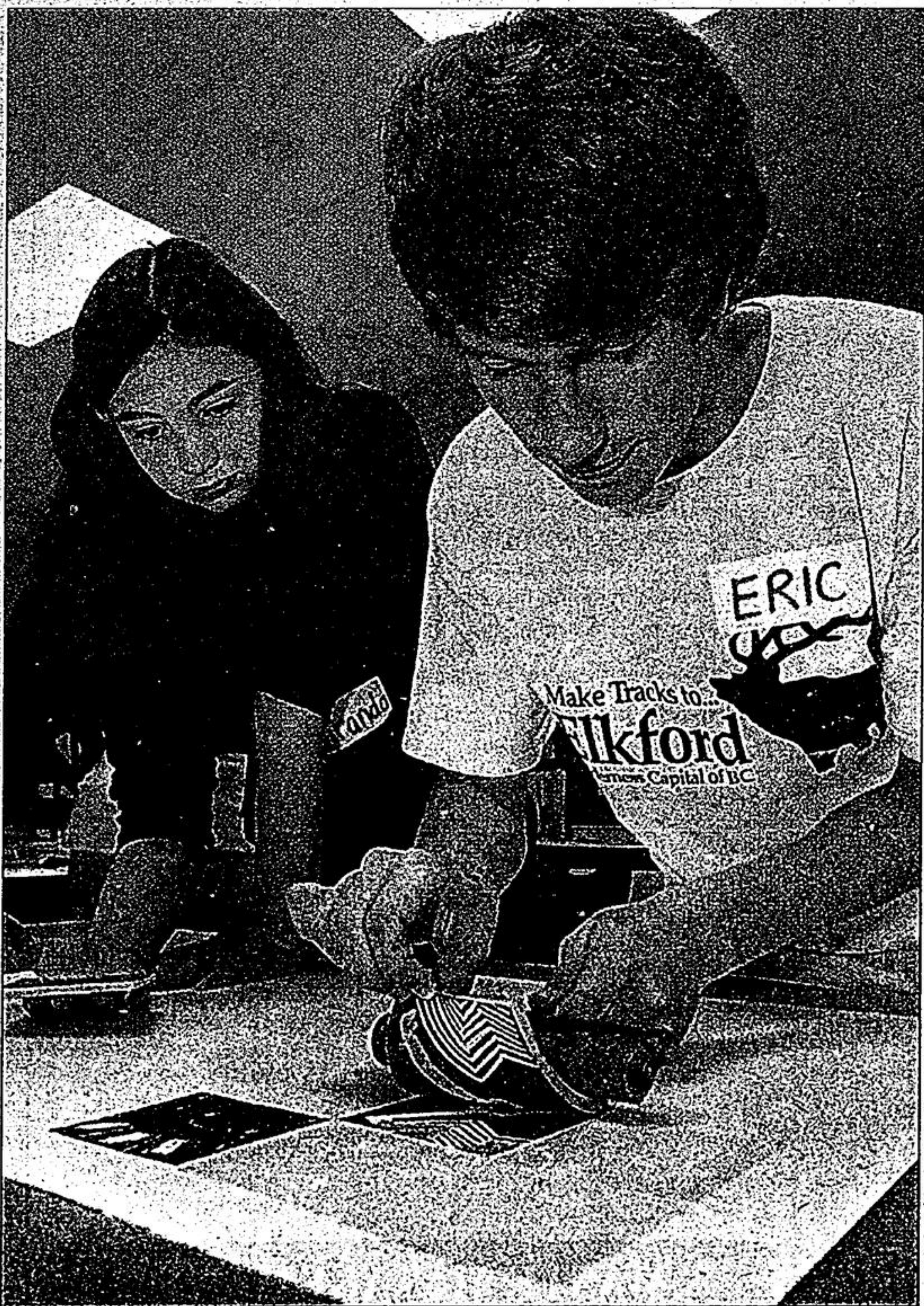




STAFF PHOTOS/MIKE BARRETT

James Beare and partner Laura Makowski of SDSS demonstrate square-dancing moves to visitors Perakaa Sethukavalan and Pirassana Gunapalan of Markham's Middlefield Collegiate during exchange visit to Stouffville last Thursday. Fifty Stouffville students visiting Middlefield earlier in the week.



