

## Celebrating Success in District 6

### New Ways to Learn About an Ancient People

Since the July 2000 millennium anniversary celebration of the Vikings' arrival in North America, there has been an increased interest in all things Viking. This interest has helped to dispel many misconceptions about these medieval Scandinavians and has created a greater appreciation of the Norse as adventurers, explorers, farmers, traders and craftsmen.

Two contributors to this "new image" are Viking art and Icelandic Viking literature. In April 2003, Grade 5 students at Gander Academy explored the Vikings through the ancient peoples' art as expressed in their jewelry, rune stones, pendants, amulets and relief sculptures and through their mythology as written in their eddas and sagas. Aided by a grant from ArtsSmarts, and supported by a visit from Parks Canada personnel, about 130 Grade 5 students and their six teachers explored Viking art and literature and experienced a connection to a part of Newfoundland and Labrador heritage they will long remember.

The purpose of the Viking ArtsSmarts project was to explore the Norse legacy through a theme-based interdisciplinary approach focused on Viking art and literature. This project consisted of eight components, all of which met specific learning outcomes in art, language arts, social studies and communications technology.

#### Art

The Art component of the project included the creation of three separate pieces of artwork.

Rune Stones: The Vikings created their rune stones on large flat boulders. In this project, students fashioned and inscribed them using clay and fired them in the school's kiln.

Murals: Two large murals were painted, displaying the evidence that authenticated a Viking presence in this province. Each student signed the mural using a Viking rune monogram of their initials.

Embossing: Students recreated relief images found on Viking jewelry and coins using thick metal foils.

These three art-based projects were designed to increase students' understanding of how societies express themselves through various forms of art, to increase students' appreciation of how art can be studied to gain a better understanding of ancient and modern societies, and to enable students to express their creativity and their own understanding of this topic in various art forms.

#### Language Arts

One of the genres explored in language arts is traditional literature and mythology. Through a series of trade books and through articles written specifically for this project, students learned about the key characters in the Viking pantheon.

Based on language arts outcome statements dealing with writing creative texts, achieving interest in imaginative writing, and considering audience expectations, the students wrote their own myths which they performed in a series of short plays.

#### Special Visitors

Because of the distance and the number of students in Grade 5 at Gander Academy, it was not possible to travel to the L'Anse aux Meadows National and World Heritage site. Through the cooperation of Parks Canada, L'Anse aux Meadows was brought to Gander Academy. For four days, the five members of the interpretative staff facilitated a series of activities in which the students learned how to make a piece of Viking jewelry, churn cream to make butter the Viking way, finger-weave a piece of Viking clothing, recreate the method of making a Viking knife and unearth and interpret Viking artifacts at a dig table. The staff also brought their period costumes and household items and gave students an opportunity to handle them and learn about their uses.

#### Social Studies

Through books and a series of articles written specifically for the project, the students studied the history of the Vikings and their push westward to North America from Europe.

#### Communications Technology

During Gander Academy's enrichment program called Exploratories, a group of 18 students designed and created a series of Web pages that archived digital photographs of the entire



ArtsSmarts project. The pages and all of the curriculum resources created to support this project are hosted by Stem~Net and are available at

[www.stemnet.nl.ca/CITE/arts/vikings\\_main.htm](http://www.stemnet.nl.ca/CITE/arts/vikings_main.htm).

#### An Appreciation for Visual Art

This project has created an appreciation of the value of visual art. The students were very interested in the topics and eagerly participated in all activities. This curriculum initiative afforded teachers an opportunity to enrich the teaching and learning environment and to extend learning beyond what children normally experience in an elementary classroom.

The artwork created by this year's students will continue to serve the Grade 5 classes of Gander Academy. Teachers will continue to use what they learned in their classrooms for years to come.

#### District 6 Profile

	2003-04	2002-03
Schools	30	33
Students	7420	7756
Teachers	562.8	579.3
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	12.8	13.0