



# ISC Views and Voices

“Education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself.” - John Dewey

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## A Note from Lilou

by Lilou Baumann

*For those who didn't meet Lilou, she visited us for two months, acting as volunteer and apprentice. Lilou is part of a group in Austria that intends to open a Sudbury School in Vienna, so Lilou was here to experience a Sudbury School first-hand and learn how to be a staff member. While she was here, she began working on a documentary on Sudbury Schools; her interest in this project has since expanded and she now intends to include several different educational alternatives.*

*We really enjoyed having Lilou and are happy to know she will be coming back to Canada in the fall! She has been granted permission by the art college she attends to do some kind of practicum with us.*

*I asked Lilou to write a little article about her experiences here, and this is her offering:*

### Lilou's pleasurable experiences at ISC...

Well, first of all, I have to say that I felt welcome and at home from the beginning. There is this strong respect between students, staff, volunteers and visitors—as one of ISC's basic rules—which felt very warm to me.

Compared to many other communities, the ISC community is not a closed

circle of people who want to make you believe particular things; it is an open space where different opinions, beliefs and ways of being flow together, like the water of a fountain that keeps always going; each drop finds its own way of moving, of flowing.

Each drop can be easily separated from the others, though it always knows it is part of the huge fountain and that it can dance and spin around in the round dance with all of these drops.

I had the impression that at ISC you have the choice in every single moment to actively be part of the big fountain, or if you'd rather, you can just be for yourself. The amazing thing about ISC consists in actually not having to choose between these two states of being because, in fact, you are always part of the whole. If you are not, if there are conflicts that arouse between the water drops, they will be immediately dealt with.

### A dream come true

I love dreaming. Every morning after waking up, I write down my dreams of the previous night in my dream diary. I keep them and collect them and sometimes read them again after a while. Often I have dreams about different planets and creatures.

When I came to ISC, I felt like having plunged into one of my dreams; I felt like having landed on one of these planets where all is so different to the world that I have known so far. I seemed to be part of a dream that I already had in my imagination before several times. A dream about a school based on mutual respect, individual freedom and democratic decisions, without marks, judging, hierarchy and labelling. I always wished this “educational illusion” to become true. I couldn't believe that ISC was not a dream

world or simply a mirage but that it was reality. I am happy that I haven't woken up since being at ISC...

Thank you for being who you are and for creating who you want to be so freely and openly!

## They Don't Have to be Told

by Nicolette Groeneveld

One of the things I love about being a staff member at ISC is watching our students do things because they *want* to rather than because they're being told to. What inspired this train of thought is simply watching our students play outside. In winter, our students are inside for the most part, although there's snow fort building once in a while and when it's not *too* cold, students do go on walks. But as soon as the sun becomes even the tiniest bit warm and the snow disappears from the surface of the trampolines, that's when our students head to the outdoors in droves! The trampolines are ever popular—whether students are bouncing or just sitting and visiting; walks are a daily occurrence; buffalo rides are constantly being requested; the creek is a fun place to go adventuring (and falling in is part of the fun!); “pretend” games of every description happen in the fields and amongst the trees; and sporting games like basketball, football and Frisbee happen too. To our “free” students, being outside seems to be as much a natural part of life as eating. It gets a bit messy after the kids have been out dancing in rain showers, but what more beautiful image of the “kingdom of childhood” could there be!

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# Looking at Indigo Sudbury Campus

by Tannie Cyr—ISC Parent

As we are coming closer to the end of the school year, I find myself thinking about the impact Indigo Sudbury has had on our family. My mind is racing because of all changes we have experienced and all the friends we have made.

At the end of past school years, my thoughts were not as they are today. At other schools, the year would start out with great hope as I would sit down and talk to principals, vice principals, special needs facilitators, teachers and aides about the plan for my children. I would stay involved with every step and would work together to ensure (hope for) a successful year. It took a lot of hard work and diligence by all involved. I certainly met outstanding teachers who went the extra mile for us. Sadly, at the end of the school year, we would gather around and cry. I could see the heartbreak in their eyes when they knew they had not achieved their goal. We would be left once again questioning the system and feeling hopeless that there was something better.

