



Nah Tah Wahsh School Virtual Museum Project

January 2000

IMLS - The Institute of Museum and Library Services is an independent federal agency that supports public and private libraries, museums, and archives, encouraging education through partnerships.

4Directions - A National Challenge Grant involving 19 Native American schools throughout the country. In its final year, the goal of the 4Directions project is to help Native American schools develop technology-supported, thematic curriculum that is culturally responsive to the communities served by the schools.

QTVR - Quick Time Virtual Reality provides a way to create "movies" of artifacts that viewers can manipulate to see them at different angles. It also provides a way to create a "virtual tour" of some location.

Virtual Museum - Virtual museums, sometimes called virtual libraries, are web sites that contain collections of digitized artifacts and information resources. They can contain text, photos, movies, audio files, maps, graphs, and links to other sites on the World Wide Web (WWW).

Why a Virtual Museum?

The development and maintenance of a virtual museum is an ideal way to provide a student-centered, constructivist learning environment in our school. It allows students to make choices about what they want to study, provides meaningful topics that incorporate academics and culture. It is also a way to get their families and the community involved in their education.

A typical student assignment would be to select a topic, research it, write about it, and create a web page that demonstrates the knowledge that the student has gained in the activity. Projects can come from visiting museums and libraries; researching topics for social studies, English or art classes; or satisfying a student's curiosity about a topic that involves his or her culture.

In addition to contributions by students, families and community members, visitors to the web site could also submit entries. It could also point visitors to related resources by providing links to other web sites and providing bibliographies of printed materials.

Unlike most school research projects, a virtual museum is ongoing and changes each year. The collection process and development could continue for decades and is not limited to any grade level. For example, students who create reports or web pages in grade school could continue their work through high school, becoming knowledge builders rather than mere consumers.

Virtual museums could be used to collaborate between classrooms, grade levels and even schools. Native American students in Maine could collaborate with students at Nah Tah Wahsh to compare and contrast almost any aspect of their cultures. Thematic examples could include traditional foods, medicinal plants, songs, dances, and family or tribal structures. Perhaps one of the most prevalent reasons for creating a Native American virtual museum is to allow our students to become active participants in educating others about Native American history and culture.



Mark Christal (UT) shows a student how to focus the camera at Fort de Buade last spring.

Public Presentations

Technology Coordinator Brenda Gerber has co-presented the virtual museum concept with Mark Christal and other 4Directions members at conferences for the last four years, including TEL*ED (Telecommunications and Technology in Education) and NECC (National Educational Computing Conference). After a very successful presentation at NECC last year, there is a strong possibility that we will be presenting again at the 2001 NECC Conference in Chicago this June.

More recently, Molly Meshigaud and Nicole Loper represented Nah Tah Wahsh School as part of the 4Directions team at the Global Junior Challenge in Rome, Italy. Over 650 proposals were submitted for this conference. Thousands of students and educators from around the world visited the 50 finalists' exhibits.



Crowds of students. Some waited over ½ hour to get into the exhibit area.



Italian grade school students crowd around our laptops to interact with the NMAI Virtual Tour.

Molly and Nicole were selected for this honor because of their involvement in the project and their successful presentation at the Internet 2 Conference in Ann Arbor during a small, invitation-only conference for administrators. During this conference they demonstrated QTVR techniques and discussed NMAI's virtual tour.



Future Plans

January - Mark Christal will be visiting the school January 15-16 to help train students and staff in QTVR techniques. A display of artifacts and culturally relevant articles will be available for students to select from. Selected students will create a QTVR movie of the object, research it and write a brief essay, create a web page and, if time permits, create digitized audio files of themselves reading their essays. Students will be working 1-on-1 with adults during these activities.

February - Tentative Community History Day at Nah Tah Wahsh School. Students, their families, and community members will be invited to bring photos to scan, items to photograph, or stories to tell about the community's history.

Librarian Kathy McNeely and Brenda Gerber will present the virtual museum concept to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, DC. IMLS provided our school with a 2-year grant to develop a regional Native American historical web site.

March - Virtual Museum staff members will visit potential museums for the spring Virtual Museum Student Project.

April - The site for the 2001 Virtual Museum Student Project will be selected. It is hoped that the site will be visited the last week of the month.

May - Web pages created during the 2001 Virtual Museum Student Project will be posted to the Nah Tah Wahsh Virtual Museum.

