



AiRS

Artist in Residence
Studio Program

2023/24 Annual Report



With deep gratitude
and respect, we are
honoured to be learning and
unlearning on the ancestral
and unceded lands of the
x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam),
Skwxwú7mesh úxwumixw
(Squamish nation) & Salilwətaʔ
(Tseil-waututh nation)



*If there was no art, for me there would be no colour
in the world - Waverley student*

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AIRS program : A year in review

This year marked a significant milestone for AIRS in becoming an independent and registered charity - AIRS Program Society. We invested our first Board of Directors, held our inaugural AGM and welcomed new members. Becoming a society has already opened up doors for creating new partnerships, to expand and enrich the impact of long-term artist residencies in schools for artists, students, teachers and school communities. We are grateful to continue our primary partnership with the Vancouver School Board, and for their ongoing support at both the district and school level. This includes lead teachers at each school who have consistently and conscientiously given their time in supporting the program at their school and participating in our ongoing action research. All this would not have been possible without the energy and talent of Yunuen Perez-Verrti who worked tirelessly behind the scenes in supporting the program in administration and communications.

In reviewing all the visual documentation, written reflections and recollections from teachers, students and artists and studio visits, I am overwhelmed with the enormity of what has transpired across 15 studios this year. I am awed by the creativity, compassion and care of the artists, whose program conceptions and design has supported both breadth of learning and depth of engagement for students at each school. Their passion and vision has indeed created relevant and meaningful opportunities for students to experience the transformative power of the artmaking process. Seeing examples of the resulting work come together at our year end exhibition, underscored the ways in which the artmaking process enables students to find beauty, connection and relational care in a disaffected world - towards student flourishing and aspiration for a better, more just shared world.

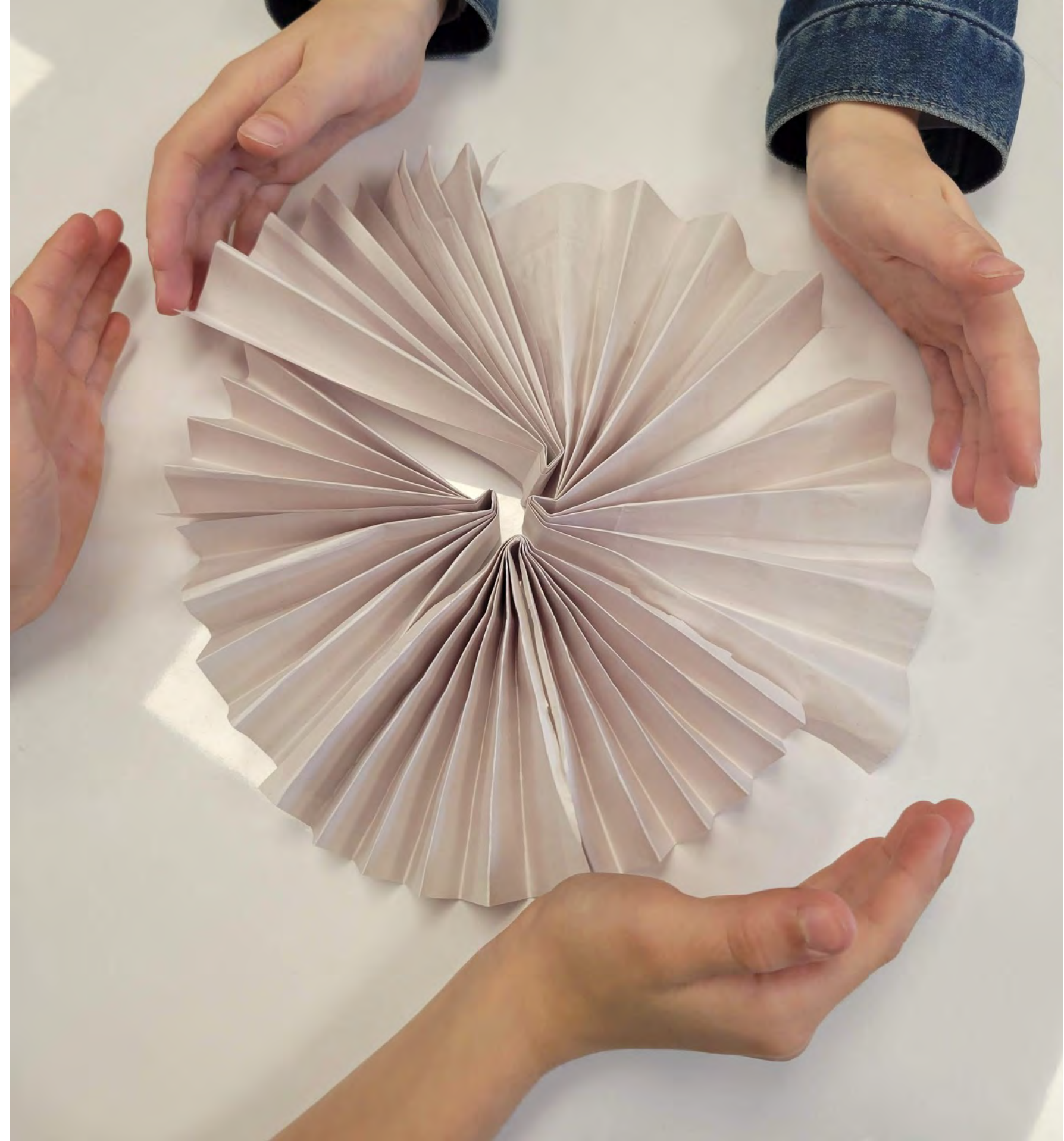
Maggie Milne Martens
AIRS Artistic Director

AIRS Mission

To develop children's creative and compassionate capacities to be transformers of their world through equitable access to visual arts education in schools.

AIRS Vision

To create a working model in partnership with Vancouver School Board to reclaim space for the arts in public elementary schools and provide relevant high quality socially and environmentally just art making experiences through long term artist residencies.



AIRS 2023/4: By the numbers

15

VSB Elementary
Schools

22

Artists

18

Lead Teachers

157

Classroom teachers

3,664

children

Centering Indigenous Knowledge

As we re-imagine the transformative possibilities of long-term artist residencies in schools, AIRS recognizes the critical importance and responsibility in centering Indigenous perspectives and understanding of art, culture and ways of learning. Throughout the year, we have intentionally created spaces for listening, (un)learning, dialogue and reflection for both teachers and artists through orientation, discussion groups and professional development opportunities.

Our goal is to create culturally safe studio spaces for artmaking that not only uphold the educational and cultural goals of the TRC (2008) and UNDRIP (Canada in 2021), but also, in centring indigenous informed pedagogies and image of the child, create space for honoring the uniqueness and diversity of all children, and provide artmaking opportunities rooted in and for community that allow students to explore, make and imagine together their belonging and capacity to shape a more equitable, and just shared world.

Candice Halls Howcroft

Candice is a Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) storyteller, poet and educator. Candice has enriched AIRS program through professional development and learning opportunities for artists, teachers and students, sharing water teachings, medicine wheel teachings and its relationship to Indigenous pedagogies such as Martin Brokenleg's Circle of Courage. Candice also serves on the AIRS Board of Directors.

Robin Roberts

Robin, Raven Clan from Gitga'at First Nation is a VSB Indigenous education teacher and a carver, painter, digital artist, and designer. Robin participated with AIRS lead teachers in our Collaborative Inquiry this year, Robin was a key presenter for our collaborative inquiry, sharing his perspective on first peoples principles of learning from a personal, scholarly and professional lens through his teaching and art practice.



Robin leading a Collaborative Inquiry presentation for Lead teachers at Nightingale Art and Discovery Studio



Candice Sharing water teachings with students at Wakwanas te sequem Elementary

Artists

This year AIRS program worked with 22 local and professional artists who created dynamic art residencies for students in studios across 15 schools. Artists brought expertise in diverse media, including drawing, painting, comic illustration, bookmaking, papermaking, masks, textiles, photography, stop motion, film, movement, and spoken word poetry. Residency themes included honoring our identities, inside and out, dreaming, exploring the possibilities of making with materials, and cultivating relationship with the land and the waters.



Building Community

Throughout the year, AIRS creates opportunities for artists to come together as a community and learn and share from and with one another. In January 2024, Angela Ma from Handsondiversity led a session at ArtSpeak Gallery on creating inclusive culturally safe spaces that invite authenticity and courageous conversations.

I would like to highlight the invaluable sense of community that the discussion sessions fostered. The opportunity to connect with other artist educators was truly inspiring. We can sometimes feel isolated in our studios, so hearing others share their ideas and challenges was both helpful and uplifting. It served as a reminder that we are part of a larger community. Learning from each other's experiences and perspectives was an enriching aspect of these discussions.

- Tami Murray



Angela Ma at ArtSpeak Gallery

AIRS Artist Mentorship Program

The AIRS mentorship program is integral to program sustainability in creating opportunities for community engaged professional and emerging artists to gain confidence and skill in leading artist residencies in schools. This year, with the help of an Artists Shifting Culture Grant from the City of Vancouver, AIRS was able to welcome five mentee artists to work with the support of five experienced AIRS mentor artists to envision, plan and facilitate an emergent five-week residency at five different established AIRS studios and schools. Mentee artists shared that the mentorship experience had built capacity and confidence in their art facilitation skills and a better understanding of the relevance of their own practice in community collaboration with young people. Mentor artists were impacted by the experience in using their expertise to enable other artists to grow theirs.



Nova at Seymour Elementary

Mentoring is a part of indigenous culture to sharing, learn by doing with support and this year has been amazing opportunity to work with someone that is passionate and experienced. Being able to share my teaching on how to strengthen the amazing ability Nova brought to the program and help frame and empower them to feel confident in what they bring to the community through the AIRS program. Christine Mackenzie.

Drawing our Connections

Zhouhan Yin (Grace) with Maggie Milne Martens at Nightingale Elementary

Shifting Perspectives

Aihblin Fowlie with mentor Tami Murray at Henderson Elementary

My Story is Important to this Place

Nova Wiepart, Red Buffalo with mentor Christine Mackenzie at Seymour

Experiencing and recording gifts of being here, now, together

Shamina Seneratne with mentor Rebecca Heyl at Tecumseh Elementary

Storying Waterways

Fiana Kawane with mentor Yunuen Perez Verrti at Wəkwəʔəḥəs tə syaqʷəm



Fiana at Wəkwəʔəḥəs

“Working with elementary students in schools has allowed me to bring more authentic aspects of my practice into my community engagement and be inspired by their enthusiasm.”
Fiana Kawane

Teachers

18 AIRS Lead Teachers supported AIRS program at their school, participating in a year long collaborative inquiry and gathering reflections from teachers and students on the impact of collaborating with an artist in a studio space for student learning and wellbeing.

One of the standout aspects of this program was the collaboration between teachers and artists. This partnership allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and teaching methods, benefiting both educators and students. Teachers were able to integrate artistic practices into their classrooms, enhancing the overall learning experience and fostering a more holistic approach to education.

- April Huang and Pat Teacher - Douglas



Erika shares examples of student art working with Julie McIntyre at Maquinna



Tecumseh class in the temporary studio at South Hill

Teacher Observations: A Summary

In their reflections, teachers noted a strong correlation between art learning in the studio and the development of all core competencies; creative and critical thinking, communication and personal and social competency. Persistent themes emerged across all 15 school sites.

These were:

Safe Space: The studio and the artist's ability to create a space of safety and non-judgement allowed students to find freedom in self-expression, and embrace mistakes as opportunities for learning.

Inclusion: This safe space to create resulted in an environment where all students were engaged, and motivated. Students who normally struggle in the classroom were self-regulated, successful and even thriving.

Deep Learning: Art processes allowed opportunities for deep learning and access into complex topics such as Indigenous history, self-identity and environmental stewardship.

Mental Wellbeing: Teachers overwhelmingly noted the impact of artmaking experiences in the studio on positive attitudes and emotions; particularly calmness, happiness and sense of pride as well as connection in community through collaboration and school exhibitions

In the studio teachers discovered; stickiness and patience, positive connection with who we are, student connection, ripple effects into the classroom, bringing the outside in, nature and calm, evolving identities of who we are, creative freedom in fewer constraints, hands on making and gifting, peace with self and community, collaborative process.

AIRS Teacher Inquiry & First Peoples Principles of Learning



Mentorship Residency at South Hills with Tecumseh students

An education that reflects Indigenous informed pedagogies is “honoring the knowledge that come from Indigenous cultures and creating more responsive systems to meet all learners’ diverse needs in our contemporary world”

Jo Chrona, Wayi Wah!, 2023

AIRS Lead Teachers from each school participated in a collaborative Inquiry that considered:

How might art making processes in the studio reflect or align with First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL)?

Each teacher looked at one of the principles that best resonated with their artists’ vision and their school culture and learning goals. Understanding of FPPL was supported with teaching and knowledge sharing from Candice Halls and Robin Roberts.

What we Learned

We learned that FPPL are holistic and relational, integrating all aspects of the self - mind, body, emotions and spirit. Balance between all four aspects is central to an Indigenous worldview, reflected in the medicine wheel and in FPPL. The artmaking process integrates all four aspects of being to support holistic learning.

