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LOCAL HISTORY

Student Research Shared as Curriculum

Discovery Lab project includes taped interviews with Japanese Americans sent from the Valley to WWII internment camps

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YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

Two purple plastic tubs will soon be a hub of information about the experiences of the Yakima Valley's Japanese Americans during World War II.

The contents include videotaped interviews with local Japanese-Americans, a resource binder detailing a curriculum, supporting books, workbooks, CD-ROMs and multimedia student projects. The tubs will be available at three Yakima Valley locations for use by schools in at least four surrounding counties.

Most of the research and work to fill the tubs with curriculum materials was completed by 31 seventh- and eighth-graders from Yakima's Discovery Lab.

The students have spent the past year researching and creating a curriculum that details the stories of individuals that reflect the culture of local Japanese-Americans during the early 1940s.

"Seeing the completed project, I think it is very exciting. It adds depth to a period of time that you could not find in textbooks," said Wapato's Kara Kondo, one of four people interviewed on video for the material.

Kondo spent her late teenage years in the Heart Mountain internment camp in



JEFF HALLER/Yakima Herald-Republic

Elizabeth Church, 14, left, talks with Kara Kondo at the Yakima Valley Museum on Thursday, after Church and Discovery Lab classmate Loren Antonio presented research materials they gathered about the Japanese internment in the 1940s. As a young adult, Kondo was taken from Wapato and sent to live at a camp in Wyoming. She was interviewed as part of the students' project.

Wyoming. That was in June 1942, when Japanese-Americans from the Yakima Valley were ordered to the camps as part of former President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066, which permitted the military to incarcerate about 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast.

The students donated the plastic tubs to the Yakima Valley Museum and the

Heritage College library. A third box will be kept at the Discovery Lab.

"We encourage you to take this box ... we did a lot of work on this and we really wanted to share our experience, said Elizabeth Church, 14, a graduate of Discovery Lab who worked on the project.

Pam Root, a professor in the education department at Heritage College, plans to use the material in her social studies

methods class.

"This is how you motivate people to do it," Root said. "It is very difficult for teachers to do something like this."

Root also plans to add information from a similar project she did a few years ago on the Wapato Nippons, a pre-World War II Japanese American baseball team.

In addition to interviewing local Japanese-Americans who'd been interned, Discovery Lab students rummaged through 1940s newspaper clips and visited museums and libraries in the Yakima Valley and Seattle.

"We really wanted to be personable about what happened in our Valley," Discovery Lab teacher Irene Smith said. "Back in the Valley after internment, it was a different place."

The Yakima School District's Discovery Lab serves grades one through eight in a multi-aged classroom environment. Much of the coursework is hands-on and project-based.

During a recent trip to Washington, D.C., the students stumbled onto a Japanese fair where the Japanese-American Veterans Association had a booth.

They videotaped some of those interviews, too.

"The work that these students did, the work that was put into it is in this binder," Smith said, holding the large three-ring notebook that details the curriculum.

They also included some student-generated assessment in the curriculum material.

"We put that into our curriculum because we know that is the direction that the state is heading," Smith said.