

# A WESTGATE Retrospective



MENNONITE  
**WESTgate**  
COLLEGIATE  
2020



## A “PORTRAIT” OF PENDER ISLAND

By Bob Hummelt



Eleanor and Ross Brownlee

In my office one morning, where I can watch late winter slip into early spring, a music score lies in front of me. The head of an occasional visitor pops around the door jam and becomes somewhat bemused as everyone in the school knows I cannot read a single note. “Just wait,” I mutter to myself, “once I retire I’ll learn this stuff and I’ll show them!” But yes, I may as well be looking at hieroglyphics on a Giza pyramid, not knowing what the foot, bird and eyeball is supposed to be telling me. I flash back to Grade 9 shops class, where the worst teacher I ever had gave me a box of wire and capacitors and a schematic of how to build a tube radio; the indecipherable squiggly lines and circles were left to me as he got back to his newspaper. I was smart enough to stall the project, unlike my bench mate Dennis; I can still smell the burning capacitor oil as his smoldering radio sizzled unhappily on its maiden run.

The score in front of me belongs to our Band instructor, Ross Brownlee, and it is festooned with bright highlighter to tell him when respective instrument players have time changes... whatever that means. Several weeks ago I heard the premiere of this piece, Portrait, when the Senior Concert Band performed it at Winnipeg’s 45th Classic 107 International Band Festival. Ross, with some help from the school, commissioned Portrait to honour his mother, Eleanor Brownlee, a longtime resident of Canada’s beautiful Pender Island, who passed away June 2019. The score was written by Peter Meechan whose music can be found on over 100 commercial recordings and has been featured at festivals and clinics globally. Meechan will publish

and release Portrait to the global market and it is likely that it will be played by bands around the world. Ross is pleased that, “Through the auspices and rich heritage of Westgate’s music program, the story of Eleanor and her profound care for creation will be shared, in the universal language of music, with our brothers and sisters across the planet.”

In April of 2008, I was on Pender Island with our Westgate Music Tour kids. Our two packed motor coaches turned quite a few heads as these types of buses are rare on the tight corners of that west coast mountain island. Our itinerary included a morning performance for the quaint little elementary school and a wonderful evening concert with the extended and appreciative community of residents who seemed no strangers to a wide range of music. That evening I met Ross’s mom Eleanor and I have continued to learn more about her over the years. Her sudden and untimely passing was met with sadness among several staff who knew her. Ross wrote in the score’s Program Notes that: “Eleanor had an internal power and strength that drove her to constant good work – for her family, for our brothers and sisters around the world in need, for our Indigenous partners and especially for the environment that she championed every day. Going to visit mom on Pender Island had become my equivalent to a complete ‘life reset’”.

The island Eleanor made her home juts out of the Salish Sea, the result of the folding and faulting of sedimentary layers that were deposited millions of years before. The strata were subjected to tremendous earth forces and pressures that “cooked” some layers to

become harder metamorphic rock and melted others to become very resilient igneous rock. This island, in turn, is slowly being worn down to become deposits of sediment once again, with the continuous action of waves as its key erosion agent. And, it is these waves washing ashore that offer a sublime soundtrack that accompanies the beauty of Pender Island, and a sensory experience of that sound is captured by the music of Portrait, evoking memories of my time near the island’s shores.

Our recently redeveloped school campus similarly pops out of small but usable green space. The building is a response to the pressure to provide a facility that can continue to educate children so that they can respond to the joys and challenges of adulthood and the greater world. Perhaps like an island, this edifice of brick and glass weathers changes in how young people need to learn in the context of a world that has them ponder questions of faith in God. As well, “fiscal waves” of daily operations and our \$1.8 million building debt annually wash ashore. Alternatively, there are waves of support that, like the breakers on the rock face of Pender Island, awaken feelings that all can be well. This journal is produced to encourage these waves of financial support, and dare I say in an already stretched metaphor, from our surrounding ocean made up of those who count themselves as alumni and friends of Westgate.

Pender Island seen in the distance from Mayne Island, BC in the Spring of 2019



## OUTDOOR EDUCATION AT WESTGATE

By Terry Dirks

The 2019-2020 chapel theme at Westgate is “Caring for God’s Creation” – an apt choice in this time of climate change awareness when Australia is burning, Canada’s Arctic ice is disappearing, and Manitoba has suffered from both a flood and a drought in the same crop year.

Jarrett Rempel, Westgate’s senior Outdoor Ed teacher, explains how outdoor education helps students cope with the crisis of these concerning times. “Creation awareness equals creation care. Getting kids outside and connecting them with these natural resources helps students understand their own impact and that they need to become part of the solution as *they* value the beauty of their planet.”

