

2024-2025

City Hall School

Report to partners



In partnership with:



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Grade 5 students tour downtown observing murals that tell about significant people in the community.



Grade 6 students at the Bow Tower, reflecting on connections between landmarks and public art in the city.



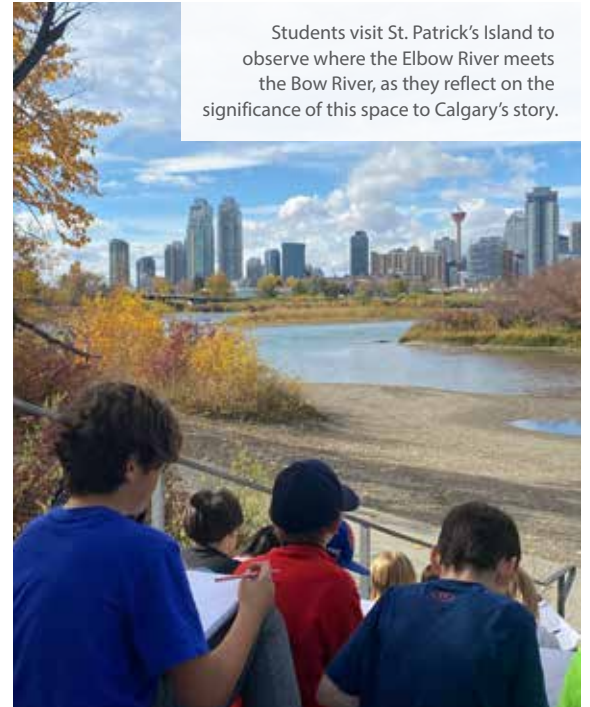
Students explore indoor public spaces, such as Devonian Gardens.

Land acknowledgement

Moh-kins-tsis. Wichispa Oyade. Otos-kwunee. Guts-ists'i. Calgary. This land has many names, and when we recognize the traditional names of this place, along with how it is referenced today, we acknowledge the rich history and layers of story that have created the city of Calgary as we know it today.

In recognizing the traditional names and the original caretakers of this land, we acknowledge the stories, ceremony, traditions, culture, song and ways of knowing and being that continue to influence us today as well as demonstrate understanding of the significant value of that knowledge and traditions.

Calgary is located on Treaty 7, the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy – Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wicastabi First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki, Bearspaw and Wesley First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. It is also home to the Metis Nation, Districts 5 and 6. As treaty people, we acknowledge and value the oral practices and traditions of these communities, and strive to uphold the reciprocity and respectful relationships, along with deep gratitude for being able to share stories and engage in learning on this land.



Students visit St. Patrick's Island to observe where the Elbow River meets the Bow River, as they reflect on the significance of this space to Calgary's story.

Throughout the year, classes visit The Confluence, to view where Calgary's story began – even long before it was named Calgary.



Students investigate what Indigenous plants can be found on St. Patrick's Island.

Exploring our city

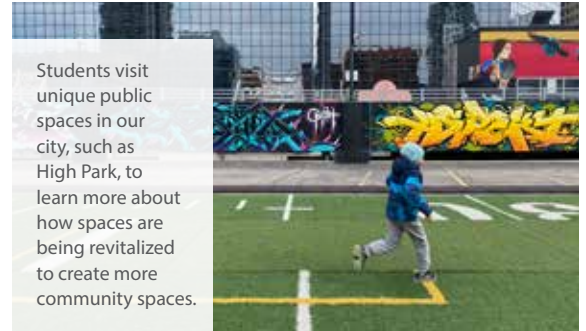
Upon arrival at the Municipal Building, students file off The City transit charter bus and onto the sidewalk, pointing at things they see and offering up enthusiastic comments to their peers. When arriving in the building and entering through the revolving doors—a highlight—the excitement and curiosity is palpable. Some students gaze around with wide-eyed awe, while others are captivated by the aroma of coffee and freshly baked goods wafting through the atrium. Initially, they were a bit shy, but by the end of their time at City Hall School, they felt confident that this is a place where they belong. Many expressed a desire to share this experience with their family and friends.

Over the course of the year, City Hall School welcomed 615 students to explore downtown and learn about municipal government and civic engagement. For many students, this experience provides their first real opportunity to engage meaningfully with the civic spaces and systems that shape their city. They visit places they may never have encountered before and reflect on how these spaces are designed, used and experienced by different people. In doing so, they begin to understand that their voices, observations and ideas have value in shaping the future of Calgary.

