

Hello! My name is Debra Giebelhaus-Maloney. I am a child advocate, teacher, musician and artist in residence committed to arts integration in education. I believe that music is an important tool that should be part of all of our children's learning. Very importantly, music has the power to develop expression and communication. When music/movement and drama are infused into the regular curriculum they can positively affect the academics of reading and writing and build confidence and self esteem.

In the spring of 2009, Sarah Russell a teacher in Aupaluk invited me to fly up from Calgary, Alberta for a week in April 2010 to write a piece of music with her students. After lengthy discussions and much thought the vision changed. Sarah and I decided to see if it would be possible to connect with an English class in each of the fourteen villages in Nunavik and involve them in the project! And so it began . . .

The logistical challenge at the onset of this project was: 'How on earth could fourteen groups of children scattered all across Northern Quebec come together as one voice in song?'

It was interesting for me to create defined curriculum units as there were so many questions that could not be answered until I had connected with the students and teachers. I took a close look at the language arts and social studies curriculums being used by KSB and began the process of creating a generic curriculum that would support the existing curriculum while involving students and teachers in an arts integration experience.

As a music/drama/movement teacher I rarely sit behind my computer to teach. Yet, because of the distances between each village and from Calgary to Nunavik, the project success is totally dependant on communication. The uniqueness with this project is that everything from September through early May is 'on-line' and totally dependant on dialogue and 'weather'!

September through December was designed to inspire and provide opportunities for the teachers, students and myself to gain insight and understanding while getting to know each other. The teachers worked hard with their students to accommodate the SKYPE and weather challenges. The children sent photos of themselves at work, drew pictures and introduced themselves, and wrote paragraphs about themselves, their families and their communities!

When the children returned to school in January 2010 after their Christmas break, we began work on Part II – a massive quilt to include representation from each village in Nunavik and Part III – a book in Inuktitut and English that will hold all of the art work and legends that the children have created and gathered from each of their villages.

The process began with the children researching local stories and legends of importance. They interviewed their families, community members and elders. After scribing each of the stories in English and Inuktitut, the children and their teachers brainstormed art ideas from their stories that might be representative of their community, nature and the land around them. At this point I sent each of the schools 4 pieces of blank fabric to create artwork that represented their uniqueness. Every school used a different medium to create their quilt pieces.

Two weeks ago, the completed quilt pieces started coming back to me in Calgary – it felt like Christmas! As the artwork arrived, it was photographed (in preparation for the book) and turned over to t Joni Hanson, a Calgary quilter who has volunteered many hours to create a magnificent quilt out of all of the children's squares. The quilt will be completed by the end of March.

As I write this, the adventure is only half over with so much more to come. . . When the children return from their various spring breaks we will focus on compiling all materials for our book and then move on to the final steps - 'making music'!

It is such a privilege and joy to get to know the children and their teachers. Because we depend on SKYPE, e-mail and telephone to communicate I am always doing a weather report on my end before we start as there are days (and sometimes a full week) when our SKYPE calls are dropped and the internet fails. But on the great weather days the sky is the limit! Some of us have been able to connect more regularly than others because of various circumstances but we are slowly becoming one voice!

This Artist in Residency Project is rich with stories, experience and knowledge as it involves students from all fourteen villages in Nunavik in Grade 3 – 6. The written work, the stories and the art from the children and their classes are the foundation for the tapestry of music that we will create when we come together in Aupaluk at the end of May. Currently I have had the delight of putting on my composer's hat starting the process of using the children's phrases and stories to create and weave a melody out of their beautiful written work.

This project has been a mammoth undertaking. We have placed great dependency on technology to develop virtual classrooms. It has been full of many twists and turns. However, I am affirmed in my belief that, "*it takes a whole village to raise one child*" In this instance there are fourteen villages involved with scores of voices to lead with wisdom, and countless ears to listen and learn. We are celebrating each community and its beauty through music and art. I look forward to continuing to the final leg of this very special journey with the students, teachers and communities in Nunavik!

Thank you to every one of the students, teachers and administration for being a part of this very unique classroom experience. As well, a heart felt thank you to the many sponsors for their financial support and belief that this is an opportunity to create something unique and very special with the students in Nunavik.

I would also like to thank the community in Aupaluk for supporting and hosting our Workshop week at the end of May. Preparation is already under way for the feast and our final Celebration of Learning! What an exciting time that will be!!!

Finally, a very special thanks to Sarah Russell in Aupaluk for bringing us all together! Nothing is IMPOSSIBLE!!!!