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This is the third resource in a series developed by the Canadian Multicultural Education Foundation (CMEF) and the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA). The first two, which explore working with students from Somalia and the South Sudan, are available from the ATA (www.teachers.ab.ca) and the CMEF (www.cmef.ca).

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Karen Culture in Canada

By Lei Htoo, Hse Nay Paw, Ku Ku, Lah May Wah, Renato Delcioppo, Lynn Farrugia

Karen is the name given by the British to the group of people who lived in Burma and called themselves, Pwyar ka Nyaw. Pwyar ka Nyaw is also the name of their language. In the 1970s many Karen people were driven out of Burma and into Thailand. Because of the Karen allegiance to the Allies in World War II, while most Burmese supported the Japanese during that conflict, the Karen people were exiled from Burma.

Currently tens of thousands of Karen people live in nine UN refugee camps in Thailand. Conditions in the camps are restrictive, with limited educational and employment opportunities, and refugees are not permitted to work outside the camps. Since 2006, the government of Thailand and the UN High Commission on Refugees have been relocating the Karen to communities around the world. There are Karen people now living in Australia, Europe, the US and throughout Canada. The Karen community has a flag, a history, a language and a culture, but it does not have a country to return to.

The Karen began to immigrate to Canada in 2006. They can be found living in various communities across the country, including Saint John, PEI, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, London, Thunder Bay, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary, Lacombe, Edmonton, Surrey and Langley. Edmonton and Calgary are each home to about 400 families.

Every three years, the Karen Committee of Canada meets in a different city to discuss issues of concern to the community.

Most Karen children currently in junior high and high school were born in the camps in Thailand. Elementary-aged children are a mix of those born in Canada and those born in the camps.

Religion

American missionaries visited the Karen area of Burma in the early 1800s, converting many Karen to Presbyterian and Baptist Christianity. Most Karen in Alberta are Christian, but a few are Buddhist and Animist. Animism is a world view that plants, inanimate objects and natural phenomena possess souls.

The church is important in the life of Karen families. Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Edmonton have Karen ministers and offer a blend Karen and Western traditions. This is evident in wedding celebrations, where the women sing traditional songs as the wedding party enters the church, while the youth play new songs using nontraditional instruments such as guitars and drums as part of the ceremony. Children are highly valued and are an integral part of church life. They are typically involved in the music and the social justice ministries within their church.

School

In Burma, schooling was expensive and tuition was high. Schools offered Grades 1–12, but not all children were able to attend school because of the expense and
because schools were not accessible to those living in the hilly regions of Burma.

In the refugee camps in Thailand, schooling was free, with subjects covered including some social studies, math, science, Karen, Burmese, English and art. Camp schools offered Grades 1–12 from 8 am to 3 pm. The teachers were from the Karen community as well as from other parts of the world. Those from outside brought new perspectives to the schools and the community.

Parents trust the teachers as the school authority figures, and they trust the schools because education is valued in their communities. In general, parents feel very positive about the schools their children attend, and they understand age-appropriate placement. Most parents regularly attend parent-teacher conferences and other school events. They feel comfortable calling the school and talking to the teachers about questions and concerns. In fact, many Karen parents prefer to talk to teachers on the phone or in person rather than through notes. Parents have access to online report cards but appreciate hard copies as well.

The Karen community values jobs in the trades, such as cabinet-makers and electricians, as well as work in construction and agriculture. For young women, training in nursing, cosmetology and couture is prized. They are anxious that their youth stay in school to gain entry into these careers.

Young men and women marry early, and married people do not attend school with unmarried teens. The high school teachers working on this resource noted that students were leaving school after they turned 18 but before they were able to complete their high school diploma requirements.

Students prefer to speak English with their friends but speak Pwyar ka Nyaw at home and with elders. The community is worried that the language may be lost, so in Edmonton, children are taught Pwyar ka Nyaw in Sunday school, and there are plans to establish an extensive Saturday school so students will acquire communication skills in both English and Pwyar ka Nyaw.