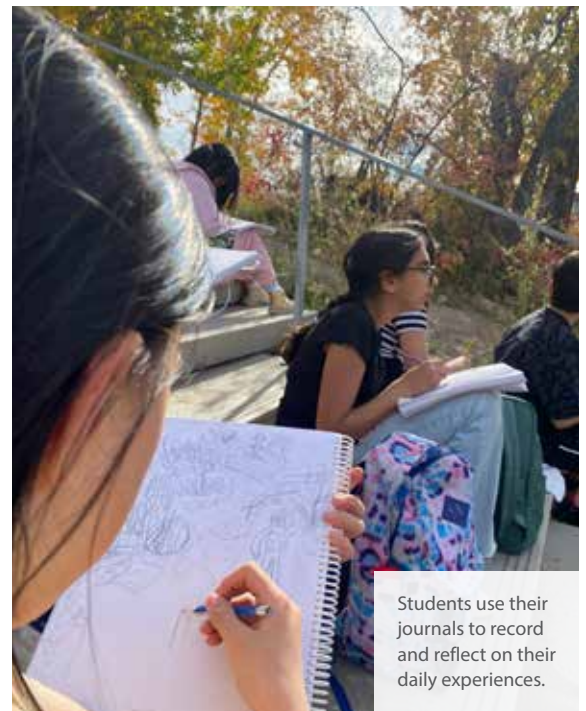
City Hall School is an investment in youth as active participants in community life. Through guided reflection and journalling, students explore big questions about citizenship, community and identity. They learn how to see their city through multiple lenses and develop the confidence to contribute thoughtfully to conversations about how it can grow and evolve.

Whether navigating the Plus 15 network, feeding the fish at Dragon City Mall, touring The Grand or visiting the new Wave Tech Centre, students gain a deeper awareness of the stories behind the spaces around them. They enjoy peaceful moments by the Bow River, admire native plants at St. Patrick's Island and play in reimagined spaces like High Park and Pixel Park. In every location, they ask questions like: who is this space for? How has this space changed? What is the story that this space tells and what does it tell us about Calgary?

City Hall School gives young people a chance to connect with their city in personal, thoughtful ways—building a sense of ownership, inclusion and civic pride. By fostering curiosity and encouraging deeper engagement with place and policy, it lays the foundation for a future generation of informed, compassionate and involved residents.



Students visit unique public spaces in our city, such as High Park, to learn more about how spaces are being revitalized to create more community spaces.



Students use their journals to record and reflect on their daily experiences.



Students are captivated with the artifacts and displays throughout the Municipal Atrium.

How does City Hall School work?

City Hall School is a five-day field study that is jointly run by The City of Calgary's Recreation & Social Programs business unit and Campus Calgary/Open Minds. In the spring, teachers submit a proposal for the following school year about how the field study would be incorporated within their year-long plans. All Calgary schools are welcome, which include public, Catholic, independent or charter schools.

Being accepted to the City Hall School program includes a full-year experience that's guided by a big idea. This big idea connects the students' work at school to their week downtown. Teachers are involved in many professional development opportunities throughout the year which provide knowledge which they may find helpful when participating in City Hall School and the skills that their students will need.

Every week is personalized to each class, their big idea and their needs. Approximately six to eight weeks before their time downtown, there's a planning meeting with teachers to set intentions and expectations. Using the information gathered, a five-day field study experience is curated for the group. This experience has many different facets. Every class meets Mayor Gondek and their councillor, and attends part of a meeting in the Council Chambers. When meeting the mayor and councillors, students ask many questions about their roles, inquire about solving community issues and seek to understand current events. Students learn from many experiences, including presentations from City of Calgary experts, community experts, community walks, observation and journaling.

City Hall School's mission is to offer a look into the municipal government, how decisions are made and how the city is run. Through this experience, we aim to inspire students to become active citizens in their communities.



Grade 6 students meet with their councillor, asking thoughtful questions about decision-making in their community.



Students explore historic City Hall with Councillor Wong and Councillor Dhaliwal.



Students met with Councillor Wong and learned about how decisions are made in the Council Chambers. We even attended a meeting in Chambers to hear about land use changes in the city.



Grade 6 students enjoy seeing the Municipal Building from a different perspective.

