

BACKGROUNDER

The Border Kids project was launched by External Affairs and International Trade Canada as part of the Consular Awareness Program. Its goal is to help make young Canadians aware of their responsibilities when travelling in another country, the consequences if they do not respect the laws of the host country and the level of assistance that our missions can extend to them.

"Border Kids" involved a group of grade eight students from Hugh Beaton Public School in Windsor who met with law enforcement and judicial representatives from the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S. Customs, Canada Customs, Canada Immigration, the Detroit Police Department and the Wayne County Sheriff's Department.

The project began on October 30, 1991, at Hugh Beaton Public School, where the students were briefed by U.S. Immigration and U.S. Customs representatives and viewed a demonstration by a dog specially trained to detect drugs. On November 6, the students received separate briefings by Canadian officials and the Detroit Police Department at the Canadian Consulate General in Detroit, toured the offices of the U.S. Border Patrol, and attended a session at the Recorder's Court for the City of Detroit, presided over by Judge Michael Sapala. On November 13, they toured and experienced life inside the Wayne County Jail.

The "Border Kids" video portrays the students' experiences and reactions as they toured the various facilities and met with the people working in them. The companion booklet, *Border Kids Teacher's Guide*, suggests a number of lessons and activities to complement the showing of the video in the classroom. The video and booklet are available in English or French.

During the production of "Border Kids," the primary concerns were to get the message across to the "kids" that they are responsible for their own actions and to ensure that they take it home to family and friends. It was important to make a dramatic impact on the participants so that young people in schools across Canada, who could not engage in a similar adventure, would benefit from the experience.

Canadians rank fourth in the world as travellers, with some 80-million trips outside Canada recorded per year. The U.S. is the most frequently visited destination for Canadians and, because many live in close proximity to the border, there is a tendency to think that the country is an extension of Canada. As a result, some people break laws they know nothing about, then find out too late that the Canadian government can do little to help them.

Since many young Canadians will travel in the future, particularly to the U.S., it is important to teach them that, while they are visiting a foreign country, they must learn and respect its laws or bear the consequences. It is also important that they know the limitations to the types and level of services that Canadian missions can provide to Canadians who find themselves in difficulty abroad.