Westgate’s Outdoor Education Program, now a major part of the fabric of the school’s ideology, began developing in the early 1980s. Junior classes were already enjoying celebrating community with their year-end camping trips, but teachers felt the need to develop Senior outdoor trips as well. Will Barmeier had experimented with some local summer and winter camping for seniors in the late 70s but these had faded away until Bob Hummelt arrived in the fall of 1982. Hummelt, an avid outdoorsman, was determined to develop a comprehensive outdoor education program for all Westgate students. “Arriving at Westgate I found many of my colleagues, like me, really enjoyed backwoods camping - seeing, smelling, breathing in the wilderness – why wouldn’t we invite kids to join us?” And so, in early 1983, Hummelt, led the first Marsh and Mountain

Club winter camping quinzee building overnight trip. Then in June, continuing the outdoor club concept, Hummelt along with leaders Karl Wiebe, Al Klassen, and Ed Epp, headed out to Glacier/Waterton National Parks for a mountain hiking week with two vans full of senior students. With the success of these early trips, more staff became Marsh and Mountainers and many valuable leaders – Ozzie Rempel, Loren Brown, John Enns and Terry Dirks – began to add their contributions to Westgate’s senior outdoor program.

Over the past four decades, interest in outdoor camping has grown tremendously and the outdoor education program has expanded accordingly. Junior camping trips continue to help develop students’ basic outdoor skills. Senior trips are now scheduled three times in the school calendar year. In fall, students generally hike and camp for two days locally, heading east to Whiteshell Provincial Park or west to Spruce Woods and Spirit Sands for unique Manitoba experiences. In winter, two choices are available for seniors – a two-day quinzee building trip in the Whiteshell area or a three-day snowshoeing trip to the wilderness cabin at Lake Mantario. In spring, senior trips are a full week of camping and follow a three-year rotation, ensuring that students entering at the Grade 10 level are able to have the widest outdoor camping exposure possible during their three senior years. This rotation in Canada’s world class outdoor arenas includes mountain hiking in Kananaskis, canoeing in Ontario’s Experimental Lakes and biking from Jasper to Banff.

All outdoor trips are planned with great care, teaching students to be cautious but also hoping that eventually they will gain confidence. As Hummelt reminds kids, “When it comes to wilderness, experience is the very best teacher. If you’ve forgotten something

or you’ve let your sleeping bag get wet, you will absolutely not make that same mistake next time.” Nevertheless, Hummelt reminds his staff leaders and students, “I remember the words of the Hudson’s Bay Company employee who looked at the Hayes River for the first time and how he felt the chills running up and down his spine – fearing and yet being enthralled by the unknown. You have to honour the wilderness. You could get hurt by it if you don’t fully honour it.”

An accredited Outdoor Education Course is now taught by Jarrett Rempel at the Grade 10 level to ensure that students are fully prepared for their wilderness experiences.

“‘The buzz word’ in Education these days is ‘resilience,’” reflects Rempel. “These trips provide authentic challenges, where students gain that true sense of accomplishment in doing something that is really hard. In recent years I have noticed that in our comfort-seeking society, an aversion – a fear of nature, is developing. Our students may not all choose the outdoor life, but they will not fear it. And for many, the awe they experience in the wilderness will encourage them to live sustainably with faith in God’s good and beautiful world.”



Jarrett Rempel in Kananaskis

# A HISTORY OF MARSH AND MOUNTAIN CLUB



2007



2018



Bob Hummelt in 1990



James Friesen in 2008



2008



Jarrett Rempel



Spring Cycling 2018



Loren Brown, Ozzie Rempel and Terry Dirks in 2014



Marsh and Mountain Club 2008



Winter Sauna at the Mantario Wilderness cabin 2018



(left) Ozzie Rempel and students on the Quincee Hike 2019

(far left) Loren Brown



Current grade 6 students sorting plastics headed for ReGen Composites



(above) Students harvesting corn planted in Westgate's garden boxes



(left) Sustainability committee leaders Payton Gowder and Nora Kroeger sit on a bench fabricated by ReGen Composites who recycled a year's worth of plastics from our school!

## SUSTAINABILITY AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

By Julia Thiessen

There is garbage on the walls of Westgate. These crumpled bits of non-biodegradable material don't look like much, and yet that yogurt container and take-out coffee cup are an acknowledgement of our regular participation in an unsustainable system. Students in the Grade 9 Family Studies class created these waste posters in an effort to raise awareness about recycling and composting options at our school, but these simple signs are also a confession – a confession that our ecological presence matters, and a declaration that each of our actions can be transformed.

As students show ever more interest in and anxiety about environmental issues, we also recognize the need to address these topics as matters of faith and spiritual development. In our weekly chapels this school year we have sought to explore the scriptures alongside the present reality of climate crisis.