Regarding English, many children and parents find that Canadian teachers speak English very quickly. Also many words in English have multiple meanings, which makes the language even more challenging to learn.

Families

Karen families are usually large and intergenerational, with grandparents and extended family living together. Since leaving the camps, however, families have dispersed throughout the world. Many members of the committee who worked on this project have several siblings in other parts of the world as well as in Edmonton and Thailand.

At celebrations it is evident that elders have a valuable place in the culture as the keepers of the lore and traditions. Young people work together so that the celebrations honour everyone. Young adults live with their parents until they marry. When families have extra room, they take in cousins so that no one is alone.

The Karen people are beginning to sponsor their family members for immigration through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The financial strain created by doing this is mitigated by their churches and by fundraisers.

Gender Roles and Parenting

Traditionally, Karen women stayed home to care for the children. However, in Canada both Karen men and women have jobs and both take care of the children and perform household chores.

Generally both parents are responsible for the disciplining of the children. Older siblings and grandparents may also handle discipline issues. When discipline is required, parents want to know all the information before delivering the consequences. Punishments include taking away video games and

Language

Pwyar ka Nyaw (the Karen language) is written in Burmese script, but it is related to Mongolian, not to Burmese. At present the Edmonton Public Library has no books in Burmese or in Pwyar ka Nyaw. The Edmonton Public School Board has translations in Pwyar ka Nyaw of critical communications such as school interviews and field trips as well as an introduction to School Zone (its online communication tool). It also has books in the Karen language that were ordered from Asia.
having children sit quietly, but not hitting the children. Older children are expected to do chores, depending on their age. The older they are, the more responsibilities they have. They might cook, clean and help out as needed. When children are able to understand, they are given jobs and chores that require more responsibility, such as shovelling snow and babysitting. Chores for children are somewhat gender specific—washing dishes for girls, mowing the lawn for boys.

Many children act as translators for their parents. This role reversal is disconcerting for both parents and children and can be a source of friction in the family. The Karen community has organized a group of translators that the community can access throughout Alberta. These people help out at school conferences and with medical appointments.

Support systems

Since coming to Alberta, the Karen community has created new support systems through extended family and friends. They can also turn to their counselors at agencies like Catholic Social Services, Multicultural Health Brokers or their church. Multicultural Health Brokers is an Edmonton group whose members include agencies that serve the immigrant community in the city. They meet, liaise and work together to provide wraparound services for people at risk. Similar groups are found in other urban centres in Alberta.

Health Issues

During their first years in Canada, the Karen experienced serious health problems, such as malaria, hepatitis B, asthma and tuberculosis. Now, seven years later, most of the community is healthy; however, high blood pressure, strokes, kidney disease and diabetes are becoming more common among the older people in the community.

In the camps, some children developed asthma and malaria, and many children chewed tobacco, which caused further health complications. Here in Canada, children catch the common childhood communicable diseases, especially chicken pox. They tend to have more weather-related health problems, such as asthma. It is rare that the children have food allergies.

Children are not typically taken for regular check-ups. Dental and eye exams were done upon arrival in Canada but not since then for some families. Only some parents know that those check-ups are common practice, and others are working and don’t have the time. Children are taken to drop-in clinics if very ill. Parents give children over-the-counter medications for colds and pain.

Diet

Typically, Karen families eat three meals a day. In the Karen diet, rice is the most common food, followed by noodles. The community eats all types of fruits, vegetables and meat, including chicken, beef, pork and fish. The most popular fruits and vegetables are banana, pineapple, watermelon, sweet potatoes and sugar cane. Most people can digest milk. They like spicy food, although some believe eating it leads to high blood pressure.

Housing

Eighty percent of the community rents accommodation. Rental units are crowded, but the Karen do not consider this a problem. Typically two small families or a family and a related single person may live together. Constantly rising rents are a burden for Karen families. Those families in subsidized Capital Region Housing feel they are in a better housing situation because Capital Region Housing has stable rent linked to income.

