



ACTIVE LIBRARY

Janine Schaub

The library is designed around themed areas to inspire readers. A display of popular books in wire baskets is nicknamed “the drive-thru” by students. The “living room” is a quiet place for hanging out with a book on a comfy couch beside a huge fish tank. Another carpeted nook is specifically designed for the kindergartens with bins right on the floor so that little students can see every book cover. Baskets along another wall are grouped by theme for easy access by tiny hands. Another reading area targets the school’s Tibetan-Canadian population, which is the second largest in North America. Milica takes delight in spoiling a small army of grade five library helpers. She calls them her “staff” and they work daily to keep the many displays and bins of specialized collections in order.

Milica has also had a key role in co-ordinating and developing many storytelling walls that adorn the school. As chairperson of the school’s arts committee, she has worked with other staff members, local artists, and community organizations like “Inner City Angels” and “Mariposa in the Schools” to help students work with artists to successfully complete many ambitious projects. Some of the murals have been crafted in the style of famous artists. Classes study an artist’s body of work and then develop an idea for their mural. Other

murals are originals and have themes like “heroes and she-roes.” One student’s contribution was a portrait of the school’s caretaker who was his hero because the man always had a smile and a kind word when the boy first arrived at the school. Some murals wind their way up several flights of stairs telling traditional stories like *Anansi the Spider*, or have a curriculum focus such as a study of the urban community found in the Parkdale neighbourhood mural.

Students at Queen Victoria clearly feel very connected to their school and adore the library, which sets the tone for the whole place. As one student put it, “My dad wants to buy a house and move but I hope we stay in our apartment forever because I love this school.” ■