Holistic learning encourages students to view art as a comprehensive experience that involves mind/body/spirit. Experiential learning in the art studio encourages student in hands on practical experiences that foster skill development and application of knowledge.

- Teacher, from Bruce

Equally important is the goal of education in supporting each child’s discovery of self and their becoming in relation to the community, including the Land and all living beings.

“The communication of creative ideas and the reflection of these ideas foster an understanding of self-identity, purpose and relationship with oneself and the wider community - concepts that the FPPL support..” Wakwanas,

Key themes were:

Connection to the land:

The artmaking processes provided opportunity for students to develop relationship with the land through, slow,, sensory engagement, close looking, and creating art materials and tools from nature. This fostered a sense of place, and built knowledge and understanding of the Land characterized by intimacy, care, respect, reciprocity and gratitude. Students became more aware of nature all around us and a genuine connection to nature as part of their community.



History, memory and story

Diverse and complex themes, from the impact of colonization, displaced neighbourhoods, community heroes and water stewardship touched on this FPPL. The artmaking process allowed for meaningful connection to the importance of looking backward and forwards in time, considering and attending to the consequences of ones actions and reflecting on the qualities and values that make a positive difference in our communities.



Papermaking at Douglas

Patience and Time

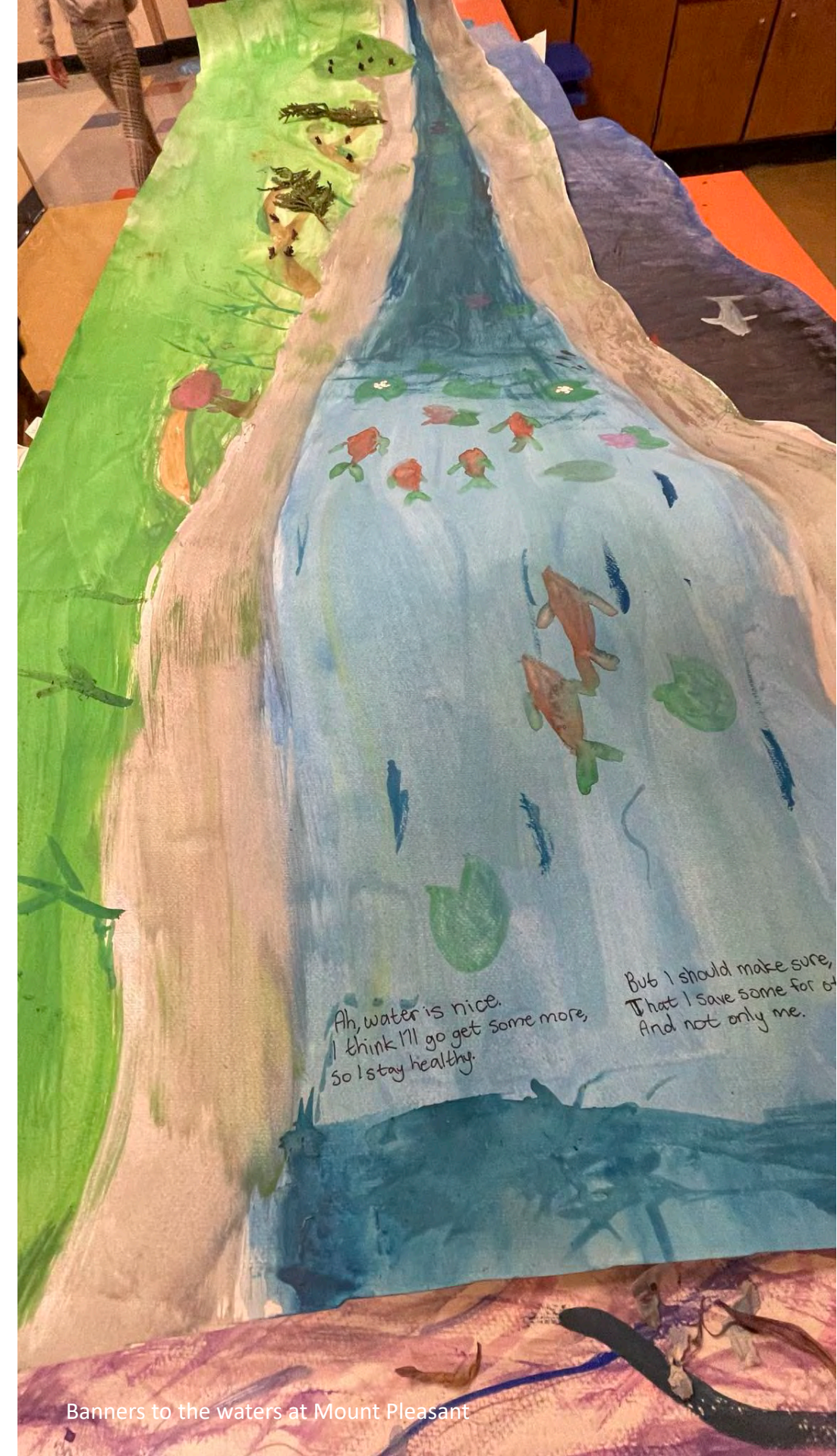
Studio artmaking allowed for extended explorations into working with particular materials, evolving an idea over time, building a project over many weeks involving layers of complexity, rather than as a one-off activity. In the context of 'apps' and instant rewards, this fostered persistence and appreciation for the hand-made and the time required to develop skill through practice. The struggle and the challenge was not separate from the enjoyment and increased pride in their accomplishments.

Identity

Several residencies focused on the theme of identity. Through emergent art processes, these explorations encouraged students to discover their identity through their unique inner qualities, strengths and gifts, rather than external focus on national origins or achievement, allowing students to connect with their own spirit.

Some learning is sacred.

With the exception of artists that had permission to share indigenous knowledge, story and artforms, the studio experiences were aligned with FPPL through the artmaking process only, avoiding the appropriation of cultural forms. The artmaking process offers pathways for re-orienting learning towards inclusive, holistic, and child centric learning that develops and honors the whole child within education.



Banners to the waters at Mount Pleasant



As a teacher, I believe that powerful, enduring learning is that which involves the heart, and it is the special power of the Arts which enable this to happen. As a teacher who has worked with the AIRs program for six years, I cannot overstate the impact that experiences such as these have had on my students and on my teaching practice. Any teacher who collaborates with an Artist in Residence is offered a unique professional development opportunity which is unparalleled in its value.

The AIRS program offers students so much, including but not limited to opportunities for cross-curricular learning, development of artistic skills and knowledge, development of capacities for creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. The art studio is a space where students feel safe to express themselves and to belong. Students who have a difficult time succeeding in other areas of academics or athletics often see their time in the Studio as their time to shine and demonstrate mastery.

We need spaces such as these in order to create inclusive and safe schools.

E. Tufts, Teacher at Nightingale Elementary

Students

Students in select classes across all 15 studios were invited to share their reflections on their experience in the studio.

One of the most striking aspect of students reflections were their articulations of why art matters to them. While many students shared that art was fun and they loved it, other powerful and striking themes emerged, shared in different ways and in their own words consistently across all 15 schools and diverse age ranges.



Mentorship residency at Nightingale Elementary

Here is why art matters to children:
In their own words.

1. Art is a space of creative freedom

I am free to draw whatever I want to draw - Beaconsfield

It makes me feel I can do anything I want to - Henderson

There are no rules and I can speak my own way through art - Waverly

I have lots of creativity inside of me - Tecumseh

It is the only way I can share my creativity with the world - Henderson

2. Art helps me to feel Calm

It helps me escape in a good way - Henderson

Art makes people quiet - Waverley

I feel calm, happy, collected and connected to all things - Tecumseh

It makes me feel a little bit better - Beaconsfield

Art takes away my negative energy - Mount Pleasant

It is like my calm. Art is my safe place to stop overthinking stuff and focus on what you are doing. It makes my mood better - Bruce



*Art is my life -
Wakwanas*

3. Art allows me to discover and be who I am

Art helps me find myself as a person - Waverly

Art lets me express myself and I feel more me when I am creating something - Waverly

Art makes you trust your ideas because there is no right or wrong - Beaconsfield

I made it ME! I didn't listen to anyone and I just made it how I wanted - Queen Alex

It makes me feel like myself - Henderson

Art is important because art is you - thunderbird

It relates to important stuff in my life - Wakwanas

Art shows who and what we feel. It calms us and sometimes frustrates us too. Art can be your passion and show your personality. It could even change who you are. Art can be different in any way, depending on you. Monica T.

4. Art lets me express my feelings

*On my outside it makes me feel good and relaxed and on my inside I feel that I can make art with my feelings and thoughts.
- Trudeau*

In art, I can tell my feelings without saying anything - Trudeau

5. Art brings us in connection with beauty

Art is beautiful - it connects us together - Beaconsfield

Art is making beautiful things - Bruce

It is beautiful...buytful...bootiaful... btoful... - primaries

It shows nature and happiness - Wakwanas

It inspires me - Queen Alex



I love art I need art - Queen Alex



A few thoughts from Parents

The AIRS program shows kids through arts to get in touch with their inner voice and talents. This ability brings them strength on hard days so they can cope with the hardship. The impact of AIRS is in so many ways; it takes years to realize how deep the impact is. It is helping with children's mental health and with their resilience.

AIRS program is like a breath of fresh air for children's hearts and minds and souls. To break from the rigor of text book learning, to pause and look inward and outward and connect to nature and others is VITAL to their emotional development. Than you for this program. - Nightingale, parent

As a child psychologist, I couldn't be more delighted to see that our kids are being led through experiences of artistic expression like this. We all require outlets for what is inside us and we need to know that mediums like art, music, dance, writing are about self expression, growth, connection exploration and transformation – not something we are good/bad at, something that is full of life, dynamic not formulaic.

L. Lautzenhieser.

And School Support Worker

AIRS is essential to help kids fully develop into human beings in this era of cost savings, rapidity, disconnection from self, others and place, and emotions relegated to texts and emojis. The AIRS program is vital and transformative to our school community. The development and growth of the students is deep and profound. T. Hicks

Imprints of Belonging:

AIRS Year End Exhibition at the VSB

On May 13-27, AIRS program displayed a selection of student work from 15 studios and elementary schools from the year in the Student Gallery and spilling over into Room 180 and the Foyer.

Guests were impressed with the diversity and authenticity of the work, showcasing students' meaningful engagement and powerful expression through art.

At the opening student docents from each schools captivated guests as they eloquently and passionately shared about their artwork, and the importance of art in their lives.

"AIRS program hits it out of the park again! All student benefit from art. All students need this program and art therapy it can provide." gallery guest

"The power of collaboration with students is clearly evident. Once again I'm inspired by the creativity, passion and expression of youth." - guest

"So reassuring to hear student docents speak of the fun they had making their art - creative confident youth engaged with their surroundings bodes well for us all."



Student docents from Douglas with Candice Halls

Partnerships in 2023/4



Kelsie in the studio at Trudeau Elementary

ECU Shumka Centre

Shumka Centre for Creative Entrepreneurship at Emily Carr University sponsored a full year residency at Pierre Elliot Trudeau Elementary. This was awarded to distinguished ECU alum Kelsie Grazier, a Canadian artist who creates abstract works with paint and light. Kelsie's work with students seeks to raise awareness through mindful practice to the experience of being deaf, hard of hearing in a hearing world. This residency was the subject of an article in Pancoeur Magazine in January 2024.

Vancouver Parks Board and City of Vancouver.

Vancouver Parks Board and City of Vancouver partnered with AIRS to support two residencies, at Beaconsfield Elementary and Wakwanas te sequeum to support community engagement and education around water stewardship, watershed environments, ethnobotany, and green infrastructure projects at Beaconsfield and Charles Park. Residencies integrated Indigenous water teachings from Candice Halls Howcroft and ethnobotanist Cease Weiss, with an experiential learning and art creation process led by Kat Wadel at Beaconsfield and by Yunuen Perez Verri, Rebecca Heyl, and Fiana Kawane at Wakwanas te sequeum

They were able to see that water is everywhere, they discovered and learned about rain gardens and how important they are in and around the community. R. Caverzan



Installation at Charles Park



AIRS Community of Support

AIRS program gratefully acknowledges the financial and practical support of the following partners:

Financial Partners for 2023/4

Vancouver School Board
City of Vancouver
Emily Carr University/Shumka Institute
Vancouver Parks Board
Rennie Foundation
Higher Ground Holdings
Ingrid Fluevog and David Alderdice

Partners offering in-kind support

Vancouver School Board
ArtSpeak Gallery
Vancouver Art Gallery
Rennie Foundation



Financial Summary

AIRS Program Society 2023/2024	
Expenses	
Program Expenses	149,863.38
Administration	63,767.49
Total Expenses	213,630.87
Revenues	
Vancouver School Board	100,000.00
Private donors and Foundations	35,000.00
Grants and Partnerships	40,562.00
Schools (Material costs)	15,250.00
AIRS Reserve funds	22,818.87
Total Revenues	213,630.87



Art makes our insides calm and free so we are not afraid to show it and our outside can change when we let our inside out because people can be hiding their unique talents.”
- Sonam, Trudeau Elementary

Drawing trees in the studio at Seymour



Beaconsfield outdoor exhibition at Beaconsfield Park

Appendix

Individual School Reports

- Lord Beaconsfield Elementary
- Graham Bruce Elementary
- James Douglas Elementary
- John Henderson Elementary
- Chief Maquinna Elementary
- Sir Walter Moberly Elementary
- Mount Pleasant Elementary
- Florence Nightingale Elementary
- Queen Alexandra F.A.M.I.L.Y School
- Admiral Seymour Elementary
- Tecumseh Elementary
- Thunderbird šx^wəx^waʔəs Elementary
- Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary
- Wək^waʔəs tə syaq^wəm Elementary

:

Lord Beaconsfield Elementary

Ripple Effects

Artist: Kathryn Wadel

Lead Teacher: Shauna Bredin

FPPL: Learning is "relational (connectedness, reciprocal relationships and a sense of place."



