

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

April 30, 2002

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: A. McBeath, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Archives and Museum; Supporting Teaching and Learning

ORIGINATOR: C. Luck, Supervisor, Archives and Museum

RESOURCE
STAFF: Karen Bardy

INFORMATION

This report is intended to provide information with respect to the programs provided by Archives and Museum.

Edmonton Public Schools Archives and Museum is located in the district's two oldest schools: historic McKay Avenue School and the 1881 School. Both buildings have been extensively restored and each is a Designated Historic Resource. A major component of the vision for the extended use of both buildings was the development of school programs such that teachers and students could learn about important local history in the actual buildings in which the history was created. The intention was to return the benefits of the restorations to the district, and in the development of Archives and Museum, every effort was to be made to provide learning opportunities for all visitors with respect to Edmonton Public Schools and its importance in local and provincial history. One way in which we return these benefits is to extend our programs at no cost to Edmonton Public school classes.

Archives and Museum now offers five school programs for Grades 3 to 12. These programs are strong curricular fits, primarily in the subject areas of social studies and language arts.

Three programs are offered on-site, to elementary classes: the 1881 Schoolhouse Program, (begun in 1982), Grandma's Place: A Visit to Grandma and Grandpa's in the Thrifty '30s, and Mr. Puffer Goes to Parliament. These programs provide learning experiences which are very "hands-on" and so actively engage students in learning, an effective teaching technique strongly supported by current educational research.

Two programs are offered in published format, to junior and senior high school students: The Re-enactment of the Trial of Louis Riel, and Calgary or Edmonton? A Program for the Re-enactment of the Capital Debate of 1906. These programs were developed in co-operation with Resource Development and are sold through the Learning Resources

Centre, Alberta Learning. With the purchase of these resources comes the opportunity to stage a re-enactment in a school that actually served as a courthouse in 1885, or to re-enact a debate in the actual space in which the original debate took place.

For teachers we provide a teaching opportunity that allows them to cover a great amount of material in a short period of time, in a unique and enriching setting. As part of each program we send the teacher an information package beforehand with suggestions as to how to prepare students for their field trip so they can get as much out of it as possible. The programs are a time of intense instruction and exploration so much benefit can be gained back in the classroom with follow-up activities such as writing exercises and critical discussions.

For students we provide a learning experience that supports and enhances their classroom work. The unique settings provide a meaningful, definite context in which to receive information, and the hands-on, interactive activities further reinforce the experience.

For parents we provide an opportunity to participate in their child's learning experience while learning about local history themselves. We encourage teachers to invite parents to take part in the field trips and to play an active role in the activities; in fact, the Grandma's Place program depends on parental assistance for optimum delivery.

Because every school is identifying an instructional focus, such as literacy or critical thinking, we can offer schools a unique opportunity to pursue these areas of concentration. Our programs offer excellent opportunities for wide curriculum-based learning experiences and we would welcome the opportunity to accommodate any school's instructional focus. In this way we can continue to build on the original intention of utilizing our historic landmarks for the fullest benefit to the district.

We measure our success and our contribution to student achievement by the many and valuable comments which we receive from teachers, students and parents, expressing their satisfaction with the content, delivery and all-round experience of the programs.

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