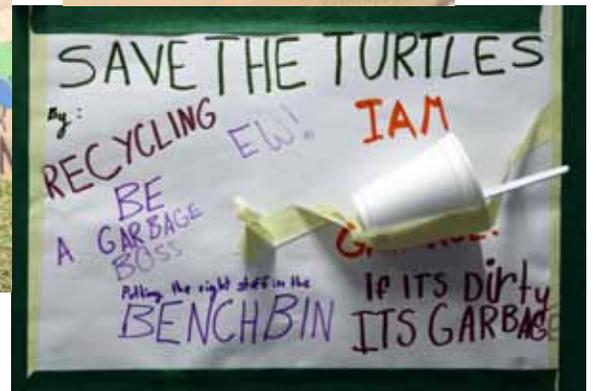
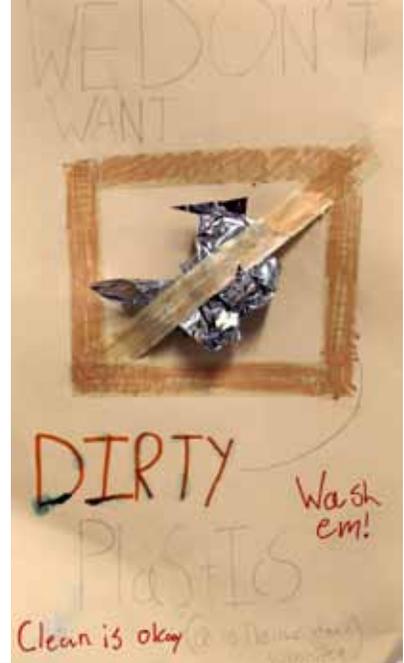
This has meant giving our attention to the literal mountain-top moments – when God meets us in the powerful beauty of the natural world – and to the mundane parts of our environment – like the parasitic Cowbird or the Carmine Shiner, a minnow found in

the Winnipeg River system. We've challenged each other to see every bird of the mountain and every insect of the field as created and loved by God.

We've also heard the words of Romans 12 from many mouths: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." From fast fashion to industrial food systems, we have seen that our society's patterns of consumption make us a weight upon the shoulders of the world's vulnerable populations, violating Christ's call to care for the least of these.

*"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds" – Romans 12:2*

Westgaters joined thousands of other students in the Global Climate Strike on September 27, 2019



Although our transformation may be slow, Westgate is seeking to become a more environmentally responsible community, and facing how much waste we produce has been a very visible step in this process.

For years our school community has collected all compostable waste materials. During the 2018-2019 school year, Westgate's Senior Student Council began to collect typically unrecyclable plastics for ReGen Composites, who made these materials into a durable and stylish bench for our front step. Senior Council continues to divert some of our waste to ReGen (also known as the "bench bin") by physically sorting through our school's garbage, one dirty plastic bag at a time. Doug Durksen, one of the teachers guiding this project, has noticed that students have become more uncomfortable with just throwing things away.

This year's Junior High Student Council has also named ecological sustainability as one of their primary aims. The group has discussed setting money aside for future infrastructure

such as solar panels. Solar is a live conversation, says Principal Bob Hummelt, as costs for such projects become increasingly less prohibitive. Junior Council also hopes to invest in butterfly and bee-friendly plants for the yard at 86 West Gate, which could be planted in the garden boxes students helped build in 2019, and which could be watered with the rain water already being collected from the roof.

Westgate has had a long history of communing with nature and leaving no trace through fall, winter, and summer camping trips. Recent years have seen a few changes to June's alternative education week, as Grade 9 camping has moved to Rushing River, where students are more immersed in the landscape of the Canadian Shield. Senior High students have also had the option of living on a small-scale farm for a week, and learning first hand the labour that goes into our food.

Our conversations about sustainability have also included a global view. This winter students led a fundraiser to support those fighting bushfires in Australia, and in fall our halls were



rather quiet as students poured onto Manitoba's Legislative grounds to participate in the global climate strike.

In Luke 13 Jesus describes the Kingdom of God as a tiny mustard seed planted in a garden. Like this seed, we hope that each of these conversations and practices will take root in our community. Whether we're singing "Be a Sower" or making garbage posters, we are acting out of a hope that we can live peacefully within God's creation.



Carrie Schulz ('19) in the Westgate production of "The 25th Annual Putnum County Spelling Bee"

## MUSIC IN THE LIFE OF THE WESTGATE COMMUNITY

By Nicolien Klassen-Wiebe

Music is an integral part of life at Westgate Mennonite Collegiate. It floats out of classrooms and runs through hallways and bursts from lounges. It shows up not only in rehearsals and lessons, but in worship, around campfires on Marsh and Mountain trips, and it has even echoed in ancient caves on Middle East study tours. It is one of the many things that make Westgate's heart beat.