“What are the ripple effects
of our actions?”

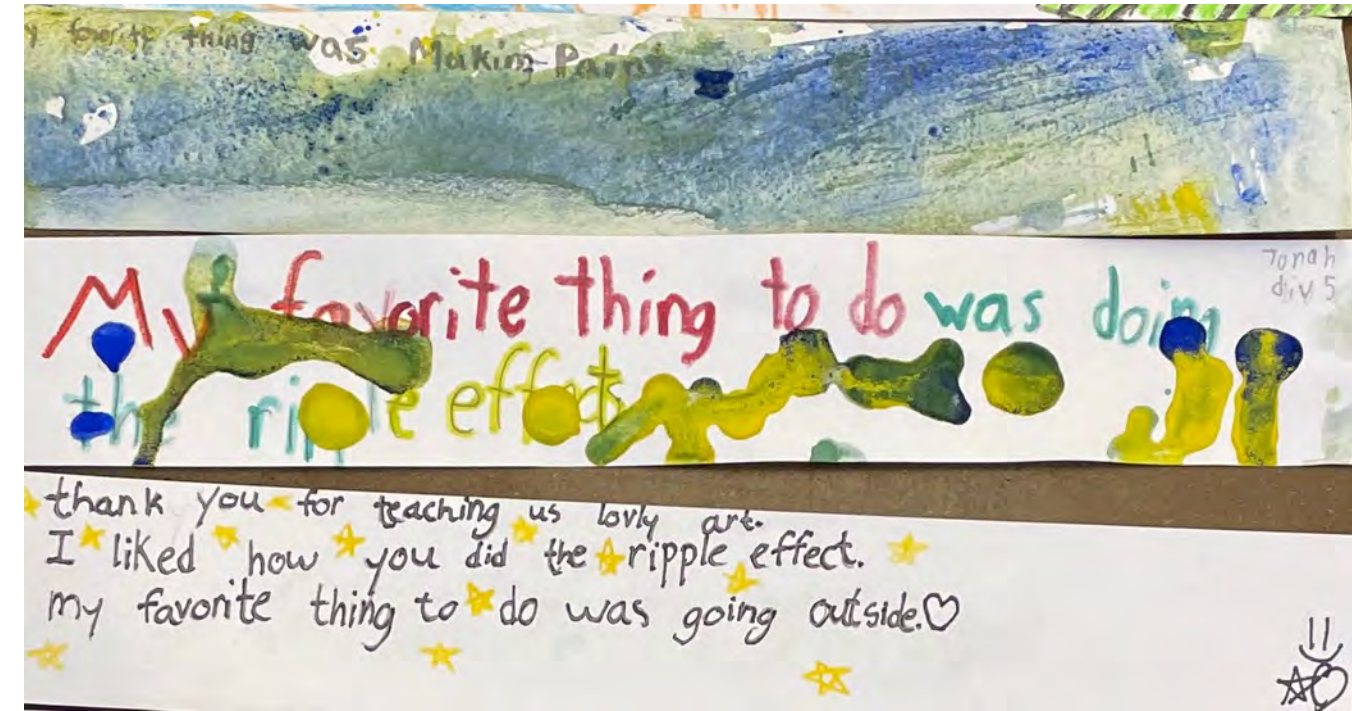
In partnership with City of Vancouver, Parks Board, this residency focused on the site of a future watershed garden at Beaconsfield Park, our relationship with water, and the ripple effect of our actions. Grounded in Indigenous teachings from Squamish Knowledge keeper Candice Halls and ethno-botanist Cease Wyss, students explored indoor and outdoor art practices; making their own water-colours and created “water log” sketchbooks documenting their creative process and expressive reflection. The residency culminated in an outdoor exhibition in which the whole school processed their art down to the park and rippled out to hang it in and amongst the trees.

Student voices

Students’ core memories included; spending time visiting the watershed park, drawing and connecting to nature in their sketchbooks, seeing the birds and ducks and trees in relation to the rain water, making and naming their own watercolour paints and sharing their art.

“I make paint!”

"This is so wonderful seeing the kid's artwork at the park" - parent





Teacher observations

Teachers all noted the role of art in creating pathways for students to see and make relational connections to water and nature in their community and how even art materials are made from nature. Shauna noted the way the studio learning spilled out into the classroom, extending connections between water and all living things, rocks, plants and in our bodies. Teachers also observed the enjoyment of students in the art making processes and how calm it made them.

Art is a great through way into environmental issues. Making art and the creative process can help with positive mental wellness."

"Art is helping students to make connections between the environment and the reciprocal role it has with humans. We need each other to be healthy, '

Making connections

Reflecting on student engagement, Kat shared that she saw the older students who were reserved and self-conscious open up and make connections! Students were able to find their own subject matter. One student found a tree that was dying with flowers growing at the base, and drew a connection between water, life and death.

Graham Bruce Elementary

Honoring the Gift

Artists: Yunuen Perez Verrti and
Sholeh Mahlouji

Lead Teacher: Leslie Learmouth

*FPPL: Learning is holistic, reflexive,
reflective, experiential and relational*



"I didn't know you could create only with paper."



Paper Paths: Unfolding Curiosity through Craftsmanship

Sholeh's vision was inspired by craftsmanship. Limiting materials to newsprint paper and tools to hands, students built skills such as ripping, folding, rolling, and crumpling paper. Practice and reflexive attention to the material and others' ways of doing, activated endless possibilities. Students brought the skills they had learned together to create a sculptural character of their imagination.

In the final session elementary students took on the role of teachers, sharing their skills and gifting their sculpture to an intermediate student who would bring their character to life in a stop motion animation.

"I didn't know tearing paper was so much fun"

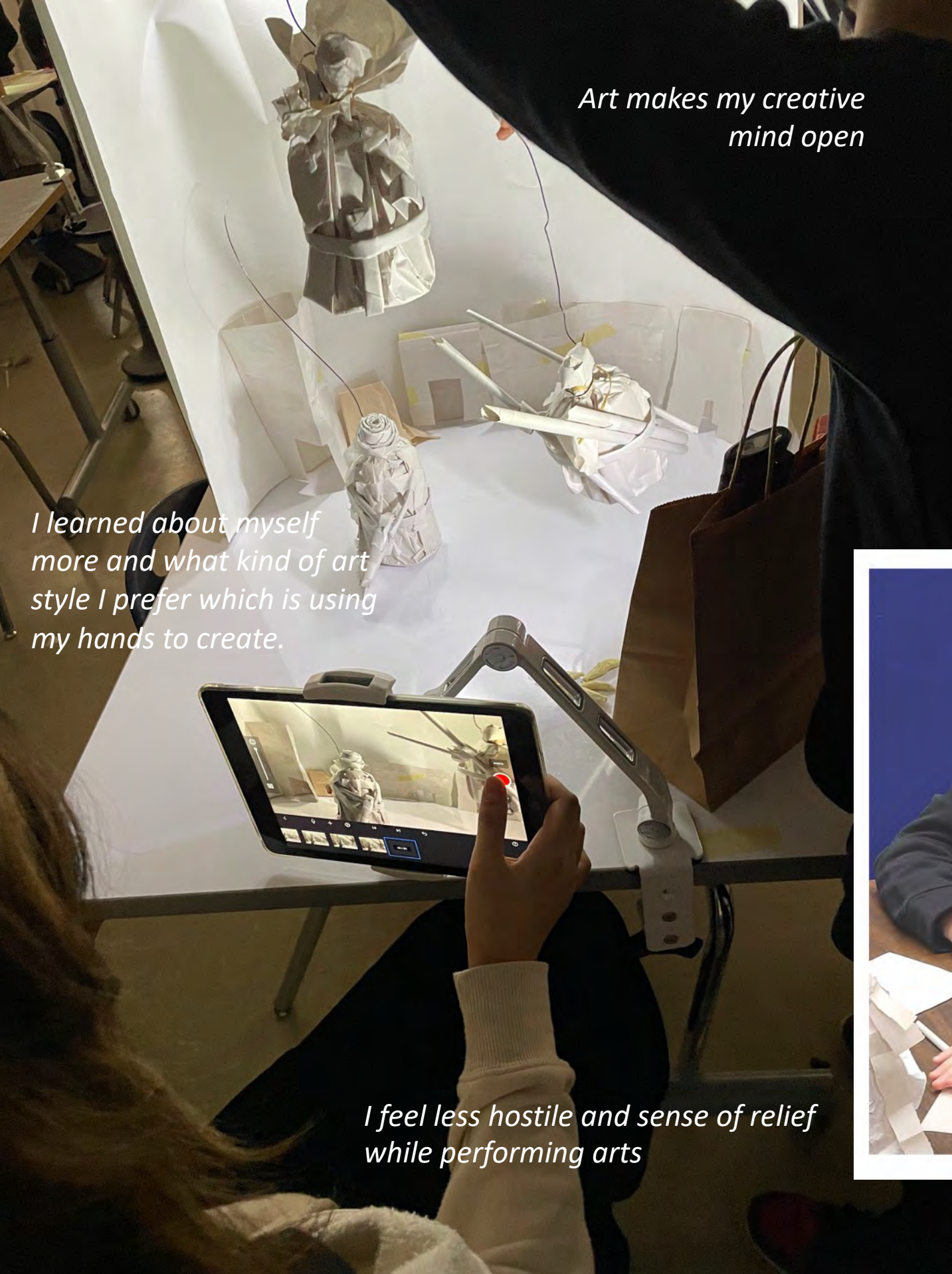
Motion Magic: Students Bring Paper Sculptures to Life

Entrusted with the primary students' precious sculptures, the older students reflected on the significance of receiving and honoring a gift and its creator.

Using paper, wire, and tape and the skills they had been taught, they created heartfelt narrative stop-motion animations in the spirit of each sculpture.

These were presented back as a gift to the primary students at the year end-of-year exhibition, completing the rich exchange of knowledge and creativity in community.

*"I didn't think I could do art but then I
learned that art is for everyone."*



*Art makes my creative
mind open*

Teachers observations

Primary students grew in self-confidence and self-discovery; They learned that through practice and patience they could learn new skills, overcome challenges and find success. Their learning was *experiential*, trying and discovering new ways of doing, *reflexive* and *reflective*, sharing learning with one another and discussing what worked and what didn't. Teachers (and students) were surprised at what could be done with just paper and hands as tools.

For intermediates, the *relational* aspect of learning was emphasized. The care and respect students showed for their gifted sculptures developed social personal competencies and empathy. Partners were assigned randomly allowing new and unexpected friendships to form through shared creativity. A safe space of creative freedom and non-judgement allowed for equality for all students to be successful and a sense of limitless possibility.

Finally, the combined project was *holistic*, connecting mind, body and spirit.

Student voice

Students felt pride in their skills and creations.

Primaries enjoyed; learning how to rip and fold, and "making" their tiny warrior, doll, wings and accessories for their sculptures.

"I learned that if I put my mind to things and keep practicing I can create something I'm proud of"

Intermediates enjoyed working collaboratively to create backgrounds, animations and sounds effects. Some intermediates had the opportunity to make new friends.

"It feels nice letting my ideas out"



*I feel less hostile and sense of relief
while performing arts*

Sir James Douglas Elementary

Re-Creation: Sustainable Papermaking

Artist: Yasaman Moussavi""

Lead Teacher: April Huang""

*FPPL: Learning involves patience and
time*



Teacher Observations:

A core experiences for students was understanding the amount of time, care, and patience papermaking requires. Learning is not about instant rewards but about the understanding that some things take time to create. Initially, many students were eager to start and finish, but as the sessions progressed, they learned to build on their skills and create masterpieces. One child shared that he was a "paper-making machine"

Drawing connections to nature deepened student appreciation for the environment and highlighted the significance of sustainability and mindfulness, and the importance of not being wasteful. Through this process, they learned valuable lessons about the effort and dedication needed to create something meaningful.

