

EQUILIBRIUM SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER – April 2026



Our EAL and LINC students enjoyed a day in Banff and Lake Louise. See more on pages 7,8 and 9.



EQUILIBRIUM SCHOOL



Johnston Canyon

More on page 24.



Take a look at Aleksa's amazing trips to Japan and Brazil.

More on Page 26.

My Experience at Equilibrium School

Since my first day at Equilibrium School, I have been feeling really great.

The courses start on time, and the teachers know their job very well. The environment is comfortable and welcoming.

My classmates are really nice. They are simple and kind, which makes learning more enjoyable.

Overall, I feel at home here. It is not boring, and it is nice to learn English. In just a couple of months, I have already made progress.

By Guy Koam



PORCELAIN PAINTING CLUB
More on Page 3.

TRIP to Kenya by Judith Van Bruggen. See more on Page 6.

The Benefits of Walking in Winter

“Hey Susan, are we still on for that walk?”

Susan: “No, I don’t think so. I’m really tired, and besides, I’ve been checking the weather app — it’s really cold.”

That reaction is understandable. Cold weather often makes staying indoors feel more comfortable. However, there are **several benefits to walking in winter**. Let me break it down for you.

Walking Through Winter: Showing Up, No Matter the Weather

Cold mornings, snow-covered paths, and quiet neighbourhoods are part of winter life in Canada. While it’s easy to stay indoors when temperatures drop, winter walking is a powerful reminder that movement, consistency, and self-care don’t stop when the season changes. With the right preparation, stepping outside can feel empowering rather than overwhelming.

As we move through the year, winter walking can become more than just a seasonal habit — it can be a lifestyle choice. Showing up for yourself, even when conditions aren’t perfect, builds resilience and routine. One step at a time, winter reminds us that progress doesn’t pause for the weather — and neither should we.

The images shared here capture what winter commitment really looks like — bundled up, protected from the elements, and moving forward with purpose. Bright, visible outerwear, face coverings, gloves, and insulated layers are not just about comfort; they’re about safety and confidence. Winter walking supports both physical and mental health, helping to boost energy, improve circulation, and clear the mind, even on the coldest days.

Physical benefits

Walking in winter causes your body to work a little harder. Cold temperatures increase calorie burn as your body tries to stay warm. Walking on snow or icy surfaces also engages more muscles, improving balance, strength, and overall fitness.

Heart health

Regular walking supports heart health by improving circulation and helping to lower blood pressure. A brisk winter walk can still provide meaningful cardiovascular benefits.

Mental and emotional well-being

Fresh air and movement help reduce stress and improve mood. Winter walking can help fight seasonal blues, increase focus, and promote a sense of calm.

Better sleep and energy

Exposure to daylight combined with physical activity helps regulate sleep patterns. Many people find that staying active during the day leads to deeper, more restful sleep at night.

Immune system support

Moderate exercise strengthens the immune system, helping the body defend itself against common winter illnesses.

Joint mobility

Cold weather can cause stiffness in the joints. Walking keeps joints moving, improves flexibility, and reduces discomfort caused by inactivity.

At the end of your walk, you may look like this, but don’t worry, inside you’ll feel warm, energized, and ready to take on the day.

A simple winter habit

Walking is free, accessible, and easy to maintain. Continuing this habit through winter helps keep routines consistent and supports long-term health.

As a new year begins, winter walking can be a hopeful and empowering resolution. Instead of setting goals that feel intimidating or hard to maintain, choosing to walk — even for a few minutes — is a gentle but meaningful way to care for yourself. Each walk is a reminder that progress does not have to be perfect to be powerful. Showing up for your health, one step at a time, can make even the coldest days feel lighter.

Even more importantly, walking does not have to be something you “try” for a few weeks and then abandon. When practiced consistently, it becomes a **lifelong lifestyle habit** that supports both body and mind. Choosing to move throughout the year — including during winter — builds strength, resilience, and confidence. Over time, this simple habit can lead to better health, improved mood, and a deeper sense of balance and well-being.

So, even when the weather feels cold, a short walk can make a big difference — for your body, your mood, and your overall well-being.

Cold Weather Walking Dress Guide

Walking outdoors in winter feels amazing — when you’re dressed right! Staying warm and safe in cold conditions means choosing the right layers and gear from **head to toe**.

Dress for warmth, visibility, and safety.

Head & Face

- **Balaclava:** Keeps your face warm on very cold or windy days. Protects cheeks, nose, and neck from wind chill.
- **Toque (winter hat):** Insulates your head and keeps heat from escaping.
- **Hooded sweater or jacket hood:** Extra protection against wind, snow, and cold air.

Tip: If it’s extremely cold or snowy, wear your balaclava **under** the hood for best insulation.



Upper Body Layers

1. **Base layer (optional):** A lightweight thermal shirt next to your skin helps wick sweat and keep you warm.
2. **Hooded sweater or fleece:** Traps warm air and adds a soft insulating layer.
3. **Thick, water-resistant jacket:**
 - Choose bright colors like **lime green, yellow-orange, or light blue** — they help drivers and other walkers see you easily.

Winter Dressing Rule of Thumb

Dress like it’s 10–20 degrees warmer than it feels. Your body warms up when walking, so layering prevents overheating while keeping you protected when you’re standing still or starting off.

- Water resistance helps keep you dry from snow and slush.



Tip: Layering lets you adjust comfort if you warm up during your walk.

Hands & Arms

- **Thick, water-resistant gloves:** Cashmere or light gloves aren’t enough — your hands need insulation *and* protection from moisture.

Tip: Mittens generally keep fingers warmer than gloves, but either works if they’re insulated and water resistant.

Lower Body

- **Ski pants or insulated winter pants:** These trap warm air and protect against cold wind, snow, and moisture.
- **Water-resistant layers:** Prevent snow and slush from soaking through.

Tip: Avoid cotton — it traps moisture and makes you colder.

Feet & Footwear

- **Winter boots:** Thick insulation keeps feet warm.
- **Added studs / traction grips:** These help prevent slipping on ice and black ice — great for safety on slippery winter walks.

Tip: Wool or synthetic socks keep toes warmer than cotton and stay warm even if slightly wet.

Extras

- **Headphones & music:** Optional — great for motivation and mood during your walk. Just be careful with volume so you can still hear traffic and surroundings.
- **Reflective gear or lights:** Especially helpful on dark winter days or early mornings/late afternoons.

Quick Checklist Before You Go

- ✓ Balaclava
- ✓ Toque
- ✓ Hooded sweater
- ✓ Water-resistant jacket (bright color)
- ✓ Thick gloves
- ✓ Ski pants / insulated pants
- ✓ Warm socks
- ✓ Winter boots with studs/traction grips
- ✓ Headphones (optional)
- ✓ Reflective gear (optional)

TINA'S SLOW COOKER RECEPIES

Slow Cooker Chicken and Dumplings

Ingredients

- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 2 (10.5 ounce) cans condensed cream of mushroom soup
- 1 onion, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons rosemary
- ground black pepper to taste
- 1 cup vegetable or chicken broth, or as needed
- 2 (10 ounce) packages refrigerated biscuit dough, torn into pieces

Directions

Combine chicken, condensed soup, onion, butter, rosemary, and pepper in a slow cooker. Add enough vegetable broth to cover the ingredients completely. Cover and cook on High for 4 1/2 to 5 1/2 hours.

Arrange torn biscuit dough on top of chicken mixture; continue cooking until dough is cooked through, about 30 minutes.

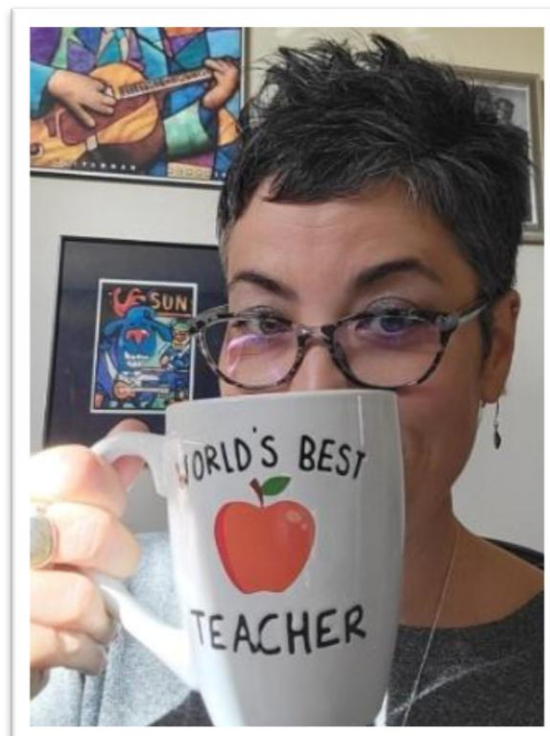
Slow Cooker Mediterranean Lentil Stew

Ingredients

- 5 cups water
- 2 1/2 cubes vegetable bouillon, or more to taste
- 2 cups dry lentils
- 5 small carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- 3 teaspoons ground cumin, or to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 (6 ounce) can tomato paste, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt, or to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1/2 (8 ounce) package fresh spinach, torn

Directions

Warm water and vegetable bouillon in a slow cooker on High until dissolved. Add lentils, carrots, and potatoes.



*Tina with her new school swag
enjoying a coffee in Bragg Creek.*

Valentine's Day Porcelain Painting Class

Every second Friday, our teachers and students come together for a special porcelain painting club led by Linda S. In celebration of Valentine's Day, students created beautiful hand-painted cups, adding their own personal touch to each design. It was a wonderful opportunity to express creativity and share the spirit of the holiday.



We have some talented painters!

One of the many wonderful things about working at Equilibrium is the sheer diversity of students and staff that we have. The sheer number of languages spoken at our school is both a reflection of our society as a whole and a testament to our school's mission to help everyone we can. About a month ago, I polled the students in my class to see what languages they are able to speak. This was my afternoon low-intermediate class, so I set the bar at being able to speak a language at the same level they speak English. This means that there are some students who can understand languages such as Portuguese, but they are not included on this list because they are unable to speak it at a CLB-4, at least.

