Pictou Landing creates literary initiatives
By Debbi Harvie

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Learning can also be fun. Just ask students at Pictou Landing First Nation's school.

As part of a literacy initiative, elders in the community, along with volunteers and school staff, have created story sacks and an educational game.

Story sacks are large handmade bags containing props, games and activities that coincide with a storybook, also included.

The story sacks are the elders' way of communicating aspects of their culture to the children.

Included in the story sacks are cassette tapes so elders can translate the story into Mi'kmaq.

The emphasis of the story sacks, says Kay Desborough, a volunteer at Pictou Landing for early childhood literacy, is to teach the children both English and Mi'kmaq so they can develop a basic understanding of both languages before and after they enter school.

The story sacks include both fiction and non-fiction books to entertain and educate the children.

Volunteers at Pictou Landing have also created an educational game for students on the reserve.

The idea for the game, called Germo, came from a story sack for the book, 'Farm Flu,' which taught the children about germs and getting sick.

Germo is based on the game BINGO and educates children on things that make them sick, how to get better and how to help others when they are sick.

The game, much like the story sacks, teaches the children English and Mi'kmaq.

"We approached Health Canada for funding for the project under the Health Promotion Strategy and received the funding to create the game because it promotes health through literacy," says Desborough.

The game was created as a literacy initiative by volunteers in Pictou Landing and the printing of the game was donated by Advocate Printing and Publishing.

"The support was absolutely tremendous," says Desborough.
Above: Kay Desborough, a volunteer at Pictou Landing First Nation for early childhood literacy, holding one of many story sacks created by elders to help children learn the Mi'kmaq language and have fun while reading. The story sacks include stories, games and activities that help engage children in the learning process. Right photo: Desborough holds a game created for one of the story sacks. The game teaches children about germs and how people get sick. The game is based on Bingo and is used to promote health through literacy. (Harvie photos)