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Drumming and dancing

African performers lead workshops in Iglulik

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Published Saturday, November 6, 2010

IGLULIK - Students at Ataguttaaluk High School in Iglulik enjoyed a series of workshops led by visiting drummers and dancers from Oct. 24 to Nov. 3.

Performers with Kalabante Productions, an African drumming and dancing troupe based in Montreal, Quebec, were in the community to rehearse on a collaboration with the Inuit acrobatic theatre company, ArtCirq.

Mamoudou Diallo, Yamoussa Bangoura, Nnato Camara, and Karim Bangoura presented performance art based on African traditions from Conakay, Guinea and Burkina Fasso. Mamoudou and Yamoussa had visited the school in the past. Many students recognized them and treated them like celebrities when they entered the school late last month.

"The students were elated," said music teacher Patricia Tidd. "They were in awe and clamoured all around them."

The students sang traditional African songs and learned about new kinds of instruments, such as the African plucked drum called the mbra, in Tidd's music class.

The performers' motto is "if you can walk you can dance, if you can talk you can sing."

They learned new dance moves as the special guests joined phys-ed instructor Daniel Guay's Grade 11 class in the gymnasium, as well.

"The students have also been incorporating the Inuit drum into some of their new found talents," Tidd said. "They are fascinated by the hypnotic rhythms and in awe of the exuberant dancing. You can find the students stomping their feet and humming the new rhythms they have been exposed to."

Tidd often hosts visiting instructors as part of her new music program. A teacher at the school for the past three years, this is the first year that students have had the opportunity to participate in a music program as part of the regular academic curriculum.



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Visiting musician Karim Bangoura examines a colourful African plucked instrument known as an mbra with Grade 11 Ataguttaaluk High School student Sippora Amarualik. - photo courtesy of Patricia Tidd