Student Voice:

*"I like colouring and making it
fat"*

*"We liked squirting colours,
squeezing and swirling and
making straight lines"*

"I liked working together"

*"I liked how we got to move our
hands to make beautiful art."*



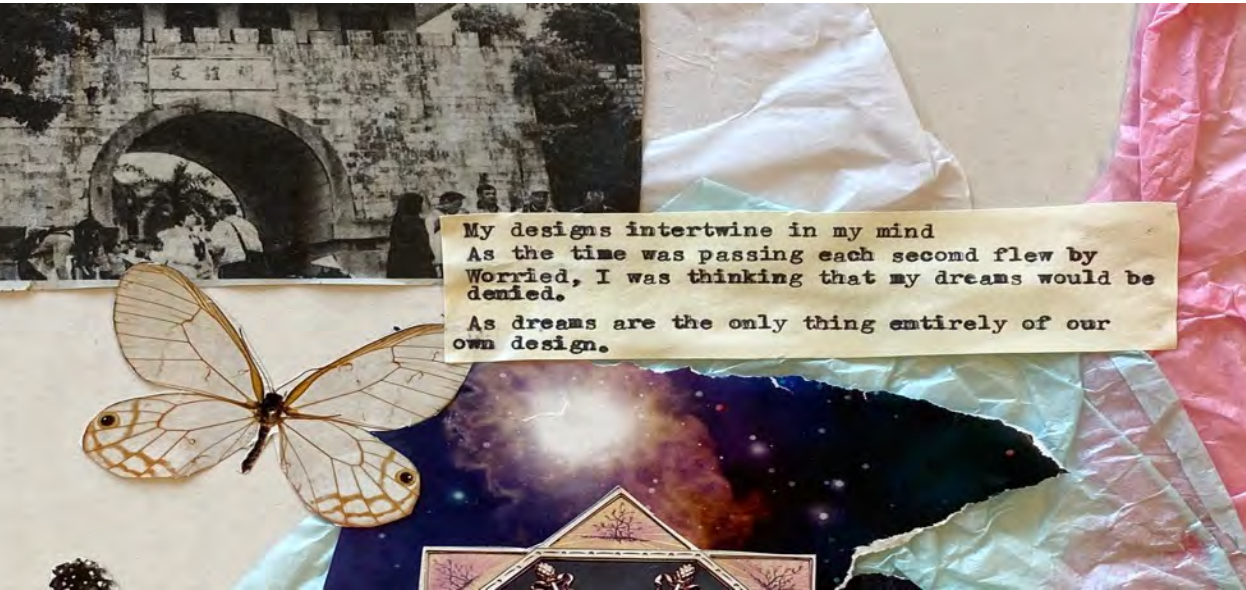
Where do we go when we dream?

Intermediate students
Artist: Fanny Kearse
Lead Teachers: Pat Treacher and Andrea Brown

FPPL: Learning involves exploration of one's identity

*Dreams are our foundation.
They give us imagination and determination
to fulfill things.
Dreams are the mortar in between the bricks
of our ideas.
Dreams drive us to create and imagine more.
Your dreams can prove them wrong.
Your dreams are your song.*
Poem by Elliot, Mario and Violet

Intermediate students were invited into 'a portal of possibility' to consider their imagination, their dreams and their uniqueness through poetry, movement and collage. Using visual and tactile prompts, students moved towards building and layering the complexity of what we were writing. Sharing through collage and spoken word performance, provided a context for vulnerability and courageous conversations about how humans treat each other, the earth and how we can make safer space for us to each be ourselves- because we all deserve to have our dreams come true.



*I saw this bright light soaring across the sky.
I saw flowers blooming around me, and even
one within a glass case.
I breathed in so deeply and felt a weight lift on
my chest.
Just like a flower in bloom.
I look at the indigo sky, I say goodnight to my
breathless stress.
I wake to see the glower wilting.
I will bloom again.*

Poem by Isla



Teacher observations:

Poetry allowed our students to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a creative and personal way. Through writing and reading poetry, they were able to delve into their inner selves, uncovering and articulating aspects of their identity that might be difficult to express otherwise. Through AIRS, Fanny provided a safe space to explore and process emotions, articulate their thoughts, and listen to their peers. Teachers learned to trust the process and the value of asking students about their feelings in and through art.



John Henderson Elementary Inside outside

Artist: Tami Murray

Lead Teacher: Ian Poole

*Learning involves the exploration
of ones identity*



*"I love art because I can be
myself"*

This year's residency was about personal identity and storytelling; to contemplate the deeper layers of inner truths and how these intersect with the personas they project outwardly.

Using simple bookmaking techniques to create covers expressing the external identity we project, while the inner pages delved into the narratives we internalize about ourselves. Students explored the relationship between color and imagination, and how specific pages evoked aspects of nature or emotions. Students were given freedom to choose materials to illustrate their words.

Teacher Observations

Students were excited and motivated to share their stories and teachers noted the depth students are able to explore when working with an artist in a special environment. Creativity, confidence and excitement grew as the project evolved emphasizing patience and time in working through a multistep project.

"When given the opportunity young student can express very deep meaningful ideas."

Student Voice

Core memories were, everything, making shapes with pipe cleaners, spraying the markers, painting, expressing my feelings, making the pages colourful, and doing art with Ms. Tami

"I enjoyed using watercolours and stamping."

Art is the only way I can share my creativity to the world

It makes me feel like I can do anything



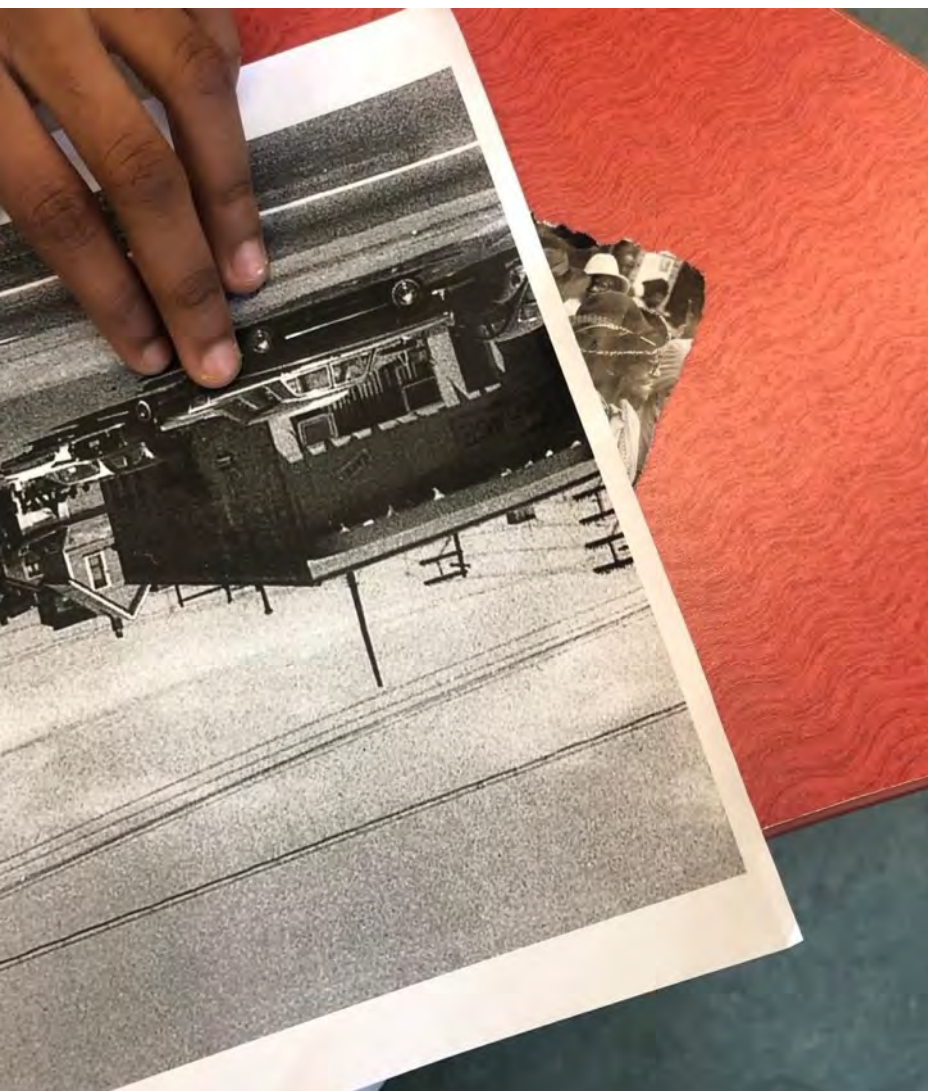
*"I liked when we sat on the carpet and
shared our books"*

FPPL: Learning involves memory history and time

FPPL: Learning involves memory history and time

Teacher Observations

I liked filming and feeling like a professional cameraman."



Students enjoyed working on sound, stop motion, working in groups and making solutions from mistakes.
I enjoyed using my hands to make the movie

"The students were able to take what they learned about the historical sites and make thoughtful choices in material and animations to make meaningful presentations. From the artefacts they used and the words they chose you could tell they were invested, connected and that the content matters to them." - Harjinder Sandhu

Maquinna Elementary

Botanical Inquiries

Artist: Julie McIntyre

Lead Teacher: Erika Wilson

*Learning recognizes the role of
Indigenous knowledge*

*Learning involves patience
and time*

The entire school was immersed in the subject of Indigenous, invasive, and introduced plants in our backyard. We learned how to identify plants by studying the branching pattern, the flower, the leaves, the stem, and the fruit, while touching on their traditional and contemporary uses.

Students learned the importance of botanical illustrations and used herbarium sheets as direct reference for our own careful drawings painted with living botanical inks. Students explored cyanotypes and silk-screening to create individual and collaborative prints using light. screens so they could create collaborative forest wall.

*I loved learning about the plants. I want to
explore life outdoors more. Maquinna Student*





Teacher observations

Teachers emphasized the power of learning about connecting learning to indigenous knowledge and the local environment through art. Art supports complex learning. Indigenous principles of learning were evident in the hands on experiential learning and the patience and time that was inherent in slowing down to observe carefully and in appreciating how knowledge from the land has been passed down between generations. Students increased capacity by learning to see and draw with their eyes, noticing lines, shapes, patterns, and becoming more attune to their surroundings. They were able to identify plants and to bring this knowledge into the classroom. An empathic Environment where everyone felt successful and students were able to create without fear.

Understanding historic wrongs on First Nations people can be expressed through making and doing. E. Wilson

Creativity flourishes when mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities. K. Plant

Student voice

Students were amazed how much they had learned:

I liked making a stamp and using it to create a garden with my group.

I liked learning about indigenous plants because it is from my culture.

I am a good artist

I can use my eyes

I know how to draw plants.



Sir Walter Moberly Elementary

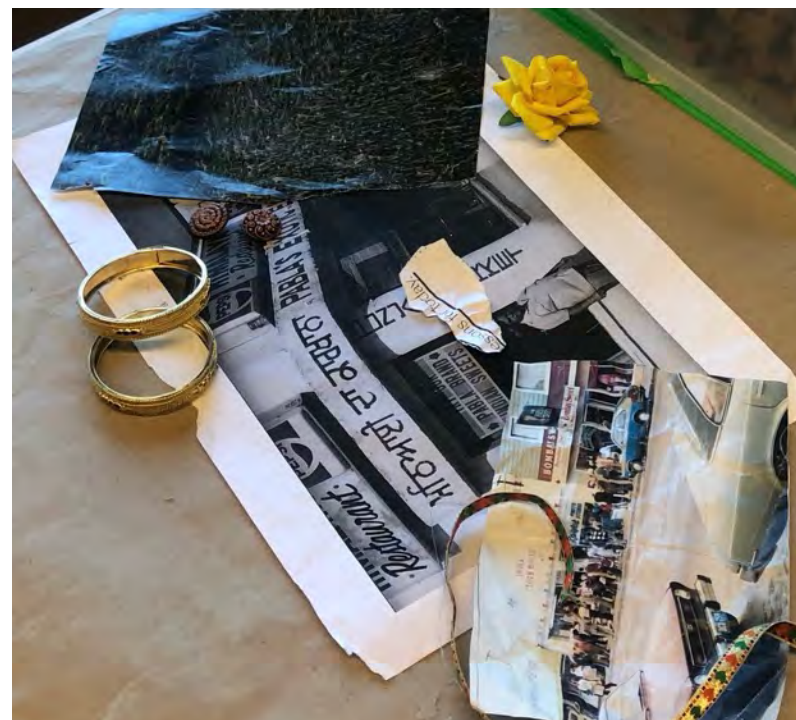
Where we imagine Home: Retracing Vancouver's Histories of Displacement

Artist: Monica Cheema
Lead Teacher: Dana Yagoi Soga
Intermediate Students

Moberly intermediate students worked with the same archival photographs selected by Henderson students to combine stop-motion filmmaking and a collage methodology to create short films that explored their questions around historic neighbourhoods (Chinatown, Hogan's Alley, South Vancouver) and their displacement. Questions around urban space (public vs. private), planning, transportation, relations to land, labour, and non-human life surfaced as themes throughout the creative process, that were symbolically represented with found images, words and materials. Using sound as a sensory and narrative prompt, each class created I imagine poems to speak a different script over the collaged history for what home and equitable public space might feel like

Student Voice

In the final film screening together students shared that they enjoyed the filming process but group work was hard and not always equitable. Through their films, students demonstrated a deep and intuitive understanding of the relationship between displacement and development. Common themes for their imagined homes included family, nature and a sense of quiet.