My experiences with music at Westgate were positive and formative, but I wanted to know what other alumni thought. On social media, I asked alumni to share how music at Westgate impacted their identities, communities, and futures. The replies came from graduates of 1983 and 2019 and everywhere in between.

Johanna Klassen ('18) in the 2017 Westgate production of "Seussical"



Rebekah (Koop) Miller ('10)

**Carrie Schulz** ('19) and **Johanna Klassen** ('18) stated that Westgate's safe and supportive community gave them the confidence to pursue music at higher levels, which for both of them meant studying music at Canadian Mennonite University. "Music at Westgate helped me define who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. Without band, choir, the musical, and tour, I would not be hoping to become a music educator myself," said Klassen.

For **Rebekah (nee Koop) Miller** ('10), Westgate was formative for her career path. "I played in orchestra, band and did choir, and now I work as

a music therapist, violin teacher, and early childhood music teacher."

The skills **Reba Terlson** ('07) and **Olivia Ulrich** ('13) learned at Westgate continue to help them in their acting and musical theatre careers. For Terlson, the discipline, hard work, and practice auditioning prepared her to work in her field, while Ulrich credited choirs, tours, and musicals in helping follow her passion.

Many alumni told me that music activities were where they made some of their closest friends. "You have to become a little bit vulnerable to play music. It's not easy . . . but when you have that shared experience, I think

people automatically become bonded with each other," said Ross Brownlee, band director.

In a band or choir, each individual is integral to the group and they cannot function without each other. "This has a huge impact on creating a sense of belonging," said Vic Pankratz, choir director. "One

of the greatest benefits of singing in a choir is working at something together with other people and creating beauty out of emptiness!" Pankratz added, "Studies say people's hearts beat in time when they sing together. While that could just be because singing is a coordinated physical action, like sports, but the experience of creating sound with others *is powerful*."

Brownlee acknowledged, though, that music groups can also be exclusive. "Not everyone feels comfortable in musical settings and it wouldn't be fair to say music unequivocally builds community."



(left) Reba Terlson ('07)  
(left below) Genevieve Giesbrecht ('14)  
(below) Olivia Ulrich ('13)



*“One of the greatest benefits of singing in a choir is working at something together with other people and creating beauty out of emptiness!”*  
- Vic Pankratz

Carolyn Letkemann Nichols ('83)

**Genevieve Giesbrecht** ('14) said, “I felt that in many ways, music was so integral to Westgate’s community that if you weren’t involved, you were never able to fully engage with the community.” She acknowledged that her full schedule probably also affected this feeling, but she missed community-building activities like performances or being able to join in singing choir songs in the hallway. She also said, “Westgate benefits from its strong music foundation and it’s hard to know how to have that without naturally excluding some people.”

While for some individuals this may still happen, many Westgate students with varying interests and investment in music are showing up in large numbers indicating they want to be connected. This year, 74% of the Senior high student body is voluntarily singing in school chorus.

By sharing their music, Westgate alumni have extended that strong, dynamic feeling of community out into the world. **Carolyn Letkemann Nichols** ('83) involvement in music connected with her work at a hospital’s rehabilitation facility while she was studying for her Therapeutic Recreation degree. “I was able to play piano for



one of my patients, who was blind and in dialysis, on a weekly basis even after she was discharged. She loved it.”

Band director Brownlee recently received a beautiful note from the University of Manitoba Faculty of Music. It praised Westgate applicants for their sense of confidence, articulation, compassion, and world understanding. “Our students are sharing some of their experiences and part of their training at Westgate

through their music. And that would be Christian Studies morals, how we teach history, how we work as community, because it’s more than just the classes.”

At Westgate, music impacts how students experience community and that community shapes students’ identities. In schools, in theatres, and even in hospitals, students are sharing the warmth of this community that keeps on singing, and will for ages to come.



It's been a full year since Westgate launched the **2K1K** Campaign – the final stage of our Inspiring Spaces campus redevelopment. Initiated by Capital Campaign Chair, Ozzie Rempel, the idea is that it only takes **2000** people to donate **1000** dollars each to raise the remaining **2 Million** left owed on our building redevelopment from 2017. The total cost of this project was 10.3 Million.

Since July 2019, donations towards 2K1K have been coming in steadily and generously and we are thrilled to report that we have raised **\$128,822**. In total, we have reached **\$209,684** of our 2 Million target, with fundraising coming from individual donors throughout the year, as well as from events like the annual Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament in August and the Dine & Donate Fall Supper in October.

