

Join us for the

Canada/Ethiopia Elementary School Twinning Project 2011-2012

The Canadian Network for International Surgery (www.cnis.ca) is inviting your elementary school to participate in the Canada/Ethiopia Twinning Project by “twinning” with an elementary school in Axum, Northern Ethiopia starting in September 2011.

Every year CNIS teaches thousands of elementary-age students in Africa how to resolve disputes without resorting to violence through a course called *Peace Building for Elementary Schools*. In the fall of 2011, eight schools and over 2000 elementary students in Axum, Ethiopia will take part in this program.

CNIS will help “twin” eight Canadian elementary schools with eight elementary schools in Axum. Once matched, the schools, and most importantly the children, can begin building a relationship with their new peers. Connections could be made through the arts, letter writing, geography projects, or other student-generated ideas. To encourage teachers to get involved, CNIS is developing a list of suggested classroom activities for the project that apply to the Ministry of Education’s prescribed learning outcomes by grade.



The twinned schools will be recognized on the CNIS web site (www.cnis.ca), where their new and innovative ideas will be featured. The goal of the program is *to instill values of living and working cooperatively with tolerance and respect, while caring for others in the community.* Through the twinning program, CNIS hopes to increase Canadian elementary school students' knowledge and understanding of African cultures and people, and to further develop a sense of empathy and social responsibility. We believe that the new friendships created will equally enrich the learning experiences of the children in Canada and in Africa.

CNIS is a non-profit organization that provides surgical and obstetrical training and injury prevention courses in Africa. You may read more about CNIS' non-violent conflict-resolution courses on our web site:

<http://www.cnis.ca/what-we-do/safer-communities-in-africa-program/peacebuilding-for-elementary-schools/>

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We hope you will join us in this exciting learning adventure!

Canada Ethiopia Twinning Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: This sounds like a great idea, but how can I fit it into my curriculum goals?

A: CNIS is developing a list of suggested activities for the Twinning Project that apply to learning outcomes prescribed by the Ministry of Education. The suggested activities will be available to participating teachers in late August. The list will also include a list of children's books about Africa, which teachers can use to engage their students in African stories and culture.

Q: Tell me more about Axum, Ethiopia

A: Axum (pop. approximately 50,000) is a city in Northern Ethiopia that has been affected by recent wars. The dominant ethnic group in Axum is Tigrayan, and 98% of the people in Axum speak Tigrinya as a first-language. Students study ten subjects in school, including mathematics, science, geography, music, Tigrayan and Amharic languages, drawing and painting, and physical education.

Q: Do the students in Ethiopia speak English? How will we communicate with them?

A: Yes, the students in Ethiopia do speak some English. The elementary school students will communicate with their twinned schools by writing letters that can be sent or scanned.

Q: What grade level can participate?

A: Any class at the elementary school level can participate. The Ethiopian students are in Grade 5. While the program is probably best suited to students in Grade 4 through 6, CNIS believes students at all levels would enjoy learning about Africa, a new culture, and social justice at a global level. Teachers with young students (such as kindergarten through grade 2) may consider pairing with older students to use the Canada/Ethiopia Twinning Project as a "buddy" activity.

Q: What schools are available to twin with us?

A: For the 2011-2012 school year, there are 8 elementary schools in Axum available to twin with a Canadian elementary school. The participating Ethiopian schools include: Hawelty, Ezana, Megabit 18, Abraha Wehtsbaha, Aksum, Kindeya, Bazen, and Worea Elementary Schools. If demand from Canadian participant schools outweighs the number of schools currently participating in Ethiopia, CNIS will attempt to find additional partners. However, participation is limited and is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Q: What kind of activities have schools done in the past?

A: Students in grades four through seven at Lord Tennyson Elementary School in Vancouver, BC were the first Canadian school children to participate in the Canada/Ethiopia Twinning Project. Lord Tennyson students wrote letters to the students at Bazen Elementary School, learned about currency conversions between the Canadian dollar and the Ethiopian Birr, and created pieces of artwork and information to teach their African counterparts about Canada.

Examples of activities can be viewed on CNIS' website at <http://www.cnis.ca/2011/05/our-first-twinning-letters-to-ethiopia/>, or some sample letters from participating students are below.

Dear Bazen Elementary. My name is Jasper and I am 9. My mom was born in Ethiopia. I will tell you a 100% Canadian story. Some racoons used to come to my house, because I have cat food. One night we left pie out and in the morning the crust was gone and all there was, was a ball of pie with racoon prints!

Hello my name is Isabella. My favourite colour is green. I want to be a Marine Biologist. The truth about Canada is that we do not (most of us) live in igloos or have beavers as pets.

Dear Bazen Elementary. My name is Kaitlin and I am 9 years old. I don't have any pets but just one fighting fish. My favourite sport is gymnastics. My favourite song is Tik Tok by Kesha. I love fruit. In Canada boys and girls are equal. Both have rights and both go to school. A woman can also do any job a man can do. What is your country like? Do you enjoy school? Do you like animals? I do.



Q: I thought CNIS' mission was to develop surgical skills in Africa. Why are they involved with this program?

A: CNIS is committed to empowering low-income countries to create an environment where the risk from injuries is minimal and all people receive adequate surgical care. Armed conflict has a vast impact on health and social development, including a pandemic CNIS is committed to reducing: injury. Our research has shown that injury is much higher (700%) in war-torn areas than in areas in the same country untouched by armed conflict. While international aid typically concentrates on providing resources and support to former child soldiers, very little is done for the average child. CNIS' *Peace Building for Elementary Schools* has taught thousands of elementary-age students in Africa how to resolve disputes without resorting to violence. In the spring of 2010, CNIS graduated 1500 young Peace Builders in Axum, Ethiopia alone. In the 2010-2011 school year, 8 primary schools and over 2000 pupils in Axum took the course.

Q: How will my students benefit from participation in the program?

A: CNIS hopes to increase Canadian elementary school students' knowledge and understanding of African cultures and people, and to further develop a sense of empathy and social responsibility. Students will also receive a Certificate of Participation.

Q: How will the African students benefit from participating in this program?

A: In addition to learning about another country and culture, the African students that participate in the program will participate in an additional component, Peace Building. The course teaches children how to prevent and resolve disputes, and to become agents for peace. The Peace Building course include 11 learning areas: Peace, conflict, conscience, empathy, anger management, self-control, fairness, kindness, problem-solving, non-violence, and, reconciliation.

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