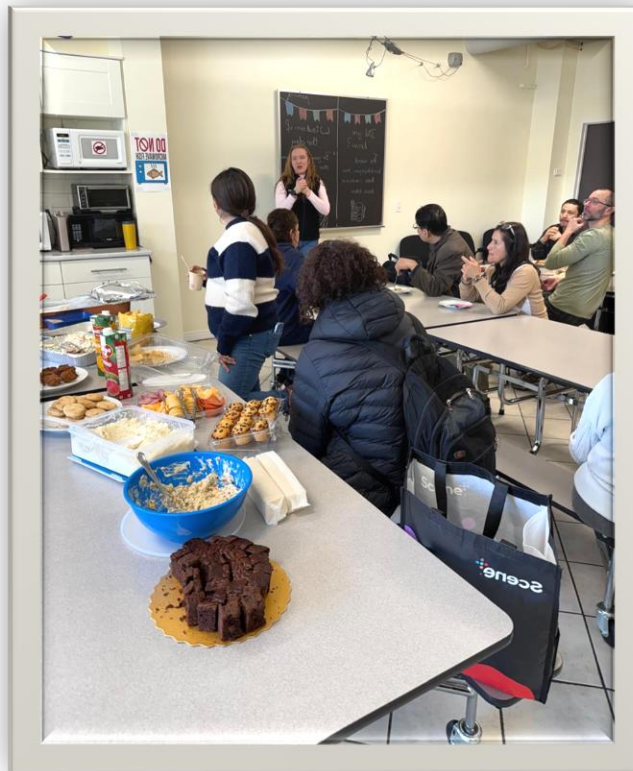
Nevertheless, it was impressive to see the sheer number of languages spoken. Many of them are spoken by multiple students, and there are several students who are fluent in three or four languages in addition to English. Majority of students are at least trilingual. There are also some combinations that are perhaps unexpected. For example, the same person in class is fluent in both Nubian and Dutch. Here is the list of all languages we are able to speak in our class. The list includes languages spoken by me and Darya, as well.

L a n g u a g e s A p l e a n t y

Here's the breakdown:

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. English | 12. Korean | 23. Somali |
| 2. Bosnian | 13. Japanese | 24. Nubian |
| 3. French | 14. Azeri | 25. Dutch |
| 4. Ukrainian | 15. Turkish | 26. Tagalog |
| 5. Russian | 16. Spanish | 27. Setswana |
| 6. Farsi | 17. Polish | 28. Xhosa |
| 7. Pashto | 18. Italian | 29. Zulu |
| 8. Pamiri | 19. Amharic | 30. Gujarati |
| 9. Nepalese | 20. Tigrinya | |
| 10. Hindi | 21. Oromo | |
| 11. Urdu | 22. Arabic | |

LINC SEMESTER'S END CELEBRATIONS



Yet another **LINC** semester came to an end, and we celebrated our wonderful achievements by getting together and sharing a meal. Some students said goodbye as they moved on to new opportunities, while others will return next semester to continue learning and celebrating their progress. We are very proud of all of them and the hard work they have shown. Great job, well done!



Favourite Holiday/Celebration

By Ron's afternoon EAL class

Lunar New Year is the most traditional festival in China. People usually call it "Guo Nian", and there is a legend about Nian. Long, long ago, there was a beast coming to villages every New Year's Eve. He attacked people and took food away. One year, a mysterious old man visited the village, and he told the people that Nian was afraid of noise, bright light, and red colour. People used those things chase Nian away, so firecrackers, lanterns, and red decorations became to the most traditional symbols of Lunar New Year. Until today, there are several generations passed, Chinese people have still followed these customs to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

I was really enjoying "Guo Nian" when I was an Elementary school student. My entire extended family members on my dad's side were going to get together on the New Year's Eve, so the women prepared a big feast, the men played cards or Mahjong, and we kids set off firecrackers, played games outside, or ate delicious food. Before the feast, my mom asked me to wash my face, hands, and feet. Actually, taking shower is the best way, but most families didn't have shower at that time. Then, I changed into new clothes from head to toe, which means letting the past year go and welcoming the new year. After that, we could finally have a feast. There were many dishes on the table, and each dish was its own symbol. We kids would say new year's wishes to each adult and get red envelopes from them. Every kid loved this. After the feast, the whole family started making dumplings together while watching the Spring Festival Gala on TV.

My favorite part was the thing right after midnight. My cousins and I carried our lanterns and went outside with adults to honour our ancestors, which is a significant thing, in the earliest moment on the first day of new year. The place was fixed in advance. The adults drew a circle on the ground, put the paper money inside it, burned them, and spilled alcohol as an offering. We kids followed them and bowed to our ancestors. After that, we could finally set off fireworks and firecrackers. The entire neighbourhood was full of people doing the same thing. It was extremely happy and unforgettable.

Unfortunately, experiences like this had never happened again after I went to Middle school. People live kept improving. We could buy new clothes at anytime. Lanterns didn't use candles anymore. The government stopped some customs for offering to ancestors and banned fireworks in almost every city. The New Year's atmosphere has been getting weaker year by year. "Guo Nian" today is different from before. Even so, most of the Chinese people still take Lunar New Year seriously because it also means being together with family.

By Cissy Sun

Christmas is a significant celebration for me on December 25th in each year. It commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ, aside from being an extravagant celebration with the family. It symbolizes love and gifts every Christmas. As

well as putting up a Christmas tree, we also decorate with Christmas light around the house. Especially we have a big colorful Parol that hangs in our window.

During the Christmas holiday, we gather all my immediate and extended family during the celebrations. We always have an extravagant Christmas party preparation and a huge feast with the whole family with many beautiful Christmas songs that play during the Christmas season. Each family member will bring delicious food that they cook at home. We assigned a family member as well to take charge of the games. We have a gift giving from our relatives who attend the Christmas party. Especially when my parents were still alive, they used to cook very delicious food like macaroni salad, chicken afritada, and a lot more. It's our tradition within the immediate family to gather all my siblings, nieces, and nephews before midnight and we all have a countdown before Midnight of Christmas.

In conclusion, the Christmas holiday is my favorite celebration because of the positive spirit of Christmas and extravagant celebration with Christmas caroling around the neighborhood. Also, I like Christmas because of Christmas songs that play starting in the month of September.

By Juvelyn Lama

Valentine's Day is my favorite holiday. It has many legends about its origins. One legend talks about a priest named Saint Valentine, who secretly performed marriages for young couples. He was eventually jailed and executed by the Emperor Claudius who banned young men from marrying because he wanted stronger soldiers.

Another legend connects Valentine's Day to the Roman festival of Lupercalia, held in mid-February to honor gods and promote fertility. During this time, young women placed their names in a box, and men would draw a name to choose a partner. The festival also honored Juno, the goddess of marriage. Over time, these traditions blended, and mid-February (14th) became associated with love and romance, leading to the modern celebration of Valentine's Day, which only lasts one day.

It has been a tradition for a century to use symbols like red roses and chocolate and love letters and jewelry to show affection, care, and love. In elementary school, we used to exchange small cards and candies with our classmates, which made the day fun and a convenient way for everyone to join. As I grew older, the celebration became more personal and romantic. Now, I usually celebrate with my wife

Our favorite way to celebrate is by going out for dinner or preparing a special homemade meal. We often enjoy chocolate desserts and drinks, creating a cozy atmosphere.

What makes Valentine's Day truly important to me is the opportunity to express my gratitude and love to my wife and strengthen our relationship. It is my favorite celebration because of its deep history, meaningful traditions, and the special memories I have created over the years.

By Ezzedini Abdessanad

Fasika is my favorite holiday because it makes me feel happy and close to my family. Fasika is Easter in Ethiopia. It is a very important holiday for Christian people. It celebrates Jesus coming back to life. During Fasika, people fast many days and don't eat meat or dairy, so this make the day very special and exciting.

Fasika is special because of how people celebrate it. Families clean house and wear new clothes, and many people go to church at night. The churches have candles and singing. After that, families eat big feasts together. They eat doro wat, injera, and eggs. Everyone sits, talks and laughs. It feels warm and joyful.

Fasika is important to me because it reminds me of love and togetherness. It is not only food or parties, but also about family and faith. I like spending time with my family and sharing stories because these moments make me happy. That is why Fasika is my favorite holiday.

Yonas Zeratsion

Eid Al Fiter is one of the most important Islamic celebrations. It comes on the first day of Shawwal and it's celebrated by Muslims all over the world (around the world). Eid Al Fiter is based on the lunar calendar, immediately after Ramada in the tenth month of Islamic calendar. There is no fixed number of celebration days for Eid Al Fiter, it depends on each country, but it is around a maximum of 3 days.

We start the celebration by going to the Mosque with our kids for prayer, and at the mosque we usually meet friends and neighbors and share greeting, wishes, and sweets. After that, we gather with family members, our immediate family, and sometimes extended family too. We usually wear new clothes on first day of the festival, and we provide a feast, a lot of sweets, and gifts for kids. One of the important symbols of Eid Al Fiter is giving (noun) money called (Zakat Al Fiter) to poor people.

Eid Al Fiter is very significant for Muslims because it's a big chance for gathering and practicing our faith. Nowadays, I'm far from my original country, so I remember how we celebrate Eid Al Fiter there. I also remember my mother, father, and my brothers, and how we spent this time together with a lot of faith and love.

Hoda Gharib

Epiphany is a celebration in the Christian religion (faith) in Ethiopia (the first Christian country in the world) to commemorate the baptism of Jesus Christ. As it mentions in the holy bible, John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ in the river of Jordan, symbolizing Jesus as the son of God. In the Ethiopian custom, the celebration lasts for three days, from January 18th until January 20th. After the entire church brings the replica of the Arc of the Covenant to the river, the patriarch prays and blesses the river, the believers get peptized, the people accompany the priests by singing religious songs and everyone wears traditional white clothes. After the program finishes, people get together and have a dinner feast and drink traditionally made beer. We have celebrated it with honour and a strong faith for centuries, so its significance is undeniable. Christian Epiphany has a deep meaning of revelation and heritage. The chanting, worshiping of Christ, and performing of religious songs make it very colourful event. It had been passed to us from our ancestors.



