36. RIDEF 2026 POLSKA
4
AKTUALNOŚCI • NOUVELLES • NEWS • NOTICIAS
RIDEF 2026
Rencontre Internationale des Éducateurs Freinet

Eight beads for a meeting

Japanese workshop on Nansō Satomi Hakkenden

In a short workshop, our Japanese friends invited us into the world of Nansō Satomi Hakkenden (南総里見八犬伝), often shortened to Hakkenden. Behind this name lies one of the great works of classical Japanese literature: a vast epic novel by Kyokutei Bakin, published over almost twenty-eight years, from 1814 to 1842. The work belongs to Edo-period literature, but its story is set much earlier, at the end of the Muromachi period, in a feudal Japan marked by conflicts between clans.

The story is connected to the Satomi clan, in the former province of Awa, which today corresponds to part of Chiba Prefecture. At its centre stands Princess Fuse, daughter of Lord Satomi Yoshizane. After tragic and wondrous events, the beads of her rosary scatter in eight directions. Each bead bears a virtue: jin, benevolence; gi, righteousness or justice; rei, respect for forms and for others; chi, wisdom; chū, loyalty; shin, trust or sincerity; kō, filial piety; and tei, fraternity or respect for elders.

These beads become the signs by which eight young warriors, the hakkenshi, the “eight dog warriors”, can recognize one another. At first separated, they grow up far from each other, go through trials, gradually meet, recognize one another, and finally join forces. Hakkenden is therefore not only a samurai adventure: it is a story of bonds, faithfulness, shared destiny and building together.

Perhaps this is why the legend resonates so strongly at a RIDEF. Here too, people come from far away with their languages, gestures, histories and convictions. Like the beads in Hakkenden, each person carries something precious. Only by meeting, speaking and creating together do these fragments become a shared strength.



Workshop material: locating the Hakkenden story and its characters in the Japanese imagination



The eight beads: each one bears a virtue



Images to enter the story through the eyes and the hands



In the workshop, the legend becomes material for sharing, storytelling and cooperation

The workshop allowed us to approach this tradition not through a scholarly lecture, but through experience: observing, handling, imagining, making, and entering a story with our hands as much as with our words. This way of transmitting culture deeply echoes the spirit of our gatherings: learning by doing, sharing a culture without freezing it, allowing everyone to make a story their own while respecting its origin.

Hakkenden has crossed the centuries because it has been reinterpreted again and again: in kabuki, ukiyo-e prints, puppet theatre, cinema, manga, television series and video

games. In Gniewino, it found a new stage, modest and alive: that of a workshop among educators. Thanks to our Japanese friends, the eight beads travelled once more — not only to tell us about the past, but to illuminate what we seek today: cooperation, trust, loyalty to the group and the joy of building a world together.

Pierre

Handcrafted with wool



Myriam, Twan and Isabel brought to us a lot of ways to work with wool. It was nice to see a lot of people coming to this workshop. Conversations were flowing over techniques, countries, languages… Everyone has their own technique or variation of a technique and it was interesting to learn from others.

Annick



The short workshops are doing great



As part of the "**Inventors' Playground – The Great Adventure of Little Builders**" workshops, **Michał Malinowski** demonstrated how to use MuBaBaO construction blocks to create original inventions and tell stories inspired by them. In developing MaBaBaO, he combined his passion for mathematics, physics, and mechanics with the principles advocated by Célestin Freinet: creative thinking and free expression.



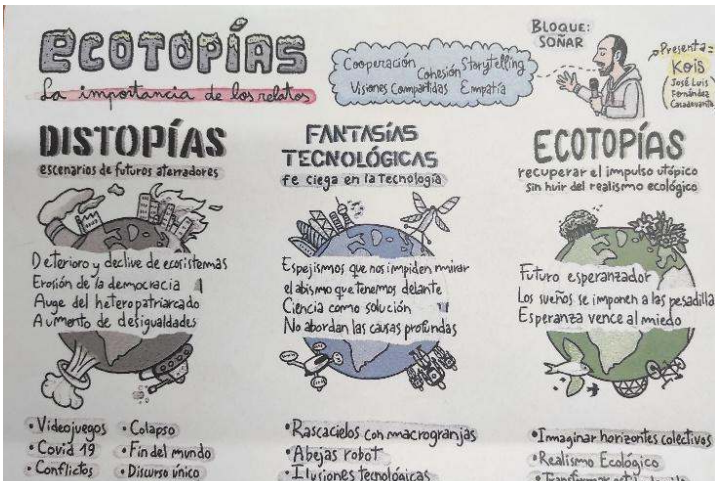


During the "**Leaf Creations**" workshops led by **Kazimiera Piwko, Ada Dorociak, and Aleksandra Piela**, participants followed Freinet's recommendation to draw as much inspiration as possible from nature by creating refined compositions from dried flowers, leaves, and herbs. The results often surprised even their creators…

