

Thanks to a local veteran nets Williams students a surprise



By Brock Weir

Carl Bedal has inspired many Aurorans over the years with his poignant story of serving in the navy during the Second World War. This past Remembrance Day, he shared his story of signing up for King and Country in the midst of the Second World War with Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School. Moved by his story of growing up on a rural farm, and seeing enlistment in the Royal Canadian Navy as a way to escape the path set out for him ? and bearing witness to the horrors of war along the way ? was a moving experience for the students who decided a mere thank you note wasn't enough for the Aurora veteran.

Brainstorming various creative ways to thank Mr. Bedal for his service, their poem, filmed and set to music, unexpectedly landed them second place in the annual Grant McRae Commemorative Contest, hosted by The Memory Project.

?Just being able to see his life in the Navy and moving forward from there was cool,? says student Sanjay Singh, who penned the words in the commemorative video. ?He was very inspiring. He didn't glorify his experience at all. He saw his friends actually die during the battles he encountered and it really made me think how much he had been through. We split the class into two groups, one who would make a thank you to Mr. Bedal for coming in and one to talk about Remembrance Day and what it means to them. I decided to do the side for Mr. Bedal because he was really inspiring to me. I just sat down at the computer writing away to see what came to mind and I realised some of the words that were coming out happened to be in correlation.?

And a poem, embraced by the class, was born.

Enlisting the help of Nathalie Ganesh and some of the other tech-minded students, they put their heads together turning the words into a multimedia presentation involving the group as a whole.

?When Sanjay wrote the poem, I was getting ready with the camera and different positions and how it would look on screen,? says Nathalie. ?We thought it would be more personal if we made the video so people would know it was mainly directed to Mr. Bedal. We weren't aware of it going into competition at first. We mainly focused on getting it to Mr. Bedal because it was for him.?

Doing his own brainstorming behind the scenes on how to take the tribute to the next level was teacher Stefano Fornazzari. At the start of the video project, Mr. Fornazzari said he had no idea such a contest even existed, but once he was contacted by The Memory Project over a host of different Remembrance Day initiatives he knew his students just happened to be cooking up the perfect fit.

?The students were not motivated by anything, they were not creating it for a contest, it was just because we had a great connection with Mr. Bedal,? says Mr. Fornazzari. ?The only desired outcome was to thank this man we thought did an exemplary job talking about the war experience. The only conversation we had was, 'Let's do something different. I can go buy a card, I can go write a letter, but let's do something different,' and these two ran with it. As a teacher, that collaboration, creativity and innovation is exciting.?

While the win was also exciting for the students ? and Nathalie tells of Sanjay excitedly running into another one of her classes to tell them they had placed second ? more meaningful to them was hearing their video had reached the eyes and ears of Mr. Bedal. ?It was quite a surprise to me that they followed up with a thank you in that forum,? Mr. Bedal tells The Auroran. ?I had no idea they were going to submit it for a prize and I am glad they won. My enjoyment was meeting with them and trying to answer their

questions and seeing their enthusiasm. I think [I wanted the students to know] of the many sacrifices in order to win peace and freedom and they seem to have augmented that feeling with their work at school.?