**Report of Finland Mobility Monday 20.1.2020 – Friday 24.1.2020**

Our guests from Austria, Germany, Spain and Scotland arrived during the weekend at various times.

**Monday 20.1**

At 9:00 am on Monday morning, the Oulu International School (OIS) principal, Raija Perttunen, welcomed our guests hoping they would spend a lovely week at our school learning about our school and Finnish culture. After this, the students went with OIS teacher, Samantha Harjula, to take part in an ice-breaker activity to get to know each other better and feel more relaxed being with new friends in a strange school. Meanwhile the accompanying teachers attended an informative presentation about our school and then a staff meeting with the OIS teachers.

Before attending a Finnish language/drama workshop the students and teachers were introduced to the school premises through a guided tour of our facilities by OIS students. In the Finnish language workshop, one of our Finnish teachers, Tanja Salo, lead the visiting students and teachers in fun and games that taught them some basic Finnish words and phrases which might come in handy during the week in Finland like thank you – kiitos, and how to say Finland in Finnish – Suomi.

Midday was lunch time. Our visiting students got to experience their first typical Finnish school lunch in our school’s lunch hall called *The Big Bite*. There is always a warm food, salad, and bread as well as either water or milk to drink. Once a week we have a dessert.

The afternoon was spent doing a tour of Oulu city centre in groups. We mixed the groups so that each group had students and teachers from different countries. A sheet of instructions was given to each group which had photos of 6 famous landmarks in the city centre such as Oulu Castle, the Toripoliisi statue and Oulu Cathedral among others. The idea of the tour was an interactive one. Each group had to take a fun selfie with the whole group next to each landmark. There was also a question asked about some detail at each location. Selfies and answers to the questions had to be uploaded to an internet site called Padlet. The locals in each group recognised each landmark and knew how to navigate their group to each location. The group which has all of the tasks done and questions answered correctly will be awarded a prize and announced at Friday’s assembly.

Oulu Castle


Students went home for the evening to enjoy activities and dinner with their host families while teachers went out to Sokeri Jussi which is a restaurant that provides traditional Finnish food. We ate reindeer and other Finnish specialties.

**Tuesday 21.1**

On Tuesday morning when students arrived at school, they joined in with host’s lessons according to their timetable to experience normal classes in Finland. At 10:15 it was time for everyone to go to the gym for a whole school assembly. Each country had a short presentation to show which they had prepared in advance about cultural heritage monuments and buildings in their own city and how they are maintained and restored.

After lunch, our music teacher Maarit Haataja held a workshop about traditional Finnish music. Students learned a Finnish song and how to play simple chords on a traditional Finnish instrument called a kantele. The music was truly beautiful and it was amazing how everyone caught on so quickly.

Then, there was one more creative workshop for the day, and it was off to the nearby art museum. Students viewed the current exhibition of contemporary art called *Shared Dreams* and then created some of their own art consisting of short video clips in a Green Screen workshop lead by experts at the art museum.

Students had free time again with their host families after the day, while teachers participated in an annual Scottish event held in Oulu each year: a Robert Burns evening hosted by the English club of Oulu which took place in a beautifully maintained cultural heritage building called *Weckman House*. Amongst all the other programme for the evening, one of our talented teachers from Scotland, Alison MacRae, who is also a singer, sang some traditional Scottish songs for all to enjoy. This evening was very profound and special, also because it was a meeting of Finnish and Scottish cultures within our project.

**Wednesday 22.1**

Being in the city centre of Oulu, OIS has many nearby places to visit. Across the road from the school, there is a beautiful large park called Ainola Park where we spent the morning. Wednesday was the day to experience Finnish some traditional Finnish winter activities. Unfortunately, this year there is not as much snow as there usually is, but we managed to do some sledding down an icy hill and grilling sausages on the open fire. We had hoped to ski as well but it was not possible. Grilling sausages is very typical for anyone on a day outdoors in Finnish nature.

Another attraction just 5 minute’s walk from our school is *Tietomaa* which is an interactive science museum and this is where we spent the afternoon. There are several floors to roam and many interesting exhibits to participate in through hands-on activities.

