



## Superintendent's Report – November 29, 2011

### 1. Japan Visit

I recently had the privilege of joining a delegation from Canada and the United States invited by the Japan Foundation to visit Japan. Our delegation left for Tokyo on 5 November and returned on 13 November 2011. The Japan Foundation Group Tour Program for Educators was invitational and I was pleased to be recommended by Alberta Education. The delegation consisted of 22 representatives from the United States and 5 from Canada. Delegates from Canada included; Ms. Sherri Bell (Associate Superintendent of Schools – Greater Victoria), Mrs. Elaine Schmidt (International Language Specialist – Calgary Board of Education), Dr. John Salvatori (CEO – Ontario College of Teachers), Mrs. Kim Gauthier (Vice-Principal – Kelvin High School, Winnipeg School Division) and myself.

The overall purpose of the trip was to promote a better understanding of Japanese culture and society and to encourage the development of Japanese language education programs. While in Japan the delegation visited two cities, Tokyo and Kyoto. The delegation had many opportunities to experience the culture and have great conversation about current educational practices and the future. Visits included:

- Japan Foundation Head Office in Tokyo
- Lecture on Japanese Education, Social, Cultural and Structural Aspects by Dr. Mark Langager (Senior Associate Professor of Education, International Christian University)
- Japan Foundation Japanese Language Institute, Urawa
- Traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony
- Courtesy call on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
- Saitam Municipal Urawa High School
- Kashiwagi Elementary School
- Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto
- Cultural Workshop and Lunch at Traditional Japanese-style restaurant “Seiwaso”
- Kinkakuji Temple in Kyoto
- Courtesy call on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Sharing of learning with delegates at the Japan Foundation Head Office
- Tour of Tokyo
- Shinbashi Embjuo Kabuki program (traditional Japanese theater)

This experience reminded me of the importance of second languages in our ever shrinking world. Youth of today need second language more now than ever. With social media and technological advances, connecting with the “world at large” is now an everyday event. Education and the teaching profession are truly valued in Japan. The respect shown in schools and during all interactions was admirable. It is important to note how clean we as a delegation found Tokyo, a city of 12 million people!

I look forward to following up on opportunities for our staff to further develop Japanese Language skills (free of charge) at the Japan Foundation Language Institute in Urama. The experience was very worthwhile and I thank the Japan Foundation for this unique opportunity.



The Japan Foundation Invitational Group-Tour Program for Educators 2011 10 Nov. Fushimi Inari Shrine

## 2. 6 - 29 November, 2011 – Snapshot of a few highlights:

- I met with our Lead Team where the new format was introduced. Our Principals, Assistant Principals, Directors and Senior Team spent the morning focused on Professional Development. Lead Team had the opportunity to further develop skills in evaluating support staff and using twitter to enhance their learning. Community meetings (Spruce Grove area, Stony Plain area, and West End area) have been incorporated into the day. Using a Wiki, our public can view the agenda and reports given. No confidential information is made available.
- Board of Trustees held a very successful community consultation night at Brookwood Elementary as part of Phase III of the System Review.
- Board Chair Gilchrist and I attended a Zone 2/3 meeting with Minister Lukaszuk. At this time our Board Chair shared highlights and challenges in Parkland School Division.
- Division Principal George Couros and I attended Graminia School Council. As part of the Innovation and Teaching portfolio, digital citizenship presentations are being done with students in Parkland School Division. Mr. Couros presented a version of the student presentation to members of the Graminia School Council.
- Board Chair Gilchrist, Vice Chair Cameron and I had the opportunity to meet with Honorable Doug Horner to share PSD successes and challenges.
- Attended Smart Showcase at Millgrove School.