

Limestone barrens linking students in Port Saunders, Ontario and Ireland

Artist starts new project at Roncalli High

By RICK MASSIE

PORT SAUNDERS — A group of students at Roncalli Central High School has embarked on a project that is using science and technology to promote and protect the limestone barrens.

An artist from Ireland, Orla Kenny, met with 12 Grade 8 students last month to begin work on an international, online collaboration that will last the entire year.

The students were introduced to practical research of the barrens by conducting field trips. They were given a taste of working with new technology through video, minidisk player recordings, scanning, and website design.

The three days of study were intense, but it was a welcome break from the regular school routine, according to student Dawn Tulk.

"We got to make our own websites on computer," she explained. "It was different than school because we were focused on one topic, and it was a little bit easier because we had just one topic that we had to focus on."

Like many, Michael House

felt the hands-on learning was valuable.

"It went away from the routine, it was interesting," he remarked. "It was a different way of learning."

Ms. Kenny, who received funding for her trip in Slagel, Ireland, is striving to enhance the Limestone Barrens Project through education, awareness, and visual media. The project, which shouldn't be confused with the Limestone Barrens Stewardship Program, focuses on studying three unique areas internationally—one of which is the limestone barrens of the Northern Peninsula.

"It's a project that links three communities, one in Ireland, one in Newfoundland, and one in Owen Sound, which is north of Toronto," she explained. "Basically the project identified links in the landscape of these three areas. Nine artists were asked, as well as scientists and other educators, to explore that link further."

Last year, Ms. Kenny travelled to Owen Sound and created video diaries of the landscape using a camera and sound diaries using a minidisk player.

"The trip was fairly

intensive and the work that I produced out of that was kind of looped footage—exploring the textures and pattern in that area."

The Irish artist allowed the students to document their own landscapes using techniques similar to her own. It gave them a unique opportunity to learn new technological skills while investigating their local ecosystems. The students shot a video and edited a final product, recorded interviews and soundscapes of the windy barrens, scanned images of man-made debris littering the barrens, and created websites and online profiles to share the information they collected.

Student Brent McCarthy was especially impressed with the new technologies they were introduced to.

"I liked the technology part. We actually did fun stuff like go down on the beach and collect stuff and use technological stuff that we don't have in our regular classes," he noted. "We collected manmade substances that were damaging the beach, and we studied some kinds of plants so we could scan them. I think it's important because if we don't take care of it, then we won't have anything special left."

Ms. Kenny said she's a firm believer in working with youth and developing their skills.

"I wanted to explore the



Roncalli Central High teacher Don Tulk (left) oversees Mason Sarrison and Dawn Tulk as they edit footage for their online