Westgate strives to be a caring connected community. One of the ways that community is reflected back is through gifts that have come from far and wide - from current and former parents, grandparents, alumni staff, recent grads and our supporting congregations. Thank you for your generosity and support.

**Could now be the time? Please join the 2K1K!**

As an independent school, we do not receive any government support for capital campaign projects, which means we rely on fundraising for 100% of our redevelopment costs. We are so grateful that our community continuously supports us year after year, and if you haven't yet had the opportunity to donate to Westgate, there are many quick and easy options to help support our school today!



**Cash or Cheque**



**E-Transfers**

Direct transfers to:  
accounting@westgatemennonite.org



For tax receipts, please email the same email address with your Name, Address and Email.

**Online Donations**

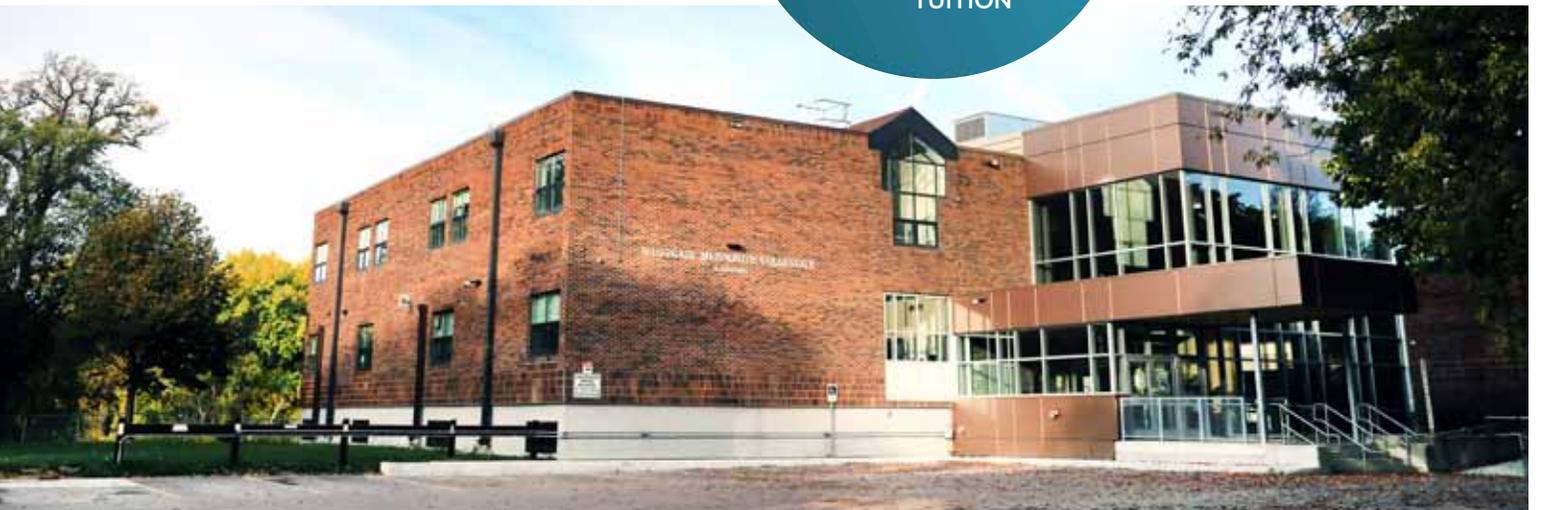
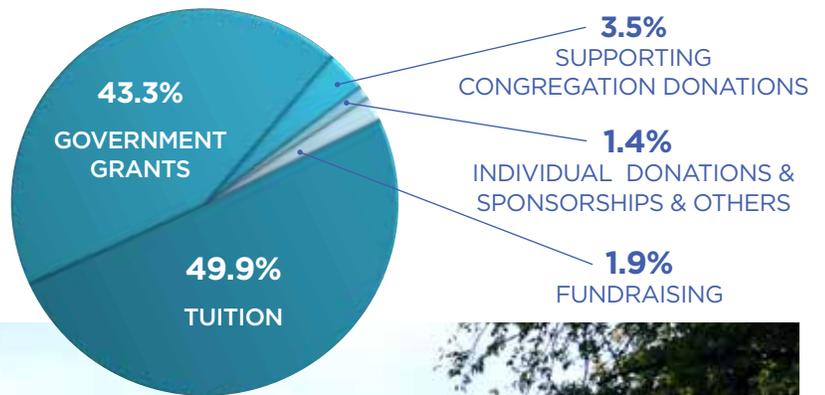
Visit: [westgatemennonite.ca/capital-campaign](http://westgatemennonite.ca/capital-campaign)  
To make a one-time donation, or set up monthly auto withdrawals, click "Donate Online."



