

Edgy topics are the focus of new North Bay game

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NORTH BAY — Three North Bay natives who were buddies at West Ferris Secondary School have turned a quirky idea into a game they hope will surpass the legacy of Monopoly and Balderdash.

After 10 years of prototypes and designs, Mark Sherry and brothers Ted and Tom Quinn have launched THINGS, a game where players say whatever comes to mind when asked provocative questions.

More than 300 topics include "things you wouldn't do in church," "things your parents forgot to tell you," "things you shouldn't lick," "things dogs actually say when they bark" and "things you shouldn't say to your in-laws."

"That day when Tom scribbled down those first few questions I knew we had something here," Sherry said.

"It's like Balderdash but with an edge. There's no right answer and the topics are a little more risqué," said the 38-year-old.

"It's a game that gives everyone a chance to be a comedian."

About 200 copies of the games have been sold so far for \$39.99.

The reader, who is selected by the highest roll of the dice, chooses a topic card and reads it aloud. All players, including the reader, write down a response, fold it and place it in a box.

The reader then reads each answer aloud and one at a time competitors try to guess who wrote what response. If you guess correctly, that player is eliminated from the round.

Out of character

Sherry said he soon found out that the more out-of-character your answer is, the greater chance you have to stay in the game.

"It's also a good idea to disguise your handwriting," he said.

Bonus points are also up for grabs for each round. The reader rolls the dice to determine the category, which includes most humorous, most disgusting, most original, most bizarre, most normal and silliest. Each player has the opportunity to vote on which response best fits the category.

It wasn't until Sherry had played

the game for several years that he proposed the idea of producing a commercial product.

"For eight years we worked on it, but because we got so busy the idea was pushed aside for a while," Sherry said, noting that part of the delay was due to their demanding careers. Ted teaches in the Middle East and Europe, Tom is a film director in Toronto and Sherry owns a local restaurant franchise.

"Although we've been playing it ever since high school, it wasn't until two years ago that we got back to finishing what we had started."

The game was completed in October.

Marketing

The next decision was whether to sell their game in small independent game stores or to approach big stores such as Wal-Mart and Zellers.

"If we took the second route we would have to have at least a \$500,000 advertising budget, and for us that would mean more investors," he said.

After much debate, Sherry said, they decided to go to the small independent stores.

"Once we have a promising track record we will then approach the bigger retailers," he said.

"It's a hard market to get into, because we're up against companies like Hasbro and Mattel."

Sherry says he's confident the game will succeed.

In the meantime, he and his partners are preparing for the Canadian Toy Fair in Toronto, Jan. 25.

Some other avenues the game's creators are considering include producing Spanish and French versions of the game and an educational version for teachers to use in classrooms.

"We also are waiting to receive the game's Canadian and U.S. trademarks. After that, we'll be looking to expand into markets in Australia and Europe," Sherry said.

So far, the trio invested \$30,000, which helped launch it in North Bay at Gulliver's Quality Books and Toys earlier this month.

For more information about THINGS, log onto their Web site at www.thingsthegame.com or visit Gullivers.