A Typical Activity

When developing a "web exhibit" of an artifact for a virtual museum, students would typically approach the task by:

- 📷 Selecting an object or topic (student-centered).
- 📷 Researching the topic.
- 📷 Writing an essay about the topic.
- 📷 Digitizing the object or support documents (photograph, scan, etc.).
- 📷 Putting the information into the web page template and save to disk.
- 📷 Submitting the web page to the virtual museum team for publishing to the web.

Remember, a virtual museum or library can be about almost any topic, from poetry to art projects to social studies or science.

Relevant Web Sites

www.4Directions.org
4Directions Challenge Grant

www.ims.gov
Institute of Museums and Library Services

<http://www.conexus.si.edu/VRTour/>
National Museum of the American Indian virtual tour

www.hvl.bia.edu
Nah Tah Wahsh School

www.edb.utexas.edu/teachnet/QTVR
QTVR Tutorial

NMAI Virtual Tour

In the fall of 1998, staff from the Four Directions project, the NMAI, and the BIA convened to plan a virtual museums project that would consist of two components: one, a virtual tour as seen through the children's eyes, of the permanent exhibitions in the George Gustav Heye facility, and two, virtual museums of the student's cultures developed with the help of the school communities and regional museums. Four Directions staff sent out a request for proposals to the project schools, and two schools were selected to participate in the project.

In March of 1999, students and staff from Santa Clara Day School of the Pueblo of Santa Clara, came to New York City to begin the creation of the virtual tour. A QuickTime Virtual Reality studio was set up at the museum, and students recorded virtual objects of items they had selected from the exhibition catalogs, recorded virtual panoramic spaces in the exhibition halls, and researched their artifacts for their accompanying essays in the museum's resource center library.

In June of 1999, students and staff from Nah Tah Wahsh school came to the museum to add to the work done by the Santa Clara students.

Since the initial recording and research by the students, Four Directions and NMAI staff assembled the current Virtual Tour with input from the schools. It can be viewed at www.edb.utexas.edu/teachnet/QTVR.



Dana Halfaday prepares the camera to shoot a Michigan headdress.

Logo Created for Project

The logo to the right has been created to demonstrate how important we feel this project is. We envision that, as this site grows, more schools, museums, and communities will participate by contributing relevant material and assisting us in identifying and documenting articles that we discover but do not feel qualified to document.



Fort de Buade Museum Project

Last spring, Nah Tah Wahsh students had the unique opportunity to visit and "photoshoot" Native American artifacts in a real museum setting. Fort de Buade Museum is perhaps one of Upper Michigan's best kept secrets. Often overlooked by area visitors, it houses over 6,500 square feet of exhibits organized by the French, English and American periods.

For five days, students and teachers were transported by van from the school to the fort and spent approximately three hours in the museum. Each student selected an artifact that interested him/her. After selecting an artifact, they researched their artifacts in the mini library put together by the schools library and culture staff and asked questions of the adults working with them. They took turns photographing the artifacts and completed essay forms about them. These artifacts will be presented in the school's Virtual Museum of Great Lakes Area Native Americans which is expected to make its debut in February on the World Wide Web.



High quality photography enables us to take close up photos that show details of craftsmanship as shown by this quill work from a small birch bark box.

The virtual museum staff is searching for another museum to explore and photoshoot this spring. As a prerequisite, a group of students will be selected from grade school and middle school classes to participate in QTVR training January 15-16. Training for staff will be available after school. Students who are trained at these sessions will be tech leaders for the upcoming Community History Day as well as future classroom projects that can use this technology.

Community members who are interested in seeing how QTVR is done may schedule an appointment for Wednesday morning by calling Lisa Keshick at the school's technology department.



Rich Sgarlotti discusses the fur trade with one of the students.



Mark Christal helps two young ladies with a digital camera.



*Fort de Buade Museum
334 N. State Street
St. Ignace, Michigan
(North side of the Mackinac Bridge)*

A Little History Lesson

For over three centuries, the Straits of Mackinac have been occupied by military establishments. Fort de Buade was built by the French in 1681, a decade after Marquette had established his mission in 1671 and called it St. Ignace. Its name was that of the family of Frontenac, the French Governor of North America.

Until Detroit was founded in 1701, it was the first and most important French post west of Montreal, guarding the life lines of the fur trade. The fort's commandant had charge of all other French forts in the West. Also known as Fort Michilimackinac, it was the first of three forts which were to bear this name and make up the triangle of history of the Straits area.