Gina



A workshop towards the future



Alfredo “Bux” ran a short workshop called 'The Congress of Futurology' over two consecutive afternoons. The topic particularly interested me because in the Italian Movement we worked in the peace education group about possible, predictable, and alternative futures, and in the anthropology group, one of the research themes focused on imagination and utopia. Alfredo started by talking about the importance of stories and the image of the future that they envision. There are different themes, whether it's dystopias, technological fantasy, or ecotopias. Narrative production, films, TV series are full of attention to these aspects that concern the future of humanity and the world (e.g., Stanislaw Lem's 'Solaris': the image of Kois by José L. Fdez. Casadevante). We can refer to our favorite texts on this topic. Also, psychological and psychoanalytic literature emphasizes the importance of stepping out of everyday life and projecting oneself into the future by imagining alternatives.



In the workshop, we suggest simulating a futurology conference with representatives from different points of view. We have to imagine alternative futures in which we'll find ourselves 50 years from now, as if we had lived through all those years in hibernation. Everyone tells their story as if they are living in the chosen situation. You also need to explain how we got to this situation, what the current problems are, and how they were solved in the future. Each person can start with a story and then engage with others to analyze the different situations.



We form two groups. We can choose from the following aspects: ecology, social justice, economy, education, social organization, computing and cybernetics, biochemistry and genetics, democracy, …

In the group I was in, there were transformations in agriculture, food, city structure, and biodiversity conservation.

The two most shared solutions were reclaiming large non-urban areas to reduce hunger and inequalities, and gradually reducing concrete coverage in cities.

We worked for half an hour in groups, and then we got together to present, simulating specialists at a conference who have to support their proposals.

Time was short, and we didn’t have the chance to discuss possible introductions of future-focused activities at school. But this is an essential task now.

Giancarlo Cavinato

My first RIDEF

When I reflect on my teaching practices, I can be tempted to ask myself: is this Freinet, or is it not Freinet? And during our RIDEF, I began to think that the answer might be: it does not matter. Well, of course, it is more complex than that...

The workshop on Latin American Freinet pedagogy gave me valuable insights. The comrades facilitating it (many thanks to them 🙏) clearly emphasized that we were speaking about Latin American Freinet pedagogy, and not about Freinet pedagogy in Latin America. I understood from this that it is important to keep in mind that our pedagogies develop in relation to a lived context, a cultural and intellectual context, nourished by the contributions of other educators coming from similar contexts. And I conclude, for myself, that it would therefore be absurd to refer to an “orthodox” or “pure” Freinet pedagogy. As far as I am

concerned, in my journey as a beginning Freinet practitioner, this is a step forward — or perhaps rather, a step to the side.

Other questions remain for me, and I would like to share them with you. What invariants can we hold on to in order to ensure that our practices serve the aims we set for ourselves? Especially since what I think I am grasping from our RIDEF is that, within the Freinet movement, we do not all pursue the same aims. Mine would be emancipation on the one hand, and social transformation on the other, understood as a process of moving beyond capitalism and abolishing all forms of domination (both at the same time, I insist...), moving toward societies that guarantee the preservation of the conditions of existence for as many forms of life on Earth as possible. What would yours be? And then, what invariants should we define for ourselves? Cooperation–Creation–Expression–Communication–Experimental trial and error? Should we define others? Concerning the ways we consider children? Or the roles of adults in education?

I would be very glad to read and hear your reactions to this text. Thank you for everything (and congratulations to the members of the organizing team, who make it possible for us, every day, to experience these fascinating encounters)!

Julien

Is the Freinet pedagogy climate-neutral?

The International Federation of Freinet Movements (FIMEM), was founded around 70 years ago. This took place during the French Freinet Congress held in Nantes in 1957.

In 1968, the first international Freinet congress, known as RIDEF, took place in Belgium. Just three years later, in 1971, the meeting was held in Lebanon; in 1973 in Tunisia and in 1975 in Algeria. Otherwise, all annual congresses took place in Europe. From 1982 onwards, the frequency was changed to every two years. In 1988, Freinet educators travelled overseas for the first time, to Brazil, after all meetings had been held in Europe or the Mediterranean region for around 30 years.

