

Good News Release

February 27th, 2025

What a month for Bishop Smith Athletics teams! The Senior Girls Volleyball team captured the UOVHSAA championship title, delivering a decisive 3-0 victory over St. Joseph's High School. Adding to the excitement, the Junior Girls Volleyball team also triumphed in the county finals against Jeanne Lajoie, winning in three thrilling sets. They dominated the first set with an impressive 25-3 win, but the subsequent sets were a hard-fought contest, with both teams battling point for point. The juniors showcased incredible grit and determination, securing a 25-22 victory in the second set and a nail-biting 26-24 finish in the third, ultimately claiming the championship title.

Additionally, the Bishop Smith Senior Boys Basketball Team secured the County Championship trophy for the second year in a row. Another exciting win for the Bishop Smith Athletics teams! Way to go Bears!

This year, two grade 11 and 12 construction classes, led by teachers Matthew Valliquette and Michael McGrath, have embarked on a significant community project for the Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre. These dedicated students will be refinishing two large cedar signs, beloved fixtures of Shaw Woods, giving them a much-needed restoration. This generous donation of time and skill from the students and teachers will help preserve these iconic signs for years to come.

St. Joseph's High School had their Kindness Café back in action with a special Valentines Day menu! Students were overwhelmed with the amazing support from both staff and students throughout the school community, with a special thanks to Director of Education, Mark Searson, for stopping by and testing out the café! The Kindness Café is a space where inclusion, skill building, and community grows.

Grade 11 and 12 students from both St. Joseph's High School and Bishop Smith Catholic High School recently returned from their annual Dominican Republic Experience trip to Yamasa, a journey filled with cultural immersion, community engagement, and lasting memories. The trip provided students with a unique opportunity to connect with the Dominican community and broaden their global perspective.

The trip allowed students to engage in a variety of activities, offering them a glimpse into Dominican life and culture. They shared time with Sister Noelia Hernandez and host mom Rosa Herminia after Sunday Mass, gaining personal insights into the local customs and traditions. All students stay with wonderful families during their stay and create life-long friendships with the people in Yamasa.



Grade 11 & 12 construction classes working on refinishing two large cedar signs from Shaw Woods



Junior Girls County Champs!



Senior Girls Champs



Senior Boys Basketball Champs

The group also participated in community service projects contributing to the revitalization of the Ozama River by collecting 30 bags of refuse. This initiative demonstrated a shared commitment to environmental stewardship and well-being.

The warm hospitality of the Dominican families was evident, with rosaries hanging on doors symbolizing their strong faith. The vibrant colours of Dominican houses reflected the unity and sense of community, a tradition embraced by both Canadian and Dominican friends who joined together to paint two houses and a local store in Yamasa.

Additionally, a fun and interactive baking session with teacher Maria at the Marguerite Centre in Yamasa saw students creating traditional pastelitos, Valentine sugar cookies, and bacon & rosemary rolls.

The visit also included educational exchanges at San Martin de Porres Secondary School, with students touring classrooms and interacting with their Dominican peers. At Fray Pedro de Córdoba Elementary School, the Canadian group introduced students to Canadian music with Shania Twain and shared a message of global unity through a performance of "We Are the World."

Students shared remarks on their experience in Yamasa as follows:

Evelyn Watson:

My experience in the Dominican Republic has heavily impacted me in so many ways. I would say that what impacted me the most was seeing the Dominicans being the happiest people I've ever seen while having so little. The Dominicans don't live in big beautiful homes or have nice expensive things. But they are still happy with who they are and what they have. I also saw that they hold very dear to themselves the little that they have; whether it was a cut out picture of Jesus or a piece of pottery. They were proud of what they had and they cherish and hold dear the little that they have.

Madav Ratheesh

*Before I made the trip, I had a lot of people telling me that it's a 'really life-changing experience.' At first, I took this with a grain of salt, people were just exaggerating, right? But as it's come and gone, I do believe that being with the people of Yamasa changed the way I look at things. It **is** moving seeing the extent of the poverty the Dominicans face, as well as the strong sense of community that stands against it. Even in their lack of material possessions, the Dominicans have a sort of happiness you don't find in Canada, and I both respect and envy it. The three words I think I'd use to describe my experience are: moving, eye-opening, and unassuming. My most unexpected experience that stands out occurred while we were cleaning up rivers on Thursday. Not only is the environment something I deeply care about, but that day I had the chance to have a 1 on 1 conversation with Jodi on a variety of topics I care about. It's difficult to describe how much that conversation meant to me, but I feel like I was deeply moved by hearing his opinions on the poverty that surrounded us and the parallels it drew back to our own issues back in Canada. It's one of the big things that compels me to want to continue with mission/relief work in the future.*



St. Joseph's Kindness Café



San Martin de Porres welcomes their Canadian friends to their school



Elliot Lofstedt:

My experience in the Dominican Republic impacted me in many ways. Seeing joy in poverty makes me a lot more appreciative of what I have. The people there don't have very many physical possessions, but their appreciation for family, God, and the few things they do have gives them much more joy than I see within much better-off Canadians. Seeing this joy and appreciation for less changes my perspective on how I should live my life going forward. I was also impacted by my interactions with the Yamasa community. While walking through the streets, I would say hello to people I would see. Everyone responded back with a smile. This made me feel amazing because in Canada, people almost always ignore you. Seeing this makes me want to be kinder to people within my community. My experience on this trip impacted me so much in more ways than just these. It has changed my entire perspective on life. I would recommend this trip to anyone who gets the opportunity.

Fedora Yonkeu-Tchami

My experience in the Dominican Republic reminded me that what I have here in Pembroke is a privilege and to never take it for granted. 3 words to best describe my experience would be "Eye-opening," "refreshing" and "exciting." Remember that this experience is bigger than you. You are directly impacting a lovely community of people who may not be as privileged as you. Furthermore, always try your best to fundraise and follow God's path for you.

"Until we meet again," shared San Martin de Porres Secondary School, expressing the hope for future collaborations and continued friendship. The RCCDSB Dominican Republic Experience trip served as a powerful reminder of the importance of cultural exchange and the positive impact of connecting communities across borders. The students returned to Canada with a deeper understanding of the world and a renewed appreciation for the values of global citizenship.



Visit with Sister Noelia Hernandez and host mom Rosa Herminia after Sunday Mass.



Students enjoyed a baking session with teacher Maria at the Marguerite Centre



Until we meet again, from San Martin de Porres Secondary School.



Canadian and Dominican friends painting two houses and a local store.



DR team collected 30 bags of refuse from the Ozama River today.