So we would try another school, in another city, in another neighborhood. Devonte and Demico would cry because they didn't want to leave. That even saddened me more. How could children want to stay in a school when they were so clearly unhappy? Of course the answer is that they didn't know any different. I must say they are remarkable boys to be able to see the good in a very dismal situation. I also love that they have forgotten just how depressed and angry they really were. The abuse was horrible. They experienced more bullying and abuse in one week than I did in my 12 years of school. They experienced name calling (often "nigger"), extreme yelling from teachers, not being allowed to participate in school activities (track and field, choir), excessive time-outs and so much more. It got to a point where hurting themselves on purpose and intentional suspensions became a normal way of coping.

My heart, spirit and body was broken. I wrote a letter to my MLA asking him to help me keep my boys out of jail. After all the time I put in, and after all the advocating I did for my children, I had nothing to show for it. In fact, every year got worse and worse. I ending up having

to quit work as my body started to shut down. I was really feeling hopeless and, of course, so were Devonte and Demico.

Fortunately, I had an amazing therapist who told me about Indigo Sudbury Campus. Of course my first thought was, 'How can I, a single mother on disability, afford to send my boys to this school that is located 45 minutes away?' Then I thought, how can I not. After visiting the school, I realized we were home. Without any money or means of getting money, I registered both boys at ISC. I trusted that if it was meant to be, the money would show up. Indeed it did.

This school year has been an amazing experience. Lots and lots and lots of tears have gone into the healing of our family. It has been hard work. The difference is that every day brings new hope and growth. I am not left feeling hopeless and I am not looking for another school in another city or neighborhood. In fact I am selling my house and moving closer to the school. It feels wonderful to be moving forward and seeing the remarkable changes in our lives. We have a new family that supports us in every way. ISC is not just a school, it is a community that works together for the success of all. I have always found it strange how traditional schools really lack parental and family involvement. The Potluck/Talkabout gatherings have made a huge difference in the success of the school year. I no longer feel like an outsider. While sharing my fears and hopes with the other parents, I would glance over and see compassionate faces. They would share similar stories and how Indigo has made a difference. I felt hope, love and compassion like I have never felt before. It was like having a warm blanket wrapped around me while having trusting voices saying, "It's going to be OK".

Once my heart started healing, I realized I had some work to do. At the beginning I saw myself as a single mom with two special needs boys whose family didn't accept them. As time went on I saw myself as a blessed mom with two very determined boys with incredible strengths. Boys who are teaching me about who I really am and through their determination have strengthened our family. Since my story has changed, so has our lives.

Demico, no longer has temper tantrums at school. That is huge!!!! He is a happy boy full of energy and is learning to use his intensity in a positive way. He now loves himself, respects himself and others, and lives life fully. He believes he can do anything he wants and dreams about possibilities.

Devonte's self-esteem has increased tremendously since September. Being in



the system two years longer than Demico, Devonte has extra reprogramming to do. At the beginning of every school year, I would ask the teachers for one thing and that was to keep his self-esteem intact. Every year got worse. So the fact that Devonte's self-esteem has improved says it all. We watched the movie "Conversations with God" and Devonte was really uncomfortable. In the movie, Mr. Walsh became homeless and was treated very badly. People wouldn't look at him or talk to him and treated him like he had a contagious disease. Devonte turned to me with tears in his eyes and said, "That's how I used to feel at the other school". At that moment, I realized that coming to Indigo was absolutely the right decision.

Devonte has always been a beautiful boy right from birth. Because of the treatment at the other schools, Devonte thought he was ugly. No matter what I said or did, he did not see the beauty in the mirror. That broke my heart. Now he combs his hair, puts lotion on his face and admires himself in the mirror. That in itself is priceless. He is proud of the beautiful belly he has grown and even answers the door in his underwear in total confidence. The people at the door get a

chuckle at that as well as me. He has come a long way.

On Monday when Virginia Tech had the horrific shooting incident, I found myself glued to the television. I don't watch the news, but for some reason I couldn't stop watching this event unfold. I realized today that my interest was in how the shooter could do that. I looked back at how my boys were treated and that if we would have continued on the same path, would they be suicidal as well? It was my greatest fear that some day they would snap. I no longer have those fears.