As the community is able to afford houses, they are buying them near the rental units they used to occupy to remain connected to the community. The availability of rental units in smaller centres in Alberta may spur movement out of the major cities.
(L-R) Lei Thoo, Hse Nay Paw, Lynn Smarsh, Renato Delcioppo, Mee Mee Po, Matt Hundert, Lah May Wah, Lynn Farrugia, Ku Ku
Educational Challenges Faced by the Karen Community

By Lynn Farrugia

Teachers and other staff members may have little knowledge of the culture or background of Karen students.

This booklet includes a short list of resources (page 36) relating to the immigration of the Karen community to Canada as well as a section on Karen Culture (page 3 and page 15). Karen people take the education of their children very seriously, and they trust teachers and school authorities.

As well, teachers may not have background knowledge about the circumstances of the family. If the student was born in a refugee camp in Thailand, there may be a lack of documentation and health issues that the school should be aware of. If the student was born in Canada, the issues are different and may be related to poverty.

Parents may not understand school communications.

While many Karen young people are now able to read and speak English, teachers still face communication barriers with parents. It is helpful to ask parents to bring a translator with them for teacher-parent interviews. Karen parents do not understand the student-led interviews that are increasingly being used in elementary schools. It is helpful to have a translator that the family trusts in this case.

There are similar problems with written communication that is sent home. The Karen language is written in Burmese script. In Edmonton Public schools, for example, only very important letters for family are printed in Karen. Teachers need to check with the family about their ability to read English, and if there is a problem, ask for assistance from the liaison workers at agencies such as the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.
Families may be experiencing intergenerational stress.

Parents may need support, especially through their children’s teen years as the students and parents struggle with being between two cultures. Within the Karen community, there are strong family bonds and a desire to keep the language and the culture strong and vibrant.

Some students are dropping out because families are not aware of career options.

Parents want students to stay in school and complete their education. However, some parents are not aware of career options and the support available for students to graduate and attend post-secondary institutions. Some students drop out to help support the family and repay transportation loans. Also, early marriage may be a family stressor. It is the tradition that married people do not attend the same school as unmarried students. It is an area of concern for schools when students leave suddenly without completing their diploma requirements.

The Karen community does not yet have an awareness or understanding of mental health issues such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. The stresses related to hiding from danger and then living in camps and under constant threat can wreak havoc with the mental health of some refugees and their children. Schools should have information available about mental health services in the area.
Teachers will be most effective by approaching Karen students positively. Karen students need to understand how much they are improving. They want to know what they need to improve on in order to move to the next level, and they need to feel confident that they will move up when they are ready. Parents told us that we should not make assumptions about students understanding a mistake or our expectations. They said that we should be specific about what the students need to improve.

Schools will be more successful with Karen students if there are aides in the classroom and community liaison workers or settlement workers that students and parents can talk to.

Parent involvement will also promote student success. Parents need to know and be concerned about how well their children are doing in school—they need to be involved in their education and not just be spectators. They need to come to parent-teacher conferences and phone the teacher for an appointment to see how their children can improve their performance.

To ensure students have the tools needed for success, discuss what works well in school for students that have grown up in Canada, as well as what works well for other immigrant students. This will include note-taking, test-taking, homework habits and organizational and study skills. Discuss the kind of problems they can foresee and provide examples of successful solutions in a positive light. This discussion can take an hour or longer and must be visual as well as verbal.

Try to be aware when a student might leave the education system or is having trouble and then quickly deal with the situation by talking to the student as well as the parents.

In conclusion, through dialogue with the Karen students at the beginning of a school year as well as throughout the year, we can help them stay focused on what they need to do in order to be successful in the education system.

The outline below may be useful for your beginning-of-the-year session with your Karen students.

**Tips for Success for Karen Secondary Students**

**Homework and studying**

Do your homework when assigned and do it to the best of your ability. Be sure you understand what the teacher expects from you; if you are not sure, ask. Complete assignments as soon as possible and don’t wait till the last minute. Set aside a certain time in the day every day and a certain place in the house for doing your homework.

Review your notes and lessons daily. School is not a 9 to 3 job only. You need to do extra work at home that is not assigned homework. Use your study time to
look up words, and use the Internet to get information so that you understand the topic more thoroughly. It is not enough just to read the information. You need to understand it and know it. Talk to your parents about the lesson topic in Karen. When you translate it into Karen, you will deepen your understanding of the topic.

