual Holi Festival celebrated in India and Nepal, Central's second annual Colour Festival celebrates the diversity of the school and community.

'No man's land': Vimy Ridge through the eyes of young Duncan Cran

APRIL 6, 2017

Before surveyor Duncan Cran moved to the Peace Region in 1930, he fought in the First World War. The following letter was provided for republication by the Fort St. John North Peace Museum.

18C776 Signaller, 25th
Canadian Battalion,
April 18, 1917

Dear Mamma:

You and Papa will perhaps have wondered whether I was in the Battle of Arras April 9th and the taking of Vimy Ridge by the Canadians that day. Well, I had the privilege of going 'over the bags' and following up one of, or perhaps the most wonderful, creeping barrage in the world's history. We heard the order "two seconds to get over" and were no sooner lined up on the fringe of no man's land when the barrage started as one gun and the noise was deafening.

The noise of our guns, goodness knows how many in number—the 18 pounders sounded like machine guns was added to soon by the sound of the enemy's bursting shells and his machine guns. I think, however, that most of Fritz's smaller artillery was silenced as there didn't

seem to be many of his shells flying around.

On our way across the ground we had to capture about 1,700 yards. We encountered occasional big shells from the enemy. One had to be pretty close to one of these to be hurt for before they burst they penetrated the soft ground which stopped the shrapnel to a great extent. Fritz's machine guns, of course, bothered us a little but they were soon put out of business.

Before our advance our guns had carried out a systematic bombardment of the enemy's lines and I am hardly exaggerating when I say that throughout 1,000 yards of our advance there was not a foot of ground left untouched by our shells. I saw round bowl-shaped holes, dug by our shells, which must have measured 10 feet deep and 30 feet across. There was hardly a sign of Fritz's trenches in most places.

...

Well, it is something to say that one has been in at the taking of the famous Vimy Ridge and I am very thankful at having come through it safely. Love to Papa.

Your loving son,
Duncan Cran

ARTS & CULTURE

IT'S THE CIRCLE OF LIFE



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Simba (Eli Liddicoat), Zazu (Maisie Thomas), and Nala (Abigail Francoeur), with the help of students from M. Charles, Mme Emily and Mme Sohpie's class, sing a bilingual version of I Just Can't Wait To Be King at the Ecole Central Elementary production of The Lion King on March 16.



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Students from Mme Marianne and Ms. Jaimelia's classes sing He Lives In You.



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Scar (Shayne Thomas) leads the hyenas in a rousing rendition of Be Prepared at the Ecole Central Elementary production of The Lion King on March 16.

ARTS & CULTURE

Central students ready to roar in *The Lion King*

ALEISHA HENDRY

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Be prepared, Fort St. John. *The Lion King* is coming to the North Peace Cultural Centre.

Ecole Central Elementary is putting on a production of *The Lion King Kids*, a scaled down production of the Broadway musical that the whole school is involved in.

"It's to create a school community, all of these kids are going to remember that they were a part of this play," said teacher Kayla Nakonechny. "We're trying to foster a love of music and drama and art, and trying to do that in everything we do as a fine arts school."

All the students contribute to the show in some way, be it by acting, singing one of the songs with their class, or even by helping paint the sets.

"It's a perfect play for kids at this age, and they were really excited to play the parts too," said Nakonechny.

That is definitely true for Shayne Turner, who plays the villainous Scar.

"It's fun to be the bad guy," she said. "I like bossing people around, I'm a very bossy person, so it's good to be the leader of everything."

Playing the male villain wasn't too daunting for Turner—she welcomed the challenge.

"I feel powerful," she said.

On the comedic side of the show, Linley Jarabek takes on the role of Pumbaa, one half of the show's comedy relief.

"I really like singing most of the songs and goofing off with Timon, it's pretty fun," she said.

Her favourite part of the show is when she and her meerkat pal distract the hyenas in hula outfits.

The music in the show is all from the movie, as well as a song from the second movie that was included in the Broadway production.

Two songs will be bilingual—*I Just Can't Wait to be King* and *Can You Feel the Love Tonight*—because Central is a French immersion school.

Nakonechny said that anyone who loved *The Lion King* movie will love this production.

"It's going to be a great show," said Nakonechny. "My actors have worked so hard to be the best that they can be so I'm really excited to see the final product."

The Lion King Kids takes place March 15 and 16 at the North Peace Cultural Centre.



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Shayne Turner leads her pack of hyenas through the song 'Be Prepared' at a rehearsal for *The Lion King*.



MATT PREPOST PHOTO

Education Minister Mike Bernier scooped up the first pile of dirt during a groundbreaking ceremony at the new Margaret "Ma" Murray Community School site on Feb. 17.

Officials break ground on Ma Murray school

FEB 23, 2017

MATT PREPOST

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Local and provincial education officials picked up their ceremonial gold shovels Feb. 17 and broke ground on the new Margaret "Ma" Murray Community School alongside students and city representatives.

Standing in front of the early phases of steel frame construction along the West

Bypass Road and 105 Avenue, Education Minister Mike Bernier said the 365-seat elementary school will help alleviate space constraints facing School District 60.

"It's really important we're making investments in a new school like this," Bernier said.

"This was really needed in the area, and this isn't the only school that's needed," he added.

