



A new year begins - with a huge thank you from the Mae Sot Education Project team to all our partners and supporters, in both Canada and in Thailand

Members of our team together in Mae Sot, Fall 2018



Dear Friends,

2018 saw some positive developments in Mae Sot with regard to educational options for migrant children. With the migrant education community working more closely with governments, migrant learning centres play an increasingly important role in creating pathways for migrant and refugee children to transfer into formal education systems in both Thailand and Myanmar. Even though democracy and human rights for all in Myanmar are no closer to realization this year than last, we hope that through education, a new generation of critical thinkers and leaders may emerge, helping to create a more inclusive and humane political and social culture in the country. We at MSEP are honoured to be able to play a small role in this process. We are also grateful for the opportunity given our volunteers to participate in and learn from the migrant education community. As you will see from the messages below, their experience has been both deep and personal.

Messages from our 2018 Volunteers

From Fanny Barret...

I realized how much I felt at home at my schools when my father came to visit. He came right before our October vacation, but I insisted that he arrive a few days early. It was very important for me to introduce him to my students and fellow teachers. Hsa Thoo Lei is a big school and he came on the last day of exams. We invited some of my students for lunch and had a great time, but we didn't see much at the school. Hsa Mu Htaw is much smaller, and much like a family. Everyone knew about my father's visit, every day my students would ask me "Friday, teacher father come?" And when he finally did, what a pride I felt to be part of this school, to be able to show him around, to tell him what I was doing every day. I sat back and watched my father share with Daw Htet Htet Aung and I felt such joy to see two parts of my life come together. Hsa Mu Htaw school has been like a family to me during my time in Mae Sot, and it was a privilege to see their dear headmistress talk, laugh, share food and stories with my father.

From Tyler Gordon...

One of the hardest things I had to do while in Mae Sot was to say good-bye to my students. During the last days at my school, a number of them kept telling me, “do not to forget about us.” How could I forget my very first students? Every day I am reminded of special moments with these kids. Throughout the last months in Mae Sot, three girls from my grade 6 class would appear at my classroom each day and dispute with each other about who would get to carry my bag and water bottle to their classroom. Another moment that will stay with me happened when one day, I noticed something on one of the boys’ legs. As I ventured closer, I realized that he had drawn a mountain range on the back of his leg. It took me a brief minute to realize that his drawing matched the mountain tattoo that I have on my own leg. One of the best memories I will have with my grade nine students was when I would take 5 minutes at the end of a class and they would teach me Burmese: me trying to write out new words phonetically and having my students repeat them several times while I tried to pronounce the words, all while making them giggle and laugh. These are only a few of the moments that will stay with me when I think about my first students.

From Fidelie Camirand...

Having been back home for two weeks now, I am only just starting to process all that happened during the past six months. It was hard for me to leave the school and make my farewells to the students. The day of the Goodbye Ceremony was an especially emotional one and the last occasion to witness the community’s incredible generosity and thankfulness. My three groups sat in a room that had been prepared for the celebration, and I was so moved to walk in and see “Farewell Teacher Fifi” written on the board. I was invited to sit at the front next to the school’s founder, facing all my students. As I looked into their eyes and saw their smiles, I could not believe how far we had come. Now I had to say goodbye. The students’ speeches were very moving, and some had written me notes which I was so happy to read later flying back to Canada. At the end of the ceremony, they sang songs, and I could not hold back my tears as I sang along. I then shared a last lunch with them, took photos and answered their questions regarding my travel back. After I made my farewells to all teachers, I walked into the principal’s office one last time. Looking around, my eyes landed on the drawing of General Aung San under which there was a quote that had inspired me on my very first day: “Improvement starts with I.” I was so proud of my students, of what we had accomplished, and biking away from the school with this sentence in mind, I felt like I understood it in a whole new way.



Again, all of us at the Mae Sot Education Project extend our deepest thanks for your on-going support for our work and our wish that the coming year brings well-being and peace to all in our troubled world.

Read more about our project at <https://maesot.ubishops.ca>.