

Evelin Ilves visited the Estonian School in Washington, met the children who study there and presented the school with an array of children's books as a patron of the Estonian Children's Literature Centre.

"Children's books are an invitation for children into the world of books. This is where children will experience their first pleasures of reading and establish a reading habit to last a lifetime; this is where children enrich the vocabulary of their mother tongue," told Evelin Ilves, who read the children a chapter from "Complicated Lives of Letters" (Kirjatähtede keerukas elu) by Aino Pervik.

"For Estonian children living in North America, books in the Estonian language represent a bridge to their roots, origin and homeland," she added.

Evelin Ilves stated that for children living far away from Estonia, children's books in their mother tongue often remain unavailable. To enable age appropriate literature reach Estonian communities abroad more easily, the Estonian Children's Literature Centre, the Estonian Institute, the Estonian Publishers' Association and the Foundation for Estonian Language pooled their efforts to enrich the libraries of Estonian schools abroad with good children's books.

Today, more than 150 original children's books per year are published in Estonia.

The Estonian School in Washington is an organisation that forms a part of the Washington Estonian Society, which offers children of Estonian origin (aged 4 to 11 years) studies in Estonian language and culture (Estonian history, songs, round dances). The school operates every second Saturday. The children study Estonian language as both their mother tongue and foreign language. The school was launched in autumn 2011 and approximately 40 children study there.

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