**Asking questions**

Ask questions when you don’t understand the material when it is taught. Do this right after the lesson is taught. Ask questions while you are working on the topic assignment.

**Preparing for exams**

When an exam is being held in a few days, you must study for longer periods of time. You may find exams hard in Alberta because in Alberta exams not only check your memory, but also your ability to apply the lessons to new situations.

*Note to teacher:* This type of exam writing can be specifically taught.

**Getting organized**

You need to have binders for your notes and work. Organize your binders by subject and date and topic; don’t just stuff your assignments in your textbook. Take your own notes when the teacher is lecturing; don’t depend solely on the notes given to you.

*Note to teacher:* Karen children are paying attention when their arms are folded in front of them. In the Karen culture this shows respect. Organize the lesson so that students have an opportunity to write notes. Don’t assume that all students will write notes while you are speaking. Assist the students in organizing their notes in binders with dates on pages and headings. Developing this skill in junior high will assist students as they move through to high school.

**Getting proper nutrition**

Proper nutrition is important for successful learning. Most students eat breakfast, but you must also have lunch so that you are able to learn in the afternoon.

*Note to teachers:* During our discussions we found that parents would prefer that the students eat Karen cuisine, but most youth do not like to eat lunches from home because they are perceived to be different. Many youth want to buy convenience foods for lunch, which expensive and often unhealthy. If school staff would encourage students to bring their own food, parents would be happier.
Developing language skills

In order to learn English you need to speak English. While in school—in class and out of class—speak English with your Karen friends and make friends outside of your community. At home continue to speak Karen. Speak with your elders about school in Karen.

Planning your future

Canada will provide you with many opportunities later in life. You will need English; you will need a high school diploma; and you will need postsecondary training. Begin thinking about your career now. Try to meet somebody in a career you are interested in and learn more about it. What do people actually do day-in and day-out in that career? Would I enjoy it? Do I have the aptitude for it? How would I prepare myself for that career? What education is needed?

At some time you may be tempted to drop out of school to take a full-time job. You and your family will want the money you can make when you are 17 or 18. But keep in mind that to make your full potential income, you will need a high school diploma and postsecondary training.

( L-R) Hse Nay Paw, Lynn Smarsh
The following is a list of some common Karen customs and taboos.

- A child may not touch an adult on the head.
- Older people may call others by name, but younger people refer to older people by their position in the family or the community, for example, “Honoured Father”. Children call their teacher “Teacher” out of respect and do not say the teacher’s name.
- Out of respect, a younger person does not make eye contact with an older person.
- When listening, children and adults sit with their arms folded. This is a sign of respect, not a defiant gesture.
- There is a misconception that Karen people have only first names. When registering the Karen in the camps, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) did not ask for full names. As a consequence, incorrect names have been perpetuated because of mistakes made on camp documentation. Teachers need to ask Karen children how they prefer to be addressed.
- Karen culture is conservative and Karen teens are often shy, so they do not usually attend school dances. However, boys and girls may work together on school projects.
- Homosexuality is considered taboo.
- Knives are not to be given as gifts.
- Birthdays have only recently started to be acknowledged.
- Karen students participate in Christmas celebrations and other religious celebrations. Most Karen people are Christian.
Youth Discuss Youth

Lah May Wah and Ka Shee Ha, two Karen high school girls, interviewed by Matthew Hundert, a youth worker with Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

Matt: Are there traditional female and male roles?

Lah May Wah and Ka Shee Ha: Yes! By age nine or ten, girls are “expected to clean and cook and know good from bad. Back home in the camp, boys were expected to work at a young age; they had to watch over the family and be responsible.”

Girls clean the house and cook for their father and brothers. These chores are done when they wake up in the morning or in the evening. Their brothers do not have to do this. Their mom expects the boys to clean, but they don’t. To make up for this, the girls ask their brothers not to make a mess or cause problems and to stay clean.