In February, I had the opportunity to spend one month in Kenya, visiting our Kenyan friends at their home in Juja Farm, just outside of Nairobi. It was a fantastic trip that had its challenges, wonders, and pleasures.

Kenya is a diverse east African nation with contrasting environments and circumstances. There are dry, arid areas of the country, which contrast significantly with lush, tropical regions. Economically, there is a huge chasm between the wealthy business owners, foreigners, and poor Kenyan workers. Due to the challenging political situation, there are many forgotten areas of the country where there is an absence of jobs, poor infrastructure, and limited medical and educational services. However, one of the greatest attractions is the fruit – mangos, papayas, passion fruit, pineapples, apples, bananas, oranges, star fruit, dragon fruit, grapes, etc.; so plentiful and so delicious!!!

Our friends live one hour northeast of the capital, Nairobi, in Kiambu County. It is largely a farming community. January and February are hot, dry, and dusty months. The grass and trees are brown, covered in dust, looking very dead. The daily temperatures in the months of January and February are usually in the 30's. In March, the rain usually starts, bringing the countryside to life.

Our friends, Beth and James, have started a training center for local people. Because



water is a highly sought after resource, they

drilled a well at their compound to provide water for the community. Together with another Edmontonian friend, our group of four planned and carried out a three-day training workshop. Because of the political, economic, and spiritual oppression of the people in this area, our goal was to provide a message of hope to these suppressed people. In addition to teaching sessions on Biblical topics, we also provided food. On day one, a crowd of one hundred, predominately women, showed up. Day two saw an increase to about 125. The crowd size exploded to over 350 men, women and children on day three! In anticipation of an increase, although not of this size, we prepared a full meal of goat stew, rice, ugali, and cabbage salad. Miraculously, everyone was fed with some people receiving two or three plates of food. This was an incredible experience. My friend and I were the only 'white' faces in the crowd. People sought us out, sharing their stories of need and requests for help. It was both heart breaking and heartwarming to be with these people.

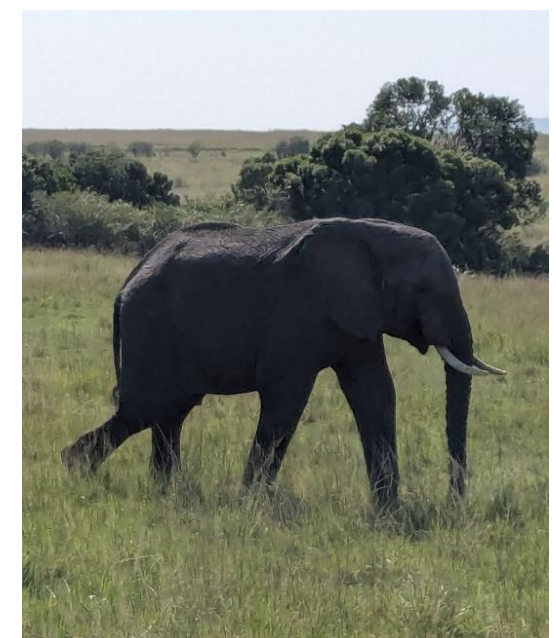
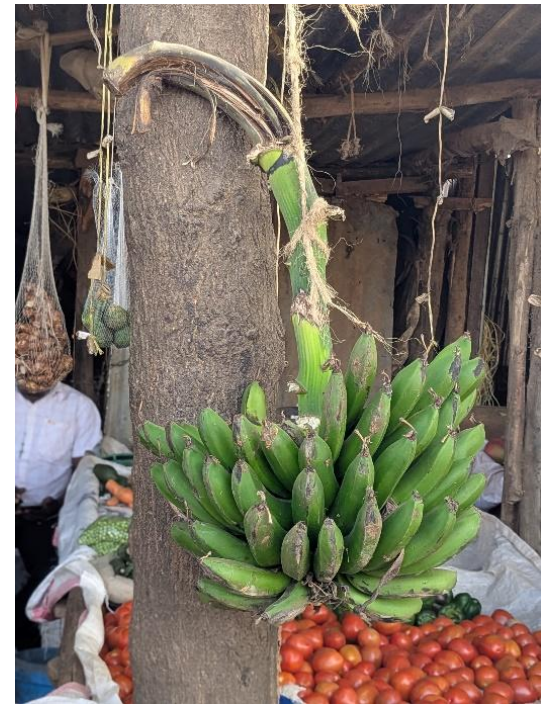
In addition to this event, we visited the homes of poor families living in the community, hearing their stories of need and providing bags of food and clothing. We met people living in mud huts, sleeping on dirt floors, grandmothers raising grandchildren, and medical conditions beyond our capacity to respond. In addition, our friends took us to orphanages, schools, and churches. This was certainly an eye-opener to a part of the world I have only seen on the Internet.

One can't go to Kenya without taking a Wildlife Safari. We took a three-day Safari at the Maasai Mara National Reserve. Every African Safari includes sightings of the 'BIG 5' (lions, elephants, African buffalo, rhinoceros, and leopards) and many other animals (hippos, crocodiles, hyenas, zebras, wildebeests, ostrich, gazelle, cheetah, wild pigs, and a large variety of birds). On our tour, the only elusive animal was the rhino; they hid in the hills and avoided discovery. It was incredible to see these animals in their natural environment. What an amazing world!!!

Would I go back? Definitely! Even though it was very challenging to be with people who are struggling to feed their families and send their children to school, the experience was unforgettable! The difference for next time would be to choose another travel plan. This time, my flights took me through the US and Qatar; a journey of 25 hours, which was far too long!!!! I understand flying through Europe is a much better option.

The Kenyan people are lovely, kind, fun-loving, and enthusiastic. It was an awesome experience, one in which I learned a lot about our fragile world.

By Judith Van Bruggen



Two Days in the Rocky Mountains

by Tina Jensen

On March 4&5, I was very fortunate to accompany 20 of our EAL students on two trips to our beautiful Rocky Mountain landscapes. Our guide was Russell, founder of

Molari Tours and Adventures. He organized fantastic trips, full of amazing scenery, interesting information, and a delicious lunch! We were cozy and comfortable in the private van, equipped with phone chargers, water, and music.

We started out at the gorgeous Lake Louise. We watched people skating on the lake and enjoyed taking MANY photos at the pretty ice castle across from the lovely Chateau Lake Louise. Next stop on Wednesday was Storm Mountain Lookout for lunch, where we were joined by a curious (and hungry!) Whiskey Jack Bird. We could see some animal tracks on the ice below and enjoyed watching a CPRail train pass as we ate our charcuterie lunch.

On Thursday we had our lunch at Vermillion Lake, with another gorgeous view of the mountains.

We lucked out both days with good weather - blue skies and lots of sun! It was nice to eat outside while taking in the scenery.

After lunch, Russell took us to Banff, where we could roam around the charming town on our own.

On Thursday we had a stop at Bow Falls, right behind the Banff Springs Hotel. I have been here many times in all seasons but never get tired of this beautiful spot.

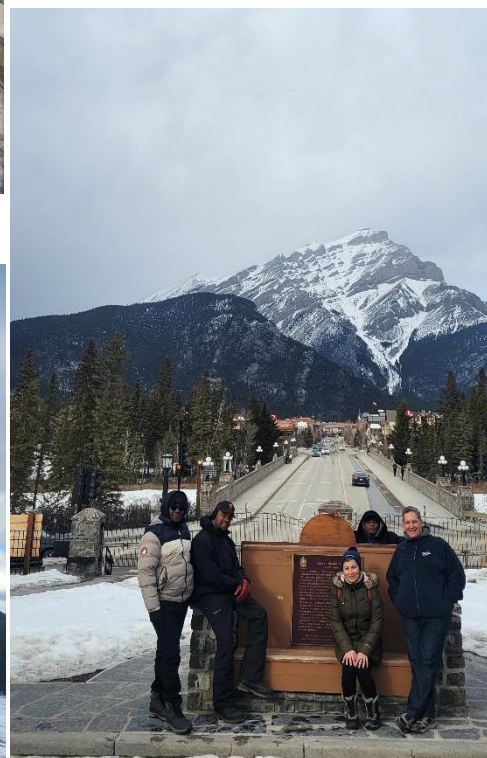
Then we headed to Two Jack Lake and Lake Minnewanka for more spectacular views and adventures. Russell made sure we were all safe walking on the ice and snow, as he provided us with snow cleats for our boots. He is very knowledgeable about the areas we visited and gave lots of interesting details.

We headed home with our cameras full of amazing photos, our stomachs full of tasty food and most importantly, our heads and hearts full of beautiful, happy memories.

Thank you to Russell at Molari Tours and to our wonderful, enthusiastic students for a fantastic experience!



And of course, thank you to Equilibrium School for this fun opportunity!



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SCHOOL TRIP



Our LINC and EAL students went on an adventure to the Rocky Mountains with Molari Adventure Touring, visiting Lake Louise and Banff. Nestled in the heart of the Canadian Rockies, Banff National Park is one of Canada's most breathtaking natural destinations. The charming mountain town of Banff serves as a gateway to stunning alpine scenery, wildlife, and outdoor adventures year-round. Just a short drive away lies Lake Louise, famous for its striking turquoise waters framed by towering peaks and the iconic Fairmont Château Lake Louise along its shoreline. Together, Banff and Lake Louise offer unforgettable experiences, from hiking and canoeing in summer to world-class skiing in winter, making them some of the most celebrated natural attractions in Canada.



EQUILIBRIUM LINC and EAL STUDENTS TRIP TO ROCKY MOUNTAINS

Banff Trip

By Svitlana Kharouzha

In winter, it looks truly magical. I think everyone should visit this lake at least once in winter. It is beautiful in every season—both summer and winter—but winter has a very special atmosphere: quiet, snowy, and incredibly peaceful.

On the way, we also stopped at a viewpoint with a beautiful view of the forest and the river. We had a short picnic there. The company that organized the trip provided food, so we could enjoy a snack while breathing in the fresh mountain air and admiring the stunning scenery.

After that, we went to Banff. We walked along the cozy streets of the town, visited small shops and art galleries, looked at souvenirs, and simply enjoyed the atmosphere of this beautiful mountain town.

Later, we also visited Lake Minnewanka, where we admired the breathtaking mountain views and the quiet beauty of nature.