The OIS Parents’ Association arranged a potluck dinner for the evening. It was held at the school in the Big Bite dining hall. The host families brought along some food and desserts to share with the guests and to eat together. It is special to have OIS parents share their foods as we are an international school and so there were many tasty foods from many different countries including traditional Finnish dishes of course. The evening was fun with lots of feasting and socialising.

**Thursday 23.1**

The bus departed from the school at 7:30 am on Thursday morning. It was an early start to an exciting day trip on the bus to Rovaniemi to see Santa. The bus trip takes 3 hours and the first stop in Rovaniemi was the Arktikum Museum with a guided tour. The Arktikum Museum helps people understand the history of the Arctic, what it is like for people and animals to live in the Artic regions. It also teaches about the climate and changing seasons that are unique to the area. Lunch was eaten at the Arktikum Café instead of the school lunch – which was a nice change and upgrade.

After the museum, it was time to see some huskies at the *Husky Park*. The guests all had a short husky ride. They also had fun patting and hugging the beautiful dogs and having photos taken with them.

Finally, it was time to see Santa. The best part of the trip was left until last. Santa’s Village had many interesting things to do. Students and teachers roamed freely, going to see the Christmas exhibition which shows many different Christmas traditions from Finland and around the world; shopping in specialty Arctic shops; taking photos of stepping over the Arctic Circle line; and of course meeting Santa Claus and having a photo taken with him. It was late – after 8:00pm when the bus arrived back in Oulu.

**Friday 24.1**

The first item in today’s programme was to walk 1 ½ km to Pikisaari Sailor’s home museum. The walk is a pretty and scenic one through parks and gardens, across bridges and the Oulu River. The museum was quite small so two groups were made. While one group was in the museum, the other went for a tour of nearby landmarks like the city library. The museum tour was guided, and the hosts were dressed in costume and told and showed what it was like to live a few 100 years ago in Oulu. Since Oulu is a coastal city, sailors played a large part in its history.

Back at school in the afternoon, the mayor of Oulu, Päivi Laajala, came to visit. The mayor gave a presentation about Oulu – it’s past, present and future plans, and she responded to questions afterwards. A group photo with the mayor was also taken. The original idea was to visit the City Hall to meet the mayor, but it was under renovation, so the mayor was kind enough to come and visit the school instead.

One last set of Finnish cultural workshops were held after the mayor’s visit. Students were divided into 3 groups: 2 crafts workshops with craft teachers Anne Linna and Jussi Heikkilä, and 1 cooking workshop with our home economics teacher Sanna Åman.

After the workshops a final “Ending Party” was held. Firstly, there was a trivia Kahoot competition about Oulu and each of the activities that was experienced throughout the week. Hosts teamed up with their guests to compete as a team. Questions included things like: “What does the Finnish word, *kiitos* mean?”; “Where was our pee break on the way to Rovaniemi and back?”; and “What was the name of the snowmobile simulator at Tietomaa Science Centre?” This was a nice way to review all the activities done during the week. The winning pair received bags of goodies from Oulu. The winning group of Monday morning’s Oulu City tour was announced and the Padlet pictures were shown. To end the celebration, everyone danced the Finnish letkajenkka - a Finnish folk dance and ate Finnish goodies made in the cooking workshop.

Students spent their final evening with their hosts. Many had teamed up during evenings to go bowling together as a group or do other activities. Good memories were made and lasting friendships were sealed.

The teachers had a final Finnish cultural evening. They went to a sauna ferry or“saunalautta” to have a traditional Finnish sauna on a boat which was docked on the Oulu River. The boat also had a warm bubbling jacuzzi outside in the freezing cold. Teachers went in and out of the sauna and jacuzzi as well as taking a few dips into the icy water of Oulu River. Everybody survived the ordeal and even felt refreshed afterwards.

Saturday saw the departure of our dear guests. OIS Finland loved hosting our guests, learning together, and seeing our guests experiencing our Finnish culture with us.