

Interviews with Selkirk Montessori Students- Art as Intervention (Dec. 2016)
By Tasha Henry

Eli: We honoured the children who didn't get to eat with their parents.

Natasha: It is sad because people were in residential schools and they had to be or else they would just get taken away by the government.

Tovah: I liked this project because I liked how Monique Gray Smith shared everything with us and took a lot of her time to teach us. We also learned about "Whale Child" from Carol Simpson.

Peyton: It's kind sad that the Europeans came and changed everything and moved First Nations and took away their culture.

Vivian: The experience at the Art Gallery felt different because not many people get to make art installations.

Natasha: And not many people get to eat at the table. The children didn't get to sit at the tables with the adults. The children would make their own language to communicate.

Peyton: it is good to know what happened before in history before we came.

Rhys: I learned about the residential schools and that they took people away from their families. It was fun doing the trip to the gallery. I liked meeting all the First Nations people who came into our classroom. I like the symbols in my drawing and the black and red colours on the white plate.

Garnet: This history is true and sad. I am happy we did the installation and it is always fun to be on the news. Five people chose to put their plates at the corner of the installation because the table was too loud. The reason I didn't draw an Orca, is because I wanted to draw my own symbols.

Cecilia: I like the way that we actually created something that some other people didn't get to. These symbols are about what other people didn't get to do, that we can do so right now. Children in residential school didn't get as much freedom as we do right now. I like the way that all the other people were trying to make a symbol on the plates in the First Nations culture, to resemble the art work. I learned that some cultures can be easy to take away but some cultures are so strong and can't be taken away. Cultures are extremely important to all people. It is really hard to think about the things that happened to First Nations, but their culture survived.

Ana: We are happy that we are the only class that actually did this and that we saw a lot of famous artists and we are lucky to see them like Nicholas Galanin, because he was a DJ and an artist and he let us see his art as he was making it. Butch Dick did the murals near Victoria Gymnastics and now I know his art work. He is Songhees. We are lucky that we have a good school and good teachers because we don't have to go to residential schools.

Adison: I like that some people learned that not everything is for yourself you have to make things for others as well and learn about other cultures.

Cole: At the Art Gallery we got to meet a famous artist. I learned he doesn't keep his art work he likes to leave the installations for other people to learn from.

Jolie: I put my plate under the table because children might crawl under the table to steal the teacher's food at residential school. It was a fun experience because I like art and I liked placing my plate in the gallery exhibit.

Isabella: I put my plate under the moose hide because some children did not get food to symbolize the children who didn't get any food. The Art Gallery was fun because I like making art.

Lucy: We wanted to paint something from the ocean because I am from the Alert Bay coastal tribe. We put our plate on the table because we wanted to do that for some people didn't get to eat on the table.

Sadie: I wanted to put my plate on the table because some kids were forced to be quiet at the table.

Mabel: Lots of people were at residential school who didn't get their traditional things. It was a nice project because we reuniting children in a way and saying that "you are a good person and this shouldn't have happened to you!".

Layla: I thought this was really fun knowing that this was something traditional and they would celebrate and have festive cultural experiences. When I made the drawing I felt I was learning about the culture and doing something kind for them by drawing their designs.

Jamie: The kids couldn't see their parents for a long time. So we honour them.

Keaton: The reason we did this project is we thought it would be good to make modern art. I've never done something like this before. The First Nations children were not always treated well and many didn't want to go to school.

Soren: We made this to remember the First Nations children who were not called their actual names and they cut their hair and they didn't think about or care about what their actual beliefs were. They made them speak English.

Napier and Nathan: We put our plate at the edge of the table, kind of upside down so it looked like it was in the position that someone would sit at the table. So it would look like someone was making this art. The plates represent light, First Nation Arts, animals and the culture of First Nations people. It was fun and interesting to draw new art and learn from masters. I thought the installation was really nice with all the plates laid out.

Shion and Colton: We chose the turtle symbol because the shell has faces on it. We liked the eagle because when I think of First Nations I see feathers. I really like the feather because when Arlene came in she said that for every feather she finds she looks up and says "thank you". We drew the moon and painted it yellow. We put our plate above the fireplace so that people could remember the people that didn't get to have these plates in residential school. The fireplace is a symbol of First Nation hope.

James: Me and Jai thought that our plate should tell a story to honour First Nation's culture. We chose a legend to paint to honour them. We drew the killer whale who ate all of the salmon and made two tribes suffer in hunger. Eagle picked up killer whale and took him up to the sun to be judged. I put my plate away from everyone else's because the people were trying to destroy their culture and keep it away from them. Our plate represents the culture that was taken away from the kids.

Kingston: I really like this experience. It was fun, and I learned drawing skills from Native Art. The symbols on my plate are the moon and feathers. The serpent is from the story "The Salmon Twins" by Carole Simpson.

Angelina: The sun on my plate represents light and brightness instead of darkness. At the Art Gallery we smelled the beautiful oak trees and we made an installation.

Shea: The meaning of this project was to make kids feel they belong and show them we care. The reason we put peace signs and hearts on our plate is because we hope there is peace on earth and we care about the people who were in residential school.

Maciah: We put our plate on a shelf on a smaller table because maybe not all kids got to sit at the table and maybe had to sit on the floor. It was meaningful because we are bringing back some thoughts of First Nations kids who were forced to go to residential schools.

Lewis: We were drawing First Nations drawings and mixing them with our own symbols: rocks, masks, ravens, frogs a sea serpent, otter, and mushrooms.

Zane: We put our plate on the table for First Nations people and their struggles at school.

Carson: On one side of our plate is one stripe of red and red dots and the other side is black dots. There is an orca, turtle and owl. We chose the images because they were interesting.

Tai: We first outlined our plate and then coloured it in red and black. We made one big animal all connected. We put our plate near a window representing First Nation's people.

Ben D: This was important because we get to remember the people in residential schools.

Lily: We drew a snake because to us a snake represents bravery. And First Nations children are very brave.