



News Release

École Secondaire Notre Dame High School, St. Joseph High School to welcome Japanese visitors this week

For immediate release – April 11, 2024

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools is thrilled to welcome a delegation of 67 grade 11 students and four chaperones from Yamate Gakuin High School in Yokohama, Japan to Red Deer later this week, continuing a cherished tradition of cultural exchange dating back to 1988. This enriching program, a symbol of international camaraderie and educational enrichment, has been a cornerstone of our shared experiences with the vibrant City of Yokohama.

The students and chaperones, who are scheduled to arrive at St. Joseph High School on the evening of Friday, April 12, will embark on a two-week journey through the heart of Central Alberta, where they will not only attend local schools but also delve into the breathtaking natural beauty and vibrant urban life our region has to offer. From the serene landscapes of Banff to the bustling corridors of West Edmonton Mall, their itinerary is packed with quintessentially Canadian experiences, including movie nights, a high school dance, and bowling, aimed at fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our culture and way of life.

This year's program marks a poignant return for the program following a brief hiatus caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The visiting students from Yokohama will be welcomed into the homes of local host families, a testament to the deep, personal connections that have been the backbone of this initiative, enriching lives and communities across continents.

"We are thrilled to welcome the students from Yamate Gakuin High School to Central Alberta for the first time since 2018," said Jeff Lerouge, Dual Credit Program Teacher at École Secondaire Notre Dame High School. "This exchange has built bridges between our

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communities for over three decades, and we are proud to continue this tradition of friendship, learning, and cultural exchange. We look forward to two weeks of enriching experiences and lifelong memories."

As we prepare to welcome our esteemed guests, we reflect on the countless individuals whose lives have been touched by this program. Many past participants are still in touch with host families, three decades later.

"Congratulations to all involved in sustaining this incredible partnership. We look forward to another memorable chapter in our ongoing story of friendship and cultural exchange," said Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools Board Chair Murray Hollman.

In July and August, 17 students from École Secondaire Notre Dame High School, seven from St. Joseph High School and three from Innisfail High School (another program participant) will stay with local families in the Yokohama area as part of the second half of the exchange.

Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools serves over 10,650 students in 21 schools in Red Deer, Blackfalds, Sylvan Lake, Rocky Mountain House, Innisfail, and Olds. It also supports the learning of over 850 students in a Home Education Program. The Division is committed to serving children and parents with a complete offering of learning opportunities delivered within the context of Catholic teachings and within the means of the Division.

For more information, contact:

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