The whole day was filled with a warm and friendly atmosphere. We took many photos, laughed a lot, and enjoyed the incredible nature of the Canadian Rockies.

Thank you to our school for this wonderful day and for moments like this that stay in our memories and bring us closer together like one big family.



On March 4, Equilibrium School organized a trip to Banff, Lake Louise, and Lake Minnewanka. It was a wonderful and unforgettable journey!

We traveled in a small, very comfortable bus. Our driver was also our guide—a very friendly and cheerful person. He told us many interesting stories about the mountains, nature, and the history of these places, so the time on the road passed quickly.

When we left Calgary, the weather was gray and foggy. But when we arrived at Lake Louise, everything was completely different: the sun was shining, the sky was bright blue, and there was no wind at all. It was a beautiful, sunny day, perfect for walking. At Lake Louise, we saw amazing ice sculptures, walked on the frozen lake, and strolled along the shore. It felt unusual to walk directly on the lake, which is full of water in the summer.

The Lake Louise Ice Castle



Last week we went to Banff with our school. You can see the pictures above. I would like to give some information about the ice castle.

First, workers build the towers and walls using metal rods and frames. When the weather is freezing, they spray water on the frame with hoses. The water freezes quickly in the cold air. Then

they spray more water again and again to make thicker layers of ice.

In the end, they use LED lights for decoration and design. By repeating this process, they create beautiful walls, tunnels, and towers made of ice.

By Masoumeh Ashuri

Calgary

Calgary is a lively city in western Canada known for its friendly atmosphere and strong connection to both nature and modern living. It sits near the Rocky Mountains, giving residents and visitors easy access to outdoor activities like hiking and skiing. Calgary has a growing downtown with tall buildings, diverse neighborhoods, and a mix of cultures, while still holding on to its western roots, especially during events like the Calgary Stampede. Overall, it's a city that blends urban energy with natural beauty.

Prince's Island Park – A Beautiful Place in Calgary

If you are looking for a peaceful place in Calgary, Prince's Island Park is a great choice. The park is located near downtown and is perfect for walking, biking, or relaxing by the river. Many people visit this park in spring and summer to enjoy nature, green trees, and beautiful views. It is also a great place to take photos and spend time with family or friends.

By Faroozan Haideri



The Plus 15 Walkways in Calgary

Calgary is a modern city in Alberta. One interesting feature of the city is the Plus 15 skywalk system. The Plus 15 connects many buildings in downtown Calgary. People can walk from one building to another without going outside. This is very helpful in winter when the weather is very cold.

Many people use the Plus 15 every day to go to their offices, buy lunch, or move around downtown. It makes traveling between buildings easier and more comfortable. I recommend visiting the Plus 15 system if you are in Calgary because it is convenient and useful.

By Satvinder Singh

Nose Hill Park—a Park with Every View

If you go north from the school on 14th Street, you will get to Nose Hill Park after 5-6 km. The park takes up over ten square kilometres and has views of the city, the mountains, and, in the centre of it, you can think you not in the city but in the middle of the Alberta prairies.

There is something for everyone! Do you like wildflowers? There are different ones throughout the year—crocuses, fireweed, brown-eyed Susans, there will be something different from April through September! Do you have a dog? There are many off leash areas for them. (But be careful—there is also wildlife in the park—deer, coyotes, and badgers.) Do you like to hike? There are dozens of different trails, and you can choose hard or moderate routes around the park. Do you like views—there are many of those!



See you out there this spring, or summer, or fall, or winter. It's different in every season.

Crescent Heights

Lookout Point

is one of those places that never really gets old. With its elevated view just across the river, it offers a clear, beautiful look at Calgary's downtown skyline, especially around sunset when the light hits the buildings just right. It's a simple, peaceful spot, perfect for a short walk or a quiet moment to take in the city from a different perspective. Milo seems to enjoy the view as well. 😊



Two of the most interesting places are on opposite sides of the park.

In this picture, you can see most of the Bow Valley, stretching all the way to the Rockies. There is a park bench so you can sit and just let the sound, the sun, and the breeze relax you.

Another view is available on the city side of the park. It is the location of a medicine wheel that was constructed by the local First Nations people in 2015. It represents the connection of Nose Hill and Calgary to the Blackfoot people and is a lovely spot to take a picture of the city.



By Darren

By Slavica

Summer 2026 – Calgary

Summer in Calgary is almost here! Check out some of the exciting events happening this season. From the iconic Calgary Stampede and its concert series (July 3–12, 2026) to broad music festivals like Sled Island (June 17–21, 2026) and Calgary Folk Music Festival (July 23–26, 2026), the city's summer lineup offers world-class live entertainment. Foodies will love Taste of Calgary (July 30–August 3, 2026) and the evening night markets that run throughout the season, while community street parties like the Lilac Festival (June 7, 2026) and Inglewood Sunfest (July 25, 2026) add local flavor. Cap the season with dazzling fireworks at Global Fest (late August 2026) and comedy under the sky at the Great Outdoors Comedy Festival (August 28–30, 2026). Whether you're into music, culture, food, or family fun, Calgary's Summer 2026 has a date for you!

Calgary Summer 2026 Events Calendar

Early Summer & June Highlights

4th Street Lilac Festival — June 7, 2026

A free, lively street festival celebrating spring with *live music*, artisan vendors, food, and family entertainment along 4th Street SW — a perfect way to kick off summer.

Jazz YYC Summer Festival — June 23–29, 2026

A week-long celebration of jazz across multiple venues, featuring Canadian and international artists in an intimate setting.

Country Thunder Alberta — June 26–28, 2026

One of Calgary's big country music festivals, with top country acts on multiple stages over three days

July Events

Sled Island Music & Arts Festival — June 17–21, 2026

A multi-venue festival with 200+ bands, comedy, film, and art scattered across the city — great for discovering something new.

Calgary Stampede — July 3–12, 2026

The famous 10-day celebration of rodeo, concerts, chuckwagon races, midway rides, cultural showcases, and nightly entertainment.)

Cowboys Music Festival — July 2–12, 2026

High-energy performances and party vibes running alongside Stampede — perfect for night-owl music fans.

Badlands Music Festival — July 2–12, 2026

Big lineup of *EDM*, *hip-hop*, and *pop artists* with dynamic festival stages.

98° Concert — July 25, 2026

Throwback pop night featuring the multi-platinum vocal group at the Grey Eagle Event Centre.

U/D Night Market — July 30, 2026

Enjoy local food, vendors, crafts, and live music under the summer sky in University District.

Calgary Folk Music Festival — July 23–26, 2026

Four days of roots, folk, and global sounds at Prince's Island Park across multiple stages.

Inglewood Sunfest — July 25, 2026

A big community festival with *artisan crafts*, *live performances*, circus acts, and street entertainment.

August & End of Summer

Taste of Calgary — July 30–August 3, 2026

A beloved annual celebration of Calgary's food and beverage scene — food trucks, local eats and live music.

Calgary Bluesfest — July 30–August 2, 2026

Four days of blues music from around the world with workshops and live shows.

GlobalFest — August 22, 25, 27 & 29, 2026

A spectacular fireworks competition paired with *music*, *lights*, and *food*, celebrating many cultures.

BUMP Festival — August 2026 (Dates TBD)

Calgary's massive street art and mural festival with live graffiti artists and creative installations.

Great Outdoors Comedy Festival — August 28–30, 2026

Laughs in Prince's Island Park with some of the best comedians live on stage.

Marda Gras Street Festival — August 9, 2026

Calgary's longest-running street festival with live performances, shopping, entertainment, pet photo booths, and more.



When Your Brain Feels Stuck... Move Your Body

By Debbie Benko

Let me ask you something.
Have you ever been staring at a screen, a worksheet, or an email...
and your brain just refuses to cooperate?
You read the same sentence three times.
You try again.
Still nothing.
It happens to everyone — teachers, students, office staff... all of us.
Most of the time we assume the solution is to try harder.
But interestingly, the problem often isn't your brain.
It's that your body hasn't moved.
Your brain and body are not separate systems. They work together. When your body wakes up, your brain often wakes up too.
Think about when good ideas suddenly appear.
Maybe it happens while:

- walking down the hallway
- stretching after sitting for a while
- stepping outside for fresh air
- or simply standing up from your chair

That's not a coincidence.
When you move, your body sends more oxygen and blood to the brain. Your muscles wake up, your breathing changes, and your mind often becomes clearer.
In other words, sometimes the fastest way to help your brain is to move your body — even just a little.

A few simple ways to reset your focus

These take less than a minute and can be done almost anywhere.

Change your position

If you've been sitting for a while, stand up for a moment. Stretch your arms overhead. Roll your shoulders back.
Small changes in posture can wake up your attention surprisingly quickly.

Move one joint

You don't need a workout.

Try ankle circles, shoulder rolls, gentle twisting side to side, or a few calf raises.

Even tiny movement helps your body reset.

Step outside briefly

Fresh air and natural light are powerful for focus.

Even one minute outside can help your brain reset and come back clearer.

Try this small experiment this month

The next time your brain feels foggy or stuck, pause for a moment. Instead of pushing harder, try something different.

Stand up.

Stretch.

Walk down the hallway.

Then come back and try again.

You may be surprised how quickly things start making sense again.

Sometimes the most productive thing we can do is simply move.

And that's good news — because it's something we can all do.

International Women's Day

International Women's Day is celebrated in March. On this day, we thank our mothers, sisters, and teachers for their love and care.

Women's Day reminds us about women's rights and equality. I hope we can celebrate Women's Day in every village because women work very hard to make our lives better.

Let us promise to respect and support women everywhere.

I wish everyone a very happy Women's Day, women, men, and children. May God give peace and safety to all people around the world.

By Haidat Aray



By Fazili Mwanatunga

The Most Beautiful Places in Poland – Our Top 20

By Krystoff Kroll

Every day, we explore the most remote corners of the world while helping others choose the perfect vacation. However, Poland itself is full of charming towns, historic landmarks, and breathtaking natural beauty. Here are 20 of the most beautiful places in Poland, our personal selection. This list is subjective, and the order is random. There are many more incredible places to visit, but these highlights are a great starting point for discovering Poland.