Eric Zurowski and Miranda Clayton of SDSS try their hand at print-making during an exchange visit to their school last Thursday.

Stouffville culture? Line dancing, venison, rugby, century homes

From page 1.

of some of our students went to the same school," Mr. Zoratto said. "They couldn't believe there were 2,000 members of the Reesor family who gather together. Their community is so much newer."

For their part, many of the SDSS students hadn't heard of Middlefield.

WHERE'S MIDDLEFIELD?

"It happens everywhere like that," Mr. Zoratto said. "People grow up with their circle of friends in their own school and then their community without knowing what's down the road."

Until last week, Mr. Ganeshalingam, captain of Middlefield's championship soccer team, learned to play rugby and line dance at Stouffville.

He and his classmates ate venison, lasagna, cookies and goulash. "We're so close to the city, we don't experience this," he said. "It's

an amazing experience, just awesome. It's so close-knit here. The environment is completely different here.

"We're soccer crazy the way they're rugby crazy here."

Other differences?

Clubs at Middlefield are largely based on race or religion, including southeast Asian, Tamil and Muslim organizations. Stouffville's clubs are activity based.

And there's more emphasis on technical education and trades at SDSS.

"Our parents want all of us to be lawyers, doctors and engineers," he said.

White students are a distinct minority in the 1,600-member student body at Middlefield. The students represent 19 cultures, communities and countries.

Even more amazing, Mr. Zoratto said, was WASP-dominated Stouffville had students from 53 backgrounds.

Jennifer Lee, a Grade 9 student

at SDSS, had a temporary henna tattoo on her hand, a souvenir from the trip to Middlefield.

A speed-meeting session that mirrored speed-dating and looks at the Chinese cultures were her highlights.

ART, PHOTO SOUVENIRS

Framed and autographed photographs and pieces of art created during the exchange are being exchanged, along with e-mails between students.

A Facebook page could be in the works as well as an annual exchange.

"People have been altered in a very positive way," Mr. Zoratto said. "When you have people of different cultures coming together, you have this unexpected cultural explosion of talent."

"We talk a lot about cultural exchanges, but you really don't have to travel around the world for this."

Just 20 km will do.

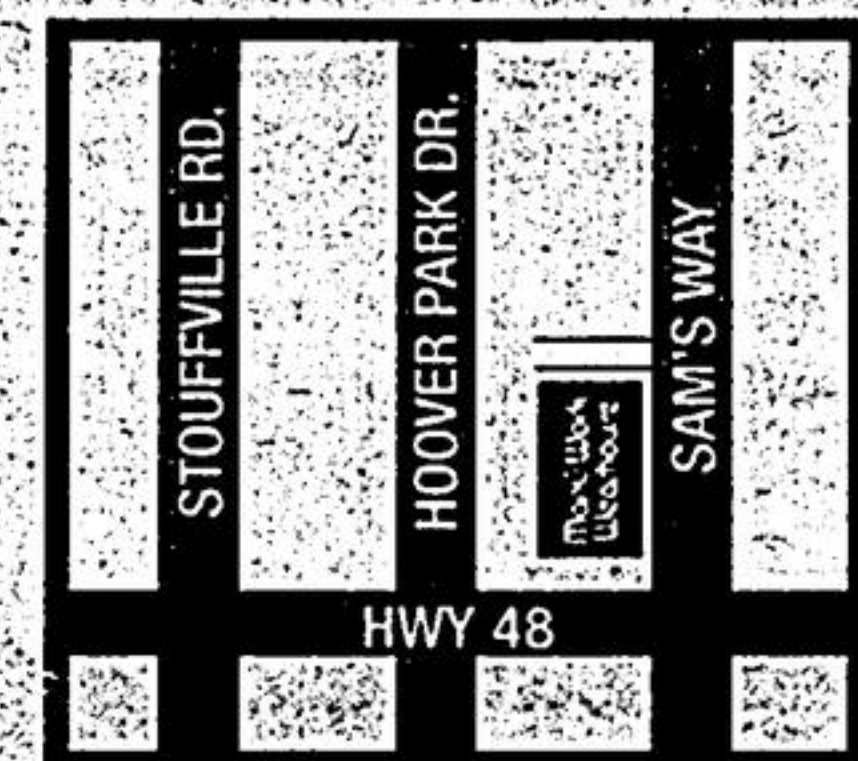
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