Paper Paths: Unfolding Curiosity through Craftsmanship

Artist: Sholeh Mahlouji

Lead Teacher: Gabi Lutynskyi

FPPL: Learning involves patience and time

As with the Henderson project, Sholeh's vision was inspired by craftsmanship. Working with 6 primary divisions and limiting materials to newsprint paper and tools to hands, students built skills paper sculpting skills such as ripping, folding, rolling, and crumpling paper. Practice and reflexive attention to the material and others' ways of doing, activated endless possibilities. Students brought the skills they had learned together to create a sculptural character of their imagination. In the final session, the studio was transformed into a gallery, providing students with the opportunity to experience their artwork as part of an exhibition, keeping senses sharp, looking for details staying curious.

Teacher Observations

Building skills over time using limited materials required critical and creative thinking in problem solving, trial and error, and sharing acquired techniques. Student learned to persist when things felt challenging, developed fine motor skills and a sensory dexterity as well as an expanded understanding of art. The project revealed for teachers the beauty and possibilities for artmaking using simple materials.

Student Voice

This is the first time I've used a technique for ripping paper. I've never actually done that before!"

The crumpling paper was kinda satisfying and noisy.

I learned you don't need scissor to make a perfect line.

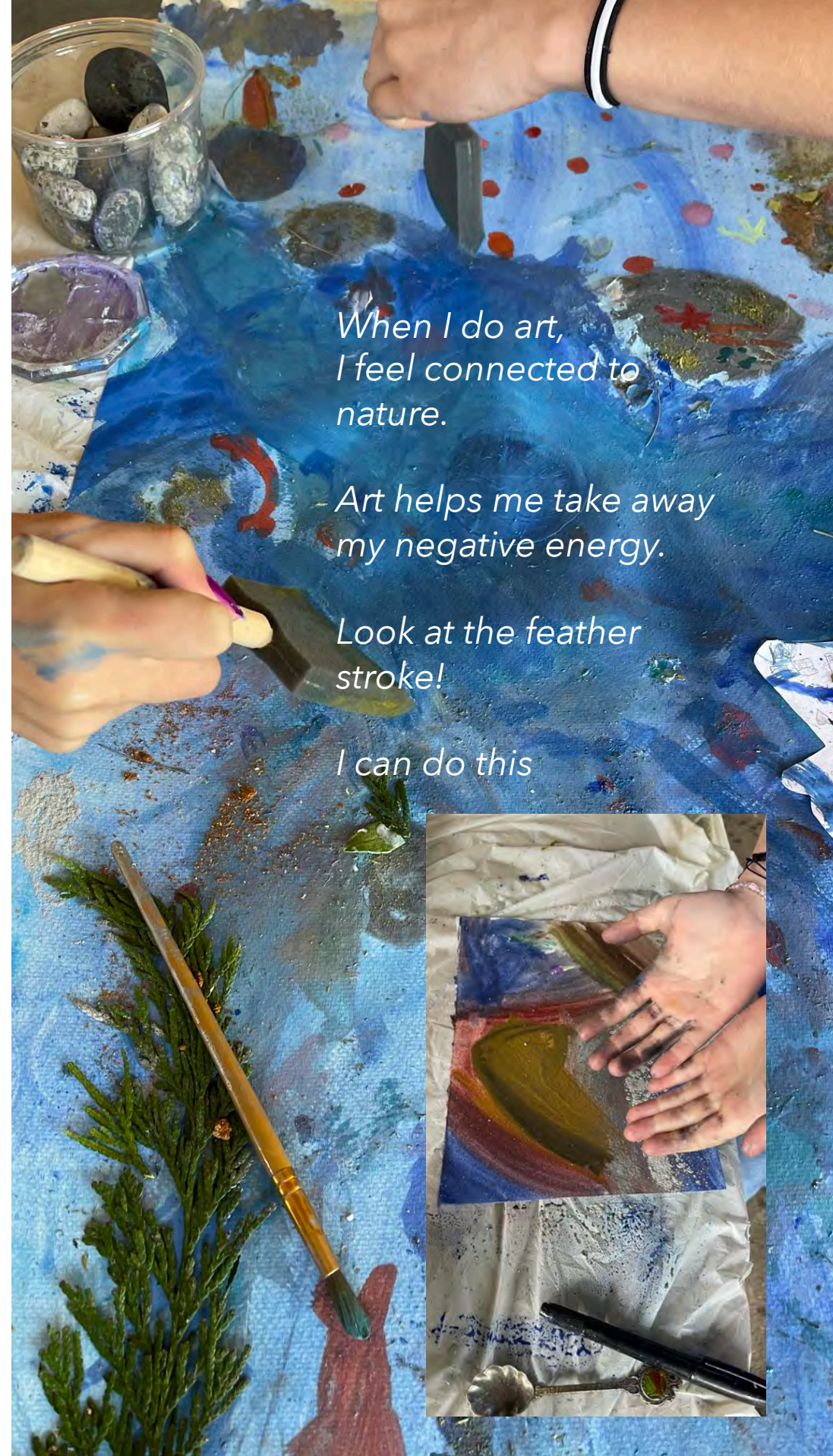
It was getting better as time went by.



Mount Pleasant Elementary

The eyes of the water: Creating Ecological Streams Through Art

Artists: Laura Cisneros
With Lori Snyder (InHarmony)
Lead Teacher: Selena Stecher



*When I do art,
I feel connected to
nature.*

*Art helps me take away
my negative energy.*

*Look at the feather
stroke!*

I can do this

"The Eyes of the Water" was a spring 'outdoor studio' residency is an eco-artistic project that connects nature, community, and creativity as both subject and medium; Students connected to water both physically, emotionally and metaphorically, exploring themes such as. impermanence, the life's ebbs, flows and evolution as well as how water shapes the lands and also our own lives. Activities included tasting and tea making, water poems, stories, and prints, and creating natural paints and watercolours reinforcing the bond between art and nature.

Emphasis was placed on collective art-making to foster generative expressions that embrace diversity and inclusiveness within the community. The outdoor art studio becomes a space for openness, generosity, courage, and listening, where every individual story holds significance in the broader narrative of the community.

"The Eyes of the Water" invites us to explore the intricate interplay between art and ecology, where the movement of water mirrors the transience of art and where each stroke, each creation, becomes a testament to the beauty and fragility of our natural world." - Laura and Lori

Teacher Observations

This was an AIRS first for many participating teachers. They noted how art was useful for connecting students to significant and challenging topics, like water and stewardship in meaningful and impactful ways through self-expression. They also observed how the collaborative art making process helped students feel calm and less anxious.



Florence Nightingale Elementary

Befriending the Land

Artists: Maggie Milne Martens and
Reed Jackson

Lead Teacher: Colleen Mieczanec

*FPPL: Learning is holistic, reflexive,
reflective, experiential, and
relational(focused on
connectedness, on reciprocal
relationships and a sense of place.)*



This year in the Art and Discovery studio at Nightingale, students explored the idea of friendship in relation to the Land – and particularly the trees that make their home in the precincts of Nightingale school. We wanted to better understand Indigenous perspectives of the Land as an interconnected ecology of living beings of which we are apart.

We asked

What might friendship with the Land and trees at Nightingale look like?

Over the course of the year, we slowed down and spent time with the trees and their relations through a variety of material, embodied and somatic art practices corresponding with the gifts and changes of the seasons. The land has been our ink, canvas, muse and teacher, as we have explored the possibilities of co-creating together. These practices helped to create space for closing the separation between land and body through listening, reflection and metaphoric connection and towards a felt understanding of our interconnectedness.

Teacher Observations:

Teachers were surprised at how much learning was possible from just the nature situated on the school property: “There is beauty all around us!” Students cultivated relational connection to place and the trees around them through a variety of visual and embodied art modalities including – with students building awareness and respect for trees they had previously taken for granted. Teachers noted that students shifted their behavior and for some genuine love and care for the trees developed.

Making tools and ink from the school trees opened students eyes to understanding how much trees and the land can provide, how things are made and the time involved. The emphasis on process allowed an equity of participation for students and a chance for students thoughtful and insightful ideas to emerge. They learned that their dreams also extend into nature.

The collaborative aspect of the program brought individual creativity into a shared work that “brings power, strength and empathy.” The whole school exhibition and enthusiastic sharing of the work with parents and students within the school was empowering.



The tree gives up her leaves
They fall on the ground
Protecting what's beneath
That's why I think my tree is
strong
Because she gives up what she
needs
To help others. - Grade 5

Student Voice

I learned (from my tree) that I talk a lot and sometimes I need to just listen. - Grade 4

I liked making my own paintbrush and using it to paint my very own picture. And it was all made by ME! - Grade 6

This is the first time ever I made a painting of the leaf. I was proud. - Grade 1

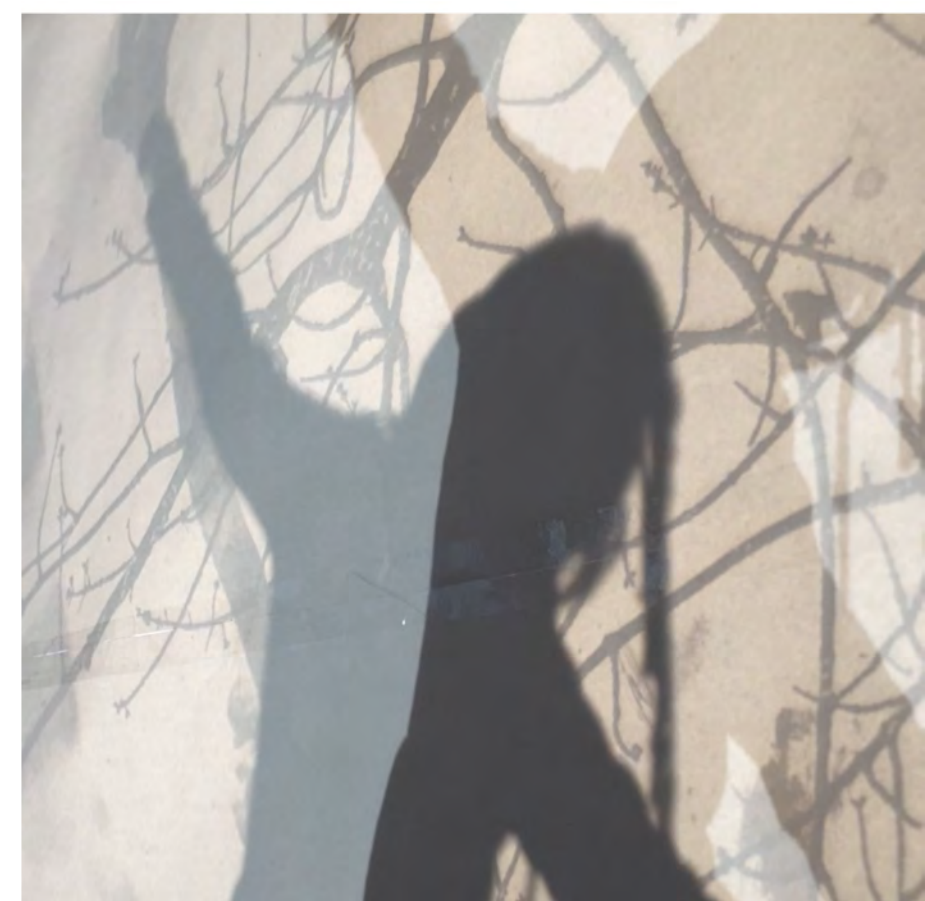
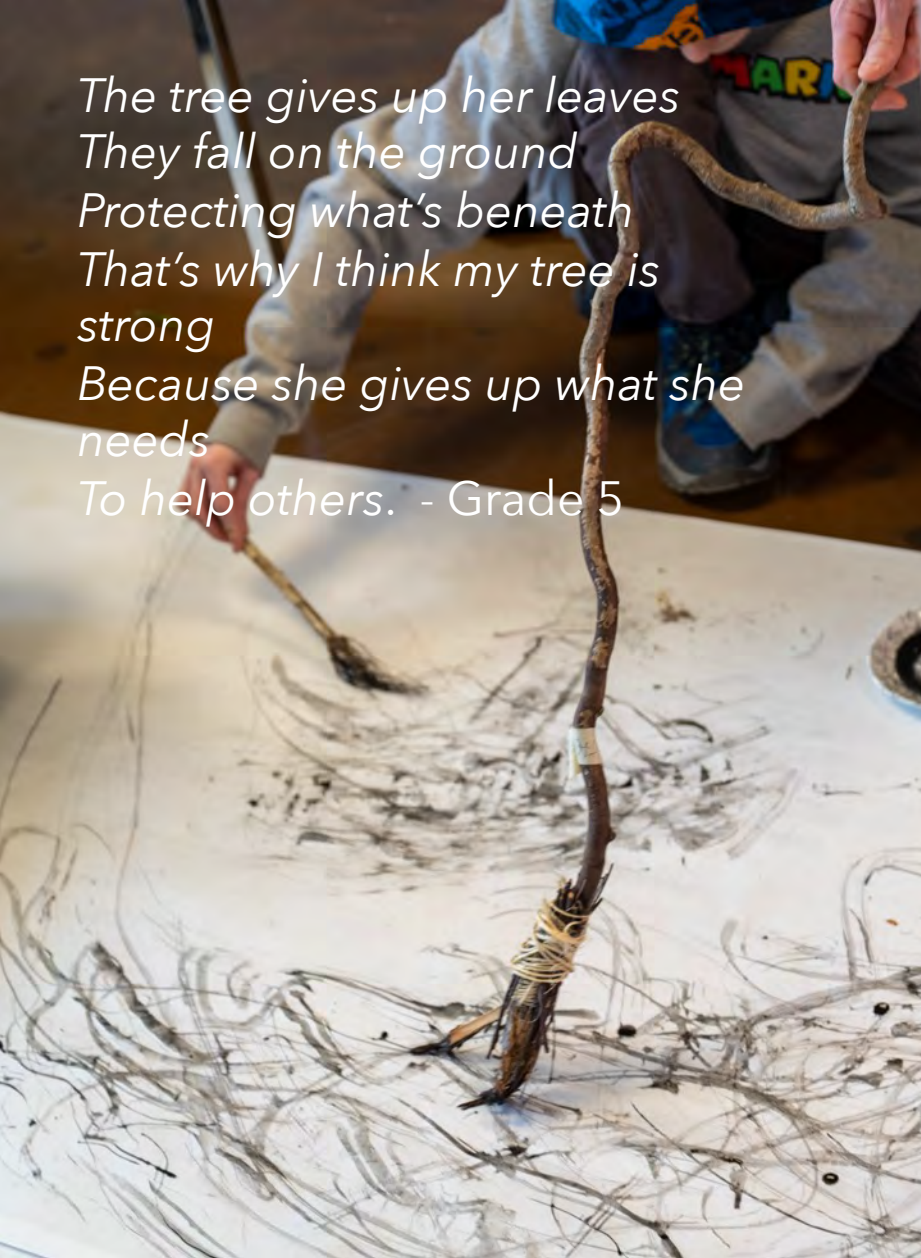
Dancing with the buds made me super super super duper happy. - Kindergarten