1. Wawel Castle (Kraków)

One of Poland's most iconic landmarks, Wawel Castle is rich in history. Visitors can admire royal chambers, beautiful tapestries, and the famous Sigismund Bell, which is over 500 years old.

2. Wieliczka Salt Mine

Located near Kraków, this underground wonder stretches across nine levels. Its highlight is the stunning Chapel of St. Kinga. The mine has operated since the Middle Ages and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

3. Toruń Old Town

Known for its Gothic architecture and delicious gingerbread, Toruń offers a unique atmosphere. The statue of Nicolaus Copernicus adds to its historical charm.

4. Białowieża Forest

One of Europe's oldest forests, this natural treasure is home to majestic bison and ancient trees. It is a peaceful and unforgettable place.

5. Shifting Dunes in Łeba

Located in Słowiński National Park, these dunes move several meters each year, creating a unique and ever-changing landscape.

6. Hel Peninsula

Surrounded by the sea on both sides, this area offers beautiful beaches, charming towns, and excellent opportunities for cycling and water sports.

7. Wrocław Market Square

Famous for its colorful buildings and small dwarf statues, Wrocław's Old Town is lively and full of character.

8. Karpacz

A mountain town in the Karkonosze region, known for the Wang Temple, scenic trails, and views of Śnieżka, the highest peak in the area.

9. Masuria (The Lake District)

A paradise of lakes and forests, perfect for relaxing, boating, and enjoying nature.

10. Elbląg Canal

A unique engineering marvel where boats are transported over land on special tracks. It's a rare and fascinating experience.

11. Valley of Five Lakes (Tatras)

This stunning mountain valley offers breathtaking views and access to Siklawa, the largest waterfall in the Tatras.

12. Bieszczady Mountains

Known for wide open landscapes and peaceful hiking trails, this region is especially beautiful in autumn.

13. Sandomierz

A picturesque town built on seven hills, famous for its charming market square and underground tourist route.

14. Kazimierz Dolny

A historic town known for its Renaissance architecture, scenic hills, and castle ruins.

15. Moszna Castle

With 99 towers and 365 rooms, this fairytale castle looks like something out of a storybook.

16. Ojców National Park

Poland's smallest national park, filled with caves, rock formations, and beautiful natural scenery.

17. Gdańsk Main Town

A vibrant historic area featuring St. Mary's Basilica, Neptune's Fountain, and colorful townhouses.

18. Vistula River Mouth

A peaceful natural area where the river meets the sea, known for its birdlife and protected reserves.

19. Trzęsacz

Famous for its seaside cliffs and the ruins of a Gothic church overlooking the Baltic Sea.

20. Świnoujście

Known for its wide beaches, beautiful nature, and unique location across 44 islands.

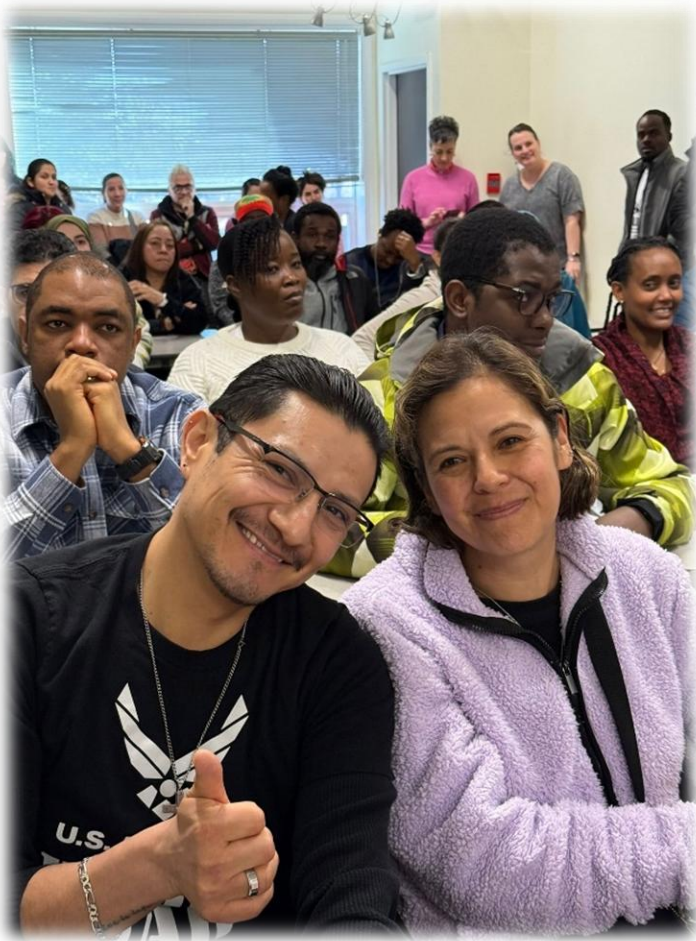


Equilibrium School

I would like to write about Equilibrium School and why it is a good place for students to study English and computers. First of all, the school has a very friendly and welcoming environment. Students from different countries come to study there. Because of this international atmosphere, students can make new friends and learn about different cultures while improving their English. Another positive aspect of the school is the teachers and the administration. They are very helpful and patient, and they always encourage students to participate and do their best. For these reasons, Equilibrium School is a great place to study and learn new skills. Students are encouraged to share their ideas and take part in all kinds of discussions. This makes learning more interesting and effective. The school also organizes activities and events for students. These activities help them gain confidence and improve their communication skills. They also allow students to explore the city, relax, and practice English outside the classroom. Overall, Equilibrium School offers a positive learning experience, combining quality education with a welcoming atmosphere. It is an excellent choice for students who want to improve their English and enjoy studying in Calgary.

By Irada Muradova

Family Day Celebration



Our teacher Phillip gave a presentation about Family Day. He explained the importance of spending time with loved ones and shared some interesting facts about how the holiday is celebrated. The presentation was engaging and easy to understand, and he included examples that made it more relatable. The students enjoyed listening because it helped them appreciate the value of family and traditions even more.

WHAT I LIKED MOST THIS SEMESTER

Patty-Jo's morning LINC class.

This semester we learned about vowels, snowman, body parts, symptoms, feelings, weather, current conditions, National Anthem, map of Canada, provinces and capitals, seasons, routines. We learned about special days like Pink Shirt Day, Orange Shirt Day, International Women's Day and St. Patrick's Day.

Patty- Jo- What I liked most was teaching about Orange Shirt Day and the map of Canada.

Lady Laura- What I liked most was learning about Pink Shirt Day and playing Hangman. (I like break time too!)

Susu- What I liked most was learning English and learning about different countries from my classmates.

Maria Ximena- What I liked most was learning about the map of Canada, the provinces and capitals, the seasons, and winter clothing. And Patty-Jo is beautiful.

Mohamed- What I liked most was learning English, and I love Canada, the whole school, and my teacher.

Reza- What I liked most was learning about Canada's geography.



Mohamed, Maria, Susu, Laura, Reza



Back row- Thierno, Hassen, David, Yessica, Pilar, Pepe, Narges, Somporn, Natsnet

Front row- Sirly, Lenor, Jin, Cristian

Patty-Jo's afternoon LINC class.

What we learned about this semester was food, nutrition, superfood, calories, adverbs of frequency, map of Canada capitals and provinces, wild animals (beaver, squirrel, skunk, caribou, moose) superpowers, talking to your landlord.

Patty-Jo- What I liked teaching about most was superpowers, "stop, collaborate and listen," the arctic, playing jeopardy and "new word."

Pepe- What I liked learning about most was the Groundhog Day forecast.

David- What I liked learning about most was reading "Max's Big Day" and future verb "will."

Leonor- What I liked learning about most was "talking to the landlord."

Somporn- What I liked learning about most was the Canadian map, provinces, territories and capitals, and learning Canadian history and Inuit culture. I also like learning about household problems.

Narges- What I liked learning about most was the "new word," speaking with my classmates, and how to make sentences in English.

Jin- What I liked learning about most was the map of Canada. I live here, so I should learn more about the country. It is important to know about the provinces and cities.

Natsnet- What I liked learning about most was vocabulary, talking to landlord, map of Canada, and nutrition facts.

Pilar- What I liked learning about most was who to call if I have problems with my apartment, life in Canada and the Arctic, new word, and making conversation at school.

Thierno- What I liked learning about most was Canadian geography, verbs past and future, and practicing conversation, and *listening*.

Hassen- What I liked learning about most was English.

Cristian- What I liked learning about most was new vocabulary, superfoods, and Kahoots.

Sirly- What I liked learning about most was the Arctic Canada, healthy food vocabulary, and landlord problems

LINC STUDENTS

Tina's class did their weekly 30min writing task on a variety of topics. Here is what they had to say...

Why did I choose Equilibrium School?

By Cedric

Choosing Equilibrium School for my English studies is a strategic choice for anyone looking to combine academic rigor with flexibility.

Equilibrium School is located in the heart of a vibrant community. It fosters rapid progress through teaching methods focused on real life communication. My professor Tina is excellent in this.

Equilibrium School's programs are designed to help newcomers overcome language barriers while they are learning local cultural nuances. My professor Tina is excellent in this field again. Reading, speaking, listening are so important for me because in this transition career in Canada, it's so important to be fluent and confident in English language.

Equilibrium School offers a flexible scheduling for student which helps them to balance work, school and family. That is a good point to mention.

In conclusion, this choice demonstrates a commitment to achieving a high level of expertise through structural and methodic guidance.

By Guy

I want to share with you my moments at Equilibrium School. Already, my first day at Equilibrium School was very full of emotions. The receptionist was friendly, the classroom was clean and all the learning tools was in place. I have been also affected by the professionalism of teachers; they know their job; they have many ways to help the students to understand the lesson. After teachers, the kindness of my classmates was remarkable. Couple of months ago, I noticed that all the building was perfect for learning because lunchroom is adapted for keep knowledge – you can eat while looking at your book easily. The most important is we have 10 minutes break in each hour which helps us to relax a bit.

Overall, I can of course say that it has been an opportunity for me to know this school and in some months, I made progress.