Celebrating 25 years

This year marks a significant milestone —25 years of City Hall School in Calgary. Reflecting on this milestone, we recognize the journey that brought us here—from an initial idea to a pilot site, and finally to a full-time program housed in a dedicated classroom on the main floor of the Municipal Building. City Hall School has engaged both students and adults in learning about local government, understanding what it means to be an engaged citizen and realizing how these elements directly impact their lives as Calgarians.

City Hall School was officially launched in March 2000, starting with six pilot classes and under the guidance of Coordinator Diane Murray, who laid the foundation for the program. The City transformed a committee room into a classroom on the main floor, offering the public a glimpse into how young people can engage in learning about municipal government and civic participation.

Over the years, City Hall School has built a legacy of inspiring youth to understand their role in shaping their communities—one class, one conversation and one connection at a time.

To celebrate this 25-year journey, we hosted a special gathering that brought together students, former teachers and coordinators, delegates, City employees, Campus Calgary/ Open Minds staff, school board representatives and community experts. The event was a meaningful opportunity to share stories, celebrate milestones and reflect on the lasting impact City Hall School has had—and continues to have—on Calgary's youth.



Students engage in some of the activities at the City Hall School anniversary event held at the Municipal Building.

City Hall School helped me understand the importance of empathy downtown and everyone that lives in it...we might have a different culture, a different background story, but no matter what we are all connected with one thing. We all love Calgary for what it is.

Grade 5 student

I realize now that all of us are part of Calgary's story.

Grade 6 student

Stories of place and space

This year, many of the big ideas explored by students centered on the theme of place—how stories are embedded in the spaces around us and what we, as citizens of Calgary, can learn from them.

Our city's story began long before it was known as Calgary. For thousands of years, people have gathered at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow rivers. Students spend time recognizing how the land has shaped our city, and the stories of the land offer glimpses into the relationships that exist here—balancing the needs of the humans who call the city home and the natural spaces that provide sustenance for wildlife.

Often, students share their own stories and curiosities about being on the land, recognizing familiar plants and natural features from their own neighbourhoods. These moments of connection helped students realize that, even if downtown feels far from home, we are all linked by the land we live on. Visiting The Confluence and St. Patrick's Island helps students see these similarities and appreciate the unique way these spaces tell Calgary's story from past to present.

Students also explored downtown spaces that illustrate Calgary's growth and evolution through its infrastructure and architecture. By visiting Stephen Avenue and the Grand Theatre, students gained insights into the city's early years and how preserving these buildings helps us remember those stories while also highlighting the changes over time. Visiting Arts Commons and observing the construction at Olympic Plaza allowed students to envision the future of these spaces and reflect on what this transformation communicates about Calgary's vision for the future.

Exploring downtown and visiting many hidden gems and public spaces often prompts students to reflect on who uses these spaces and the stories they tell. At the Chinese Cultural Centre and Dragon City Mall, students noticed murals that convey a sense of belonging, traditions and community values. Working with city planners, students learned how communities are organized and designed to support the needs of their residents.

At the Central Library, students encountered artwork focused on Indigenous placemaking, prompting meaningful reflections on how art communicates stories, history and identity.

Together, these experiences encouraged students to think deeply about how Calgary's spaces (both natural and built) tell the stories of the people who shape and are shaped by them.



Students stopped to watch the construction happening at Olympic Plaza. Students reflected, how might this space, once transformed, impact community in a positive way?



Students visit unique public spaces in our city, such as High Park, to learn more about how spaces are being revitalized to create more community spaces.



Visiting historical landmarks in the city, like the Grand, to learn more about the story of places and spaces around the city.



Students imagined different versions of a popular landmark, the Calgary Tower, and then made their drawings come to life.



Students observing and discussing public art murals in Chinatown and how they tell stories of culture, tradition and community.



Students participate in activities at the Exploratorium in the Central Library.

I can be a positive force by sharing my voice and ideas, building community and understanding different perspectives.

Grade 6 student



Students spend time in Municipal Plaza, reflecting on how that space can tell a story about Calgary.



Students visited the Wave Tech Center, a resource of The City of Calgary to allow prototyping of projects that involve a variety of technologies to address concerns in an innovative way.

Community: Connections and contributions

Throughout the year, students explored many big ideas related to curiosity, having a positive impact on the community, being an engaged citizen, understanding empathy, enhancing community and taking actions to improve the future. They learned from City staff and community experts about the many ways individuals can make an impact, whether through small everyday actions or large-scale initiatives that connect people and places.

