



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Putting big opportunities in small hands: customized laptops to open doors to education

One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Canada to deliver high tech, culturally relevant learning to Aboriginal youth in Canada

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada – September 29, 2010 – The Belinda Stronach Foundation today announced it will distribute up to 5,000 laptops to children aged six to twelve in Aboriginal communities across Canada. With support from Vale, BMO Financial Group and the Government of Ontario, the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Canada program leverages leading-edge technology combined with culturally relevant programming to deliver a unique platform of learning tools to Aboriginal children.

"I believe strongly in combining the power of technology and education and investing in our young people," said Belinda Stronach. "One Laptop Per Child Canada is about just that. Aboriginal kids should have the same opportunities as every other child in Canada – and we're delighted to launch OLPC with our partners and welcome others to the table."

"We at Vale are proud to support the One Laptop Per Child Program," said Tito Martins, President and CEO, Nickel Business, Vale. "This program unlocks opportunities for Aboriginal Canadians and aligns with our commitment to care for the communities in which we operate by improving access to quality education. Vale is honoured to be part of a Program that has proven successful around the world, and we are proud to invest in the future of Canada and Canadians in this innovative and effective way."

The OLPC Canada initiative is modeled after the internationally successful One Laptop Per Child Program currently in place in more than 30 countries. This first of its kind program in Canada was designed in collaboration with Aboriginal students, education specialists and program experts from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), ParticipACTION, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Ekomini and Safe Kids Canada. This collaboration resulted in the development of eight customized programs.

"I am delighted to partner with One Laptop Per Child on this important initiative," said The Honourable Chris Bentley, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. "This pilot project will open new windows of opportunity and provide new educational pathways for Aboriginal students."

Although Aboriginal youth are the fastest growth segment within the Canadian population, many lack the resources necessary to realize their full potential. OLPC Canada provides a concrete, technology-based solution to reducing the education gap and effecting positive change within the lives of Aboriginal youth in Canada.

Central to the pilot program is the suite of eight customized programs tailored specifically to the needs of Aboriginal children. With the inclusion of this customized suite of programs, the initiative will encourage youth to explore new and existing subjects in a creative way that is tailored to their unique history and cultural perspective. Each XO laptop is equipped with the customized educational software as well as more than 30 other programs developed by OLPC, and wireless capability, designed to improve the recipient's connectivity to the world at large and allow for community-building within the students' own networks.

Customized programming includes:

Owl Vision – Literacy: With progressive layers of difficulty, 60 activities take young users from basic knowledge of the alphabet through simple reading and writing and on to more complex comprehension and understanding. The program includes vowel and consonant recognition, word matching, sounds, and comprehension. Designed by Ekomini, the program awards points and allows children to track their scores as they would in an online game.

The Meeting Place – Mental Health, Substance Use and Well-Being: Using an interactive map quest, The Meeting Place addresses a variety of topics including: bullying, smoking, alcohol, solvents, family violence, suicide, drugs, depression and anxiety. The map walks children down paths that they may encounter in their own communities and daily lives, and introduces them to community settings and characters that represent lessons to be learned about making good choices. Content and functionality helps children identify where to go for help in various scenarios. Intended for children aged 10 and older, this program was designed by CAMH and developed by Bitcasters.

Swift Feet – Physical Fitness: A high energy and up-beat action program, Swift Feet encourages children to be active. 20 different exercises and 10 different dances set to music take users through high, moderate and low impact movements. A post-session quiz assesses each child's knowledge of physical fitness and helps measure knowledge retention and improvement. This program was designed by ParticipACTION Canada in cooperation with Ophea.

Ekominiville – Financial Literacy: the basics of money management are offered through a series of activities and games addressing investment, want versus need, saving and the value of money. Children must manoeuvre through a small town with 4 different characters, gaining points along the way and experiencing various scenarios such as operating an ice cream business, work around the home, banking money and giving back to their community. This program was designed by Ekomini.

Healthy Heart – Food and Nutrition: based on Canada's Aboriginal Food Guide, Healthy Heart helps children assess their recommended daily intake of food. Stylized bear avatars teach children to act as "chefs" to choose food from a menu that represents the correct daily intake and prepare meals for their customers, all while learning more about healthy eating. Canada's Aboriginal Food Guide was provided by Health Canada.

Drum Beats – Science of Sound: Buffy Sainte-Marie walks children through the Nature of Sound and Native American/Aboriginal Instruments in order to introduce children to what sound is, the characteristic of sound, wavelengths and how sound travels. Hands-on experiments and a vocabulary resource provide students with a working knowledge of words and meaning, as well as an understanding of Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native American music and sound terminology. This program was modified for OLPC Canada by Buffy Sainte-Marie.

Future Generation – Virtual Library: Recognizing the importance of preserving stories and Aboriginal languages, the XO contains 25 books written by First Nation, Métis and Inuit authors. Some books are offered in various Aboriginal languages and one book is fully narrated. Children can choose any book in the library and read on their laptop by using the arrow keys on the keyboard to turn pages. This section was developed in consultation with GoodMinds.com.

Calm Waters – Water Safety: Through stories about frozen and free-flowing water, children learn the importance of safe water behaviour and begin to understand what can happen if poor choices are made. Quizzes test comprehension and emphasize good water safety choices. This program was designed by Safe Kids Canada.

All programs are interactive, narrated and are designed to advance a child's interest in learning. The programs were developed with content experts to provide children with access to educational tools and information at all times – wherever they go. Designed to encourage teachers to be as creative and innovative in their teachings as they would like, OLPC Canada hopes to support the work of teachers in and out of the classroom.

About The Belinda Stronach Foundation

The Belinda Stronach Foundation is committed to advancing human potential and achievement through individual empowerment and social change. For more information please visit www.tbsf.ca

About One Laptop Per Child

One Laptop Per Child's mission is to create educational opportunities for the world's poorest children by providing each child with a rugged, low-cost, low-power, connected laptop with content and software designed for collaborative, joyful, self-empowered learning. Visit <http://laptop.org> for more information.

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Information about partners and a list of schools participating in the pilot is available at www.OLPCCanada.com

For additional information, interview requests and available video footage requests, please contact:

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