My Journey to Canada

By Michel

I would like to relate my journey to Canada. As I said, the first month was a great challenge. I came from French country and the first thing that I struggled with English. Apart from this, everything was going smoothly. I started to learn English with a non-profit organization before attending Equilibrium School where you can learn English at your pace and get everything you need. Teachers and classmates are very friendly and socialize. One interesting thing that most attracts me is the way that people greeting, take care of strangers, you feel like you are back home. The culture is different and adaptation is very easy because you have all necessary support to success and achieve your goals. To finish, one advice that I want to say for a new person is learn English before landing in Canada, be open to change and learn about Canadian culture that would be grateful to start your integration.

For Equilibrium School, I am thankful for the support that you give us to learn English and for amazing teachers who every day try their best to give everything we need.

My First Month in Canada

By Amirouche

After a long trip, I arrived on November 5, 2005, at Calgary. First week I was very excited to discover the city, but I was very tired – I do know maybe the difference of time 8 hours. After that, my first month was very busy because I had to take appointments, open applications and register to give some documents. It is like a new life for a new one in a new place. All is new for me – language, people, area and direction. There are a lot of things to do and if I didn't plan a list, I didn't remember what I must do. I had

odds because I have a family here who help me for my first month. It is difficult for the first time, but it's good to start a new life with a new connection, new hobbies and new goals.

By Sadiq

My new home and new life in my first month in Canada. I felt safe for the first time in many years. In my home country, I lived through very hard days and dangerous moments. Because of that, I was often afraid. But when I came to Canada, I feel peace in my heart. I saw kind people, quiet city and a safe life. That feeling was of safety for me and all members of my family.

A Recent Trip

By Salem

A few days ago I went to Banff. It was a great day with my classmates. We started the trip in Lake Louise. The lake was frozen. We walked on and we saw an artistic creation with ice. After that we visited another place: the town of Banff. It is a small town, but beautiful. We took some pictures; someone bought a souvenir of Banff. After we went to Lake Minnewanka for the last stop of our trip. It is an amazing place with big and huge mountains and a big lake and beautiful forest around. Unfortunately, we didn't see "The Boss" – the big bear of Banff. We enjoyed our trip and it will be in our memories for a long time.

By Saida

Last week I had a great experience with my classmates and our teacher. We had a trip to Banff. We visited Lake Louise where I enjoyed the view and fresh air. After that, we went to Lake Minnewanka, it was a beautiful place. The weather was very nice; this was an advantage for our trip. We took many photos and we spent a great moment together. In the afternoon, we visited Banff town. I walked there with my husband and enjoyed the architecture of this beautiful small city. Also, we visited stores and bought some souvenirs. At the end of the afternoon, we came back home. I was an amazing trip. I hope to go back in the summer.



St. Patrick's Day

Darren kindly gave a presentation about St. Patrick's Day at our school. For many students, it was their first time learning about this holiday, making it a valuable and enjoyable experience.

Students and staff joined in the celebration by wearing green throughout the day, though there was no green beer, of course!

Where should you go in your country?

Fatima's PM class

In Mexico

By Nancy Lopez

Well, I think you should visit **Mexico City**. It is the capital of Mexico. There are a lot of people, and you should see the cathedral and archaeological places. Then, I think you should go to Xochimilco. In this place, you should eat quesadillas in the trajineras and travel through the water (small rivers). If you like trekking, I think you should go to the Popocatepetl volcano.



This volcano is close to Puebla. But if you like the sea, I think you should visit Cancún or Huatulco. They have very beautiful beaches. You should eat fresh fish and seafood there. I think you should visit Mexico one time in your life. It is a very beautiful country.



Pictures of Puebla and Mexico City by Slavica

In India

By Jaspal Brar

I think you should go to see India. India is a very beautiful country. There are lots of places to see. Ajmer city is a very nice city, and you can also go to see the Taj Mahal. It is a historical place and a very beautiful building. You can do lots of shopping, and there are many restaurants with delicious food.

Another state is Punjab, which is very nice. You can go to see the Golden Temple. The Golden Temple is covered with gold. It is a world-famous place and a Sikh temple. If you go once, you will want to go back again to other cities in India.



In Sudan

Written by Ahmed Eshag

If you visit my country, I think you should visit Sudan. It is a big country in Africa. I think you should visit the mountains in the south. I think you should try Aseeda, a traditional food cooked in Sudan. I think you should visit the Gezira Scheme, one of the biggest the Khartoum Palace.

I think you should camp in the countryside because there are a lot of animals. You can also try swimming in the Nile River.



In Columbia

By Christian Sarmiento

Colombia is a big and beautiful country. There are very beautiful oceans and beaches. You should learn about the culture.

A lot of people travel to Colombia for a good experience and nature. There are many rivers, and the weather is very good. I think you should learn more about Colombia.

It is a good idea for a vacation. When you visit Colombia, you should drink the best coffee in the world.

In Alberta

By

Drumheller is a small town. It is famous for dinosaurs and fossils. The weather in Drumheller is different from Banff. It has the Royal Tyrrell Museum, which is a big dinosaur museum.

Banff has a cooler and wetter climate. It has many lakes, forests, and glaciers. Many people come for hiking and skiing.

Where should you go in your country?

In Punjab

By Brinder Khosa



Punjab is a very beautiful state in India. Punjab has five rivers. It is good agricultural land. There is a lot of natural greenery. The people are lovely and kind.

Punjab is the base of Sikh culture. There is the world-famous Golden Temple, also called Gurudwara Darbar Sahib, in the city of Amritsar.

Hamadan, Iran

By Zahra Abbasi

Dear visitor, you should go to Hamadan. Hamadan is a beautiful city with many historic and natural attractions.

I think you should visit the Ganjnameh Inscriptions because they are very historic. You can also see a beautiful waterfall next to them.



I think you should go to the Tomb of Avicenna to learn about the famous Persian philosopher and scientist.

I think you should walk around the ancient bazaar to enjoy local food and crafts. If you are an enthusiastic hiker, you should climb Mount Alvand and take beautiful photos from the top. While climbing, you can smell flowers by the stream.

I think you should taste the traditional Abgosht in a local restaurant because it is very delicious.

Finally, I think you should visit Alisadr Cave, one of the largest water caves in the world. Go there at a peaceful time to enjoy it fully.



SHIRAZ - IRAN

By Fereshteh Gharesi

I was born in the beautiful city of Shiraz in Iran. If you ever visit my hometown, I suggest you explore its many historical and natural attractions.

I think you should visit Persepolis and the tomb of Cyrus the Great. These places are very important in Persian history.

You should also visit the tombs of two of the most famous Persian poets, Hafez and Saadi.

I recommend visiting Vakil Bazaar, which is very traditional and historical. You should also see the Karim Khan Citadel and walk along Zand Street.

I think you should visit the Quran Gate, which is the northern entrance to my city. You can also enjoy the beautiful Roknabad Stream and the mountains around it, such as Baba Kuhhi Mountain.

I also suggest visiting the famous and fragrant Delgosha Garden, especially in the month of Ordibehesht (May), when the weather is lovely.

My dear friend, my city and its people are famous for their hospitality. Local people will warmly welcome you to their homes and beautiful gardens and serve you delicious traditional food.

Finally, I think you should visit Eram Garden. It is very ancient and important. There are many types of beautiful flowers and plants there, especially its famous tall cypress trees.

A Short History of the Hawaiian State Flag

By Dale T. Latham, BSc,
Equilibrium CAEC Instructor

*I have always found flags fascinating. There is such a rich history around them regarding their state or country's cultural identity. As some of my colleagues are aware, I like to travel to Hawaii. Every time I do, I am greeted with the State of Hawaii's colorful, yet unusual design. My initial thought was, "why does it have the British flag up in the corner and the stripes of the American flag on it too?" As I looked closer though, I realized that the stripes on this flag were red, white, and blue, which are reflective of the British colors, not America's red and white stripes. So, I decided to see if I could get **ChatGPT** to come up with a short history of this beautiful symbol as stated here beneath the flag ...*



Dale's picture : 2026-03-18 115609

ChatGPT says, "The Hawaiian state flag has a rich history that reflects Hawaii's unique cultural and political evolution. It was first adopted in 1816 by King Kamehameha I, who used it as a symbol of the Kingdom of Hawaii. The flag features eight horizontal stripes representing the eight main Hawaiian Islands and a Union Jack in the canton, which was included to reflect Hawaii's relationship with Great Britain at the time.

In 1794, Captain George Vancouver of Britain gifted King Kamehameha I, a British flag, which influenced the design of Hawaii's flag. This connection to the British crown is

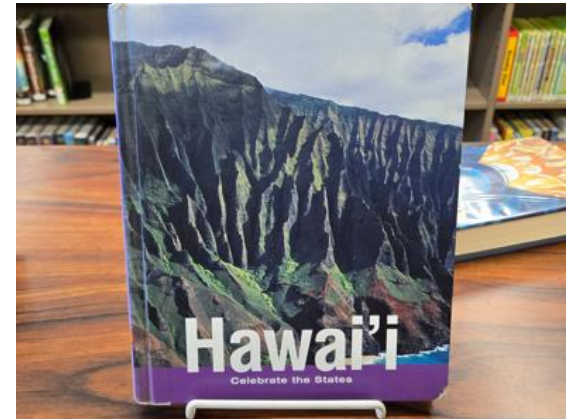
symbolized by the Union Jack, despite Hawaii's eventual sovereignty as an independent kingdom.

When Hawaii became a U.S. territory in 1898 and later a state in 1959, the flag remained the same, symbolizing the islands' historical ties to both Britain and the United States, while retaining its distinct Hawaiian identity.

Today, the flag remains a symbol of Hawaii's unique heritage, blending its royal history with its modern status as a U.S. state."

However, I did go to the Waikiki Public Library where I found a book entitled:

"Hawai'i, Celebrate the States"



Dale's picture : 2026-03-18 122346

This book clarified GPT. It says that the red, white, and blue stripes represent both the U.S. flag and the eight, major Hawaiian Islands. It was designed specifically for the reigning King. Just checking ...



Teacher Hasmik's class reflected on **International Women's Day**

and here are the highlights of students' thoughts and experiences, recognizing the importance of this day.

Hi, my name is **Kulwinder**. I am from India. International Women's Day is celebrated every year on March 8 worldwide. International Women's Day is an opportunity for teachers, parents, students, doctors, and caregivers to educate and inspire children. It honours women's sense of self-worth, their right to have access to opportunities and resources, and their right to have the power to control their own lives.