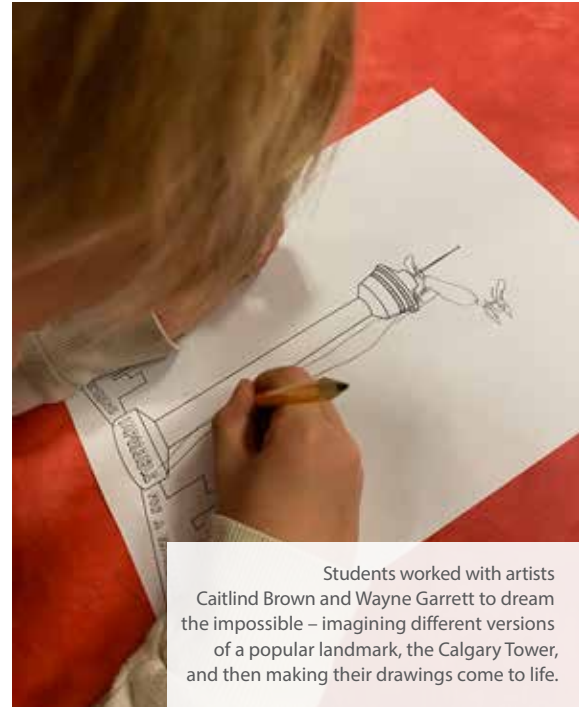
A visit with Kainai Elder Camille Pablo Russell deepened students' understanding of their own strengths and gifts, helping them see how personal growth and self-awareness contribute to helping others.

Through conversations with Engage planners, students explored how public input helps shape City projects. This gave them the opportunity to share their viewpoints on public art, accessibility and places where more Calgarians might be interested in sharing their experiences and opinions.

Civic journalist Jeremy Klaszus of The Sprawl highlighted the importance of asking questions and listening to diverse perspectives—key components of being an engaged and informed citizen. Meanwhile, Calgary Arts Development introduced students to local artists whose work enriches public spaces and brings people together.

Students also saw firsthand how public resources like the Central Library help build stronger communities by fostering inclusion and connection.

City Hall School helped students see themselves as active contributors to Calgary's future. By learning from those who serve the city in a variety of roles, they discovered that making a difference is not just possible—it's already within their reach.



Students worked with artists Caitlind Brown and Wayne Garrett to dream the impossible – imagining different versions of a popular landmark, the Calgary Tower, and then making their drawings come to life.



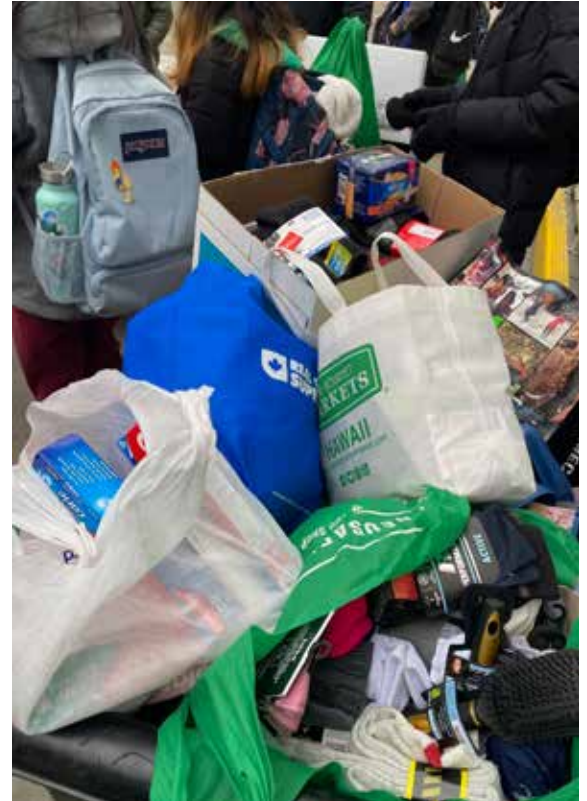
Visiting the Central Library, a legacy landmark, to see how architecture, art and community supports can help to build a positive legacy for Calgarians.



City Planning came to visit and shared with students how communities get their names.

Celebrating student learning

Students created holiday decorations and organized donations of warm socks and hygiene supplies to help The Mustard Seed support their guests. Then, students visited The Mustard Seed to learn about the important work they do in the community.



