

STEELERS TAKE FIRST GAME OF PLAYOFF FINALS BY STORM



Barrhead's Midget AA Steelers now have the lead over Whitecourt. **35A**

The Barrhead Leader

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IAN KUCERAK PHOTO

Dale Kiselyk, of Nature Alive, leads host families, exchange students and guests in a group drum circle. The participants wore silly hats and drummed to celebrate the connection between Barrhead and Tokoro. The two cities celebrated their twinning this year with a student exchange between the town in northern Japan and Barrhead.

Japanese exchange students bid farewell with drumming and hockey

IAN KUCERAK
LEADER STAFF

With smiles on their faces, host families and Japanese exchange students bid farewell to each other after a fun filled week spent learning about each other. The students, from Tokoro, Japan returned home on March 23, after they spent a week in Barrhead and Edmonton.

For both the families and their charges, the week was a time to share in the beauty of each other's culture. They shared food, pop culture, and language as well as spending time learning about rural Canada. And yes, they did go to West Edmonton Mall.

They capped off their week of travels with a farewell beef on a bun dinner in the Agrena's multipurpose room, which was followed by drumming with Dale Kiselyk, of Nature Alive. He led the entire group of host families, students and organizers in group drumming exercises

that shook the room while leaving even those on the sidelines smiling.

Some of the students and their teacher, Takahito Narita, saw the Barrhead Steelers hockey team win their first game of their playoff finals series on Friday night and then on Saturday, they departed for Vancouver. They toured the west coast city for a day and then flew to Toyko and then on to Tokoro, which is on the most northern island in Japan, on Tuesday.

Narita said the students learned a lot in Barrhead and thought West Edmonton mall was "amazing," he said with a chuckle.

"We had a very good time in Barrhead," he said, adding that their hometown was smaller than Barrhead.

Miki Sudo, one of Narita's students, said she had fun preparing Japanese dishes for her Barrhead hosts, the Widup family, tasting Canadian food, going to West Edmonton Mall, watching movies and going to school. The students

also taught their families how to make the ancient art known as origami, which are creations made from carefully folded paper.

Hilde Slomp went to Tokoro on exchange in November of last year and was one of the Barrhead teens that greeted the Japanese students in town. Miho Kashiwaya stayed and traveled with the Slomp family as they gave their charge a taste of this part of Canada.

"We took her to Stony Plain to see the murals and we showed her the park that was given to us by Tokoro," she said, referencing the Japanese garden that was built in the west part of Barrhead to commemorate the connection the two towns made across the vast reaches of the Pacific Ocean.

"It's about the size of Barrhead, but they have more stop lights," she said with a laugh. "That's the only difference. You still get that small town feel."

The towns of Tokoro and Barrhead

were formerly joined in a twinning agreement signed on July 4, 1991. The official document, signed by Mayor Kazuo Inoue of Tokoro, Mayor Bill Stutchbury, from the town of Barrhead, and Reeve George Visser from the county of Barrhead, put into motion a relationship that continues to flourish nearly 19 years later.

For the students however, who weren't born when the sister agreement was created, the trip was an exciting time to experience new things.

While they may be resting at home after a long flight, the five students and their teacher will have lasting impressions of the town and country they've only seen in photographs. They'll have their own memories that'll last for a lifetime.

"We learned about the culture and life in Canada, and the languages," their teacher, Takahito Narita, said. "We love Canada."

Town & Country
THIS WEEK

Too much info can
equal identity theft

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