Hi, my name is **Viktor**. In my country, Ukraine, we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8. It is a public holiday in Ukraine, and Canada celebrates the same day. In Ukraine, Women's Day is celebrated and respected. I give flowers to women in my family.

Hello, my name is **Nahid**. Me and Mustafa decided to compare how we celebrate March 8 in our countries. I am from Iran and Mustafa is from Afghanistan. They are close countries and share the same language. Today it is International Women's Day, and we want to do something different instead of talking about Iran and Afghanistan. International Women's Day (March 8) is recognized as an official day in Iran and is usually held with security restrictions and clashes with activists. Fifty percent of people celebrate this day because some cultures are different, and Iran and Afghanistan are not free countries for women. In Iran, women are very respected. They work equally with men. Our mothers are caring and tough. They are pilots, lawyers, cooks, and doctors, but above all, they strive to make our country greater. Women are amazing.

Hi, my name is **Rama**. I'm from Nepal. In my country, we celebrate International Women's Day on March 8. It is called "Nari Dibas." It is not a public holiday in our country. On this day, we have peaceful rallies and marches in cities for gender equality and women's rights. We also honor inspiring and brave women from different fields such as education, politics, business, and social work. Some organizations run programs to help women economically, such as entrepreneurship training and digital marketing. In Nepal, Women's Day is not only about celebration; it is also a day for women to raise their voices and demand change, such as better laws, safety, and equal pay.

Hello, here is short description from **Hiwet, Hagos and Teklezgi** on how we celebrate March 8 in Eritrea. We celebrate March 8 with our community in Calgary every year. We have a wonderful Women's Day with community members and staff at the residence. We share inspiring stories, laughter, and problem-solving experiences in the community, and we are looking forward to working with the newly established Ethiopian Women's Association in Uganda (EWAU).



February and March were full of special holidays and festivals. The students in **Liliya's LINC class** shared their culture and traditions with their classmates. They asked a lot of interesting questions and had great discussions. Everyone learned something new and gained a deeper understanding of different cultures. It was a wonderful way to bring the class together and celebrate diversity.

You will also find **Yitian's** writing about his family. I believe Yitian is our oldest **LINC student, he is 86** years old!:) Yitian is one of the most hardworking and motivated students!

My Family

More than 70 years ago, I was a school child. I had a big family. I had a grandmother, parents, six siblings, two sisters-in-law, two brothers-in-law, two uncles, two aunts, two nephews, and two nieces. We all got along well with each other.

At that time, I was little and my family was very poor. I thought my parents did not have enough resources to raise all of us. There wasn't always enough money to make sure that everybody was well dressed, or even that there was enough food.

When I was 14 years old, I finished primary school and went to junior middle school. I left home and lived with my roommates at school.

When I was 19 years old, I finished high school and went to university. At the age of 24, I graduated from university and went to work at a petrochemical company.

More than 50 years ago, I got married, and then my son was born. Twenty years ago, my wife passed away.

Now I am an 86-year-old man. I live in Calgary, Canada. I have a small family. I have a son, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons. The older one is 15 years old and is in high school. The younger one is 11 years old and is in primary school. We always feel happy when we get together.

I learn English every day and want to continue learning English with my teacher Liliya until I am 90 years old.

On weekends, I play ping pong with my grandsons. Sometimes I prepare a meal for them. I feel that I am very happy.

Yitian Gu, LINC student



LINC student **Marowa Kazaleh** shared her traditional meal and decorations during Ramadan.



R a m a d a n

Ramadan is the ninth and holiest month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide for 29–30 days. During this month, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, engage in intense prayer, give to charity, and reflect on their lives. Ramadan commemorates the first revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad.

Muslims do not eat or drink (including water), smoke, or engage in sexual activity from dawn (fajr) to sunset (maghrib). They also avoid negative behaviors such as gossiping or arguing.

The day begins with a pre-dawn meal called **suhoor** and ends with a meal to break the fast, called **iftar**, often starting with dates.

Fasting can be challenging but encourages discipline. Many Muslims find it a time for spiritual, mental, and physical renewal.

Those who are ill, elderly, traveling, pregnant, or breastfeeding are exempt from fasting but may make up the missed days later.

Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It teaches self-control, gratitude, and compassion for the less fortunate. It is a time to cleanse the soul and strengthen one's relationship with Allah.

The odd nights of the last ten days are dedicated to intense worship. This "Night of Power" is believed to be more blessed than a thousand months.

If possible, Muslims spend the last ten days in spiritual seclusion at a mosque.

The month ends with the celebration of **Eid al-Fitr**, marking the conclusion of Ramadan.



RAMADAN TRADITIONS IN ALGERIA



A Month of Faith, Family, and Giving

In Algeria, Ramadan is a holy and special month. It is a time for prayer, kindness, and generosity. Families and communities come together. From the first day to the last, people celebrate Ramadan with love and beautiful traditions.

First-Time Fasting

When a child fasts for the first time, it is a very happy day. The family feels proud and treats the child in a special way. At iftar, the child drinks water mixed with rose water. The family prepares his or her favorite food. This helps the child feel encouraged and loved.

Traditional Iftar

Following the Prophet's Sunnah, Algerians break their fast with a glass of water and three dates. After that, the table is filled with traditional foods such as chorba (soup), tajine zitoun, tajine hlouw (sweet), and bourek.

In Algeria, families cook different dishes every day. They prepare food from the north, the south, and the east of the country. Each region has its own special meals. This makes the iftar table rich and colorful.

In the evening, people also enjoy sweet pastries with honey and cakes. Families sit together at a nicely decorated table and share their meal.

A Time of Giving

Ramadan is a time for charity and sharing. Families give food and money to people in need. Neighbors exchange homemade dishes, and some restaurants offer free iftar meals for those in need.

Haq El-Melh – A Beautiful Tradition

At the end of Ramadan, there is a special tradition called "Haq El-Melh," which means "The Right of Salt." The wife makes a cup of coffee for her husband. After drinking it, the husband puts a small piece of gold in the cup. This is his way of thanking her for her hard work during Ramadan. It shows love and respect.

Nasima Lamri, LINC student



Nauryz in Kazakhstan



Nauryz is an ancient holiday in Kazakhstan. It means Spring and a New Year. People celebrate it on March 22. People clean their homes, wear national clothes, and visit family and friends.

There are games, concerts, and parades. During parades, women throw candies. This is called "shashu."

People build yurts in the city. In yurts, you can eat traditional food. There is Nauryz soup with seven ingredients: water, meat, salt, fat, grains, flour, and milk. The number seven is lucky. There are also beshbarmak, boursak, kurt, and irimshik. People drink kumys (horse milk) and shubat (camel milk). Everyone can go inside and eat.

People also play tug of war and "kyz kuu."

In Calgary, we also celebrate Nauryz. We did a tradition for our daughter called "tusau keser." It is for a child's first steps. A good and respected person cuts the rope on the child's legs. Then we put things in front of the child: a book, a microphone, a stethoscope, a dombra, and money. The child chooses one. Our daughter chose the dombra. It was special for us.

Happy Nauryz!

Gulnur Tokayeva, LINC student



Carnival in Argentina

Carnival started about five thousand years ago, when farmers dressed up to celebrate the fertility of the land. Later, it became a Catholic tradition.

The streets are full of color, music, and fun, and people dress up as different characters.

Carnival begins on the Thursday before Ash Wednesday. It comes about seven weeks before Easter and marks the time before the 40 days of Lent.

In 2026, the main days are Monday, February 16, and Tuesday, February 17.

The date changes every year because it follows the lunar calendar. It is calculated from Easter Sunday, which is April 5th this year. Carnival happens about 48 days before Easter.

Alicia Maiolino, Liliya's LINC student





The nature's beauty always attracts, fascinates, and draws us into a quiet sense of wonder, reminding us to slow down, breathe deeply, and appreciate the simple, fleeting moments that often go unnoticed in the rush of everyday life. The first days of the new year in Calgary unfolded in quiet, breathtaking beauty.

Photos by Liliya Globa



Our teachers and staff recently set out on a memorable excursion to Banff, Lake Louise, and Johnston Canyon. Although the weather was a bit rainy, everyone had a fantastic time enjoying the scenery and experience.

Chinese New Year – Tradition, History, and Celebration in Guangdong

The Spring Festival, also known as Chinese New Year, is one of the most important and distinctive traditional festivals in Chinese culture. It is an essential part of China's rich cultural heritage. The festival begins on the first day of the Lunar New Year — the first day of the first lunar month — and is commonly called “Guo Nian,” which means “celebrating the New Year.”

This year, Chinese New Year falls on February 17 (the first day of the first lunar month). According to the Chinese zodiac, this year is the Year of the Horse, a symbol of energy, strength, and determination. Chinese New Year is so significant that it traditionally lasts for fifteen days, ending with the Lantern Festival. Nowadays, the official public holiday lasts four days, from Lunar New Year's Eve to the third day of the first lunar month. More than just a holiday, it is a meaningful time for family reunions, joyful gatherings, and heartfelt celebrations. It remains the most eagerly anticipated festival of the year.

Before the New Year: Preparing for Good Fortune

Preparations begin days before New Year's Eve. On the 23rd or 24th day of the last lunar month, families bid farewell to the Kitchen God by offering sweet foods and praying for peace and good fortune. On the 28th day, we thoroughly clean our homes. There is a saying: “On the 28th day, sweep away the dust,” meaning we remove bad luck from the old year and welcome new blessings. Another important tradition is visiting the flower market. In Guangzhou, the New Year flower market has a history dating back to the late Ming Dynasty, and the custom of “walking the flower street” in the Lingnan region has been practiced for over a thousand years. The flower market usually runs from the 28th day of the twelfth lunar month until midnight on New Year's Eve. Buying New Year flowers and displaying lucky plants at home is an unspoken tradition among Cantonese families. It is almost understood without being said.