**Westgate 2019 Net Fundraising Snapshot**

CYCLATHON	\$48,086
WORKDAY	\$32,225
BURSARY BANQUET	\$53,266
ALUMNI & FRIENDS GOLF TOURNAMENT	\$28,833
DINE & DONATE FALL SUPPER	\$52,029
2K1K	\$128,822

**A glimpse at Westgate's Operating Revenue Streams 2019**



Henry Dyck at the intersection of the old and new



## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN NEWS: REPRESENTING WESTGATE SINCE '58

For the past several decades, Westgate has benefited from a volunteer extraordinaire: Henry Dyck. He has been volunteering at the board level, on building committees, on capital campaign committees and taking time to personally connect with hundreds of Westgate alumni, friends and supporters since the 1970s. Westgate has benefited from his tireless and dedicated volunteering and would not be the same without him.

The Inspiring Spaces Campaign committee (current and past) were privileged to work alongside Henry, and witness and learn from his passion about the church and school connection. He has inspired generosity in many as he shared with others about this great opportunity we have to integrate children's education and faith.

He has supported a healthy and thriving community of churches, families and

friends to become all that God is calling us to do and be together in our city and beyond. Thank you Henry for your service!

Thank you, good and faithful servant, for all your diligent, thoughtful and generous work. We thank God for you!



## Hello Alumni!

### You're important to us!

We want to know the good things that are happening in your life. Please let us know if you have exciting announcements:

- births
- marriages
- big life events

If you have new contact information, please let us know so we can keep you informed on the latest news and events happening at Westgate!



Contact Alumni Relations Coordinator, Krista Neustaedter Barg

[knb@westgatemennonite.org](mailto:knb@westgatemennonite.org)

— 2020 SPRING —

# BURSARY BANQUET

**May 11<sup>th</sup>**

\*RSVP by May 1st\*

5:30PM Refreshments  
6:30PM Dinner

Admission to this event is complimentary and tickets will not be printed. Please reserve your individual seat or book a table by contacting Alexis Dirks at 204-775-7111x246 or emailing [adirks@westgatemennonite.org](mailto:adirks@westgatemennonite.org). All donations support the Westgate Bursary Fund.

CANAD INNS DESTINATION CENTRE POLO PARK,  
1405 ST. MATTHEWS AVE

**WESTgate**

[westgatemennonite.ca](http://westgatemennonite.ca)  
[westgateinn.org](http://westgateinn.org)

**\*\*\*PLEASE STAY TUNED FOR UPDATES ON THIS FUNDRAISER IN THE COMING WEEKS\*\*\***

## Class Reunions are coming up!

The 10 year reunion for the Class and Cohorts of 2010 will be gathering on Friday, May 22. Contact Arista Ryback or Tatiana Janovcik for more details. [missryback@gmail.com](mailto:missryback@gmail.com) or [tatikjano@hotmail.com](mailto:tatikjano@hotmail.com)

The 50 year reunion for the Class and Cohorts of 1970 will be gathering on Thursday September 24. Contact Walter Kampen for details: [dwkampen@mymts.net](mailto:dwkampen@mymts.net)

## WHY WESTGATE?

By Ozzie Rempel

### Jocelyn and Harris Teskey

Their eldest is poised to graduate in June, but she was just in grade 5 when the Teskey family was thinking long-term, looking for a fit for all three of their daughters. Their first Open House visit pretty much had them convinced that Sophie, Hannah and Molly would find that place at Westgate. The warm welcome, the thoughtful way teachers spoke to their shy little girl, even the posters on inclusion spoke of a community where mutual respect is valued and nurtured. This is evident in the regard teachers demonstrate for each other as well as for students and parents. As a non-Mennonite family, the Teskeys have appreciated feeling very much a part of that community. Westgate's strong music program was definitely a draw, and amazing outdoor opportunities – hiking, cycling from Jasper to Banff and winter camping stand out as highlights in the girls' educational experiences. Perhaps of greater import: Bob and James are adept at having serious, important conversations with both students and parents about behaviour, the implications for impressions and reputations made, and do so in a thoughtful, respectful manner. That, and the genuine concern demonstrated by dedicated teachers, their willingness to talk about difficult issues, offer guidance and provide the kind of role modelling parents are seeking for children as they learn to become ethical, responsible citizens. The Teskey family is always keen to help promote Westgate to potential students and parents!

### Ayla Manning ('12)

Ayla Manning ('12) speaks highly of all the schools she has attended – both in junior high and as a post-secondary student. But, she says, there's something special about her experiences at faith-based Westgate and CMU. For these, she says, (not now, she's still a student and broke) she can see attending fundraising events in the future and supporting them financially.

