

HEATHERDALE

THEME WEEK

REPORT

1982.

ROB. McDOUGALL

THEME WEEK :

I must admit that I was very sceptical about the concept of devoting a week to such a venture. Not, most certainly, because of any reservations I had about the ability of this Heatherdale staff to make the scheme work, and improve upon such weeks as conducted by other schools in the area, but rather, was it a necessary or worthwhile undertaking considering the organisational, monetary and upheaval problems which were bound to eventuate?

A resounding yes! Why? Because the week did work. Not only was it successful from an organisational viewpoint, but I felt personally, that it was thoroughly enjoyable for both staff and children and, most importantly, it was of educational benefit to the children.

Why was our Theme Week so successful? Without doubt the timetable was a 'gem'. It held the key to a fast-moving, energetic week, which at the same time, had time — allowance for day to day administrative duties, and preparation time. The latter could also be used to observe other groups, activities and teachers at work.

The grade groupings were another plus. These allowed for better quality lessons or activities, and provided fewer hassles, which, I am certain, that multi-age groupings would have hindered. As a direct consequence of

grade groupings the learning experiences undertaken by the children were far more meaningful.

The all-school excursion to Coal Creek was most worthwhile — certainly hard work, as a small but "obvious" group of children were a "little toey" to say the least. (The reason being their inability to cope with, or in, more open-ended situations.)

Dressing in period costume was another highlight. Those children who made the effort not only looked, but also felt, the part.

I thoroughly enjoyed the contact with other grade groupings of children. We, in the Primary School Division are trained to be capable in teaching at all seven grade levels and Theme Week gave all of us the opportunity to capitalize on this.

Photographic and video-tape memoirs of the event consolidated the entire week. (I'm a little sorry that we weren't able to get more on tape. I feel that it really is necessary, in a school of this size for two to three people to be trained in V.C.R. usage, as the dividends are obvious.)

Use of "outside" people with their related expertise in a wide variety of areas was yet another very successful venture. Furthermore, in my observations, the children thoroughly enjoyed, and coped most admirably

with, the more passive observer rôle.

A very gratifying aspect of the week was the way in which most children coped brilliantly with activities/pastimes which are/were most often associated with the opposite sex. (How could I be so blatantly sexist?) What is even more significant is that the children genuinely enjoyed their work.

The museum was nothing short of outstanding. The range of memorabilia, treasures and "other", was quite staggering. The way in which it was organised and displayed was due to a very considerable amount of dedication and hard work by the school secretary - Fran Brown. The museum added impetus to the week, stimulating interest, as did the classroom displays and corridor murals, in the weeks preceding "The Good Old Days".

Finally, I feel the entire staff can deservedly give themselves a well-earned pat on the back. The week worked extremely well and was fun. (Perhaps the last word - "fun" - was basis of my early reservations. I was a little concerned that, or perhaps I detected that 'fun' was the prime reason behind initiating Theme Week. Certainly "fun" was a key ingredient, but the week had to contain educational value/merit; from my own observations of another school conducting such a

week, and some of the activities viewed, I was a little apprehensive about the educational value. This is perhaps more a suggestion that our theme itself was an excellent choice, with a vast avenue of ideas and interpretations open to it, than a criticism of a neighbouring school, whose theme was a little constrictive.)

Could such an undertaking be done on a term basis? No, I feel once a year is really the optimum. Perhaps even trying to initiate such a concept yearly within a school could prove risky, in that "enough is as good as a feast". But I believe that all teachers leaving this school would be able to "sell" the idea to another school contemplating such a venture on a "once" basis.

~~Rob H. Dougal~~

3/8/82.