

Eglinton and Perthville public school students part of Bigger Than Ben Hall project

SEPTEMBER 23 2018 - 1:00PM



STORYTELLERS: Students from Eglinton Public were involved in the Bigger Than Ben Hall film project.

LOCAL primary students will have their creativity seen on the other side of the world as part of an innovative film-making project. Students from Eglinton and Perthville public schools have just completed the Bigger Than Ben Hall project, which will see their own versions of the bushranging stories broadcast as short films to schools across NSW and San Francisco, USA.

It has been a world-first web-based collaboration between the NSW Department of Education, participating primary schools in Ben Hall/bushranger country, and creative team The Project Zone.

The short films, researched, scripted and acted by Central West year five and six students, retell the Ben Hall gang's high crimes and misdemeanours, ranging from robberies to ransom demands to hosting a three day party in the township of Canowindra where everyone was invited and RSVPs were not required.

The Project Zone creative team of children's book author Paul Stafford, cameraman/film-maker/editor Vince Lovecchio and green-screen/VR artist Lindsay Moss collaborated with videoconference hub DART Connections (NSW Department of Education) to deliver the project to schools across the Central West.

Students learnt from industry professionals about script-writing and film-making technique, including the use of the virtual reality special effect "green-screening". The cine-literacy element and strong STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) focus of virtual reality has ensured the project has met with enthusiasm from the participating schools and students, Mr Stafford said.

The Project Zone team recently won the 2018 National Trust Heritage Award in the Events, Exhibitions and Tours category for their school-based film project, History Here.

They hope to emulate that success with Bigger Than Ben Hall, an international film collaboration between students across the world.

"Our intention is to hold the mirror of history up to students to highlight just how colourful, exciting and original Australian history is, and especially when it occurred in their own backyard," Mr Stafford said.

The completed films will be broadcast live via videoconference at an event in Canowindra on December 19.

The event will feature a live re-enactment with riders in costume, a bush band, a "Join the Gang" green-screen pop-up and the premiere screening of the schools' films to venues across NSW and San Francisco, where Hall's fellow gang member Frank Gardiner opened a saloon and lived a long life following his bushranging exploits.

Schools from Canowindra, Eugowra and Carcoar are also involved in the project.