

Awareness through making videos

Workshops teach Fort Simpson residents how to spread drug and alcohol message

by Roxanna Thompson
Northern News Services
Lilidli Kue/Fort Simpson

Adults and youths in Fort Simpson are learning how to make videos to send an important message.

As part of a Department of Health and Social Servi-

ces project the fledgling filmmakers are using the medium to engage youth in three communities about drug and alcohol awareness. The project began in Fort Simpson on March 5 with a video-making workshop aimed at adults.

The workshop was led by

two facilitators from Reel Youth, a not for profit organization based in Vancouver that travels across Canada engaging youth with making videos on issues that matter to them. Over the weekend five participants worked through the entire process of

making a video, from brainstorming an idea to the final editing.

"It was awesome," said Mark Vonesch, the director of Reel Youth.

All of the participants were very keen, he said.

"It was nice to see they care about making a positive change in the community," he added.

The five participants began by brainstorming messages that would help people in make healthy decisions. One message for youth and one message for adults were recorded.

Using high definition video cameras the group shot video to go with the voice-overs. The final product was four videos, each under two minutes long, with voice overs in one of three different languages – English, South Slavey and Chipewyan.

The primary goal of the adult session was to impart skills so there will be people in the community who can

mentor the youths, said Vonesch.

Celine Antoine, one of the participants, said the workshop was empowering.

Antoine said she was nervous at first about the technical aspect of making videos including how to use a video camera. The facilitators, were very patient, she said.

"It was so much fun," said Antoine.

"We learned a lot."

Antoine said she signed up for the workshop because she's been told that First Nations people are very visual and that visual media is very effective for communicating and sharing messages. Antoine hopes to share her new knowledge with local youth.

"I just like to engage with the youth and work with them," she said.

Students are getting their chance to make videos this week. Reel Youth did one-

hour workshops in Thomas Simpson School from March 7 to 9 and is conducting a longer workshop from March 10 to 11 from 4 to 7 p.m. and from March 12 to 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The students will be learning technical skills and producing a variety of films including music videos, dramas and public service announcements all about drug and alcohol awareness.

Digital media is an ideal medium to use with youth because they love it. Vonesch said. "They get excited by the fact that anyone can make a video, put it on YouTube and have the world watch it."

"Our role is taking that excitement and focusing it in a positive direction," he added.

Both the adult and youth videos will be screened as part of a Reel Youth film festival expected to reach the village in the next six weeks. Reel Youth will also be doing a music-video-making session in Deline at the end of the month and another workshop at some point in Lutsel K'e.



photo courtesy of Reel Youth

Seven people participated in a video-making workshop for adults in Fort Simpson during the weekend including from left, back row: instructor Tiffany Moses, Jake Waugh, organizer Brandon Marsh and instructor Mark Vonesch; front row: Victoria Williams, Betty Hardisty and Celine Antoine.

"We learned a lot."

Say no to devolution

From: Dennis Nelner,
Fort Simpson

Dear editor,

As a band member I am expressing my opinion of the recent news item where Chief Jim Antoine has proclaimed in no uncertain terms support for the devolution agreement.

How can a former Dene premier go against the majority of Dene who are opposed to this transfer of authority that goes to the very core of our fundamental values? How can we support devolution when there is a treaty conference this past summer. Will this affect the treaty and erode any vestige of entitlement to the land?

Why support a government that places Dene at the bottom of the ladder? The only things we are first at are all the social ills that plague our society. From its earliest days the territorial government has been an extension of INAC, implementing a paternalistic welfare state turning our independent people into "wards of the state."

A government that beats down the aborig-

inal spirit through human rights abuses within GNWT's own aboriginal rank and file. Side-stepped for promotions – there is no aboriginal capacity and no legacy from this government on that front. In fewer than five years there will be no aboriginal managers in the territorial government.

Aboriginal employees

have little-to-no protection from management operating outside of existing laws and legislation. Blackballed or whistleblower people are singled out and ostracized for their principles.

How can we support devolution when there is little Dene representation in education, policing, business and health? Mr. (Floyd) Antoine haven't you seen the statistics?

We overpopulate social housing and are over represented in the jails. These professions are insensitive to culture and impose policies having no practical value on our way of life.

How do you integrate the values and principles that identify us as Dene and blend them into a contemporary mainstream through exclusion? When are we going to get past this residential school colonization?

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Best wishes from Dennis Bevington, MP Western Arctic

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Working together we can build a better future for our youth and the NWT.