Some sports are considered to be only for boys or only for girls. For example, girls play volleyball, badminton and tennis while boys play games like soccer and tekraw/caneball. This distinction may be because “girls aren’t that tough, and boys play too rough.”

In refugee camp schools, girls and boys sat separately in the classroom. Both teachers and students wore uniforms. In Canada everyone can sit together and only a few schools require uniforms.

Matt: Dating and friendship with boys is an important issue.

Lah May Wah and Ka Shee Ha: The way we live is about how adults view us, too. We are very conscious of how adults in the community, not only our parents, interpret our behaviour and social interactions.

“Parents are really strict with girls. You don’t talk to guys—if you do and adults see you, they will view you badly. You don’t want people to misunderstand and think that you’re dating…. You can be seen as a bad girl if you hang out with boys.”

“In the camps the girls had no friends who were boys. You did not hold their hands. Here it’s okay to have a
friend of the opposite sex, but you must not hold his hand."

Boys get a similar, but less forceful, message about appropriate behavior and are treated more leniently. "Guys can go out in the daytime or nighttime, but girls can't. If we go out, we get a lecture when we get home." Both boys and girls will be questioned if they are out after dark.

There is emphasis placed on chastity and "beauty." "Girls aren't really allowed to do anything. You need to keep your 'beauty' safe, because there is a possibility that you will not get a husband otherwise. Back home, parents want a 'clean' daughter-in-law. Boys can lose their 'beauty' and it is not so bad."

When asked about how boys from other communities are viewed, they said these expectations apply mostly to relationships with Karen boys. "It depends. You can be friends with guys from other nationalities if they are good people and you can trust them."

Matt: How are children disciplined? By whom? When?

Lah May Wah and Ka Shee Ha: Anyone can discipline: parents, aunties, uncles or teachers. They think that if a child doesn't do the right thing, you can hit them. “Our parents want us to be good people, so they hit us when we are little. When we are older, they expect us to know better, so they yell instead.”

Both said they “wonder why you can't hit kids here.” We talked a little bit about the purpose of the laws protecting children. However, they said that in general, in the Karen community, parents “only hit when it’s the right time. They have control. Besides, our parents’ generation was treated worse.”

If a youth has an issue with a teacher, parents will lecture them about it. However, parents expect their children to solve their own problems at school, because they can speak English better and have a greater understanding of the school system.

Matt: What is expected of children? When?

Lah May Wah and Ka Shee Ha: “We get more freedom as we grow up. Little kids don’t have as much freedom yet.” As children grow up, “they still think you’re a kid, but they expect you to be responsible like an adult.”

In the refugee camps, there were high academic expectations. Children had to learn three languages (Karen, Burmese and English) starting at Grade 1.

“Once Karen people come here, they change so much. They have freedom. Parents are tired from working, but they want their children to be successful and not have a hard life. Parents expect you to get a good job.” They will give examples of other immigrant communities that have been successful, such as the Chinese community, and encourage their children to emulate this success. However, none of the Karen community members who moved to North America under the resettlement program have graduated from university yet.

Matt: How do you feel about leaving school early?

Lah May Wah and Ka Shee Ha: There are good and bad reasons for leaving school. A good reason to leave school is to help parents out: “Some parents are tired and getting old, or they work at bad jobs. It’s hard to pay for the rent, electricity bills, food bills… so youth leave school to help their parents.” They said leaving school for these kinds of reasons is not common. More often youth leave school just because they don’t like going to school. “They think, ‘I’m grown up, I can do whatever I want.’”
Orientation Guide
to Canadian Schools

This guide was originally developed for the second booklet in this series: *Working with South Sudanese Immigrant Students - Teacher Resources*, written by Athieng Riak, Abiel Kon, Maryanne MacDonald, Elaine Lou and Lynn Smarsh. Karen parents working on this resource were so impressed with it that they asked that it be translated into Karen and included in this resource booklet as well. One of the writers, Ku Ku, translated the guide, and Gay Poe Hai transcribed the script for printing. Karen parents may take the resource to parent-teacher interviews as an aide.

