

# INSIDE BURNABY SCHOOLS



February 26, 2019

## LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION AT FOREST GROVE

Forest Grove Elementary hosted its annual Lunar New Year Celebration for students, their families, and special guests. The dragon and rhythmic dances were watched by about 250 attendees, including: Trustees, senior School District staff, the Mayor of Burnaby, a City Councillor, and dignitaries from the Education Office of the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China.

Students in all grades participated in the school-wide celebration, including those in the District's Mandarin Language Arts program. The program is the only one of its kind in the Lower Mainland. It runs from Kindergarten through Grade 7 and offers elementary students the chance to learn Mandarin while gaining an appreciation for another culture, which opens up their world.

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN BURNABY SCHOOLS

Our schools mark Black History Month in a variety of ways. At Burnaby Mountain Secondary, students expanded their Black Student Cultural Committee this year and re-named their group REACH which stands for: Racial Equality Across Cultural Heritages. The students also put their efforts into co-coordinating two anti-racism youth symposiums with secondary students from other school districts.

At the elementary level, Edmonds Community School hosted a family event with the African Descent Society and the African Canadian Youth Engagement Society. The event focused on community and the sharing of culture.

## BURNABY NORTH STUDENT SELECTED AS YOUTH AMBASSADOR

Burnaby North's **Vanessa Scrimini** is one of only 30 students throughout the country selected to be an Education First Canadian Youth Ambassador for 2019. Education First is in 114 countries around the world. The program empowers students to identify an issue they're passionate about in their community, propose an idea to help solve it, and ultimately create social change on a national and global scale. Vanessa's idea – to help bridge cultural differences at her school – is to hold a monthly themed international cooking class led by students and their families. As a youth ambassador, Vanessa is invited to travel to the Dominican Republic in April to participate in a learning tour and to work on a sustainable development project. The students reconvene in Ottawa in May to present their action plans to Members of Parliament and Senators.

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## INDIGENOUS HIP-HOP ARTIST COLLABORATES WITH BURNABY MOUNTAIN CHOIR

Burnaby Mountain Secondary's choir collaborated with a local Indigenous hip-hop artist named **Theresa Warbus**, who performs as **Keliya**. She's creating a music video for her song, "Take Us," and wanted a high school choir to be a part of it. Burnaby Mountain choir teacher **Deanna Gestrin** seized the opportunity for her students and wrote a choral arrangement for the song. Before filming, the 90-member concert choir rehearsed for three weeks.

The artist's aim for the video was to challenge stereotypes of disenfranchised people. One of the students, who was quoted in the Burnaby Now, described the song as "inspiring" and "about bringing everybody up." For Gestrin, it was also a chance for her students to explore a more modern genre of music and to collaborate with an Indigenous artist living in the community. Students were asked to wear something for the filming they felt represented them. The last scene in the video was shot in one of Burnaby Mountain's music rooms with Keliya rapping, while backed by the choir. The music video is expected to be released next month.

## INSPIRATION FOR STUDENTS AT BURNABY'S BC SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Academy Award winning actress **Marlee Matlin** generously took time away from her busy filming schedule in Hollywood North for a spontaneous visit to the BC School for the Deaf at Burnaby South. The American actress, who won an Academy Award in 1986, is still the only deaf performer to have won an Oscar.

Students from Grades 8 through 12 were enthralled, as Matlin delivered personal words of inspiration to each and every student. Her gift of time extended beyond deaf and hard-of-hearing students, as she visited adjoining Burnaby South's American Sign Language classes to acknowledge the importance of community, as well as the significance of allies from her own experiences. The students are still talking about how Matlin's words resonated with them, and the gratitude they feel that such a sought-after actress would take the time to inspire students in Burnaby.