I am just so very thankful for Indigo Sudbury Campus, for Nicolette, Ric, Tim, Dawn, the parents and the students for making a difference in our lives. Thank you for following your hearts and creating this wonderful Campus and for welcoming us into your community and your hearts. Our lives are forever changed.



## A Year at ISC

by Carmen Gale Martin—ISC Parent

I would like to comment on the progress I have seen in Jasper during this past school year, as it has been tremendous. In order to understand the positive impact Indigo Sudbury has had on Jasper's, and consequently my life, I have to back up to last year.

Jasper always hated school. He doesn't sit well for long periods of time and has trouble paying attention when given verbal direction as he is a kinesthetic (touch) learner. Having Jasper physically try something, he learns very quickly. By grade three, he actually

failed school. We tried homeschooling for several years, but he just wasn't getting the social interaction he needed. We tried a partial home school/in class approach, but on the days he was supposed to go to school, he would get on the bus, wander around town and come home later in the day—not having attended school at all. This was happening at age 12, last year. He was learning nothing and getting into trouble at the skateboard park.

Fortunately, we discovered Indigo Sudbury Campus. Now Jasper gladly wakes up early, takes two buses to meet his ride to school, spending three hours per day just getting to and from school. He's upset when he has to miss a day and dreaded Spring Break where he had to take one week off school. He's not at all impressed with summer vacation where he will have to spend two months away from school. Jasper is happier, emotionally stable, he has friends, and his self-esteem is awesome!

His reading skills and spelling have improved tremendously this year simply by "practicing" via computer and video games. He aspires to be like some of the older kids who unintentionally role model for him. They inspire him to be the best he can be and he continually asks me grammatical questions as he wants to be like the older kids and not make mistakes.

Jasper was so impressed with the cake a fellow student made at school that he began cooking for himself. Now he can cook a wide variety of foods, safely use the appliances and clean up after himself. As he has access to kitchen facilities at school, he no longer has to eat sandwiches as he can cook himself a meal.

Indigo Sudbury Campus encourages personal responsibility. In accordance with this philosophy, I have allowed Jasper the privilege/responsibility of handling his own finances. With his monthly allowance, he pays for his entertainment, snacks, clothing and investments. To see a 13-year old budgeting for winter boots, saving five months to buy electronic equipment and sitting down with a financial planner is a wonderful example of taking personal responsibility for one's own life.

On a social note, Jasper has made many friends at Indigo. Up until this year, he has been quite a loner, preferring to spend time by himself rather than with friends. Now he regularly asks for rides so he can have sleepovers and/or arranges his own rides, then calls me to let me

know what he has planned. He spends time with a wide age range of students, from nine to seventeen years of age.



Jasper has the self-confidence to ask for what he wants and solid self-esteem to hear "no" when necessary. He has become reasonable, responsible and respectful this year and is certainly a pleasure to live with. He easily makes pleasant conversation with everyone he meets, his manners are impeccable and we have discussions on how to handle issues at home, rather than arguments.

I am so happy we found Indigo Sudbury Campus, as this school is supporting Jasper in becoming a responsible adult that will make a great addition to society when he is ready.

On a side note, the school supports parents as well by creating a community atmosphere where opinions and problems are discussed and possible solutions are suggested.

Indigo Sudbury Campus is more of a philosophy and lifestyle than a school, where kids can learn to be themselves and develop the potential they were meant for. Other than being somewhat jealous that I wasn't able to attend this type of school, I am truly grateful my son is able to experience the atmosphere and learning at Indigo.

I admire the vision and dedication Ric and Nicolette had to start and run this school and my small thank you is a drop in the bucket of gratitude that is owed to them for all they have done for my son and many other students who have the privilege to attend.

Compared to our experience in public school and home schooling, Indigo shines like a bright light in the darkness, and I look forward to the time and learning that is yet to come!

# Confidence

by Carollyne Robertson—ISC Parent

My children exude confidence and they work well together as a team. They have their differences, but I feel that through the school and the students, they are not afraid to express their views while also having compassion for others.