This is just one tool to assist schools and Karen families in better understanding and communicating with each other.

**How to use this guide**

Consider having this guide available when the student initially comes to register at the school. It may be housed in the general office or in the student services area. District intake centres should also have copies since parents will usually be accompanied by a settlement worker or interpreter when they visit that centre. The various points in the guide should be discussed collaboratively, and parents and their children should have the opportunity to ask questions. Parents should receive a copy to take home for future reference.

This guide could be adapted for use with immigrant families of other cultural backgrounds. If you wish to create your own guide, please keep in mind the following points:

- Remember to involve members of the cultural community in the guide’s creation.
- Use plain language. This means avoiding educational jargon, explaining abbreviations and using short sentences and the active voice.
- Use appropriate illustrations to further explain each point.
School/Home Communication

## Parent–Teacher Interviews

- Parents and teachers are partners in the child’s education.
- An interview is a chance to discuss your child’s progress in school.
- The school can provide a translator or you can bring someone you trust to interpret for you.
- An interview is usually 15 minutes long.

## School Fees

- Parents need to pay for bus fees, textbooks and other learning supplies.
- If you can’t afford to pay these fees, you can talk to the school, and your child can still go to school.
- You may not have to pay all the fees if you have money problems.
School/Home Communication

Homework

- Students use an agenda to write down their homework. Please check the agenda to see their assignments.
- If you can’t help your child with homework, check to see if the school has a homework club.
- Some communities provide homework clubs as well.

Letters/Phones Call from School

You might hear from the school when
- there are important forms for you to sign.
- they have concerns about your child.
- your child is absent at school, and the office hasn’t heard from you.

缅甸语解释：

Homework

- 学生使用日程表来记录作业。请检查日程表以查看作业。
- 如果您不能帮助您的孩子完成作业，请查看学校是否设有作业俱乐部。
- 一些社区会提供家庭作业俱乐部。

Letters/Phones Call from School

您可能会接到学校的通知，因为
- 存在需要您签名的重要文件。
- 学校有关于您孩子的担忧。
- 孩子缺课，学校还没有收到您的消息。
Delivery of Learning

Textbooks

- Students DON’T always get a textbook for every subject.
- Students keep assigned textbooks for the school year.
- They MUST return textbooks at the end of the year in good condition. If they do not, they will have to pay for the textbook.

Other Learning Tools

- Students use binders to organize learning materials and carry them into the classroom.
- Students are encouraged to organize their binders regularly.
- While a computer at home is very helpful to your child’s learning, they DON’T have to have a personal laptop or other devices such as an iPod or cellphone.
Delivery of Learning

Teaching Styles:
- Students do not just memorize facts.
- Teachers encourage creative thinking and questions.
- Students often work in groups to complete assignments and projects.
- Boys and girls work together and are treated equally.

English Language Learning (ELL):
- ELL students need up to seven years to become academically successful in English.
- Students may access additional, free ELL help outside school in a public library or community church.
Parents in Canada

Family Time

- Canadians value family time.
- Families often have dinner together.
- Parents spend time doing activities with their children, at home and in the community.

Discipline at Home

- Physical punishment is illegal at school and at home.
- Parents set limits at home, and children have to take responsibility for their mistakes.

Parents in Canada

- ქართული
- იყოფა გამარჯობა
- მამათა და დედათა წინააღმდეგ
- რჩება სიტყვა, რომ სიახლოვეში გამარჯობა ცდილობს.
- შვეიცარია შუა საუკუნეში გამარჯობა იყოფა
- ბავშვთა შეერთება გამარჯობას შეუძლია პროფესიული ღირსხევა.
- ბავშვთა შეერთება გამარჯობას შეუძლია პროფესიული ღირსხევა.

- განათლების თერაპია გასამყოფი
- ბავშვთა შეერთება გამარჯობას შეუძლია პროფესიული ღირსხევა.
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- ბავშვთა შეერთება გამარჯობას შეუძლია პროფესიული ღირსხევა.
Parents in Canada

Family Responsibilities

- Children are encouraged to share family chores such as cleaning up rooms, lawn mowing and snow shoveling.
- It’s illegal to keep children at home to babysit younger siblings on school days.

