

Ceremony blended Quaker values with international flavour

By Chris McGowan

United Nations Day at Pickering College has been an annual event for eight years.

It is all about celebrating the diversity of students at the school, who hail from 29 different countries, each represented by a flag in the school foyer. When a student is accepted to the school from a 'new country', their flag is added to the mix.

Countries represented at the College this year are; Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Columbia, Germany, Guatemala, Hong King, Iran, Ireland, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Tanzania, Trinidad & Tobago, the United Kingdom, and United States.

The entire school participated in the United Nations Day Ceremony with international students proudly walking into the gymnasium holding the flag of their. Dressed in blue and grey, students' uniforms provided a drastic contrast with the flags.

The ceremony started with the inspirational speech by a grade twelve student Fernando Casanova who hails from Mexico. His speech centred on the origins of the United Nations, but the part that brought it all into perspective was when he passionately listed the key attributes of the UN. His voice grew a bit louder, and his hands were used to bring the point home as he stated, 'to adhere to a common goal, together we stand, divided we fall, that is the essence of the United Nations.'

Four year old student Lev Moskal'tsov was at the ceremony. He started Pickering College this past September and came from Russia two years ago. 'The first day of school was his birthday' said his mother Lisa. 'He loves it.'

The audience was swept away by music students at the ceremony who played the Chinese flute, guitars, and piano, and receives direction from the Sr. Music teacher, Paul Mason.

Even though the ceremony was not long, the meaning behind it runs parallel with the mandate of Pickering College itself. The College is a Quaker School built on Quaker principals founded in 1842.

'The key Quaker values are stronger at the college now than when I started 30 years ago,' said headmaster Peter Sturup. 'The main tenement of Quakerism is that there is that of God in every person, and so we believe that there is a goodness in every person. There is a humanity in every person. From an education standpoint, that there is potential in every person. As teachers and educators we believe there is an inner light, and it is our job to help that light shine.'

'The Quaker values are universal values based on respect, responsibility, integrity, compassion, and community. We are preparing students for the future, and allowing them to be in touch with people from many countries.'