

Heritage Fair projects are often personal for students



Heritage Fairs draw a diverse group of projects fuelled by students' imagination and passion. The culmination of the program is the provincial event held at Government House in Regina where regional winners compete.

The Heritage Fair program had upwards of 3,400 students participating last year and ideally, Heritage Saskatchewan would like to increase those numbers.

Currently there are five regional fairs in Saskatchewan. Four are hosted in the larger cities, such as Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw and Swift Current, while the fifth is hosted by The Saskatoon Tribal Council. The competition incorporates local and regional fairs with winning entries moving on from each level and ultimately to the provincial fair.

According to Heritage Saskatchewan Education Coordinator Katherine Gilks, the likes of Prince Albert, North Battleford, Yorkton and Weyburn are among several potential sites on the radar for the future, provided they can find sufficient numbers of teachers and volunteers.

Any students in grades 4 through 8 are eligible to participate in the Heritage Fair program. As an all-encompassing initiative, these events promote citizenship, stewardship and critical thinking, while the skills received have application across the curriculum.

Students choose their own topics and have the option whether they want to submit a written report, visual display or oral presentation.

As one who has attended these events across the province, Gilks indicated

that it is always rewarding to see the passion that is generated.

"My personal take away from these events is to see how these students really get into their projects. You can't help but be impressed by their interest and imagination. A big part of these projects is that it teaches students what it means to be Canadian and about their role in the world. It's great to see their minds open up through their research and presentations.

"It's amazing to see, and you find a lot of these projects are the result of a personal connection for the student. That's inspiring, and especially for some of the younger students, it means being that much more aware of historical events like the Underground Railroad or the Titanic for example, and then how excited they are to share that knowledge."

Predictably, Gilks said the emerging topic of residential schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is becoming much more popular, especially among the older students.

"Certainly that's good in terms of the students examining the past and what it means now. For some it can definitely be a story of someone in their family, and so it's very personal and powerful."

The advancements in technology have also had a significant impact on how students present their respective projects. Whether

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it's on their iPads, laptops, or in some cases creating videos to further enhance the story they are wanting to tell.

Gilks said one of the primary benefits for students and their teachers is that while there is a natural connection with social studies, there's also direct implications in language arts, science and generally in the Inquiry Model of Learning.

Teachers or students who might want to know more about how to become involved can contact Gilks directly at kgilks@heritagesask.ca or by phone at 1-306-780-9197. ■

Survey intended to help improve students' health and well-being

The Saskatchewan Alliance for Youth and Community Well-Being is looking for schools to participate in its upcoming survey.

SAYCW is a partnership of health, education and community stakeholders dedicated to improving the health and well-being of Saskatchewan youth. The organization's mandate is to help schools and communities connect with stakeholders and resources.

This survey, to be administered in Saskatchewan schools from February to April 2019, follows the first-such survey conducted in 2016 in which there were some eye-opening, to say nothing of disturbing, findings among students.

The previous survey indicated nearly one in five students had considered suicide in the past year

and half of those who had considered it, had actually attempted suicide. Other findings included that almost one in five students had experienced hunger as a consequence of lack of food, and nearly half of students spent more than the recommended maximum of two hours per day on screen time.

Close to 10,000 students from grades 7-12 throughout the province completed the initial survey, representing more than 100 schools across 18 school divisions and authorities.

The work of SAYCW is led by a steering committee made up of representatives from 30 various sectors, including the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

While different schools might be grappling with their own issues, SAYCW is focused



on a comprehensive followup plan to the findings of these surveys and coming up with community action teams.

SAYCW is also heavily involved in securing grants via the Healthy Schools and Communities Grant. To date that has meant a total of \$273,160 provided through 41 projects to assist schools and communities in their health-promoting initiatives.

Created in 2012, SAYCW was inspired by Manitoba's Partners in Planning for Healthy Living. For more information about SAYCW, the Youth Health Survey, or to indicate interest in participating in the upcoming provincial survey, please visit their website at saycw.com. In addition, you can contact Project Manager Shardelle Brown at 1-639-635-3080 or email shardelle.brown@saskcancer.ca. ■

Editorial



Let's see what the "next one" brings

If you are reading this, you will be aware that within a week or so the "next one" will be in place—Premier that is—as the Brad Wall chapter will have concluded after a decade-long run.

We will have one of the five Saskatchewan Party leadership hopefuls ensconced in the big chair, and they will have the task of replacing the country's most popular Premier according to the latest polls.

Regardless of how you might choose to remember Wall, the fact is he has not only been the face of the Sask Party, but also pretty much dominated it as the chief conductor.

So we're now left to ponder what the future might look like for whoever the "next one" will be following the January 27 Leadership Convention. Given the nature of this publication, it's obvious that the primary concern is how this might affect public education in the province.

It seems particularly poignant to find out how education will fare under this new stewardship given that I think we can pretty much agree the much-heralded explosion within the Sask Party membership ranks would not have occurred without the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation's Pick a Premier campaign.

It is fair to say that this aggressive initiative not only signalled a more assertive approach from the STF, but it also couldn't help but pique the awareness of the respective leadership hopefuls. It is impossible to know if, for example, promises of an extra \$30 million for education would have been suggested otherwise. At the very least, there is an acknowledgment by most of the aspirants that education does matter, and that dollars and listening to teachers need to follow.

Once the "next one" gets down to the business of the day, we will have to hold our collective breath to see if this attempt to raise the profile of PreK-12 education will have any lasting resonance with the political taskmasters.

This notion that the ailing economy has to be front and centre might seem logical enough, but it would be foolhardy not to seriously consider the role that education, in particular, plays in the hoped for revitalization of the province's future. Without an adequately resourced (both financial and personnel) education sector, any attempts at recovery will be short-sighted.

When you see how suddenly \$20 million can surface for the College of Medicine to ensure its long-term future, then surely funding can be unearthed for PreK-12 education as well.

If education funding is to be sustainable, it also has to be at least relatively predictable. In other words, the best solution is to somehow eschew the current emphasis on the all-too-short election cycle. Looking a decade into the future can admittedly be difficult and there is no assurance it will be your party in charge, but it would be a welcome and courageous step.

You can make a strong case for the fact that the timing is right for some new approaches now that the winds of change are upon us. Over to you "next one." ■

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BULLETIN

The Saskatchewan Bulletin is published 10 times during the school year by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. Contributions to the Bulletin are welcome and will be used when possible. All material is subject to editing. Requests for coverage by Bulletin staff should be received at least three weeks before the event.

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Supporting all learners

The Ministry of Education recently launched an online repository called Supporting All Learners that houses documents and a collection of professional resources in one easy-to-find location. The site provides the education sector, including classroom teachers, learning support services teachers, school-based administrators and other

supporting professionals, access to Ministry documents and resources that support a needs-based approach for all learners as outlined in *Actualizing a Needs-Based Model, 2015*. Supporting All Learners can be found on the Saskatchewan curriculum website at www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca. ■