My tree wishes for more stories to tell - Grade 3

Why are they so beautiful? How can the buds feel our love?- Kindergarten

The pictures are talking about how we are connected to the trees and what we feel for the trees - Grade 7

What does friendship with the Land mean to you?



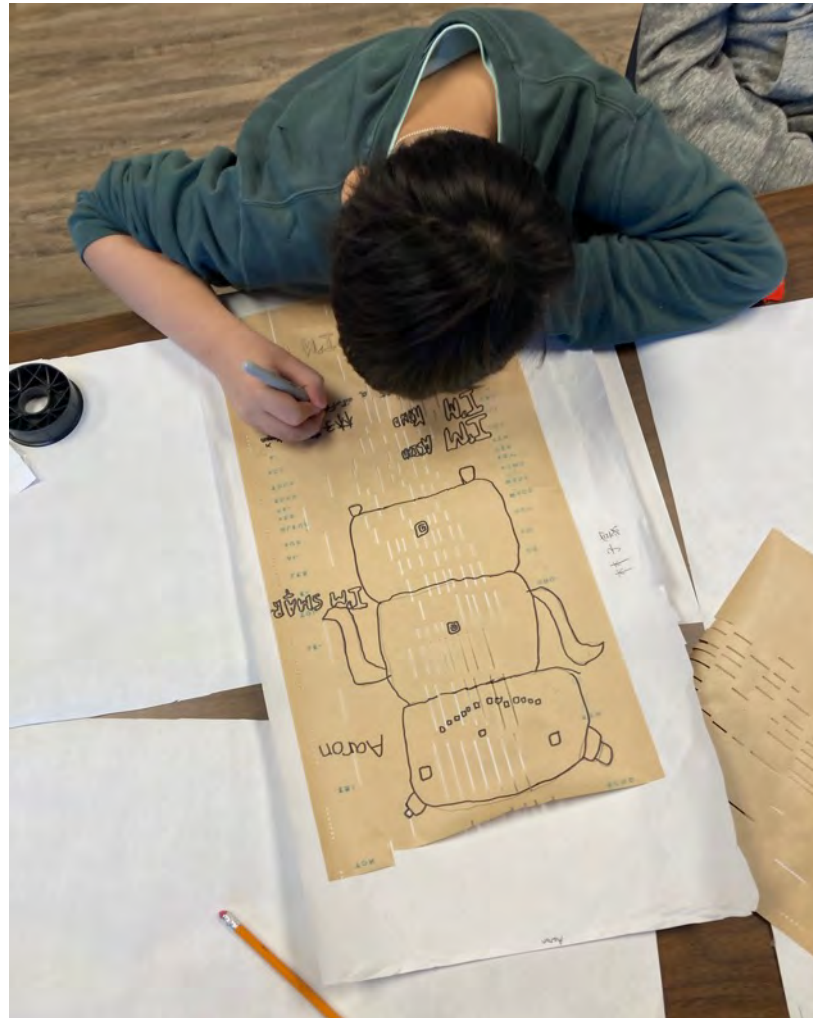
Queen Alexandra F.A.M.I.L.Y. School

Little Warriors

Artist: Christine Mackenzie

Lead Teachers: Julie Gelson and Karen Tang

FPPL: Learning requires exploration of one's identity



Christine brought a decolonized and Indigenous mind set to the residency empowering students to shine as the unique individuals they are. Each student created a portrait of themselves as an animal with traditional north west coast form line and considering the positive character traits of that animal. Younger students learned about graffiti art and creating their name in their own style. Each work incorporated kind words about themselves that were reinforced through drum circle.

Teacher observations:

Christine created a safe space for students to express themselves creatively and to share.

Learning Indigenous art forms and integrating cultural practices into teachings enhanced student personal development. The drumming circle powerfully grew confidence in student's sense of what made them special and unique.

Students were able to share how their identity was connected to the animal they chose. The gallery walk exhibition at the school was impactful for students to see all the art up together in the studio.

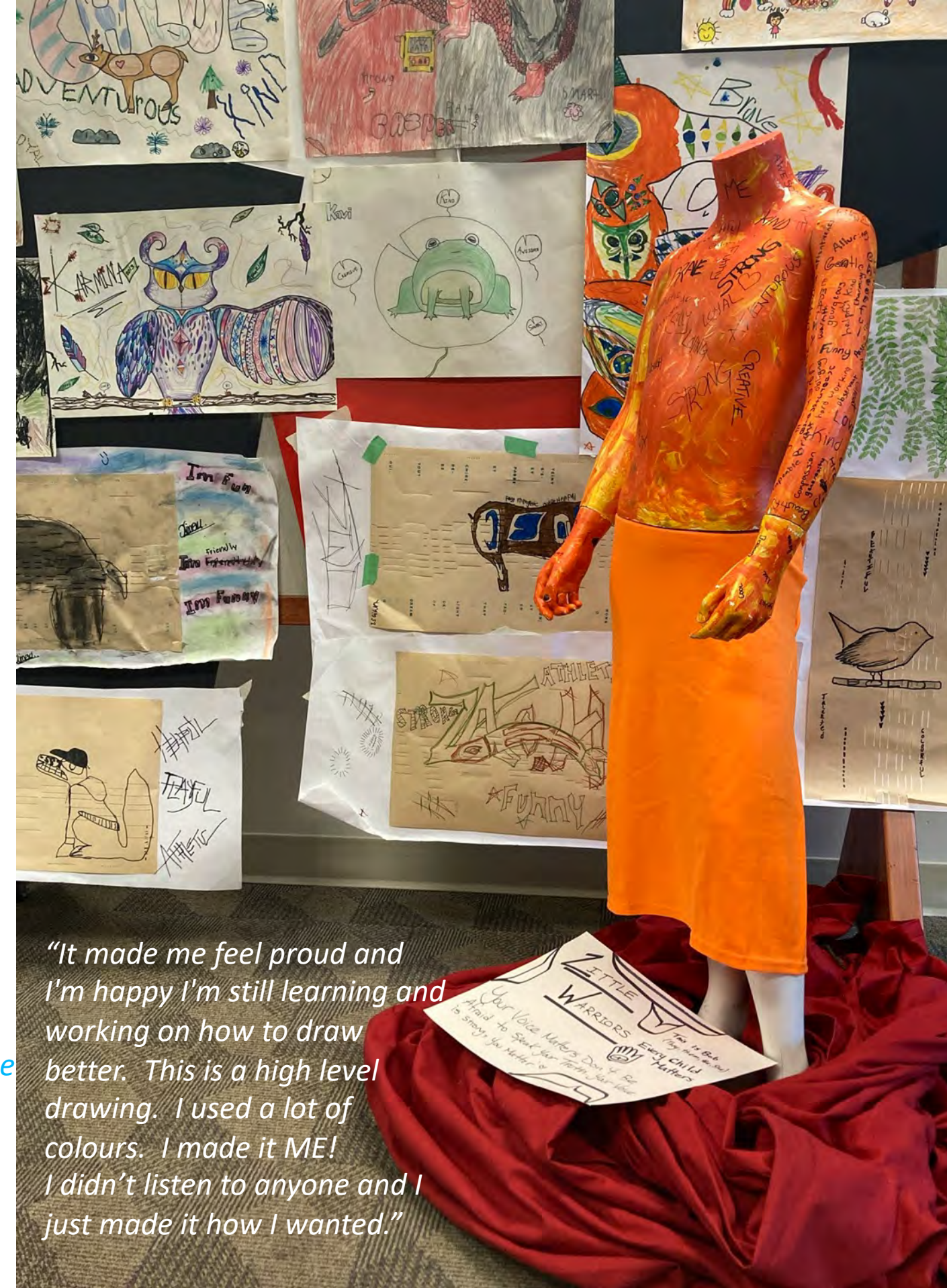
Student Voice

Students enjoyed creating their animals, making art with Christine and Bob (the mannequin)

I feel very proud. I've learned a lot since the beginning to the end. I'll always use some of those techniques. I believed in myself.

It make me feel like an artist

I love art, I feel confident with myself



"It made me feel proud and I'm happy I'm still learning and working on how to draw better. This is a high level drawing. I used a lot of colours. I made it ME! I didn't listen to anyone and I just made it how I wanted."

Admiral Seymour Elementary

Little Warriors

Artist: Christine Mackenzie

Lead Teacher: : Natasha Burditt

FPPL: Learning requires the exploration of one's identity



Identity and place was the theme for this year's residency. Each student created a portrait of themselves as an animal with traditional north west coast form line and considered the positive character traits of that animal. Younger students learned about graffiti art and experimented with different ways to write their name in their own style using pencil, paper, and markers. . Each work incorporated kind words about themselves that were reinforced through drum circle.

Teacher Observations

That the space, the people, and the process are all important parts of building student confidence. Christine has worked hard this year to make the space a place students want to be. A student that rarely is able to complete anything independently was able to do so much in the studio with very little support from any adult or other student. He was so happy with his work we had to take a photocopy because he got so upset about having to keep his work at school.

*Students who were very unsure about their abilities really blossomed during this time -
Natasha Burditt*

Artist observations

Students learned that a small voice can be a strong voice that each individual matters. From the first work shop where they are getting to know me, students were shy in there response to questions like what are you proud of or what are you amazing at? Over the weeks, they became confident in talking circle showing a strengthening sense of identity



Student Voice

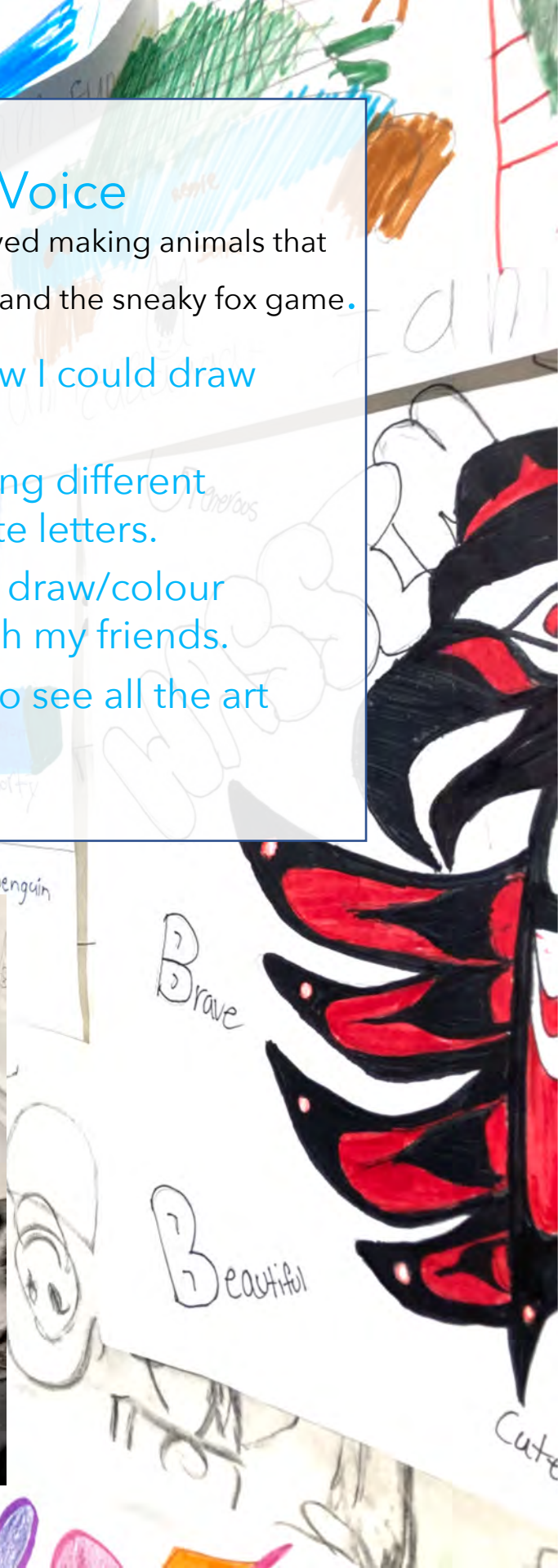
Students enjoyed making animals that connect to us, and the sneaky fox game.