Working with artist Jarett Sitter, creating works of art inspired by his work *The Bison and the Dragon*.



This trip was
one of the
greatest.

Grade 6 student



Thinking about art as CONNECTION: How art can tell stories of who we are and who we are in community.

Celebrating student learning



Students had the opportunity to work with civic journalist, Jeremy Klaszus (Sprawl Calgary) to learn about current events, the importance of asking good questions and how information can be shared with community. They even created their own zine to share with others.



I see that some of the skills I am learning now, I will still keep using as an adult – taking turns, listening and sharing my ideas.

Grade 4 student

Kids get a deeper understanding of what they are studying.

Grade 5 student



Students visited Hindle Architects to learn about the Arts Commons redesign.

Celebrating student learning



Students perform a Reader's Theatre about connections between the historical events of ancient Rome and how they impact and influence our identity today.

“It teaches you to help people, help the city and be you. It teaches you about self-confidence and courage through the mind of art.”

Grade 6 student



Students take a moment to journal about what they see in the four directions – north, east, south and west. They observe how place can tell a story that reflects Calgary's past and present.

“A legacy is a project or a love story you leave behind. A legacy is hope.”

Grade 4 student



Students sneak-a-peek into the display cabinets in the Municipal Building to view what artifacts help to tell the story of Calgary Parks.

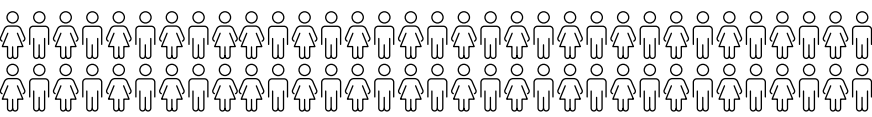


City Hall School big ideas 2024-2025

Big idea	Grade	Ward	School
How can my voice and actions protect democracy, enhance my community, support the environment and be a positive force for the world?	6	6	Battalion Park School
How can empathy help build bridges?	5 and 6	7	Briar Hill School
Exploring public art: Inspiring civic engagement and cultural identity in our city.	6	14	Deer Run School
What can we do today, to make tomorrow better?	6	12	Christ the King School
What does it mean to be an engaged citizen? How can I be a positive force in my community?	5 and 6	7	Sunnyside School
How can we make sure our actions have a positive impact on our future legacy?	4	2	Citadel Park School
How do we form and shape our identities?	5 and 6	6	Guardian Angel School
How does STORY connect us?	2	12	St. Gianna School
How might we contribute to our community, to positively impact quality of life?	3	7	King George School
How do stories teach and connect us?	2 and 3	7	Queen Elizabeth School
How do the stories shape our understanding of ourselves, other people, places and the land?	1	14	Andrew Sibbald School
How do stories shape our understanding of ourselves, others, space and place?	4	12	Sibylla Kiddle School
How can we create connections between schools and communities in order to make Calgary a better city for everyone?	10/11/12	1	Bowness High School

2024-2025 statistics

615 students

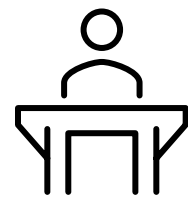


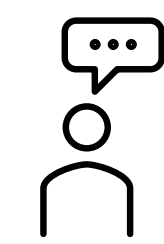
 25 classes

20 from Calgary Board of Education 5 from Calgary Catholic School District

 26 teachers
6 school staff 3 student teachers

252  volunteers

 8 Councillors and the Mayor

 54 City of Calgary experts
43 community experts



Students explore the Atrium at the Municipal Building with Councillor Wong.



Students use a variety of maps to observe how Calgary and their community have changed over time.



Learning from public engagement about the Access Design Standards and working with public engagement and designing a park for ALL USERS.

2024-2025 City of Calgary staff

Thank you to all The City of Calgary staff who shared their expertise with City Hall School.

Special thanks to the City Transit staff for ensuring students arrived safely and reliably each day, and to the Corporate Security – Visitor Management team at the Municipal Building for helping create a welcoming and secure environment for all. Thank you to the City Clerk's Office for coordinating meaningful experiences in Council Chambers and for being a consistent source of knowledge and support. Finally, a heartfelt thank-you to all City of Calgary staff who generously shared their time and expertise with students—your stories and insights brought learning to life and inspired the next generation of engaged citizens.