I watch Alyassa take books from the main public library on a regular basis, and the books are becoming thicker and thicker—and this from a young lady who was afraid to read, as the teachers always intimidated her because she had difficulty. Her confidence level in spelling has also increased, for which I am grateful as, once again, she was told she would never be good at spelling—and this was in grade two.

When parents are concerned about how much time children spend on computers, I think they should observe what their children are spending their time on. I am truly grateful for technology, for it has allowed my children the freedom to view the world. They understand and respect what is healthy for them, as well as understand their freedom to choose.



We are coming to the end of five years with Nathen, and I do have some concerns as to where he will be going and what he will be doing, however, I have watched this young man make decisions, choose alternatives and find solutions where most people would have given up.

Indigo has not only been a school for our family but a family within a community. I realize the respect and responsibility taught at the school, not only in theory but in actual practice, has created a generation “who care”.

# Snapshots: An Inside View of ISC

by Nicolette Groeneveld and Ric Rosborough



Tim, Nathen and Kris have been sharing information on trading on the Foreign Exchange.



Marleana took charge and made a play come to life for the Creation Festival.



Steve bought a car and shaved the back off—El Camino! He also gave the car a smashing new paint job!



We had the “Drum Brothers” come do a

drumming workshop which was a big hit with both older and younger students!



Sidewalk chalk reappeared as soon as the warm weather settled in.



An Alyassa original!



And, of course, trampolining became the choice sport again, even before all the snow was gone.

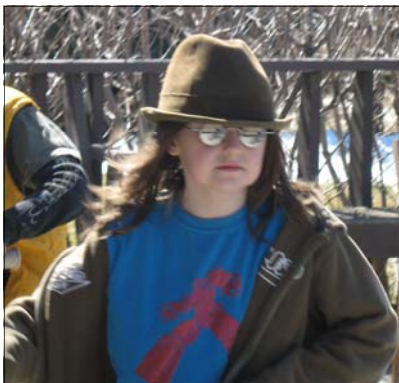




Our younger boys have been extremely active outside, with stick wars being a major activity for quite a few days.



The “hobo hut” has had some visitors; students like to climb on it, play in it, and quiet reflection and personal conversations also happen there.



Dress up clothes were in high demand recently when our younger boys went adventuring and several of them fell into the creek!



Mariel Helmers is coming on Wednesdays now to teach cooking to a mixed-age group of students. So far, the group has made various types of salads and brushettas.



Steve and Brynn had the time of their life being pulled behind Ric’s truck on their toy cars. A few other students tried it as well and discovered it’s quite a bumpy ride!



A small but extremely dedicated and passionate group of students is studying

Japanese. Classes are held for an hour on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

Besides the above adventures, it’s business as usual here at ISC. There are art projects in the works, music being made, video games being mastered, conversations being had and constant negotiating, compromising and discussing happening as a necessary part of having such a big, multi-age “family”!

We’ve also had many tours with new families and anticipate we’ll be very close to full, if not completely full, next year! What a beautiful way to approach the end of our fifth year!

### Quotable Quotes

David on breastfeeding (while playing video games and chatting with Jasper): “Rich people don’t breastfeed because they don’t want to get saggy boobs.”

Cheering at ISC during a wrestling match: “Go both of you!”

Devonte set up a little store in the kitchen where he was selling some personal items. Mars had taken care of the store for him a few times. Later, Mars said, “Hey Devonte, how much for this lobster?” “A dollar,” he answered. “But,” said Mars, “I worked for you so shouldn’t I get an employee discount?”

4:55 P.M.

Kassie: “Brett, Mom’s here.”

Bretton: “Cool! I love that woman!”

Kris: “I played chess once with my little sister and all the pieces ended up married!”

Chase, talking to a friend while holding the lunch his mother had just brought him: “No way am I trading my sub for oatmeal!”

Jasper momentarily couldn’t remember the word ‘stingray’. His description as he attempted to find the word: “The floor mat at the bottom of the ocean”!

## Announcements

- Thanks to Lilou for the time she spent volunteering with us! We are very much looking forward to seeing the video she is making of our school!
- Welcome to our newest volunteer, Jenika Watson—Azley’s mother—who is hard at work on a garden and planning to bring to our property some plants native to the area.