Chandler, March 14, 2025

Friends United Foundation
13149 Highway 104
Aulds Cove, Nova Scotia
B0H 1P0

Subject : Visit Appreciation

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to express the privilege I have each year of visiting the Friends United International Convention Centre with my students. My name is Luc Gagnon, and I teach English as a Second Language at Mgr Sévigny High School in Chandler, located in Gaspésie, Quebec. Each year, I organize a five-day trip to the Maritimes to allow our graduating students to connect with their family's cultural heritage. Their origins are varied but are mostly influenced by the different populations that have settled in Gaspésie over the centuries. More specifically, these are the Basques, French, Acadians, British, Loyalists, Irish, Scots, and of course, the Indigenous peoples who inhabited the territory long before the arrival of Europeans.

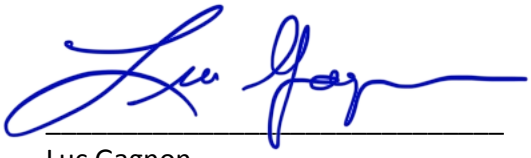
With this trip, I try to make the concepts learned in their history and visual arts classes more concrete. What better way, for instance, than to visit the Fortress of Louisbourg to understand the significance and importance of this site in history? On a lesser scale, but equally important, are the national historic sites of Grand-Pré and Port-Royal in the Annapolis Valley. For me, the Friends United International Convention Centre fits perfectly into an itinerary like ours. For my students to have a balanced view of history and a genuine reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, there must be a meaningful contact between the communities and Canadians of European descent. The Centre facilitates this contact through art as a medium, allowing an emotional rather than a rational approach. The quality of the works presented and the professionalism with which the exhibition is set up enables students to explore at their own pace and in complete freedom. All questions are welcome, and dialogue plays a prominent role during the visit. Some of my students are sometimes awkward with the English language, but the staff's openness and respect create a reassuring atmosphere where discussion is indeed encouraged.

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Every year, Mr. Rolf Bouman, founder of the Friends United Initiative, personally welcomes the students and introduces them to the Centre. This context allows the students to appreciate the visit even more. The staff is always very attentive and competent. Last year, we had the privilege of being accompanied by resident artist Jasyn Lucas. His relaxed approach and openness to discussion were remarkable. He presented his work and his journey as an artist, but also as an Indigenous person. These enriching exchanges are not possible for my students outside the context of this trip. An exceptional opportunity!

I am always delighted by my students' enthusiastic reactions after our visit. As educators, we are always seeking meaningful experiences for our students. I can confirm that the visit to the Centre is one of those exceptional experiences that becomes one of our trip's highlights.

Sincerely,



Luc Gagnon
Englis Second Language teacher

155 Mgr Ross Ouest, Chandler, G0C 1K0
Téléphone : 418-689-2233 Télécopieur : 418-689-3261
Site internet: www.mgrsevigny.net
Adresse courriel: mgrsevigny@csrl.net