

Miles Macdonell school becomes Japan for a day

By Marc Piché
Herald Correspondent

Toriniku teriyaki and gohan, or chicken and rice, were on the lunch menu and sushi-making and sword-fighting were on the agenda at Miles Macdonell Collegiate last week during the Japanese Language and Culture Festival.

Students from Japanese language programs across Winnipeg attended the festival which was sponsored by Miles Macdonell, in co-operation with the Asia Pacific Foundation and the Manitoba Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre.

Japanese and other Pacific Rim studies are becoming more important at Canadian schools, said Pam Okano, Miles Mac Japanese teacher.

"Globalization gives students an opportunity to use Japanese without having to go to Japan. We have exchanges and visitors from Japan, and there are opportunities in places like Banff and Vancouver," said Okano.

Miles Mac student Robert Campbell enjoyed the festival and says the school's program is preparing him for an exciting summer at a Japanese boarding school in Switzerland.

"Japan has brought many innovations into North American culture,"

said Campbell, pointing to everything from management techniques to karaoke singing, to the way schools are changing.

In the morning, students from Miles Mac, Vincent Massey, Balmoral Hall, Elmwood and Kelvin high schools performed presentations of speeches, poetry, songs and stories in Japanese.

The presentations really help the students in their studies, said Darlene Lindsay, Pacific Rim Coordinator at Miles Mac.

"It's tough for kids to use language in front of their peers, but they did it with a real willingness and enthusiasm," said Lindsay. "It's a real motivator for them to see that other kids in other schools are also trying to learn this."

In the afternoon, students took part in a variety of activities including sushi-making classes, shodo writing classes,

Japanese hanafuda card games and a demonstration of the sword-fighting martial art of Kendo by

the Manitoba Kendo Club. "Japan is our second trading partner after the States," commented

Lindsay. "It's probably a good sign that some of us know a few words in Japanese."



photo by Marc Piché

Members of the Winnipeg Kendo Club demonstrate their technique in the ancient Japanese sword-fighting martial art to students at the Japanese Language and Cultural Festival.

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summer off