

Teaching Local History at North Shore Community School

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Some of the bins are grey, others clear. They are storage bins made of flexible plastic. Roughly 15" by 24" by 15", the covers snap down for a tight fit. On the cover of "Trunk 5" is the word "Roots" in red, and the notation "Logging – Kindergarten." Another trunk is labelled "Chapter 4: Fishing - 1st Grade" And below, in capitals, NSCC, North Shore Community School.

In the late 1990's, North Shore Elementary (now North Shore Community School) teachers applied for a grant to begin a foreign language curriculum. One of the funding requirements was that a community component be part of the proposed curriculum. The Clover Valley/French River Community History Project was a response to that requirement. Building on previous research done into the history and development of farming in Clover Valley, Rich Sill, Jeannine Engelson, Helen

Hendrickson, Bobbi Keener, Duane Madison, and Robbie Tietge formed the Clover Valley/French River History Committee. They met, did more research, collected oral histories, and reproduced photographs, the result of all that effort being the book *Roots in the Past – Seeds for the Future: The Heritage & History of Clover Valley, French River & Surrounding Communities*.

Committee members were convinced local history needed to be personal. They asked North Shore Elementary fourth, fifth and sixth graders to help in the *Roots* project, Those students interviewed people living in the community and wrote up brief sketches which were included in the *Roots* book. The point being that the area history is not something which had happened in the past but rather is a "story" which was, and is, still being written. Those students as well as students who followed them would continue to write the community story.

Committee members Jeannine Engelson and Helen Hendrickson were instrumental in developing and integrating the community component into the North Shore Elementary curriculum. Teachers in grades K – 6 solicited artifacts, got the names of community resource persons, gathered books, contacted area institutions such as the Natural Resources Research Institute and the Minnesota Discovery Center, and did considerable research on their own in the process of developing age appropriate curriculum

materials. The grey plastic bins, stacked high on corner shelves or tucked away in closets, were and are the repositories of many of the materials used by the teachers in introducing students to local history.

That process begins in kindergarten. Linda Johnson, Lynda Markon, and Darcie Rolfe's students are immersed in a yearlong study of how trees are useful. They learn the parts of trees as well as their uses; they study apple trees; they help

transplant trees. In the winter the children set up a bunny restaurant (a small shelter in which they place carefully chosen

twigs) for area snowshoe hares to understand how they migrate and adapt and what conditions are necessary to assure

their sustainability. The springtime brings maple tree tapping, making Mother's Day cards of recycled paper with seeds

embedded in the paper. Put in the garden and cover with dirt. There are also dramatic play centers on the school grounds

where a demonstrator introduces the students to draft horses as well as the tools used to shoe and care for them.

Students have an opportunity to drive the horses, while a camp cookie treats the kids as loggers, and teachers dress in clothing loggers and their families wore. The grey *Roots* bin for kindergarten is full of woolen clothing and blankets as well as

pine cones.

Towards the end of the school year there is a trip to Tom's Logging Camp where the kids learn about who did the logging,

how much they were paid, what they ate, where they slept, and how they kept clean. They are introduced to logging vocabulary and asked what it might feel like to leave their parents and live in a logging camp.