I didn't know I could draw an animal.

I like learning different ways to write letters.

It is nice to draw/colour and talk with my friends.

Its so cool to see all the art together.



Tecumseh Elementary

FPPL: Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships and a sense of place.

Tecumseh's residency this year was disrupted by a devastating flood which resulted in extensive damage to student work and a relocation of the school to South Hill. A studio space was set aside there to allow AIRS to continue. Teachers spoke of how meaningful it was to have a program that brought creative beauty into a difficult situation of change and loss.

"It really was such a challenging year - AIRS was a bright light and we are all so grateful for what this program gave us." - Marion Collins

Visualizing Heroes

Intermediate students

Artist: Julie McIntyre

Lead Teacher: Marion Collins

Intermediate students explored the theme of the hero and their journey. In fall, students created serigraph prints, collaged Pandora boxes and a collaborative silk screened mural to represent the beginning of their own story. In the Winter, at the new location, students focused on the life of Vivian Jung, former Tecumseh educator and first teacher of Chinese descent in Vancouver and her struggle against systemic racism. Students used archival photographs, and patterned papers evoking the intersection of Chinese and western cultures to create multi-layered collaged tributes to Vivian Jung life.

Student Voice

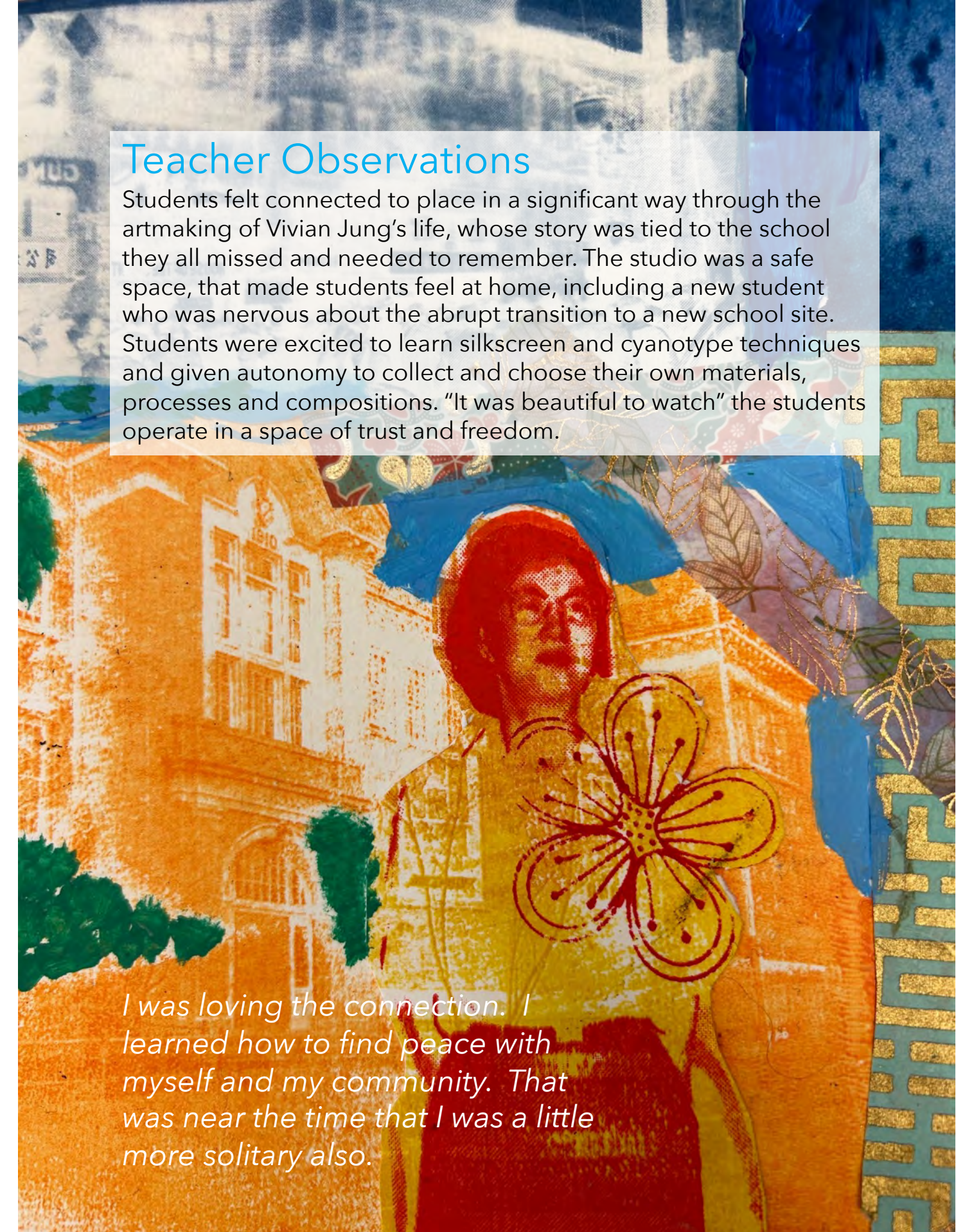
I made connections with Vivian Jung's story and I associated those parts with different hues of yellow and greens and a design for my collage."

I'm proud of how I learned to do silk-screening.



Teacher Observations

Students felt connected to place in a significant way through the artmaking of Vivian Jung's life, whose story was tied to the school they all missed and needed to remember. The studio was a safe space, that made students feel at home, including a new student who was nervous about the abrupt transition to a new school site. Students were excited to learn silkscreen and cyanotype techniques and given autonomy to collect and choose their own materials, processes and compositions. "It was beautiful to watch" the students operate in a space of trust and freedom.



I was loving the connection. I learned how to find peace with myself and my community. That was near the time that I was a little more solitary also.



Patterns in Nature

Primary Students
Artist: Rebecca Heyl

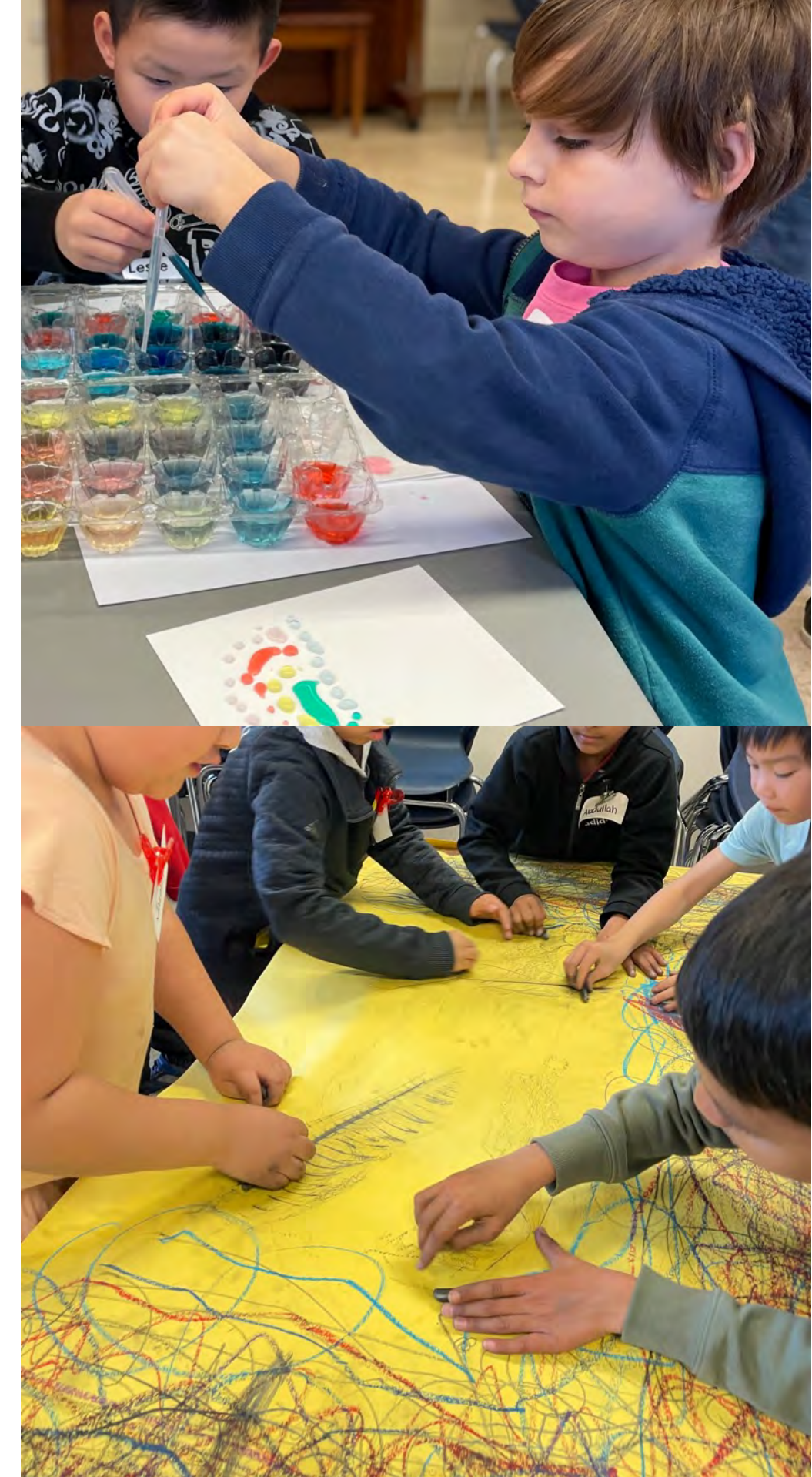
Students learned to pay close attention to the natural environment around us - both at the Tecumseh site in fall and the new temporary location at South Hill - noticing patterns and growth through mapping, observational drawing, rubbings and collaborative mark making. Students were invited to attend to the language of the materials, and the use of light and water as integral to art processes and all life.

Teacher Observations:

The studio offered a safe and supportive space for student exploration and expression where they felt happy and calm. This residency showed how to integrate outdoor learning with art, and incorporate natural elements and observation.

Reflection on and dialogue about material and collaborative processes revealed how students were making connections to what they were observing in the studio and the world - how water moves, the many different circles and cycles in nature.

Students were genuinely happy and excited to be in the art studio, a safe space that allowed them to express themselves. They enjoyed exploring new methods of learning and felt "peaceful" when taking part in the many activities. - A. Low, L. Sutherland and Y. Hunt



Thunderbird šx^wəx^waʔəs Elementary

Inside Outside

Artist: Tami Murray

Lead Teacher: Terrie Low

FPPL: Learning involves patience and time

At Thunderbird, students delved into the realm of story and identity through masks. The design for the outside of the mask was guided by words or phrases describing their connection to family, friends, and the community to show what we present to the world including positive words we want to hear more often. Meanwhile, the inner side of the mask became a canvas for our personal narratives, focusing on the aspects of ourselves we long to be acknowledged. In a celebratory activity, shared these sentiments aloud with the group and each other, concealing their faces with their masks. The session concluded with smiles and laughter, exchanging any initial feelings of inadequacy for shared positive affirmations.

Teacher Observations

The art studio provides a safe and engaging space for the students to interact with peers in a different environment. This new learning space provokes conversations, ideas, exploration and sharing that is different from the classroom.

One big take away is that our students need this space and opportunity to provide an outlet for their social emotional development.

The AIRS program provides something we can't do in the regular classroom with our limited resources.