Interested in music and art, and looking for a school that supported student-led study, extracurricular math and reading, Ayla was excited to be accepted at Westgate for grade 10. Also a little bit apprehensive about leaving friends and the familiarity of French immersion to start in a new school. Immediately showing her around the school, inviting her to be a part of their social group, Ayla credits a few of her new classmates – close friends to this day - for quickly putting her



Ayla Manning ('12)

fears to rest. Within weeks, Ayla felt like Westgate was hers. Weekly chapels felt very accessible, older students were not intimidating and she found the support for student initiated study she sought. Ayla recalls too the impression it made when staff who did not teach her would smile and greet her by name. Teachers and students encouraged her to get involved – even without prior experience. And she did! Choir, deputations, music tour, the Middle East, Marsh and Mountain trips – she enjoyed them all. Expecting to complete her studies soon in Advanced Graphic Arts Design, Ayla is looking forward to the opportunity to return to Westgate. Where better to present a workshop for students than the new art space!



Jocelyn and Harris Teskey



Miles and Darilyn Derco



Bergman Family

### Mark and Sam Bergman ('92)

Mark and I both attended Westgate from grade 7 until grade 12 and graduated in 1992. We both had an amazing experience at the school through the friendships we made and we both particularly enjoyed the sports programming. We didn't have to think too long and hard about where we would send our children to be taught in a faith based environment with teachers that treated you more like family than students. The size of the school is what we find the most special. It's really what creates that family environment.

### Darilyn and Miles Derco

The interesting part about our story on how we chose Westgate for our daughter Payton is that we didn't choose it, she did. Having started our children at Christ the King Catholic School we assumed and planned to send her to St. Mary's and our younger son Griffin to St. Paul's when the time came for them to move on from their primary school years.

In May of Payton's grade five year we were out for a family hike in the Whiteshell when the subject of high school came up somehow. Out of the blue, Payton mentioned Westgate. We had heard of Westgate but it had never been considered by us. Payton mentioned that she had heard about the school from a classmate who may be considering the school in the future, and that she thought it sounded like a good place to be. As curious parents we quickly googled Westgate Mennonite Collegiate once we were back from our hike and within cellphone range. We discovered much to our surprise that the school accepted students entering grade six. We thought that this was very timely but assumed that at this point in the year they would be full and we likely would have missed the registration deadline. A quick email exchange with the administration informed us that there would be a spot available and we jumped at it.

As parents we are still not sure of exactly what drew Payton to the school initially, but over the past six months we have come to realize that it was

meant to be. She has made many friends and has enjoyed being involved with the Volleyball and Basketball teams. She is excited for the school week to start and often asks us to drop her off early so she can hang out with her classmates prior to the morning bell.

### Judith & Arlyn Friesen Epp

When we were first deciding where to send our children for secondary education, we toured the public high school in our area and discovered an incredible array of courses in a state-of-the-art facility, with highly specialized teachers. When we toured Westgate, we saw a small, somewhat cobbled-together facility (before the renovation), with a rather short list of course electives. And yet we were very decidedly drawn towards Westgate. At the public school we heard, "Look at what we have!" but we were enticed by Westgate's message, "Look at who we are." Westgate has indeed been a character-shaping place for our three children. We have valued



Friesen Epp Family

the academic excellence; we have valued even more the way the teachers have encouraged our children to be people of curiosity and critical thought. Westgate staff members have carefully and attentively nurtured a kind, caring school community; they have, in turn, taught our children to be people of compassion. The centrality of faith that is taught, lived and modelled in this school community has invited our children to become people of conviction. In a challenging world with many pressing issues, staff and students have together talked and sought ways to address them, empowering our children to become people of courage. These gifts of character – curiosity, compassion, conviction and courage – are why we have sent our children to Westgate.

## REMEMBERING PRINCIPAL WILLIAM KRUGER

By Bob Hummelt

In late May, 2014, I wheeled up to a neat and trim mid-century bungalow in Saskatoon. It was a warm early evening and I knew I would settle in for a few good hours interviewing Bill Kruger, Westgate's principal from 1966-1972. We had met on occasion over the years and I assured myself that I would come away with some great insights as I gathered Bill's perspectives for the school's 50th anniversary history book, *Necessary Idealism*.

A read through of our history reveals a consistent theme of periods of trials and tribulations that challenged most



Bill Kruger, front row, 2nd from right with Student Council in 1967

of the school's longer serving principals. This was no exception in Bill's tenure, where a slow and controversial shift in German language use and instruction resulted. Upon Bill's arrival all classes were instructed in German on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with all Chapels and staged dramas fully in German as well. As fewer students entered Westgate with a working command of German in the early 60s, Bill refused to teach and conduct Chapel in German so that all students could engage in discussions. The school made the decision that while German was important, it should not come at the expense of its religion program. This made churches, particularly those with more recent immigrants, nervous. As Bill noted: "When the school reaches into the minds of students, a "bridge" in education and languages results. If you serve as a bridge, you need to be stepped on, and we were."