Ten years later, in 1998, the first Asian RIDEF took place in Japan. In 2006, the international meeting was held for the first time in sub-Saharan Africa, in Senegal. Just two years later, in 2008, participants travelled to the Americas for the second time, this time to Mexico. In 2016, the second sub-Saharan African RIDEF took place in Benin. In 2020, the conference was due to be held in Canada but had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic. In 2022, Morocco hosted the Freinet Congress, and in 2024, Mexico hosted it for the second time. Of the 36 RIDEFs held from 1968 up to this summer of 2026 in Poland, 11 of the meetings took place on a continent other than Europe. The African and American Freinet movements have been organising their own meetings on their respective continents for some time now.

It is also worth mentioning here just how important and valuable these RIDEFs are. They offer the opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from one another across borders, as well as fostering a sense of collegiality and friendship amongst educators who share similar goals and philosophies in schools – which often leads to correspondence and visits between congresses.

Today, many people are concerned about our climate. FIMEM, too, is addressing this concern through its Commission No. 13 on Climate Protection.

Within the Swiss Freinet movement, as well as in Austria and Germany, there are an increasing number of colleagues who are choosing to avoid long-haul flights – out of concern for the environment and the climate. In this context, the idea of continental meetings in Europe, modelled on those organised by our African and American colleagues, has been considered.

Perhaps such a meeting could be attached to a national congress in Europe – certainly not as competition to the respective RIDEF.

Andi Honegger, Freinet Group Switzerland

Intercultural Evenings – Monday, Tuesday

Monday evening began with a performance by Weronika Korthals and her band. A singer, songwriter, founder and conductor of the La Via Voise Choir and the Norda Kids children's ensemble, she and her musicians enthusiastically performed both her original songs in the Kashubian language and traditional regional songs in contemporary arrangements.



The stage was then taken over by our Freinet friends from the Netherlands and Belgium (you can read about the message of their performance in a separate article). The Swedish participants got everyone singing and dancing to songs by the legendary band ABBA. The evening concluded with three colleagues from Bulgaria, who first amused the audience by demonstrating the Bulgarian head movements for "yes" and "no," and then presented, in a lively and hilarious way, the evolution of the teaching profession in Bulgaria over the centuries.





Tuesday's programme opened with a performance by the local sea shanty group Siebie Warci. This was followed by a presentation and songs performed by our colleague from Greece. The stage was then taken over by participants from Japan. Dressed in beautiful traditional costumes and accompanied by traditional instruments, they presented elements of Japanese martial arts and excerpts from Kabuki theatre before inviting everyone to join in two traditional dances: Kachashi (from Okinawa) and Ondo (from Tokyo). Our young friends from South Korea energized the audience with a lively karaoke concert, inviting volunteers to perform their favourite song.



Gina











Two languages, one shared struggle

Intercultural evening of Belgium and the Netherlands

The intercultural evening of Belgium and the Netherlands began with voices, people gathered together, and very quickly with what runs through us all: school, its wounds, its struggles, its possibilities.

The Belgian and Dutch comrades did not simply present a country, languages or songs. They shared a concern and a strength in which I fully recognize myself. In French-speaking Belgium, the collective Mars Attacks has for several months brought together education staff members opposing reforms that worsen working conditions and deepen educational inequalities. Strikes, actions, gatherings: more than 330 schools have already joined the movement. This number speaks of the scale of the unease, but also of the strength that arises when we stop feeling alone.

The comrades from the Netherlands echoed this struggle. Attacks on school do not stop at linguistic borders. In Flanders, Dutch-speaking Belgium, the same logic is also advancing. And so our struggles answer one another. Defending school is not defending a territory: it is defending a common good.

One sentence from the Netherlands resonated particularly strongly: “Together with our Belgian neighbors. Climate change, war, genocide, discrimination, racism, fascism. There is so much to take to the streets for.” With their Belgian neighbours, there are so many reasons to take to the streets. And we know this well, as Freinet educators: school is never separate from the world. It receives the world’s violence, but it can also carry its forms of resistance.

Then they took the floor by singing. The song was in French and in Dutch. Two languages, two texts, but the same anger against policies that attack school: on the French-speaking side, those of the Glatigny government; on the Dutch-speaking side, those of the Demir government. Not to put on a perfect performance. Simply standing, many of them, side by side, with voices sometimes hesitant, sometimes stronger, but carried by the same necessity: not to let school be dismantled without reacting. The words were not identical, but they answered one another. And in that moment, anger became shared courage.