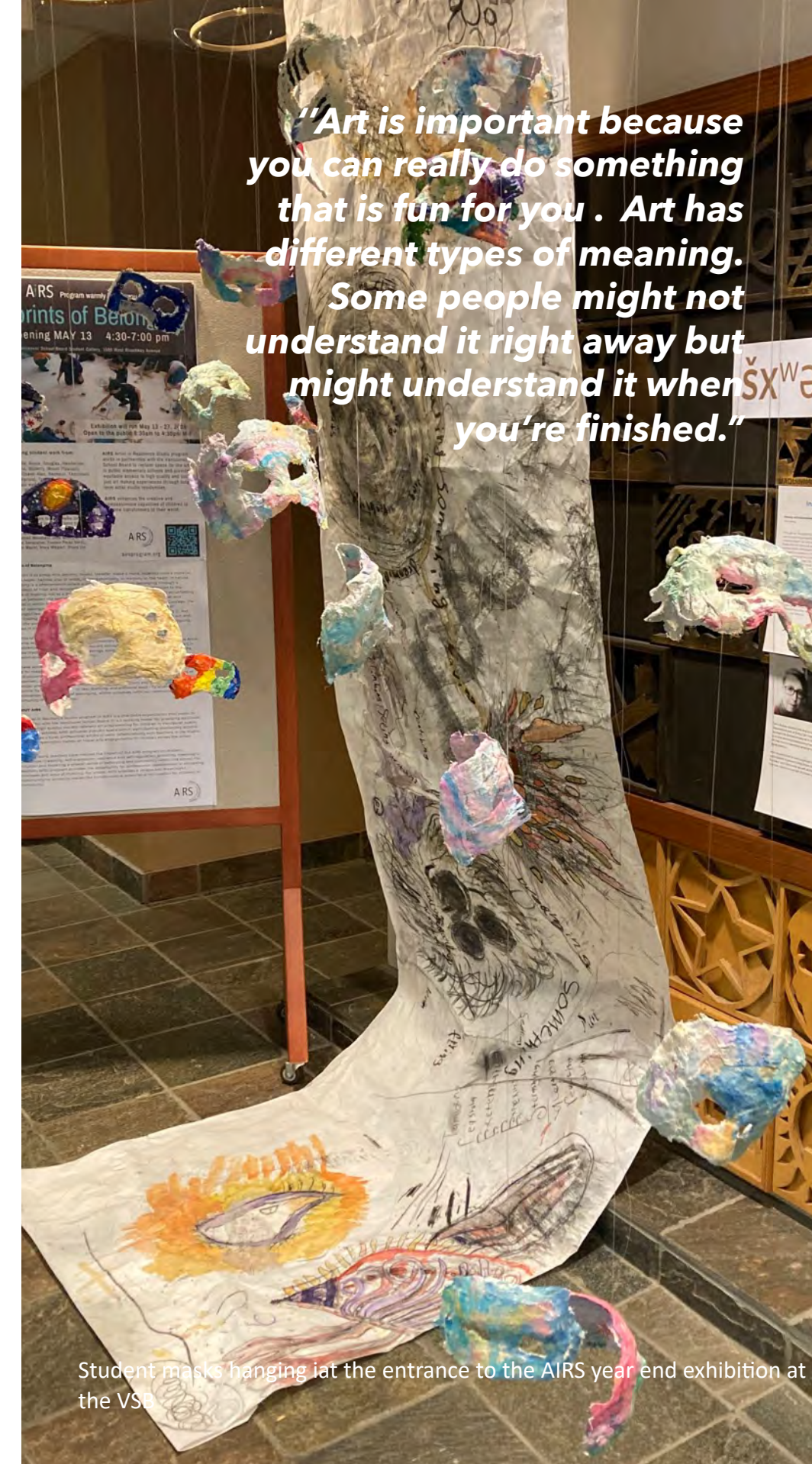
Student Voice

It was hard to get the right layer but I took my time.

Art is important because art is you.

Sometimes I get frustrated because it didn't go the way I wanted when I used the plaster. Then I would make whatever my hands would make.

"Art is important because you can really do something that is fun for you . Art has different types of meaning. Some people might not understand it right away but might understand it when you're finished."



Student masks hanging at the entrance to the AIRS year end exhibition at the VSB

Sir Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary

Noticing our Light

Painting Drawing and Light exploration

Artist: Kelsie Grazier

Lead Teacher: Alison Mckend

Learning involves patience and time

*Learning requires exploration of one's
identity*



In the 2023-2024 school year I asked students to begin to notice their reflection within the world around them. We turned the classroom into a camera obscura and drew the shadows. We worked collaboratively on gesture and movement on large paper. In closing the year, we began to explore with light and gesture through mark making with painting on plexiglass projected on overhead projectors.



Teacher observations

Risk taking is hard for our students. Teachers noted that modeling risk taking and vulnerability from the teacher allowed students to take risks and enter into the process. Creating space to slow down and meditate through their senses helped prepare students for engagement in the art activity. Importance of letting go of perfection and 'going with it' and seeing that there are different ways to interpret an experience. Positive personal identities involves being patient with yourself in unfamiliar situations. It involves awareness of your inner critic voice and reflecting on what to say to that voice.

Students have a preconceived notion of what is right – and it is hard for them to step away from that. This is why the arts are so important. This activity (blind contour) is wonderful because it allows them to take chances, take risks, to not use the eraser, trust their senses and have to create something that they don't know what it will be. Art shifts the focus. Art is more about the process. It allows them to think beyond what their perceived limits are.." K. Pavao

Student Voice

Art shows our personalities and our thoughts

Visual art is on the outside but can show something deeper on the inside

" Art makes our insides calm and free so we are not afraid to show it and our outside can change when we let our inside out because people can be hiding their unique talents." - Sonam

When I first came into the exhibit It felt really relaxed and calm because of the lighting and the energy that the art gives us. There was this one artwork that reminded me of a waterfall or an ocean.



Waverley Elementary

Studies in Business Casual

Artist: Nellie Gossen

Lead Teacher: Christine Giesbrecht
and Tammy Borg

*FPPL: Learning involves patience and
time*



“I made my first piece of clothing and I sewed it by hand”

Fashion artist Nellie Gossen led 6 divisions of intermediate students in a playful art exploration about clothes using the classic button-down collared shirt as a starting point. Students learned about the history and meaning of this ubiquitous garment as well as some basic sewing stitches.

Ultimately students refashioned their own second hand shirt into a rich assortment of wearable creations, including bags, hats, masks, shoes, pants, and skirts – as well as a whole range of garments that defy name or categorization! On the final day, each class held a fashion show where students walked the runway and shared their creations with their class.

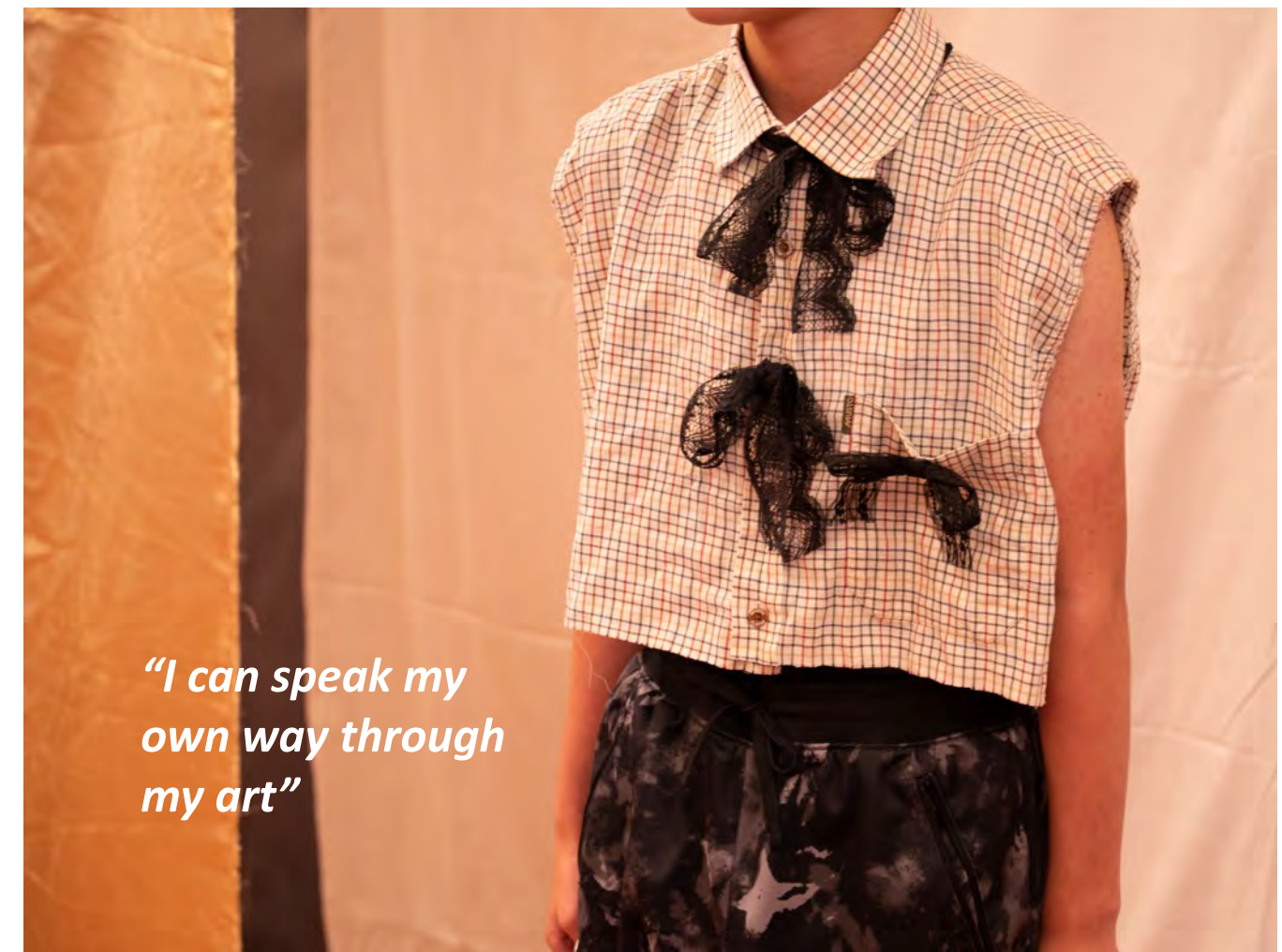
Teacher observations

Teachers noted how Nellie’s project fostered creative thinking in students through freedom of expression with fewer constraints. Teachers also appreciated the chance for students to explore fashion as a novel medium with its own history and purpose. Teachers were surprised to see how ALL students were engaged and enjoyed the process, even though it was new to many and difficult for some. Importance of time, and the growing of capacity and ideas over multiple weeks and the excitement it builds.

“The fashion runway experience showed how empowering art can be. One child who was normally quiet and barely spoke, came alive in the performance; It was incredible to see him beaming and to see a whole other dimension being unlocked for him.”

Christine Giesbrecht, grade 7 teacher

Lani Morden, the principal shared how AIRS consistently came up again and again for student’s self- reflections of their highlight at school for each reporting period.



*“I can speak my
own way through
my art”*

Student voice

Students enjoyed experimenting with the materials, dressing up, making their own garments, stitching with Nellie and seeing everyone's designs modeled at the fashion show.

Shamaya is wearing her collard shirt bag and her collard piece. You might not believe this but this bag she made was once a plain collared shirt that was kind of boring and old. Her biggest challenge was trying to figure out where to find places to stitch and where the handles might go because you cant stitch it by hand or else it might fall apart once you put stuff in it. The bag is one of a kind. I don't think you can find it in any stores!



Wək'wan'əs tə syaqwəm

Reimagining Water

Artists: Rebbeca Heyl and
Yunuen Perez Verrti

Lead Teacher: Renata Cazervan

FPPL: Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits and the ancestors



This year's school wide projects in the AIRS studio centred around the theme of water and in relation to the City of Vancouver Parks green infrastructure and wetlands projects, specifically the re-wilding of Charles Park. Informed by water teachings from Candice Halls and ethnobotanist Cease Wyss, helped students consider their relationship and interconnection with water. Over the year primary students observed the park's transformation through slow looking, observational drawing, watercolour painting and photography. Intermediate students worked with Yunuen on journaling, photography, poetry, and filmmaking through sensory, observational, and explorative journeys. The goal was for the students to notice, explore, and reflect on how this vital substance, sometimes taken for granted, affects everything in our lives.



Without art, some of my memories wouldn't exist.



Teacher Observations

Teachers shared that almost every student described a feeling of happiness while in the studio and noted the calmness and engagement of students while doing tactile, hands-on and collaborative art activities. The theme and Indigenous teachings on water created relevant connections for students to themselves and their community including the local park.

Going outside and drawing helps us connect with the Land at the Park, see nature as a part of community and understand the movement of water. -

The AIRS program highlighted that learning is experiential and relational. Children felt more connected to each other and enjoyed discovering a park that is so close by in their community. - N. Kwok



Student Voice:

Core memories for students included walking to Charles park and “sitting in between the giant trees” , drawing and painting water colours in the park, exploring water and ink, and taking photographs in Charles Park

Art says things that words can't.

I like walking to Charles Park - I've never been there before.

We made a river together.

Art matters to me because every bit of creativity to me is magic.

Art matters to me because it makes me better.



Don't you love painting the river - it looks like a real river and it feels cold like a river!- K student

*The combination of art and nature is calming to kids. They're able to focus on minute details that they might have otherwise missed, allowing them to see the beauty of our world with a different lens.
R. D'oust*



Art is a place to connect; It relates to important stuff in my life.



Students are connecting to land and the natural beauty in nature. Through poetry and art, they are learning that something so seemingly abundant is so valuable. Art can capture and advocate for water conservation and give pause and focus to reflect on the beauty and dynamics of something so simple that they take for granted. Art allows them to express their feelings and emotions, and to have influence on things that are important beyond the noise of consumerism, wealth, growth and greed.

- Jim Rutley, Principal





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