



Riverside storytelling festival bridges cultures

Riverside storytelling festival bridges cultures. Being the new student in class can be difficult, and being anew international student is even more challenging. However, a leadership program at Riverside Secondary is focused on easing this transition by having student leaders mentor international and English as Additional Language students.

Riverside Multicultural Leadership is a course where you can be yourself, says teacher Catherine Yamamoto, and get in touch with your inner multiculturalism, and help to unify the school community while still having fun.

Yamamoto says the Multicultural Leadership class gives Riverside students from diverse cultural backgrounds, but who were brought up in Canada as second or third generation children, a chance to work with international students, sharing cultural celebrations, vocabulary, food and crafts. In May, the students hosted a storytelling festival attended by staff, students and parents at Riverside. Armed with a \$500 grant from the Port Coquitlam Community Foundation, the festival focused on sharing traditional fairy tales such as Cinderella in many different languages, as well as aboriginal, Japanese, Korean and other folktales.



People of all ages understand the magic of stories, Yamamoto says, and enjoys the anticipation of listening to beloved age-old stories, whether they are in familiar languages or an unknown one.

All members of the Riverside community, as well as all Poco residents, were invited to the festival which kicked off with Aboriginal drumming, songs and stories of ancestral button blankets and multimedia presentations to complement the storytelling. We included the Home Economics classes and parents and staff to help create an international themed tea, Yamamoto says, and we displayed art work from Riverside students.

The grant covered the cost of posters, craft and storytelling supplies, honoraria and refreshment preparation.