Our education
is being trampled on
by a bunch of damn fools
with brains full of rot
And Glatigny tells us this
And Glatigny tells us that
Three steps forward
A hundred years back
Our education
Is turning into dust

Our schools are falling apart
it’s the minister’s fault
Teachers are worn out
by all this right-wing mess
And Surma says this
Demir says that again
3 steps forward,
100 years back
Our whole education system
will soon be worth nothing at all



Even without having been on stage with them, we recognize ourselves in this gesture. This Belgian-Dutch evening reminded us that intercultural exchange is not only a matter of countries, traditions or folklore. It is also the meeting of struggles. Between Belgium and the Netherlands, between the stage and the room, something circulated: the certainty that we are not alone.

And for Freinet educators, this is not a detail. It may even be one of the conditions for continuing.

Pierre and Alessandra,
Éducation populaire (Freinet movement of French-speaking Belgium)

Swiss song by Mani Matter

At the intercultural evening on Sunday, August 2, the Swiss group performed a song that is very much in line with the goals of our Movements.

Lulu Mueller explains that this was a song by Bernese singer-songwriter Mani Matter, who died in a car accident in 1972.

He sang in his Swiss German dialect. Mani Matter used simple words to convey very deep content on the topic of inequality and injustice in the world.

Giancarlo Cavinato

Call to movements - LETTERS FROM CHILDHOOD FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD

Questions were raised during AG1 in order to share, research, and expand the LETTERS FROM CHILDHOOD FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD initiative, which were created by commission 14.

Discussed at the Ridef in Gniewino, here they are to continue this initiative throughout the next school year.

Giancarlo and Marguerite

QUESTIONNAIRE CHILDREN'S LETTERS FOR PEACE

The project "The Fleet of Children and Youth: Peace Letters from Schools," which started last school year, will continue next school year.

Here are our goals, aiming to:

1. recognize that FIMEM has a significant responsibility;
2. spread this call so that Freinet educators can widely take ownership of the initiative;
3. suggest that the children themselves carry and develop the ways it is implemented.

To do this, here are a few questions. It's not about finding immediate answers. Rather, they should serve as a starting point for some deep collective thinking.

QUESTIONS

1. Given the conflicts affecting many countries today and impacting millions of children, what particular responsibility can our federation take on? In other words, if Freinet pedagogy aims to train responsible and cooperative citizens, what place should we give to peace education today?
2. How could we make sure that children's voices for peace reach decision-makers and the international public?
3. How can we make sure that 'The Children's and Youth Fleet: Peace Letters from Schools' becomes a project carried by all FIMEM movements and not just a few?
4. What forms of commitment could each national movement take upon its return to contribute concretely to the success of this initiative?
5. As a national movement or a FIMEM member, what concrete commitment are you ready to make today to bring this initiative to life in your country?
6. What are the possible obstacles that might prevent a movement from fully participating in this initiative?
7. Suggest some solutions to get around or overcome these obstacles.



LET'S SAVE THE FREINET ARCHIVES!



Support continues...
... from the Education Biennale, by Luc Bruliard,
... from RIDEF, by François Perdrial,
... from colleagues at school, by David Sablé.

All initiatives are welcome, provided they are **respectful, diplomatic and non-provocative**; otherwise, they could do us a disservice.

A motion is put to the vote at the 2026 FIMEM AGM:
"*We ask the Mayor of Mayenne to postpone the date of the relocation of the 'Amis de Freinet' archives well beyond 24 August 2026 so that they can be moved to a secure location. Yours faithfully (signature of the individual or the Movement).*"

Rather than simply sending copy-and-paste emails that fool no one, send emails announcing a PDF attachment containing a statement of support – bilingual if sent from abroad – with a logo, a stamp and one or more signatures.

to be sent by email to the mayor of Mayenne: adrien.mottais@mayennecommunaute.fr
And to the town hall secretariat: secretariat.maire.president@mayennecommunaute.fr

Please send a copy to the 'Amis de Freinet' mailing list: liste_adf_adherents@freinet.fr
or to Hervé Moullé, ADF Chair: hmoulle@icloud.com.
or to François Perdrial, perdrial.francois@orange.fr

Marguerite, based on emails from the ADF mailing list

66th Anniversary of Ivory Coast's Independence

The Ivorian delegation is pleased to announce the 66th anniversary of independence on Friday, August 7, 2026.
To this end, it invites Ridefians to join in sharing its joy.



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