

## Eel Ground First Nation School

Jurisdiction: New Brunswick  
Level: K-12

Contact: Peter MacDonald  
Theme: Curriculum/materials

I would like to reflect on two of our projects this year to showcase one of our best practices.

In accepting an award as One of the Top Innovative Schools in the country in Calgary several years ago, it was brought up at the closing meeting for the First Nation delegates that in some of their communities that technology would take away from their culture. It got me to think deeply as to what we were doing in the school with our technology. I wanted then and there to do a project that would show that not only would technology enhance their learning but that it would also promote our cultures.

This year with the technology teacher, Mr. Craig Duplessie and myself, we discussed and game planned our project. We sent our project to Industry Canada and had it approved and funding was allocated for us to commit to the program. We talked to the students and they suggested Elders that we could bring into that would describe to them the importance of legends in our culture. From that we decided to go with one who we felt had a strong passion for his culture and could relate well with students. It was decided that he would go into three classes for each Tuesday morning for three weeks and explain to the children why legends were important for all in the past and why it was so important for us to retain them for our culture.

After the three weeks the students in the different grades were to work in different mediums to showcase what they obtained by the Elder, Mr. Leonard. Our website, <http://eelgroundschool.ca>, would showcase the work. With our school having combined grades, the grade 3 and 4 class decided to do the an interview format. Different students were interviewed as to what they had learned from Mr. Leonard. The grade 5 and 6 class decided to do a play about the legendary Mi'kmaq folk-hero, Glooscap. They story-boarded the play, decided on what props to use, created their own props and masks and painted them in florescent paint. They studied their lines and spent a day filming their play. In filming they helped with the lighting and audio. Then from the filming it went to the editing and the play was uploaded to the site.

The grade 7 and 8 class broke into different groups and each decided how they would do their presentation. Clamation was done by one group where they made their character out of clay created their background scenery and with a digital camera took many shots from many different angles to create their story of "How the Northern Lights were Made!" Then went to the editing room and put in their background music and edited their work. Another group used Flash and created their story of the buffalo using animation. Last year this group was part off a 13 week course every Monday learning animation from a local professional group called FAT KAT Animation. They put their own voice-overs and put in their own music. Another group who are artistic did their own drawings, and scanned them and put them into a slide show.

All the projects were put onto the website and notices were sent home to the parents to check their work out on the site.

The learning was unbelievable, from the writing aspect, to the technical side to the greater understanding and respect for their culture. The positive feedback from the parents as well as from people all over this country has been awesome and has left a

deep feeling of pride in the students for the accomplishments and has instilled a desire to reach new heights

At the beginning of the project the elder, Mr. Leonard was very skeptical of doing the project using technology but in the end he was very gratified and complementary with the final results. I feel that we have accomplished the goal in showing that technology can indeed enhance the culture when we are passionate and sensitive.

Three students from the grade 7 and class did a three minute video on Skateboard all by themselves and won the Atlantic Competition for their efforts. They are now working on Skateboard 2. You can see the original on our web site.

### **FAS Project 2005/06**

This is a project that is dear to my heart. When I applied for the project with HEALTH CANADA, I wanted it to be a learning experience for my students and one where they could show the world that they can make a difference in people's lives. I wanted to showcase what empowering young people are capable of. In my application I stated that if we can take 16 young teenagers that are 12 and 13 old and get them to research Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and have them carry their message to the public, that if nothing else happened but that they understood the dangers and made a commitment in their lives not to drink when they will be in the situation that all the money that Health Canada helped to support us with would be worth it.

In the initial meeting with the students I told them that they had the power in them through this project to make a difference in the lives of future children and their ability to succeed in this world. The better quality of the project the more impact that it will have.

I wanted the students to be introduced to Drama in a serious and fun way. On immediate acceptance of the project from Health Canada I immediately hired a Drama teacher who had recently retired and whom I have had great respect for as he had taught the same grade level and worked on drama with this level for many years. At this opening meeting we told the students that they would all be a part of the play in different roles. We needed actors, lighting and sound people, as well as cameramen.

In the project we were to and have done a video of the play which we will send to Health Canada to distribute to the 21 First Nation Communities in the Atlantic region, made brochures re. FAS to go along with it. The play will be performed live for the parents in the community, to the students in the middle schools in the city, (of Miramichi) to the city at large and to be entered into the New Brunswick Drama Festival. As part of the project the students created power-point presentations and showed them on a video conference to the 21 First Nation Students in the Atlantic. We also set up a workshop coupled with another video conference where the guest speaker was a Mi'kmaq from Nova Scotia who had been diagnosed with FAS and was going to talk to the kids. Along with him we had a pediatrician speak. It was a very powerful workshop where Mr. Francis spoke of his problems coping with the illness and left the kids with the powerful message to have compassion for those who struggle in school as there are things beyond their control to learn.

From the play and the research the students and the drama teacher wrote the play and it is dedicated to Mr. Francis Perry. The play has a language component where it takes

place in a court room and the Mi'kmaq defend speaks in her own language. This was a real learning experience for our student as none of our students speak their language. With the help of three teachers she had to learn the language in order to do the play. All the props were built and the students helped out in doing so. Several of the staff made large puppets to be in the play. The play was a whole school effort and the pride for the project is shared by all.

The students help in writing a song which was recorded in the school and a music video in progress to be ready for the competition May 1.

The learning, the cooperation, and the pride for the accomplishment of the school is shared by all the community. Projects like this increase the confidence of the kids and when they leave our school to go into the city for High School they walk in with empowerment knowing they do not have to take a back seat to anyone.

The grade 7 and 8 teacher, Mrs. Ward commented the other day as to how much the reading has improved for one of her students since the year began and she attributes much of it to his leading role as the Judge in the play.

This is a couple of stories that reflect why our school has increased vastly our enrollment. The students are happy, engaged, and proud of their abilities which we try to showcase. This reflects on the parents perspective of the school and the increased cooperation.

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