



Adjei in OSS



Adjei & Melissa Heicamp (English Class)



Champlain Waterfront Hotel

Tuesday September 27 was our 1st Culture Days event - it proved to be a special one.

Over 200 Grades 10, 11 and 12 English and Drama students at Orillia Secondary School listened to an inspirational presentation by Randell Adjei, 1st Poet Laureate of Ontario. After a rousing audience round of self-affirmations such as I am special, I am worthy, I am unique, the students settled in to listen. Never in my life have I encountered such a large group totally silent and mesmerized by the man speaking with, not at, but with them.

Born in Ghana, Adjei was separated from his parents at an early age and developed a sense of abandonment that influenced his younger years. With a criminal record, multiple school detentions and expulsions, he used basketball to fill his need for approval. Despite skill at the hoops, and a coach who believed there was more to Adjei, he was cut from the team. This led to another trajectory at a different school with a new teacher. The difference was that this teacher helped him to start his metamorphosis. Add in a life changing visit to India, and he followed his new path.

The crowd listened attentively, responded to questions and absorbed the messages. The key thread was to know yourself. As they were leaving, many stopped to shake his hand, personally thank him for empowering them and with tears in their eyes share a personal story.

Adjei presented three additional writing workshops. I am Poem, Tree of Me, Word Mapping. Again conversational instruction, delivered with respect for the students, resulted in each head down and pencils swiftly writing in notebooks.

We all learned the meaning of respect and humility by example. Thank you Randell!

Christine Hager

Orillia & District Arts Council