Arts & Culture

Serenella Argueta

Calgary Archives

Susanne Clark

Maren King

Andrew Webster

Bryan Bance

Kristine Lehew

Lynn Bullock

Calgary Futures, Strategic Development

Eric McNaughton

Calgary Transit

Marc Briones

Mandeep Dhese

Calgary Transit drivers

City Clerk's Office

Daniela Pascan

Mary Kirk

Civic Engagement and Protocol team

Legislative Services team

Council Services team

City Planning

Kelsey Cohen

Lana Montuffar

Robyn Jamieson

Community Services

Katie Black

Councillors and staff

Richard Pootmans (former Councillor)

Councillor Wong

Councillor Dhaliwal

Councillor Walcott

Councillor Penner

Councillor Sharp

Councillor Demong

Councillor Spencer

Councillor Wyness

Customer Service & Communications

Andrea Sichewski

Sol Freire Contreras

Kaylee Scott

Elder-in-Residence

Elder Camille Pablo Russell

Facility Management

Alvin Nepunan

Regine Mak

Gyula Danko

Film Friendly Calgary

Jen Duggan

Innovation Lab

Rebecca Ellison

Municipal Building Security

Corporate Security teams

Office of the Mayor

Mayor Jyoti Gondek

Trina Hurdman

Amalie Ramcharan

Catherine Seymour

Parks

Elsie Woods

Public Engagement

Catriona White

Tracey Keegan

Bryan Tario

Ali McMillan

Jen Austin

Rebecca Melenka

Melissa Bourne

Denielle Guinto

Elizabeth Countryman

Katie Yeung

Recreation & Social Programs

Arlas Gillies

Debbie Belgrave

Renee Walker

Deanne Rommens

Jenni Hettinga

Wendy Sliworsky

Heather Johnson

Connor Rodewald

Safety Expo

Chief Steve Dongworth

Afshan Nazir

Sahar Hammoud

Waste & Recycling

Michelle Dias

Wave Tech Centre

Jason Cameron

Students were invited to attend the Safety Expo at the Municipal Building. They were greeted with a short introduction to Chief Dongworth and Councillor Sharp and then were able to visit the booths from community leaders who were there to share the work they do to keep Calgarians safe throughout the city.



Students build a landfill with expert Michelle Dias, Waste and Recycling.

This helped me understand my city better.

Grade 5 student



Exploring historic City Hall with Councillors Dhaliwal and Wong.

Being on Council would require empathy skills because you have to consider everybody's needs before you make a decision.

Grade 5 student

2024-2025 community experts

Thank you, Calgary, for being a city full of inspiration, stories and opportunities to learn.

We are especially grateful to the many community members who generously shared their time, knowledge and experiences with City Hall School. Your contributions helped students see the city through new eyes and understand the many ways people make a difference in their communities every day.

Arts Commons

Jen Stables

Calgary Arts Development

Alex Lingnau

Sharon Stevens

Laura Carabello

Jarett Sitter

Natalia Ionescu

Michelle Ku

Caitlind Brown

Wayne Garrett

Melissa Skowron

Mia Rushton

Eric Moschopedis

Mike Hooves

Tiffany Wollmans

Candace DeVuyst

Calgary Board of Education

Joanne Pitman

Mike Nelson

Garry Tink

Calgary Catholic School District

Bryan Szumlas

Helmut Kaiser

Kirk Linton

Calgary Public Library

Sam Ross

Sonya Guha-Thakurta

Pippa Ruddy

Lindsay Burns

Jon MacBurnie

Campus Calgary/Open Minds

Jenn Meredith

Natasha McKay

Marta Albertin

Contemporary Calgary

Yilu Xing

Shaghayegh Poppy Ghasemi

Dandan Gu

Fairmont Palliser

Winkie Frani

Green T Design

Kerry Ross

Jules Donner

Hindle Architects

Laura Alvey

Anna Toneguzzi

Cristina Jaramillo

Independent public resident

Harry Saunders (historian)

