

Teen steps into Dragon's Den with new game

Show airs Wednesday night on CBC

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A Midhurst youth may be onto something big after debuting an invention of historical proportions on CBC's The Dragon's Den.

Kyle Woolard, 14, is looking to the future of education by delving into the past after combining his passion for history and inventing into a board game designed to make learning fun.

"It's a war-type game where you have to defeat the opponent's men, but in order to remove them from the game board you have to correctly answer a historical question based on the lesson you're teaching," Woolard said.

"History was my favourite subject and I like inventing things so I decided to make a board game to help people enjoy history."

Woolard had original pieces graphically designed and patented for the game.

After auditioning for the show at the Monte Carlo Inn Barrie in April, Woolard's War of 1812 game earned him a shot at going head-to-head with the dragons.

"I thought it was pretty neat going down the steps and when I got down there my game was set up on the table," he said. "Two of the dragons played my game and I gave them all historical hats to wear."

Although Woolard can't say if he walked off the show a new entrepreneur with a bank roll to help with mass production, he did say he has a 'smart' vision for his game's future.

"I wanted an investment so I could make it into a SMART Board game so schools can use it in their SMART Boards and just pay a licensing fee," he said. "The investment is to make it into a video game."

The goal is to turn the game into an interactive tool for teachers to use with students on the SMART Board system, a interactive white board with touch screen and computer capabilities.

"I had a focus group with Grade 7 teachers to get their input on my game and see if they would find it helpful," Woolard said.

"They said they liked it and their students would be willing to learn more about the history through this video game."

Woolard's mother, Teresa, said her son has always been interested in inventing, and after selling a few board game versions at an event in Indiana in 2010, he was determined to see it on the big screen.

"He just had so much fun. Kyle is pretty shy and reserved and so this is a big step for him to go in front of the five 'Dragons' on his own," Teresa said.

Once in a digital form, students can use the game to educationally battle about the details surrounding the war which involved the burning of Washington and the seizure of Western Ontario.

The War of 1812 is just a starting point for Woolard, but Teresa said the game is gaining attention at a good time in Canadian history.

"We didn't even realize next year is the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812," she said.

Because many wars and battles are big parts of world history, it's only natural to expand, said Woolard.

The episode airs Wednesday on CBC at 8 p.m.

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