The tradition of placing kumquat trees — called “Nian Ju” in Cantonese — in homes can be traced back to the Song Dynasty. The word for kumquat sounds like the word for “good fortune” and “great luck,” so families place them at home to symbolize prosperity in the coming year. In cities like Guangzhou, the markets are filled with colorful flowers and cheerful crowds. There is even a saying: “If you haven't visited the flower market, it's not truly New Year yet.”

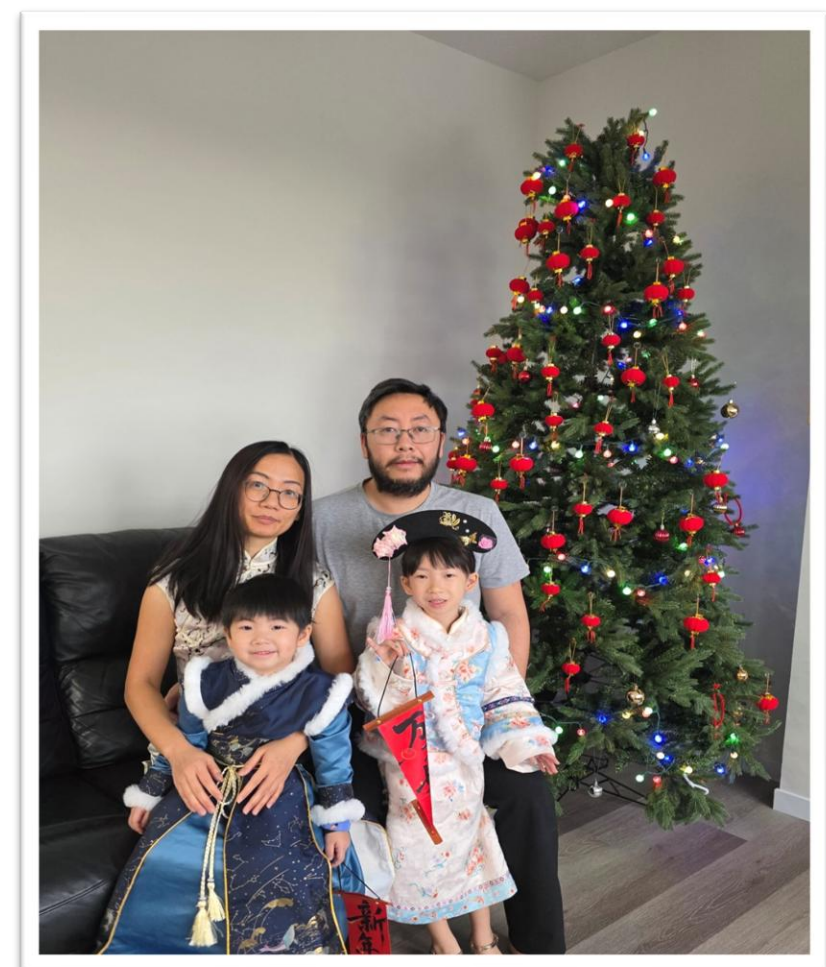


New Year's Eve: Reunion and Symbolism

New Year's Eve centers around family reunion.

We gather for a grand dinner with dishes full of symbolic meaning. Fish represents abundance year after year. Chicken symbolizes good fortune.

Poon Choi, with its many layers of ingredients, represents overflowing prosperity. Sweet rice balls symbolize family unity.



New Year Taboos

During the first few days of the New Year, we avoid sweeping the floor or taking out the garbage, as it is believed to sweep away wealth.

We also avoid saying unlucky words.

On the third day, families clean the house to symbolically “send away poverty” and welcome prosperity for the year ahead.

For me, Chinese New Year is more than fireworks and delicious food. It is about family reunion, gratitude, hope, and shared blessings.

Although traditions may evolve over time, the spirit of the Spring Festival remains unchanged — bringing people together and wishing for a brighter and more prosperous year ahead.

Ping Zang, LINC student

After dinner, we stay up late to welcome the new year. Lights remain on to symbolize brightness and abundance. Elders give children red envelopes filled with lucky money, wishing them health and prosperity.

Holidays in Brazil: Sun, Fun, and Tradition

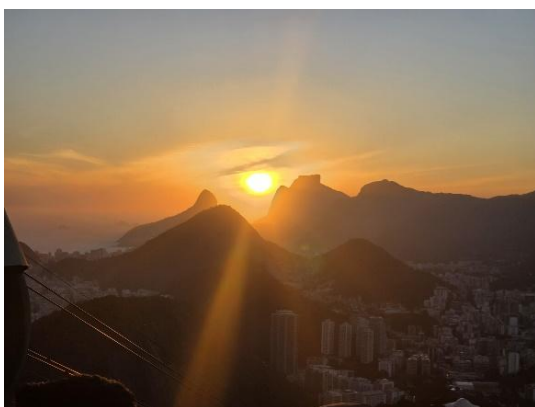
I spent my Christmas break in Brazil with friends, and honestly, it was one of the most memorable trips I've ever taken. Since Brazil is located in the southern hemisphere, the seasons are opposite from here, so it was summer there instead of winter.

I started in Rio de Janeiro, and it immediately lived up to the hype. I spent time at both Copacabana Beach and Ipanema Beach, just relaxing, walking around, and taking in how lively everything felt. There's always something going on, and the energy is just contagious.



Ipanema Beach at sunset

One of my favorite experiences was hiking up Sugarloaf Mountain. It was definitely a bit of a workout, but completely worth it once I got to the top. The views over Rio were incredible. Instead of hiking back down, I took the gondola, which gave me a whole new perspective of the city and coastline.



View of Rio from Sugarloaf Mountain

The food in Brazil was also a huge highlight. I tried things like pão de queijo (cheese bread) and acai, and I quickly understood why they're so popular. Everything was so flavorful and different from what I'm used to.



Traditional Bahian food from Salvador

For Christmas Day and New Year's, I went to Salvador, which had a completely different vibe from Rio. While I was there, I tried a lot of traditional Bahian food. I visited the "Centro Historico" of Salvador, which was the city's

centre during the Portuguese colonial period. The Historic Centre is rich in monuments and buildings from the 17th century.



Historic Downtown of Salvador

New Year's Eve in Salvador was probably one of the coolest experiences of the whole trip. Everyone wears white and heads to the beach to watch fireworks. It's meant to symbolize a fresh start and bring good luck for the new year. Being there, surrounded by so many people all celebrating together, felt really special.

Overall, Brazil was such an amazing mix of beautiful scenery, great food, and meaningful traditions. It was the kind of trip that sticks with you. Beyond the beautiful scenery, the most incredible part of Brazil is the people. The kind and care-free attitude of Brazilians made the trip unforgettable, and it is definitely a place I recommend visiting.

A week in Tokyo and Kyoto: Food, City Life, and History

I just got back from a trip to Japan, where I spent a week in Tokyo and Kyoto with my family, and it was such a cool experience.

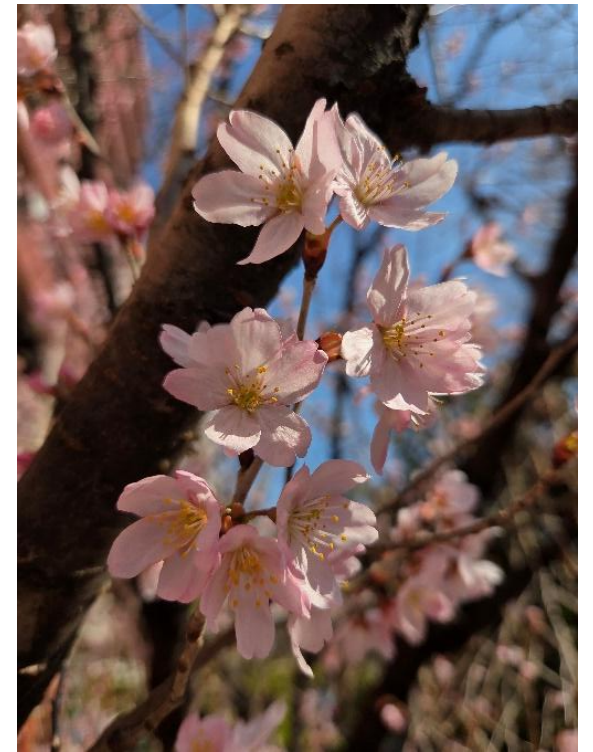
We stayed in Shinjuku, which is a super busy area packed with shops, restaurants, and people pretty much all the time. At first it felt a little overwhelming, but I ended up loving how lively everything was. We spent a lot of time shopping and getting around using the train system, which was actually really efficient once we got the hang of it.



Shinjuku during the day

One of the highlights was seeing some of the cherry blossoms just starting to bloom. It wasn't peak season yet, but even seeing a few was really special and made the trip feel even more unique.

(Shinjuku Park in Tokyo



Sakura flowers starting to bloom

We also went to Shibuya Crossing, which is just as crazy as it looks in videos. Watching hundreds of people cross from every direction at once was kind of surreal, and of course we had to walk through it ourselves.

Another really cool moment was going up to a government building observation deck and seeing the city from above. Tokyo just goes on forever, and it really made me realize how massive it is.

We needed a break from the blinding lights of Tokyo, so we spent a day in Kyoto. We traveled by train and visited some of the famous temples, and they were even more beautiful in person; quiet, detailed, and surrounded by nature. After that, we spent time just walking through local markets, looking at souvenirs and trying different snacks. It was a really nice balance of exploring and slowing down, and it gave me a deeper appreciation for the more traditional side of Japan.



A temple in Kyoto

The food in Japan was honestly amazing. I had ramen, barbecue, sushi; everything was so good. One funny thing is how often we ended up going to 7/11. Convenience stores in Japan are on a completely different level, and we kept going back for snacks and drinks.

Overall, this trip was such a great mix of exploring the city, trying new food, and experiencing a different culture. It was really



eye-opening and definitely somewhere I'd love to visit again.

M O R E P R E S E N T A T I O N S

Welcoming the beauty of Nowruz with a wonderful presentation by our teacher Elahe. Learning about new beginnings, traditions, and the meaning behind this special celebration made it even more meaningful. A perfect way to start the new year.



Celebrating and learning about Eid with our amazing teacher Fatima. A beautiful presentation that helped us understand the meaning, traditions, and joy behind this special occasion. Grateful for the knowledge and the experience.



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