

London Museum School Project in London, Ontario, given the 2005 Museums-Schools Partnership Award.

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Winner of 2005 Museums-Schools Partnership Award

Students Learn from Hands-On Classes at London Museums



Brick Street Public School students in London write in their journals as they learn from an exhibition at Museum London.

Ottawa, April 5, 2006 -- A hands-on educational program that provided elementary schoolchildren with the opportunity to learn at museum sites in London, Ontario, has earned the third annual Museums-Schools Partnership Award. This national award is co-sponsored by the Canadian College of Teachers and the Canadian Museum of Nature, in collaboration with the Canadian Museums Association. An honourable mention was awarded to a collaboration in Saint-Laurent, Quebec, where students learned about Quebec culture through the study of traditional crafts.



Students from London's St. Bernadette Catholic School have cooking lessons at Fanshawe Pioneer Village.

The inaugural London Museum School project hosted seven classes from Grades 3 through 7 from the Thames Valley District School Board and the London District Catholic School Board. Each class spent an entire week at one of the four museums: Museum London, Fanshawe Pioneer Village, the London Regional Children's Museum and the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (teamed with the Robarts Research Institute). Students explored hands-on activities, learned from exhibitions, then documented their experiences though journal writing.



Students from Sherwood Fox Public School in London, Ontario, get hands-on experience with doctors and scientists at the Robarts Research Institute.

These journals provided an opportunity for student reflection and were used to evaluate the students' learning.

"It was incredible how much they learned, and how mature and insightful they became during the project," says Pamela Mills, co-ordinator for the project. Flexibility in the program ensured that individual needs were met and that activities fully engaged the students. The results showed dramatic increases in student performance. "Their excitement about what they were doing was refreshing and it was reflected in the quality of the work," Mills explains, citing the example of one Grade 3 student who studied an "awesome" Inuit exhibit and said she learned a "gazillion facts" despite the fact that she didn't consider it work.

"This was an ambitious project that has benefits for both the schools and the museums," says Mary Ellen Herbert, award co-ordinator and Manager of Community Services with the Canadian Museum of Nature. "The judges were impressed that the students got a better understanding of the role of museums. And museum staff in turn had an extended period to work with teachers and students, much more than is normally available through day visits." The judging committee also commended the solid community base for the project, which included 75 adult volunteers.

An honourable mention for the 2005 Museums-School Award was given to *Je laisse des traces*, a partnership between the Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec and L'école Laurentide in Saint-Laurent, Quebec. This pilot project was developed for a class of third-year students, almost all of whom came from recent immigrant families, to feel a closer connection to Quebec history and culture through the study of traditional crafts. Families were included in school and museum activities, which were based on the museum's exhibits and collections. A final exhibition included a large sculpture of an open book incorporating the students' writings and self-portraits. The committee was impressed with the pride with which this pilot project was presented and was pleased to learn that it will be extended to 10 schools.

The judging committee for the 2005 award sifted through submissions representing more than 20 institutions from across the country, looking for projects that joined museums with schools, school boards and school districts. The award recognizes partnerships

between schools and museums for educational programmes that enrich students' understanding and appreciation of Canada's cultural and natural heritage.

Projects were assessed on a number of criteria including their vision, participation of all partners from the start, collaboration potential and relevance of the project to the community served. "The range of projects is impressive, and all were creative projects that helped instil in students a sense of their Canadian heritage and identity," added Sadiq Awan, past National President of the Canadian College of Teachers.

The Museums-Schools Partnership Award is open to any Canadian school or school board that collaborates with any Canadian non-profit public museum, including zoos and science centres. The submission deadline for the 2006 award is November 15, 2006. For more information, visit the Web site of the Canadian College of Teachers at <http://www.cct-cce.com/>.

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2008-09-19nDate format:IS1 -->2008-09-19">2008-09-19="0" align="bottom">[Press Room](#) ▶ Press Release - 2005 Museums-Schools Partnership Award

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Images: Pamela Mills

Last Update: 2006-04-05

2008-09-192008-09-19

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