



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

October/November, 2023

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Highlights of October and November at MFS include Cultures Day, and a weeklong break in October, as we move into our second term of the year.

Our celebration of Cultures Day made us mindful of cultures in other, less familiar settings. At the same time, the celebration helped us to reflect upon what our culture and values at MFS.

Such reflections lead us to consider MFS's heritage -- how we carry the school and our Quaker values into the future, and ways to assure that the school will be able to continue its existence well into the future.

Sadly, the Israel/Hamas war broke out during this time. Reflecting our Quaker traditions, we share a statement on peace as an aim in itself; rather than taking sides and continuing hostilities.



Our first and second graders celebrated Cultures Day by drawing and wearing masks based on what they learned in their class about an indigenous culture in Costa Rica.

Cultures Day 2023 at MFS



To celebrate Cultures Day (the Costa Rican version of Columbus Day) on October 12th, Monteverde Friends School students “traveled” across the globe. Thanks to teachers on this year’s Cultures Day Committee, working with the 11/12 class, students immersed themselves in the cultures and traditions of six countries—Argentina, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Japan, the U.S., and Nicaragua.

Stations were set up around our campus, each representing a different country. Our 11/12 students led the half/hour session at each station with information and slides they had prepared.

After having their “passports” stamped at each site, students had the chance to try traditional foods, listen and dance along to music, hear folktales and histories, and glimpse connections between cultures and people around the world. Students of every age impressed us with their rapt attention and genuine interest in every aspect of the day.

Thanks to all who made our world travel possible!

This article was prepared by Liza Ewen, our Head of School, who previously presented it in the weekly notices that go to staff and school parents.



Younger students were especially drawn to activities that included coloring masks or pictures, not to mention sampling treats for the different "countries" they "visited."

How Do We Build and Continue Culture and Heritage at MFS?



An agave spear growing in my yard first got me thinking about heritage. Toward the end of its life, the agave puts out a large spear – about 30 to 40 feet high for the one in my yard – that feeds birds with its beautiful blossoms, provides a popular perch for birds, and disperses its seeds to ensure a next generation of agave.

What a dramatic way to leave a heritage!

Watching the agave spear over the past year has led to these queries:

What are we doing now to continue to create a heritage for MFS that makes a difference?

Quakers have a very strong presence in Monteverde primarily due to about 40 Quakers coming to Monteverde in 1951 as a protest against the peacetime military draft implemented in the U.S., their home country. That alone leads to many travel groups stopping by for presentations on how Quakers came to Costa Rica. Few Quaker and nonprofit organizations enjoy such outreach!

More importantly now, we need to look at what we are currently doing, and not just rely on a heritage from 70 years ago. Woven throughout our school experiences are the values shared by Quakers and Costa Ricans, things like peacemaking, living simply, integrity, community, equality and sustainability.

As the agave spreads its seeds, so do our students as they head out into the community and the world with the values and knowledge we embrace at MFS. We see our alums coming back to engage the community on important ecological issues. **PaloVivo**, a nonprofit formed by three alumni to support important issues like reforestation and engaging youth in experiencing nature is a great example. They taught a term of tree climbing last year for the gym classes for all of our MFS students.

What are we doing to ensure that the Monteverde Friends School will be able to continue long into the future?

Living up to this query is a more of a challenge. As the pandemic has taught us, emergencies do happen. As school parents lost their jobs, tuition disappeared. At times we worried that the school might not make it through. We did make it through, mainly due to our donors' generosity. Like much of the world, we are now more conscious that, particularly in the midst of climate change, we need to prepare for emergencies.

Even our buildings, mainly made of wood that termites love point to a need for heritage funding -- large amounts in endowment-style accounts where we can rely on growth and interest funds for programs and at times, larger amounts for major capital expenses such as replacing older buildings.

As you may have guessed by now, much of an organization's ability to sustain a long-term heritage relies on financial donations. IN many cases, such donations can often be done in forms that provide donors with the benefit of tax deductions. To learn about ways we might work on building a legacy fund, we asked Mimi Blackwell, Director of Philanthropic Services at [Friends Fiduciary](#), to provide us with some training.

Mimi's presentation starts with the idea that every person, at every age, can help build heritage funding. Perhaps for a younger person that might not include any cash now, but could be a promise of future funding -- e.g. making our school (through our U.S. and Canadian partners to get tax deductions) the beneficiary of bank accounts or retirement funds.

Typically older donors have accumulated wealth in the form of retirement funds -- IRAs, for example. When reaching the age where the IRS requires taxable distributions of that wealth, there are options for donating some or all of that income directly from your investment fund to a nonprofit, which means the amount of the donation will not be included in your taxable. Another strategy that is growing in popularity is to make a Charitable Annuity donation. For this, the donor gives the charity a donation (often tens of thousand of dollars) and is paid a set amount from that donation for the rest of the donor's life.

If you would like to make a donation, either for current programs or to help us build for a longstanding heritage, please go to www.mfschool.org/donate or feel free to contact [Friends Fiduciary](#) to learn more. As always, you can [contact MFS](#) with questions.

It is so wonderful to have your support!

**Help us provide financial aid to local students
as we build a heritage through them!**

Visit www.mfschool.org/donate to make tax-
deductible donations
in Canada, the US and Costa Rica



Peace and Non-violence: Quaker Culture and Heritage

It has been heartbreaking to watch the conflict between Israel and Hamas escalate this month. As a Quaker school, our hearts go out to all those impacted by war and violence.

In particular, we have been thinking of the students and teachers in both Israel and Palestine, and their attempts to continue the school year as war breaks out.

Monteverde Monthly Meeting shared this important reminder of Quaker beliefs:

At this painful moment when it seems that another war is beginning, the Monthly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) of Monteverde declares that we have never justified war or any other type of violence since our beginning more than 350 years ago. The justification of war for religious reasons seems to us to be a contradiction to the message of Christ, as well as to the fundamental principles of all the great religions of the world. Friends have worked actively for peace for three centuries, and continue to do so.