Victor Kliever taught German and Religious Studies in Bill's last year at Westgate. Victor found himself in Bill's office from time to time as a novice high school teacher, and always "left Bill's office encouraged, ready for another day and another class." Victor clearly remembers leading a group of enthusiastic students to perform *De Fria (The Marriage Suitor)*, in Low German no less. The difficulty of the lines and other encroaching deadlines caused the troupe to "hit the doldrums," and Victor found himself in the principal's office ready to consider cancelling the show. Bill would have none of it, extolling Victor and the actors that "You have to pull together and see it through!" This changed the

Bill Kruger in 1971

momentum and they ended up having a wonderful time with the performance. As Victor reminisces, "It was a valuable lesson in learning to combine first enthusiasm with determination to see an idea through."

Victor was not the only staff member to take Bill's counsel. With no secretary or bookkeeper for most of his years, Bill remembers 10-11 hour days, and he often had his teachers drop in for a chat late into the evening. Bill emphasized during these visits over coffee that "Teachers cannot be mediocre and also be person-minded; the student is first someone's son or daughter and then a student, and therefore, deserving of the best."

Perhaps the bane of all Mennonite school administrators (Bill also served as principal at Rosthern Junior College and Rockway Mennonite Collegiate) is fundraising. As our visit wound down, Bill offered a story that is fitting in this journal intended to cultivate financial support for Westgate, among other things. He told me, "Wealth is seen as approval and God's blessing, but people put money into secular things." One church member commented to Bill that the school knew where he lived when they needed money. Bill responded that, "You should be honoured that we can ask this of you."

With that, I got up to leave and Bill rose from his chair. We shared a hug - two of the principal "Brothers in arms" (there was a "Sister" principal too) who have found meaning in our lives by spending much of it with staff and pupils at Westgate.

*William (Bill) Kruger passed away  
January 7, 2020*

In our Westgate Worship services this year, students were invited to share their image of God. Ava Campbell Enns, a current grade twelve student, approached that difficult question in this way.



## GOD IS LIKE A COMPOSER

By Ava Campbell Enns

**M**usic has always played a big role in my life. Since the age of three, I have been participating in some sort of music lessons, whether these have been piano, voice or violin. Music being so intertwined with my life has brought me much joy but it has also been difficult at times. It can be very frustrating to not “get” something - whether that’s in sports, school or really anything else.

Four or so years ago, I had the opportunity to play a Bach double violin concerto. For the little grade eight me, that was a lot of fast notes for my fingers to keep up with. For those of you that don’t know the piece, it is a duet written by Bach for two violins. It’s a fairly fast piece that requires a lot of communication between both players. For me, this

was a very difficult task because I just simply couldn’t keep up with my partner. When we’d rehearse together, it was a bit discouraging to have to play to my partner’s level rather than working together. I felt as though it was pointless to play a piece where both of us could play it better separately rather than together.

Although this may not have impacted me drastically, this was one of the first big moments I struggled with feeling that I was bad at something just because others were better than me. However, whether on sports teams, orchestras or in other collaborative groups, I have learned to find my role in each of my teams. In orchestra I am a supporting role for those who have roles as leaders.

Like the many roles I have, I feel that God has roles for everyone. We each have purposes and if we perform them properly, we can support others and that’s something God wants for all of us. In this way, God is like a composer. A composer has certain roles for each instrument so each person can work together in harmony with others. The composer creates the piece but it is up to the players and the conductor to decide how it is performed. The best conductors and players will try their best to perform the music in a way that is accurate to the image they believe the composer has, while also playing in agreeable harmony.

It’s also clear to see God as a composer because both God and composers can be seen only through their work. Composers live through their music by people performing it. We know Bach as one of the most famous composers because millions of people have played his music and somehow almost 300 hundred years later that man still makes my fingers cramp. Hopefully God doesn’t make your fingers cramp, but welcomes you into a harmonious space where you feel God’s presence always.

So maybe that performance of Bach’s double violin concerto wasn’t great but it helped me and my duet partner understand each other better. We learned to adapt our roles to help each other which I think is important in any team setting. Bach once said, “Music is an agreeable harmony for the honor of God and the permissible delights of the soul.” Music pushes me to think about all the places where my role helps others and how I can honour God in harmony.

Ava Campbell Enns (’20)





Parents: If this magazine is addressed to your child and they no longer live at this address, Westgate Mennonite Collegiate would appreciate knowing their new address. Information should be directed to [alumni@westgatemennonite.org](mailto:alumni@westgatemennonite.org)



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