

Ancient civilization comes to life at Chatham school



By Diana Martin, Chatham Daily News
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Lady-in-waiting Milani Sabitz, 10, right, flanked by princesses Mackenzie St. Pierre, 9 and Linzi Male, 10, far left, raise a toast to the king during a medieval feast at Monsignor Uyen Catholic School as a part of Catholic Education Week. Photo taken in Chatham, Ont. on Thursday May 7, 2015. (Diana Martin/Chatham Daily News/Postmedia Network)

Being a servant in 1275 wasn't a life of leisure.

"First of all they actually had someone to hold the target (for archery games) and they would have actually used real arrows," said Sawyer Ritchie, 10. "If they did miss, the guy would have been hurt or killed."

Fortunately for Ritchie, who was hit by more than one guest attending Thursday's Medieval Feast at Monsignor Uyen Catholic School for Catholic Education Week – the arrows had sucker-cup ends.

The two-hour interactive program, performed by Antje and Jon Giles of Golden Gryphon in Glencoe, transformed the school gym into a castle feast resplendent with long tables draped in deep purple cloth, heavy silver plates and goblets and two opposing clans.

"For me I definitely was disinterested about this stuff they way we learned about it in school," said 'Squire' Jon Giles, dressed in a chainmail coif, red shirt, red tights and a beige tunic.

"We wanted to have an interactive program that would engage students to be interested in the medieval time period."

During the feast the students are directed to adhere to the code of chivalry, which includes no elbows on the table, no wiping your face on the tablecloth, no passing gas and not stuffing your face with food.

"They bring weapons, the table set-up and they provided the king, queen, friar, knights, squires, princess costumes," said teacher Cathy Cadotte-Trudeau. "They're living what happened, as far as a feast night including the manners, so it's hands-on learning."

She said before the event the students discussed what they thought they knew about medieval time during for social studies, they also did personal projects on one ancient civilization for social studies.

“Now we'll go back and revisit that and ask what are your new learnings,” said Cadotte-Trudeau. “We can draw from our curriculum today and compare what they see happening back then. It could be religion, it could be family life, it could be social studies, it could be dance.”

The students were challenged in a game of riddles, learned which birds of prey could be used by which person of standing, the punishment for gossiping about royalty and several dances.

“I found it kind of surprising that at the age of 12 you're legal to be married,” said Ritchie. “But I guess when you think about it, it's not that surprising because you don't live a very long life. You don't have all the medicine we do now.”

He said children in medieval times wouldn't dare say no to a parent when asked to clean their room, in fact in comparison children then were tasked with much harder jobs than today.

Ritchie thought they probably had a good education for the time, but feels fortunate to have technology as part of his education.

“They didn't have electronics to learn off of, like smart-boards. The scientists didn't know what we know now,” he said. “If there was a big earthquake, they might have thought the gods were punishing them. But we know it's the plates shifting underneath.”

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