

The week of the child

Parent and child involved in co-op nurseries

By CHRISTINA GULEWITSCH
Times staff writer

It all started in California in 1927. Mississauga got in on it in the 1950s. Now it's an international concern and there's probably one in your neighborhood.

The parent co-operative preschool movement is booming with 10 schools in Mississauga and a total of 18 in the Shoreline Council of Co-operative Preschools which covers the Peel-Halton area.

Originally designed to give three and four-year-olds a learning experience outside their own homes, co-ops, as they've become known, have developed into activity centres for parents and children alike where each learns, grows and shares. The intent of co-ops is not to provide a babysitting service, but to create an environment where parents are involved with their children in learning experiences.

Jan Dawson, supervisor of Clarkson Nursery School on Mazo Crescent and president of the Early Childhood Education Association of Ontario, believes the co-op school has as much to offer parents as it does children.

"Co-op parents know what's going on in the school," she says, "because they are in constant contact with the supervisor and other parents. They can also see first hand what goes on when they come in for duty days."

A co-op is not a place where a parent drops his child off at 8 a.m. and collects him at 5 p.m. Parents, mothers or fathers, are required to perform about two or three duty days each month depending on the size of the school and the number of operating days.

At Clarkson school, classes are held Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Parents take part in activities, under the supervision of the teacher. The ratio of children to adults is about six to one.

Clarkson's co-op president, Sue Keller, believes parents who attend co-ops gain a good and clear understanding of what makes youngsters, theirs and others, tick.

Most co-ops operate on a shoe-string budget out of church basements and parents support and involvement is essential. Joan Arends, supervisor of Erindale Nursery School and past president of the Shoreline group, says parents who don't do their part in operating the school are asked to "shape-up".

Parents meet with teachers and supervisors usually once a month and all business, education and general concerns are open for discussion. Parents may be asked to volunteer to paint schools, build play equipment, take charge of car pools and contribute in any way they can for the benefit of the school and their children.

"The fees paid by the parents to send their children to school," says Arends, "just cover the cost of operation and wages for the teachers."

Fees vary depending on the number of days of operation and expenses of the particular co-op. At Clarkson the fee is \$22 per month for three mornings a week and at Erindale it is \$35 for five mornings. Other schools are in about the same price range.

The co-op group, although licensed by the province, does not receive provincial funding or assistance and is not exempt from sales tax on school supplies. It is in this area that supervisors and parents alike hope to make headway. To them, provincial funding is a need.

During 1979 International Year of the Child and especially during Week of the Child (April 2 to 8) co-op supervisors and parents are promoting their cause.

"After all," says Dawson, "these little people are the future. Don't they deserve a good, solid start?"



GORM LARSEN THE TIMES

Elizabeth Schensema gives the old cash register a try at Clarkson Nursery School as friends look on.

Lorne Park kids slid on pingos, munched on ukpick, muktuk and quok

By JO ANN STEVENSON
Times staff writer

There are 16 Lorne Park students who know first-hand what a pingo, an ukpick, a muktuk and a quok are.

The pingo is an enormous ice hill they climbed on and the rest are Arctic delicacies they sampled when they travelled north on their Open House Canada visit to Tuktoyaktuk, NWT.

There are 16 teenagers from Tuk, who know first-hand about elevators, escalators, apartment buildings, and "funny air". And they learned about these when they visited Mississauga last week.

For the boys from Tuk, their biggest thrill came when Leaf star Darryl Sittler arranged for them to watch a hockey practice.

The Tuk kids presented a Tuk hat to Sittler and coach Nejlson which they wore during practice. Dave Hutchison joined the action and traded his stick for a hat. One of the boys called-home, 4000 miles away (collect) and crowded for 20 minutes about

the experience. In Tuk, nothing takes precedence over a Leaf game.

For Freida Mangelana the thrill of swimming in Clarkson Secondary School pool was second only to seeing Niagara Falls. In Tuk, only the very hardy venture into the Arctic for a July swim.

Kim Easton, Freida's "twin" during the exchange says the organized tours to the food terminal, the science center, the CN tower and Niagara Falls had them both limping, but she admitted some of the limps came from the Tuk habit of tripping people up for fun. "It's fun when you get on to it," laughs Kim.

The population of Tuk is 788, clumped into three main areas along the peninsula that juts into the Beaufort Sea on the deepest harbor in the Western Atlantic.

Tuk began as a summer hunting camp which became established as German and Danish whalers off the coast began to settle there. This explains names such as Gruben and Nogasak among the residents.

With three main oil companies based off the coast, the European aspect of the community is apparent. "It's questionable whether anyone in town could build an igloo," says Chris Bridge, principal of Lorne Park. "And kissing with the nose is a

bygone tradition." Fur has long been replaced by ski jackets, dog sleds replaced by snowmobiles (except for racing) and oil lamps replaced by electricity.

Reindeer meat is 79 cents per pound, but a reindeer hamburger in a Tuk restaurant is \$2.50. "Overhead is very high," explains Dennis Yates, a geography teacher at Lorne Park.

Yates says the consumption of pop by the Tuk people is alarming. Some communities along the delta have banned the sale of pop completely.

Soon the ducks and geese will return and many Tuk families will move to a prime hunting ground and camp for a few months. Children will accompany their families, even if it means missing school.

"Education is tied to economy," says Bridge. "In Tuk, the children don't get the same kind of pressure from their parents to finish school. It's hard for them to see the advantages."

Bridge comments that Eskimos who complete school hold jobs in the higher echelons of the community. He wonders if the impact of the visit to Mississauga will be to teach the Tuk students that education can be used as a tool to improve lifestyle.

Kim Easton from Lorne Park and Freida Mangelana from Tuktoyaktuk share some unstructured time before Freida's return to Tuk. Freida is amazed that the entire population of Tuk could live in the apartment building behind her.



KEN KERR/THE TIMES



KEN KERR/THE TIMES

Parents pay and children learn French

By JO ANN STEVENSON
Times staff writer

The last bell rang and all the kids went home from Brookmeade Public School. Whoops, now the doors swing open and back they come again. Well, not all of them, only the ones whose parents signed on four teachers to teach them conversational French after school hours.

One hundred and thirty children, from Kindergarten to Grade 5, divide into seven classes which are held in two shifts in the boys' and girls' changing room and the gym.

The parents pay \$15 per child for 30 lessons, an average of 50 cents per lesson. Without the parents' action, their children would not have received any French lessons until Grade 6.

Cindy Hallman initially felt the gap in her children's education some time ago and went to the staff at Brookmeade to try to work out a solution. A newsletter was sent out from the school asking for parents' opinions. The response was favorable and an organization of parent volunteers, spearheaded by Christine Gribowski, formed the working committees.

The whole thing was organized and operating within weeks," says Murray Tenebaum, publicity spokesman for the group. He says the issue of languages is dividing the country and he'd like to see other parents start the concept rolling in their areas.

When asked how he liked his new French class, one little boy complained he had no one to speak French with. His teacher, Claudette Plume, hoped in time his classmates would be able to communicate in French.

"We aren't offering instant bilingualism," says Gribowski. "The principle is to provide conversation so that the child new to the language and the child with some background or training in French can each derive benefit from the program."

Dave Beatty, principal at Brookmeade, says it's important for people to become involved in action groups especially in new communities such as Erin Mills.

Beatty says the French after-school program has fit into the school in the same way as soccer or brownies. There is little involvement with staff (the French teachers are independently hired and aren't Brookmeade teachers) except when there is a problem with maintenance. "It's an amicable situation," he says. "We work together."