

Grade 1 and 2 Art Piece

Finger paint, Acrylic, and Varnish on Canvas

For time immemorial our ancestors have kept stories and shared them with one another. Primarily stories have been passed on and shared through oral storytelling, however there are other ways as well. One of those ways we have remembered and shared stories with one another is through visual images. Through pictographs, birch-bark scrolls, tipi liners, and other forms of visual storytelling we have remembered and shared our stories with one another. This art project focussed on doing just that, capturing the stories of the grade 1 and 2 classrooms.

The process of creating this art piece included going on a walk around the valley with the students so they could have a source of inspiration. Throughout the walk we encouraged the students to use their visual intelligence and take time to notice the things they see around them. Then we moved back to the class and spent time sketching ideas of what they saw on the walk as well as their own stories. Naturally, the students' experiences and stories spewed onto the page.

The following day we came back with a large canvas and had each student visually depict their own experience and story. After that, we had them place their handprints beside and around their particular images. The little handprints serve as a reminder of the students' youth –an indicator of the particular (s)place they were in when they created this piece.

Having each of the students' own individual story on the piece we also wanted to capture their story as a collective. In order to do this we gave the students the prompt: "We are grade 1 and 2 and we..." then we had them brainstorm ideas of what they were. After this we voted as a class on which statements they felt were the best and the result is the phrase in the centre of the piece. Collaborating with the Cree teacher Mr. Bill Cook, we were able to get a translation.

Kindergarten

Acrylic, Finger-paint, and Crayon on Moose Hide

Pictographs and cave drawings are a traditional art form that tell story by visual representation. The artist/ storyteller created small drawings on surfaces like caves and hides that told stories of their personal and cultural identities. Whether it was a fictional story that remembered myths or legends, or a non-fictional story that depicted everyday village life, there was truth in the art. Because the artist lived, experienced and interpreted from the lens of different circumstances, every drawing and story would be unique and could not be replicated. Although pictographs are pieces that commemorate a certain period of time, they remain vital to our connection to history as a people. The 2015 Payepot kindergarten group explored this idea of sharing and remembering through this piece.

To highlight the process of creating art through experience, the kindergarteners went for a nature walk that consisted of fun games, observational stops and discussions about their surroundings. By socializing through sharing and listening, the kindergarteners made connection with the land and its inhabitants by sharing stories of their friends, family and community. After the nature walk, the students brainstormed all that they had saw during their experience. They were then given sheets of paper to draw anything that came to mind when thinking of their community. These drawings were then to be transferred onto the moose hide. The first step of painting consisted of each kindergarten student putting their painted hand print on the hide which would serve as a marker of their time as a kindergartener. Continuing on, the students painted their own images on a section of the hide to create a collective piece.

Like our ancestors who created pictographs and cave drawings, it is the hope that the kindergarten group will have a marker in time to remember where and what they come from and from the perspective of their future self, see all the growth that has occurred since. Like our ancestors, they will leave a legacy behind for the future generations to come.