

Merritt Herald

Pirate ship returns from Island trip

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Captain Smollet and her crew were finally setting sail!

It was Tuesday, April 25, 6:15 am, and all of the actors and choir members of Bench Elementary's musical production, *Treasure Island*, were excitedly boarding the two buses that would take them first to Surrey, then on to Nanaimo.

Our first performance was at the Pacific Academy in Surrey. At first glance, I thought the bus driver had pulled up at a mansion. The 'school' was massive. Our play took place in an actual theatre. The stage was as large as our gym, surrounded by two levels of seating. About 200 students from Pacific Academy were already seated and waiting impatiently for our performance to begin. The lights dimmed, and the play began. Back stage I could feel my body tense as I got ready to go on. I could feel the buzz of excitement as actors went smoothly on and off stage after performing their lines. You could hear actors back stage hold their breath if somebody stumbled on a word, but they always managed to cover up their mistake without losing their cool. After an hour and ten minutes, the play was over and we had to dash to catch the ferry to Vancouver Island.

Once in Nanaimo, we dropped our luggage at our host school, Mount View Elementary, and had a quick pizza dinner on the playground in a light rain (it rained a lot there). After dinner we departed on an excursion to Newcastle Island. To get to the island, we had to cross a small body of water in several small boats. There we combed the beach for interesting shells, many of which eventually found their way into our bags. A word of advice - don't put stinky seashells in the bag with the clothes you planned on wearing the next day! Most of us ended up smelling like day old surf. After Newcastle Island, we returned to our host school to have a good night sleep - not!

In the morning, we had a quick breakfast and then got ready to travel to the **Horne Lake Caves**. The caves were amazing! Full of stalactites, brain crystal, and cauliflower rock. It was like travelling through a whole new world. There were caverns so big you could not see the top, and tunnels so small you had to crawl on your stomach. The caverns were like a jungle, with many naturally formed animal shapes. There was a great grinning crocodile with a small bullfrog perched on its head. A glaring bobcat snarled at us as we passed a small waterfall and pool. And even Winnie-the-Pooh and Piglet could be found there, carved in cavern crystal.

When our caving experience was over, our guide took us back to the buses and we had lunch. Afterwards we drove down to Horne Lake to participate in the Amazing Race, which was kindly organized by the site staff. The Amazing Race took nearly three hours of running around, trying to accomplish specific tasks before anyone else. For example, we had to make a home made stretcher and carry a teammate in it throughout the race. Another task required a blindfolded teammate to pick up several balls and place them in garbage can. We could guide our teammate only by

loud sounds (no word). In the end, my team, the Polar Penguins, won. Our reward - soggy gummy worms (did I mention that it rained a lot on the island).

Back at Mountain View school, we had a delicious barbecue of hot dogs, hamburgers, and cake, courtesy of our host. Afterwards we went to the local pool for an evening dip. It had an awesome diving board tower and a cool water slide. I was beat by the end of the day and was looking forward to a good night sleep.

The next day, we performed our last play for our gracious hosts. They thought it was brilliant. Although I was looking forward to getting home, I was sad to see the end of this awesome trip and the final call of Treasure Island. The last three days had been great, and I would like to thank Mr. Clark and all the other staff and parents for making this field trip and Treasure Island possible.