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Teens tackle bullying Video aims to aid kids cope with threats

By SHANNON VANRAES, SUN MEDIA

These teens are taking bullies by the horns, using art and technology to combat an issue negatively affecting many youth.

"I learned how bad it feels for someone else," said 14-year-old Jessica Walker, who portrayed a bullying victim in a short video she made with classmates.

The video, called It Takes One, was part of the Not In My School program's video challenge.

More than 200 schools from 20 school divisions took part and the top three videos, as voted by students, were recognized by the province at the annual Safe Schools Forum yesterday.

Walker, a Grade 8 student at Arthur A. Leach School, said she has been picked on by her peers in real life as well.

"I move a lot, so I've been the new person and sometimes people were mean to me," said Walker, who moved to Winnipeg from Nova Scotia three years ago.

She noted people made fun of her East Coast accent when she first arrived.

She and her peers said working on projects like the video helps students learn how harmful bullying is and how to stop it.

'CALL THEM ON IT'

"Now when we see someone being a bully we can call them on it," said Dana Smith, 13.

Sue Gilmour, a teacher at Arthur A. Leach, said bullying is present in most Canadian schools and she's seen the problem first-hand.

She said discussing bullying in the classroom has provided students with tools to help prevent bullying, not just during school, but after-hours as well.

"Now cyber-bullying has been more of an issue," said Gilmour, referring to insults and threats sent over the Internet and through other telecommunication devices.

"I think people use (instant messaging) and stuff because it's easy, they don't have to confront people face to face," said Emily Schulz, 14.

To help curb online bullying, the NDP government has introduced new legislation to amend the Safe Schools Act to recognize cyber-bullying.

"It's always been very high on our agenda," said Education Minister Peter Bjornson. "It's the right of every student to feel safe in their school."