Traditional vs Canadian

- Canada is proud of its cultural diversity.
- As a family, you can keep some important family traditions, and learn some new Canadian ways.
- Successful immigrant children embrace both their old and their new culture’s norms and values.
## Gender Expectations

### Recreation

- Girls and boys both have options to play all sports or take up any hobby. Boys and girls participate together.
- Team sports require separation of boys and girls as they get older. Boys' size and strength requires this for safety.

### Careers

- Girls and boys are encouraged to take up careers. This means delaying marriage.
- Careers are for both boys and girls.
- Both men and women hold positions of authority.
- Presently, more girls than boys attend postsecondary education.
Gender Expectations

Academic Success for Boys and Girls

• Girls and boys are encouraged to stay in school and to achieve the highest level of education possible.
• Academic success, as well as homemaking and child-raising skills, are important for both girls and boys.

Washrooms/Change Rooms

• Girls and boys should use their own washrooms and change rooms.
• Most public washrooms and change rooms will be marked with a sign or picture that shows a man or a woman.

In Karen:

လက်ပ်သို့သောကြည့်ရှုအခြေခံအိမ်ခြေ နှင့်မှန်ကြားချက်

• ကလေးများနှင့် ကလေးများသည် ပညာရေးအတွက် အဖြေရှင်းစွာ အရေးအကြီးစွာ ဆောင်ရွက်နိုင်ရန် အချိန်များ ပြင်ပြီးသော အချက်အလက်များ ကြည့်ရှုရာ ကိုယ်စားလှယ် ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
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In English:

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## School Discipline—It’s the Law

### Attendance
- Girls and boys must attend school daily until they are 17 years old.
- School administration must report problems with attendance to a special board.
- Missing school can result in a large fine for the parents for each day missed.
- If your child can’t go to school, phone the school.

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### Serious Offences
- Fighting, bullying, smoking and skipping school are considered serious.
- Repeated or serious problems may result in the student being suspended from school.

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School Discipline—It’s the Law

Illegal Activities

- Drugs are illegal in Canada. Use of alcohol at school is illegal. If your child is using, selling or keeping drugs, the police will be called. Parents will be called to meet with police at school.
- Illegal involvement with gangs (groups of people who move drugs or steal) will be dealt with at the school by a police officer. Parents will be called immediately.
- If a student is breaking the law, they will be suspended and possibly removed from the school.
- If a student is fined, the parent is responsible to pay.

- ကြောင်းပေးခြင်းသည်ကျွန်ုပ်ကြီးများ၏အဖွဲ့အစည်းများလည်းကောင်းမှ ချင်းစွဲပေးခြင်းအဖြစ်ကြီးများ၏အဖွဲ့အစည်းများလည်းကောင်းမှ ချင်းစွဲပေးခြင်းလည်းကောင်းမှ ချင်းစွဲပေးခြင်းနှင့် မြို့နယ်စီးရီးယားကြီးများလည်းကောင်းမှ ချင်းစွဲပေးခြင်းမှာ ဖြစ်ပါသည်။
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School Day Routines

Personal Belongings

- Children carry their books in a backpack.
- Children bring a healthy lunch and snacks to school in their backpacks.
- Parents should check the backpack for important papers and homework assignments from school.

Movement in School

- Grade K–6 students keep their backpacks and coats in a coatroom in the classroom.
- Grade K–6 students stay in one room most of the day.
- Grade 7–12 students have lockers for their belongings.
- Students go from room to room for different classes. Teachers usually stay in one classroom.
School Day Routines

Prepare for Class

- Students are responsible to get to each class on time.
- Children come to school before school starts.
- Students must come to class with their books and homework ready.
- If students don’t understand something, they should ask the teacher for help. Teachers want them to ask questions.

Homework Is Daily

- Your child should do homework every day. They should work on large assignments over a few days or sometimes weeks.
- Not all homework is for marks. If there is no assigned homework, your child should review notes or read.
School Day Routines

School Timetable

- From Grade 7 on, when school begins, you will get a schedule that your child must follow.
- The schedule tells what time each class starts and where classrooms are. Teachers help students to understand the schedule.

