



Roots & Revitalization: The Edmund Partridge Community School Re-Opening

When Cathy Dearden stood in the Edmund Partridge Community School gymnasium late last year, she stood in the middle of a long, rich tapestry of family and educational history that has just entered its next chapter.

Dearden – the great-granddaughter of the late Edmund Partridge – was the guest of honour at the Grand Re-opening of her great-grandfather's namesake institution on Dec. 8.

The 66-year-old Grade 6-8 school was under construction for more than three years and just re-opened its doors to students and staff this past September, complete with a renovated gym, revitalized classrooms and a brand new atrium and entrance way.

When congratulating the hardworking staff and students at the school and division, Dearden – who recently retired as a teacher in Seven Oaks – said she thinks her great-grandfather would have been proud to see how far education has come over the last half century.

"I think he would be very proud," she said. "Surprised, what with technology



and everything else that has evolved, but pleased nonetheless."

In a testament to that growth and evolution, Dearden read aloud the speech her grandmother gave when the school first opened in 1955.

Her grandmother – Evaline Partridge-Farlinger – spoke of the family patriarch's long history in the West Kildonan Area, including his long run on the West Kildonan Council (1907-1945), time on the Winnipeg Water Board and also his passion for gardening and providing the community market.

In the speech, Partridge-Farlinger also likened the bold, humble and strong

man the whole community called "Pa" to the strength of the school itself.

"It is the first school of its kind," the speech read. "Its two-storey concrete block construction is durable, and it is the first school completely finished before it even opened. It has ruggedness, clean lines and no frills – just like my dad."

Though Dearden herself was only three when her great-grandfather died, she recalls being told stories of the "honest" and "dependable" man with a "big moustache" and bigger heart.

That big spirit was reflected in the nearly 300 current and past students,



parents and community members who attended the momentous event in December – many with fond memories of and strong attachments to the school.

The crowd beamed as the school’s band and choir performed selections both classic and contemporary, reflecting the diverse and timeless building being celebrated.

Edmund Partridge principal Peter Obendoerfer gushed about his students and staff and said he was thrilled to finally publicly unveil the refurbished building – one he said truly provides a glimpse into the hearts and minds of the students who learn within its walls.



“It’s about our student voice, about creativity and about taking responsibility for our own learning,” he said. “Each person in our school does that.”

With Obendoerfer’s help, students led the event and were very excited to introduce each other’s projects including a presentation about an interview with Cathy Dearden and a slide show that featured photographs of every single staff member and student at the school.



SOSD Superintendent Brian O’Leary beamed as he watched the students present, then proudly encouraged attendees to explore the space and realize its potential.

“We turned a building into a school,” said O’Leary. “I’m proud to say it will serve decades and generations to come.”

As students led their parents and interested others throughout the school’s newly glossy hallways, they took ownership of the building and boasted about the limitless potential it has given them.

School trustee Claudia Sarbitt summed that up, saying though schools are often reconfigured, the Edmund Partridge renovation is a noteworthy happening for both the school and the division.

“We now have a better learning environment for these students.”



2010-2011 BUDGET MEETING

The Board of Trustees of the Seven Oaks School Division invites the public to an open meeting to discuss the 2010-2011 school year budget. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public about funding provisions and current budget discussions and to invite comment on educational and budget initiatives.

Monday, Feb. 22, 2010 – 7:00 p.m.
Garden City Collegiate - Commons
711 Jefferson Avenue

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