

THANK YOU TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

A letter from a Washington state educator shows how participation in the 2010 STUDY CANADA Summer Institute and use of the K-12 STUDY CANADA Resource Valise teacher loan-kit has enhanced Canadian content in her Grade 1 classroom.

Dearest Tina,

I just wanted to tell you how much fun I have had teaching, and how much fun the first graders have had learning about Canada this fall. Their interest was initially piqued when the Canada Valise arrived. They have loved learning about the weather, geography and important landmarks in Canada. It has been particularly fun for them learning about the Arctic in this season so close to Christmas. It was not in my lesson plans, but the students are eager to figure out how exactly to get to the North Pole in order to find Santa!

The students are becoming much more proficient at their map reading skills. As you (and other instructors) presented in the summer course, these students do associate Canada with a vast frozen land. But, as they are learning about the varied landscapes and weather, they are seeing how Canada does have icy land, but it also has big cities, and farmland, and forests and important rivers and lakes.

The students have loved the story *The Sweater*. They are practicing their French-Canadian accents to mimic the voice on the DVD as they cheer for the Montréal Canadiens and Maurice Richard.

And, my students really are connecting to the Canadian value for diversity. I teach at a school that is quite diverse – about 50% of our families speak at least two languages (English and a home or native language). So, my students are naturally connected to what is clearly Canadian of being integrated into a multi-cultural community that appreciates and celebrates differences.

My students have figured out that I typically tie a field trip to any of our science or social studies units. So, they are certain that we are going to be field tripping to Canada soon. (Of course, I am all for this! I haven't exactly figured out the logistics of taking twenty-six first graders on an international field trip!)

Additionally, I have gotten a lot of great feedback from my students' parents, who are happy to see the kids using critical thinking skills in order to build their own knowledge about geography and the inter-connections between geography and communities.

I am so happy that I was able to participate in the *K-12 STUDY CANADA* Summer Institute as I learned so much in the process. I knew that I would be able to use the information in my classroom and now I am excited to report how beneficial the institute has been to my social studies instruction this year.

These students have learned a lot about Canadian geography. They have developed more and more questions about Canada and are eager to visit. And, I think we have about twenty-six newly indoctrinated Montréal Canadiens' fans!

Happy Holidays to you. I hope you enjoy it with your family.

Martha Gibney
First Grade Teacher
St. Matthews School
Seattle, WA