The Grand

Nate Chiang

Autumn Sali

The Mustard Seed

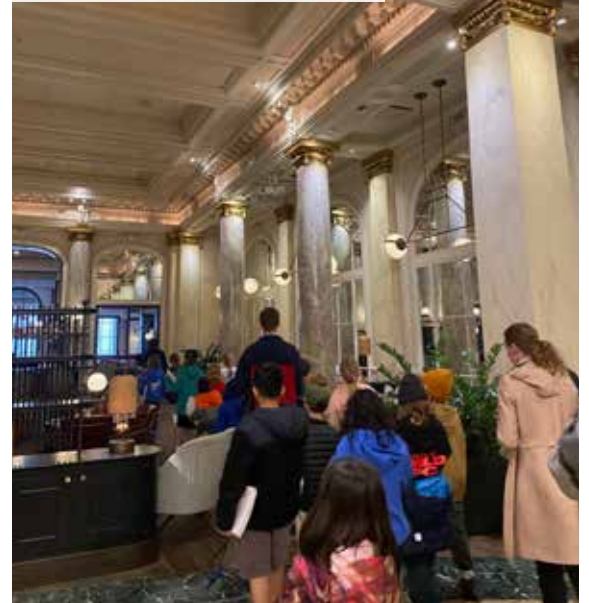
Cecily Letendre

Danielle Burns

The Sprawl

Jeremy Klaszus

Students toured the Palliser Hotel with historian Harry Saunders, to learn more about this important landmark and its connection to the growth of our city.



Learning about how green roof projects can support climate change initiatives and healthy environments for all, students created their own green roof with Kerry and Jules from Green T Designs.

Conclusion

Throughout the school year, students, teachers and volunteers expressed enthusiasm for their time at City Hall School and a renewed sense of connection and appreciation for our city.

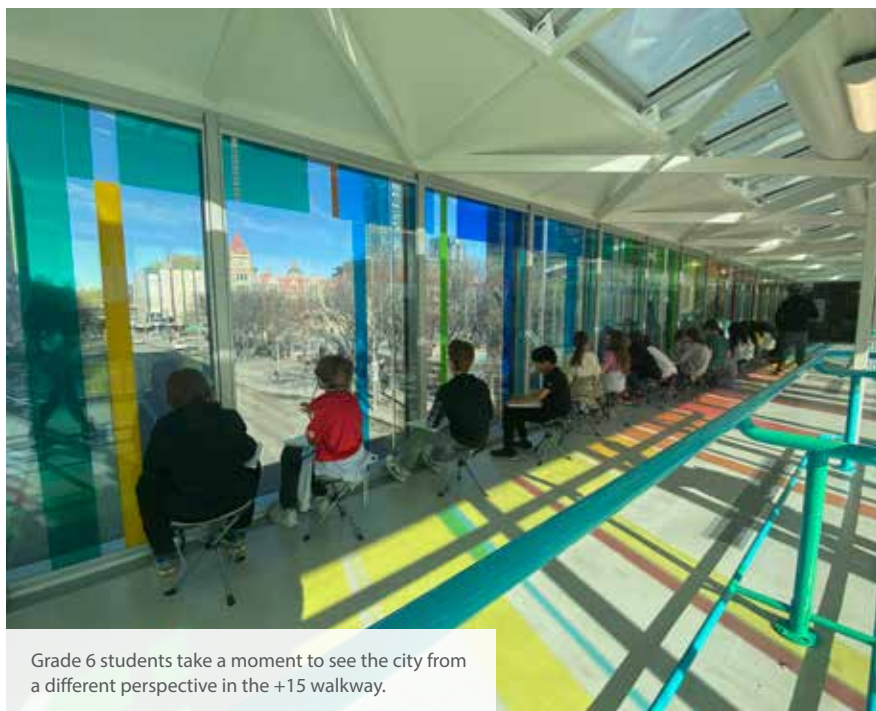
For City employees and community members, engaging with the program is a meaningful reminder of the impact their work has on Calgary's future. For teachers, City Hall School highlights the city as a place of deep learning—full of resources, stories and inspiration—inviting them to view the community as an extension of the classroom.

When students engage in experiential learning, they begin to see the connections between what they learn in school and the world around them. With the support of City staff and community members, they build understanding, discover the value of learning alongside others and experience the power of collaboration and community.

It is this power of connection that helps build a city where young people feel a strong sense of belonging and a desire to contribute. When students know that their voices, perspectives and experiences matter, they are empowered to shape the future of a city they are proud to call their own.



Exploring local history—Grade 6 students examine artifacts in the Municipal Atrium.



Grade 6 students take a moment to see the city from a different perspective in the +15 walkway.



Grade 6 students journaling at The Confluence.