Questions to Ask Your Child At the End of a School Day

- What happened at school today?
- Did your teacher give you a paper for me?
- What did you like best today?
- Did you have fun?
- What do you have for homework?
School Day Routines

Going to Bed and Waking Up

• Your child should use a clock, not the sun, to know when to go to bed and get up.
• Sometimes, schools might be closed or school buses might not run if the weather is bad. Listen for the morning weather report on the radio or TV.

Health

• If your child has a fever or a disease that other students could catch, like measles or chicken pox, keep the child at home.
• Take your child to the dentist every six months.
• Have your child’s eyes tested every year.
• Take your child for a checkup with the doctor every year.
**Helping Children**

- There are programs in schools and communities to help young children get ready for kindergarten.
- If children have not been able to go to school in their countries, there are literacy classes to help them fill the gaps in their education.

**Special Programming**

- If a student does not achieve well in grades 1 to 5, special programming is available to assist the student in catching up and succeeding.
- If the school asks for special programming for your child, you should ask WHY. The purpose is to help your child catch up.
- If special testing is required, you will be asked to sign consent forms. The testing is necessary and will assist the school in correctly assessing your child.
School Programs

Provincial Tests

- In Alberta, provincial tests are in the spring of Grades 6, 9 and 12.
- The Grade 9 test marks help decide the student’s high school courses.
- The Grade 12 test marks are used for college entrance.
- Marks of 75% or higher mean that your child has more academic options.

Promotions

- Each year a student progresses from grade to grade.
- Teachers look at report cards and provincial tests to make course plans with you and your child.
### Assessments

#### Types of Assessment

- Written assessments (writing assignments and exams)
- Oral assessments
- Group work
- Presentations
- Peer assessments (student assess each other)
- Self-evaluations (students assess their own work)

#### Expectations

- Students are not ranked in the classroom. Teachers do not compare children in the classroom.
- Teachers ask students to achieve to the best of their ability and a little beyond.

#### ការសម្រួលសម្រាប់កាលបរិក្ខាមួយក្នុងការសិក្រមាន

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Assessments

What Is Taught

- All of Alberta has a standard curriculum. It is completed in 12 years of school.
- All children are expected to take English, social studies, sciences, mathematics, Physical Education and optional courses.
- Children are expected to be competent in that level of the curriculum for each year.

Reporting

- You will receive report cards several times each year. They have marks and comments from the teacher about your child. If you have questions, contact the school.
- Talk to your child about the report card. Then sign it and send it back to the school if your school requires this.
- At the end of June, you will receive a copy of the final report card.
In senior high school each course is worth credits. Graduating students must have at least 100 credits. This means they must take 25–30 courses over three years.

Courses include English, social studies, sciences, math, physical education, career and life management and options.

Students can complete the high school diploma requirements at high school or as adults at a community college.

Students need at least a 70% average in five academic subjects for college entrance.

English 30 is used for entrance to many college programs.
Paying for College and University

- College and university fees cost several thousand dollars. Textbooks and other materials are also very expensive.
- Students can work part-time and go to school part-time. Students can also apply for scholarships and loans.

Careers

- In Canada, all careers are valued. Trades courses and professional courses are studied at college.
- Trades certificates are often earned on the job.
- Trade professionals are well respected and well paid.
Resources

Compiled by Lynn Farrugia


How Can a Boy. 2012. Produced and written by Jane Gurr. Documentary. Ottawa: Kublacom Pictures. Additional information on the film may be obtained by contacting the producer at jane.gurr@sympatico.ca. If the film cannot be accessed, the trailer is worth watching at howcanaboy.com


This monograph gives a view of life in Burma and in the Thai camps, with a specific focus on health issues. It came from a roundtable discussion with the Karen community in Seattle and Minnesota.


This book traces the history of the Karen people, describes their life in Burma and recounts some cultural tales and their contact with Christian beliefs.