See SCHOOL on A10

SCHOOL from A1

“There are other pressures in Fort St. John and the area, and we’re continuing to work with the school district,” Bernier added.

Plans for the new school, which include 40 kindergarten and 325 elementary seats, were announced in November 2015, with the first phases of construction and site clearing starting last spring. At the time, School District officials said its elementary schools were 117 per cent over capacity.

The northwest area of the city is growing significantly with several new subdivisions, and only one elementary school—C.M. Finch—to accommodate students. Eleven portable classrooms were added to schools last year to meet enrolment demands, SD 60 board chair Ida Campbell said.

“This is going to give us an opportunity to give back some of the space we need in all of our elementary schools,” she said.

Construction on the \$26.6-million school is expected to wrap by spring 2018, with the first classes in the fall.

The province is contributing \$22.1 million, according to a news release, with the school district pitching in \$264,000. The City of Fort St. John will spend \$2.5 million to help build a 10,000-square-foot gymnasium that will be available for community use, while BC Hydro is contributing \$1.8 million for a new daycare.

Sixteen Project Heavy Duty students have taken part in the school's construction, including Janeh Apsassin, who drove to the work site from Blueberry River First Nation every day for the opportunity to work heavy machinery last May for what she called "extreme hands-on training." The long hours put into the project "prepares students for a real job and the expectations that come with it," Apsassin said.

"Later on in life when I drive by the school I'll remember working there and always have the memory of helping contribute to the future of other students and feel proud about my contribution to this project," Apsassin said.

"I will see the building and think, 'I worked on that!'"

The school is named after pioneering newswoman Margaret Murray, who founded the *Alaska Highway News* with her husband George after arriving in Fort St. John in the 1940s.

The Bella Yahey Gathering Centre will be the main foyer of the school, to recognize the contributions of Bella Yahey and the Dane-zaa people.

On Friday, Bernier also announced \$516,000 in funding to support ongoing renovations at Ecole Central Elementary, which will go toward roof, foundation, and ventilation improvements.

SD 60 is also looking to build a middle school on the same site next to the Ma Murray school, Campbell said, with plans to build another near the Fort St. John Hospital.



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTOS

Karel Roessingh leads a group of band students through five note chords during a jazz workshop at North Peace Secondary School on Monday, Jan. 30.

FEB 2, 2017

SD60 students get a little jazz education

ALEISHA HENDRY

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A group of School District 60 students may have found a new love of jazz this week.

Victoria-based jazz and blues singer Maureen Washington was in Fort St. John for a concert at the North Peace Cultural Centre on Monday, and offered to hold a workshop on jazz music for any interested students.

North Peace Secondary School music teacher David Price jumped at the chance, even though it was a Pro-D Day and technically the students weren't at school.

"It was really neat to give them the chance to play and

improvise and just get the experience of the jazz, which we don't really get here in Fort St. John very often," said Price.

About two dozen students from Grades 6 through 12 brought their instruments to the NPSS theatre room to listen to Washington and her band, consisting of Karel Roessingh on piano, Joey Smith on bass and Calvin Washington on drums.

After playing a few songs, the students gathered their instruments and Roessingh taught them 12 bar blues and five note chords, which are standard in jazz music.

The students played along with the band, and even teach-

ers Price and Nadine Aulin got out their own instruments to play as well.

"They were really enthusiastic, which was great," said Roessingh after the workshop.

Later that night at her show, Washington told the audience about the workshop, which she'd been "telling everyone about all day," saying how cool it was to see all those kids working with these musicians.

Washington's performance was as authentic and vulnerable as she promised it would be, sharing pieces of herself with the crowd and inviting them to experience the emotions along with her.



PHOTOS OF THE YEAR



JAN 4, 2018 EVE PETFORD PHOTO
Mia Zoerb, as Ariel, set the stage for The Little Mermaid during its opening weekend Dec. 8 and 9, 2017.

ARTS & CULTURE

A VERY MERRY UNBIRTHDAY TO YOU!



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTOS

Dr. Kearney Middle School musical theatre students fell down the rabbit hole during their run of Alice in Wonderland Jr. at the North Peace Cultural Centre last week.

Familiar book, new language

MAR 23, 2017



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Alyssa Yu and Morgan Churchill worked together to bring a new language to elementary school students in Fort St. John.

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Elementary school students in Fort St. John have experienced what it's like to not know a full language.

The Multilingual Books In Schools program is a partnership between the Fort St. John Public Library and School District 60's Settlement Workers in Schools. This is the second year of this particular program.

"The purpose is to expose all kids to different languages and give them a little taste of what it's like to be a language learner," said Morgan Churchill, program coordinator for the library.

This year, the program is using the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, and is being translated into Tagalog, the official language of the Philippines. Last

year another Bill Martin book was used, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

"We choose those books because they're full of lots of familiar friendly vocabulary, so there's colours, animals shapes, things like that," said Churchill.

Alyssa Yu, a Grade 11 student from North Peace Secondary, helped with the translation of the text. She went with Churchill to do a presentation and said it was awesome to see how the students reacted.

"Some of the kids are ESL and are from the Philippines, and when they heard their own language their eyes just lit up, it was really cool to see," said Yu.

She said the kids really took to the new language within familiar context like the *Brown Bear* book, noting that it's easier for children to pick up on a language when they're young.