

CHMH Newsletter

November/December 2009

*My paddle's keen and bright
Flashing with silver
Follow the wild goose flight
Dip dip and swing
dip dip and swing it back
Flashing with silver
Follow the wild goose flight
Dip dip and swing*

*Spreading my long wing feathers as I fly
Spreading my long wing feathers as I fly
I circle around, I circle around
The boundaries of the earth
The boundless universe*



November has been a month steeped in the essence of the Iroquois People. Native American music and chants have filled our classroom with their mesmerizing rhythms and wise messages. Our shelves have been adorned with clay-rope bowls decorated with “wampum”. Our amazing Long House, a collaborative art project, was a popular addition to our Iroquois tables. Under the gentle guidance of Tara, the children loved decorating it with wooden slats, a moss roof, and landscaping it beautifully with trees and grasses. This authenticated replication of the Iroquois dwelling was a great source of interest as the children arranged tableaux of native peoples living their lives with attendant trees and animals from our area. The children delighted in visualizing the days of the Cayuga Iroquois as they fished in our lake and hunted in our valleys, seeing the same deer and wild geese and interacting respectfully with the land, with great respect for living things. Jeffra wove this area of study beautifully into her weekly music sessions, guiding the children through chants and canoe dances, leading them to soar into the skies with white wing feathers to ‘circle the boundaries of the Earth, the boundless Universe....

Our appreciation of Native peoples led us seamlessly into story of Thanksgiving and how critical the Wampanoag people were in the survival of the Pilgrims in 1621. Our focus this year was on the reality of life on the Mayflower during that fateful voyage. Meals of Salt beef, hard tack, (after the maggots in seawater, were picked off), washed down with stale beer; baths sounded quite enjoyed playing with the ship animals and watching the sailors while



Pilgrims in 1621. Mayflower during (after the maggots in seawater, sounded quite enjoyed playing they worked.

Our Thanksgiving feast featured turkey, gravy, stuffing, the three sisters (corn, beans, squash), mashed potatoes, and, of course pumpkin pie and whipped cream. The children ate around our beautiful table

of bounty and reflected on all they were thankful for...families high on the list, along with trees, butterflies and horses.

This focus on thankfulness prepares us for the month of December, where our appreciation of various holidays leads us to our focus of GIVING. Community service is an important part of our program, as it provides the children with a compass to filter through all of the distractions of commercialism in their city and recognize the hidden goodwill towards others. That program each year. The kind to the needs of others and a desire family through the Salvation provide food, clothes and toys for added to a decorated box in our box fill up each day, as we learn more about Kwanzaa, Chanukah, Christmas and Ramadan, and enjoy the smell of our Christmas evergreen, and the gentle lights of our Menorah in our window.



With the arrival of December, we roll up our sleeves and dig out the rolling pin, in preparation for our holiday cookie extravaganza! Each year, the children bake holiday treats to pass out to the diners at the Loaves and Fishes. We will be asking each family to provide three dozen cookies to supplement our classroom contribution. This is a delightful field trip, and a wonderful time for all involved. The children will get a tour of the kitchens and pantries, enjoy a meal in the dining room, and pass out the cookies, spreading holiday cheer.

Our Circle of Lights celebration will be on December 23rd, and we are looking forward to welcoming families into our classroom, to enjoy a holiday performance by the children, followed by a dish to pass meal. The children's performance will be preceded by the lighting of our Chanukah, Ramadan, Christmas and Kwanzaa candles.

In our French program, our visiting 'French' puppet Cecile has enjoyed coming in to the classroom to talk with the children about clothing and dressing for the cold weather. The children are enjoying greeting Cecile and each other and asking and answering with now familiar phrases: Comment va tu? ("How are you?") Comment tu t'appelle? (What's your name?). During lunch we often hear "J'ai une pomme" (I have an apple) or "J'ai une banane" (I have a banana). It is this weaving of the language into the natural rhythm of the day that helps to reinforce Cecile's lessons.

Art Happenings from Tara Reimer

Surrounded by the theme of harvest we were inspired by the creativity of our local Iroquois and Wampanoag people. Exploring the details such as their food, we started by creating one of the three sisters, corn. The children used bubble wrap as our painting tool and it created the texture of corn kernels. Next, we practiced the technique of coiling clay. Each child created a precious coil pot and added some beadwork for some added color! Then moving on to the unique Iroquois dwellings, we have been very carefully building an interactive model structure of a long house. The children have blankets cut and fires prepped



to keep the Iroquois families warm. With lots of softening and laying of modeling clay for the flooring and ground and some selective picking of natural elements for the landscaping, it's coming together beautifully. Be sure to take a peak when you get a chance!

Music News from Jeffra Ruesink, Music Together:



Thank you so much to all the families who attended our parent/child music event on November 23. It was a morning to remember; singing, dancing, and playing together as a whole community. We included many songs from the Fiddle songbook, as well as some Native American chants and melodies. It was such a pleasure to see how naturally the CHMH parents model joyful music-making for their children! My sincerest compliments and thanks to you for jumping into all the activities with gusto. If you couldn't make it that day, we hope to see you next time!



The next all-family event will be announced soon. As we look forward to the winter holidays, we will be working more with the Music Together curriculum as well as traditional holiday songs of many faiths. We are choosing songs that have rich musical and cultural significance and also reflect CHMH values of peace, community, and generosity. In my own family, winter holidays are a time when there are many occasions for music. I was reminded again at Thanksgiving that gatherings with extended family can be a wonderful time to sing, make music, or listen to music together. In the coming weeks, you and your children might celebrate with music. You can introduce others to the songs you've learned this fall – many of the melodies & verses are immediately accessible to almost everyone. And this can be a great way to engage young & old alike! Try asking your children if they will help teach some of their favorites. I hope adding music to family celebrations becomes a tradition you cherish. Best wishes for a peaceful, joyful, and musical season. I look forward to working with your families in the new year!

P.S. If you are enjoying Music Together, please help us spread the word! Music Together of Ithaca is enrolling now for winter parent/child classes. More information at www.musictogetherofithaca.com or 607.227.2500.

I really enjoyed meeting with all of you during our Parent Teacher conferences. Close communication between parents and teachers is critical in ensuring the best experience for your child. Due to the small size of our program, Karen and I welcome the opportunity to share little nuggets of news during pick up and drop off. Please let me know if you would ever like to schedule an afterschool chat at any time. Phone-calls are also good, and of course, the email is a wonderful way to contact me.

We are looking forward to a wonderful joy-filled holiday season with your children. See you all at the Circle of Lights.

Mark your calendars:

- 12/11** Field Trip to the Loaves and Fishes
- 12/18** Delivery of the Giving Box
- 12/23** Circle of Lights Celebration (noon dismissal)
- 12/24-1/1** Holiday Recess



Ana enjoying the table washing work.



Ainslie and Ana working hard on the Decimal System work.