

\$60,000 to go towards education at York River

By Sarah Sobanski

York River Public School has received \$60,000 in grants.

The first grant includes \$10,000 from MusiCounts for the school's instruments. Teacher Troy Thrower applied for the grant last fall. Principal Marion Wilson said MusiCounts helps "support music education in schools."

"Our instruments are older. We haven't bought a new instrument in quite a while, so this is a huge bonus for us," she said. "We are very fortunate that we have an instrumental music program for every student from Grade 5 up ... Which is getting rarer and rarer these days."

It also received two grants from the Ministry of Education. The Community-Connected Experiential Learning grant and Teacher Learning and Leadership Program grant.

The first was applied for by teachers Sarah Vance and Mary Anne Hicks. It will bring \$20,000 to the school.

"It was to connect our children to experiential learning opportunities with an Aboriginal perspective," said Wilson. "As a result of that grant, each of our classrooms are going to be able to experience at least two experiential learning opportunities."

Wilson said these could include going to the Canadian Canoe Museum in Peterborough, field trips to Algonquin Park and/or visits from elders of the Golden Lake Omàmiwinini Pimàdjowin Algonquin Way Cultural Centre.

"They do a lot of work in the local schools up there. A lot of the work they do with the kids is connected with numeracy, which we know is a huge focus across the province," said Wilson. "They use beading opportunities to make that connection, not just culturally but numeracy based."

The Teacher Learning and Leadership Program grant was submitted by a group of teachers also led by Vance and Hicks. It adds up to \$30,000.

The grant will be used for teachers to expand their knowledge of coding and then teach it to students in all grades.

"We also have money for devices, things like LEGO, robotics. There's also a number of devices that we're going to purchase that can be used in classrooms for coding," said Wilson. "We know that coding is a very sought after skill and we especially want to address gender based gaps."

"Through hands-on experiences, we're not only engaging students who traditionally don't perform well [with] paper and pencil, but we are also addressing that it opens up the whole idea of technology and the STEM [science, technology, engineering and math] to female students as well as male students," she added.

Wilson called her staff dedicated. She said they were "always looking out for proposal applications that would result in funding for opportunities our kids would otherwise not have."

"The staff was very dedicated in this. They put a lot of time into these applications. It's never an easy process so I am incredibly grateful for a tremendous staff and our kids are the benefit as we work with our students to make them globally minded citizens," she said.

"It's these experiences that take them beyond the borders of Bancroft."