

ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia Project Summaries

Project name: Identity Photography

School: Bicentennial Junior High

Location: Dartmouth

Artist: John Hillis

Grade: 9

Project description:

This project was a partnership with the Halifax Regional Police Cops 'n Kids program. Launched in 2004, the Cops 'n Kids program is designed to create positive interactions between Halifax Regional Police and Halifax District RCMP officers and children identified by their schools as succeeding despite facing challenges.

Local photographer John Hillis worked with the two grade 9 classes at Bicentennial Junior High on a photography project which involved both the students and the School's liaison officers from the Halifax Police force. John escorted groups of students and officers on tours of the neighbourhood teaching them how to use their camera as a means to "frame " their views of the community. Together, the groups produced a large photo triptych. For the triptych, each student was asked to create a self-portrait without taking an image of their face. They were asked to photograph a favourite thing, a favourite place, and then write a phrase on their hand that meant something to them and take a photograph of it.

Each of these sets of three images form a self-portrait of an individual student, showing a little of whom they are, what they think, and the things that mean something to them.

In a world that is overly focused on how things look, this approach to self-portraiture is an opportunity to explore identity that goes below surface image, letting the viewer connect to someone without forming opinions based on clothes, hairstyles, or other aspects of our exterior shells. – John Hillis

Hillis is also the owner of Truefaux Films in Halifax and a regular part-time instructor in Film at NSCAD University. The Bicentennial Junior High photo triptych is currently on display at the IWK Mental Health and Addiction Program's Dartmouth Community Mental Health Clinic. It will also be featured at the AGNS this fall.

Project name: Identity Transparency

School: l'École Rose des Vents

Location: Greenwood

Artist: François Gaudet

Grade: 5

Project description:

What are the elements that make up the historical and cultural landscape of l'Acadie in Nova Scotia? How can young people build their identity in relationship to their local heritage?

These are two of the guiding questions that were explored by Mme Goziou's grade 5 and 6 students at l'École Rose des Vents. The students worked with Acadian artist François Gaudet, who guided them through an examination of their own identities and the creation of self-portraits. They also visited Grand Pré National Historic Site near Wolfville with students from l'École acadienne de Truro, to explore and connect with the culture of l'Acadie. L'Acadie is one of Nova Scotia's founding cultures and the spirit of Acadian culture and heritage is found in its historic sites, language, music, food and art.

By working with the students at Rose des Vents in Greenwood, I was struck by their lack of attachment to the landscape and topography. Greenwood is a naturally transient place. I was amazed by how profound the students were bonded to each other and also with their French heritage. They also shared ideas and materials with ease, fostering a collaborative atmosphere. It was a pleasure and honour to spend some time with these extraordinary students and their teacher. - François Gaudet

The students from Truro worked on a similar ArtsSmarts project last year, which was focused on the Acadian history of the Cobequid region. In both ArtsSmarts projects, the students used photographs of their faces and gel medium to create a transparent portrait they could then transfer to canvas. The students painted under and over their portraits, adding defining details to create a personal likeness reflecting their identity and interests.

My search of what to do with my printed images evolved into seeing photographs as a tool. The print itself became the catalyst for the final photo-based artwork. Exposing the dynamics of "time and space" in an image, and the creative process of manipulating the print with paint and other materials, enables me as an artist to push the boundaries of the subject matter and the energy of image making. Recently, my work has hit another juncture with the added possibilities of film and video. - François Gaudet

These projects gave both school groups an opportunity to explore and connect with the culture of l'Acadie and consider how their identities have been shaped by living in Nova Scotia. While these two projects have common elements, the students come from different cultural backgrounds; most of the students in Truro grew up in that area, while at Rose des Vents, the majority of the students are from military families posted at CFB Greenwood, with many coming from the province of Quebec. An exhibition of the artwork from the *Identity Transparency* project was on display from March 7 to April 3, 2013 at the Greenwood Military Family Resource Centre.

The project was jointly funded by ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia and Genie Arts Nouvelle Ecosse, which is supported by the Acadian Cultural Federation of Nova Scotia, a non-profit organization whose mission is to support and promote the development of arts and culture of French-speaking Acadians in Nova Scotia.

Project name: La Diversité Culturelle de la Région Atlantique

School: Centre scolaire de la Rive Sud

Location: Bridgewater

Artist: François Gaudet

Grade: 9

Project description:

Voilà le sujet qu'ont abordé Laura Connors, enseignante du cours de sciences humaine, et 19 de ses élèves de 9^e année au Centre scolaire de la Rive-Sud à Cookville. En avril dernier, ces élèves ont passé un total de trois jours avec l'artiste multidisciplinaire François Gaudet pour amener leurs apprentissages plus loin en créant une œuvre d'art qui reflèterait leur compréhension de cette diversité culturelle dans les maritimes.

Une murale formée de deux grands panneaux de contreplaqué peints illustre des aspects environnementaux, politiques et sociaux de leur entourage. Les élèves laissent ainsi traces de leur passage dans l'histoire acadienne de façon très directe : des images de leurs visages font partie intégrale du chef d'œuvre. Celui-ci sera bientôt monté sur les murs relativement nus de l'école bâtie quelques années passées.

Madame Connors, qui est derrière cette initiative, entame sa première année en enseignement et ne laissera pas l'école indifférente. Elle affirme que « *Les élèves ont vraiment aimé l'expérience, même ceux qui n'ont pas l'habitude de s'appliquer autant. Ça a été un réel plaisir de voir le groupe travailler si harmonieusement vers un but commun.* »

François a servi de guide aux jeunes apprenants quant aux aspects artistiques du projet. « *Pour le projet, nous avons exploré les aspects culturels des Maritimes avec la création artistique. Pour faire la fresque, nous avons utilisé du contreplaqué et de la peinture acrylique. Nous avons fait appel à la photographie, le transfert de photocopie et la pulvérisation de peinture. Nous avons appris au sujet de la sensibilité culturelle et la façon de représenter les zones maritimes avec des symboles. Les couleurs qui serpentent pourraient évoquer les rivières ou les routes, et lier les différentes parties de la fresque ensemble. La diversité est célébrée avec l'océan et les scènes urbaines du passés et du présent. J'ai été frappé par l'affection que les élèves ont l'un pour l'autre et la vitesse à laquelle ont travaillé. Leur sens des couleurs était remarquable et le produit final sera un témoignage de l'époque que nous avons passé ensemble. J'ai adoré mon temps avec leur professeur, Laura Connors, et ses élèves, et j'ai hâte de voir la murale suspendue. »*

En plus de s'amuser, les élèves ont acquis des connaissances recommandées dans le programme d'étude de sciences humaines 9^e année en termes de culture. Parmi d'autres, les résultats d'apprentissage suivants ont été atteints : examiner et formuler un concept général de la culture, démontrer une compréhension des facteurs locaux et mondiaux qui ont façonné les cultures de la région atlantique du Canada, démontrer une compréhension de la nature des groupes culturels, ethniques et linguistiques de la région atlantique du Canada, et démontrer une compréhension des forces aux plans local et mondial qui entraînent une évolution constante des cultures.

Cette expérience a eu lieu dans le cadre d'un projet GénieArts Nouvelle-Écosse et ArtsSmarts Nova-Scotia, programmes auxquels plusieurs écoles francophones, anglophones et d'immersion de la province participent à chaque année. (Auteure : Christine Benoit, GénieArts Nouvelle-Écosse Coordinatrice de programmes, La FéCANE)

.....

Project name: Expressing Identity

School: Coldbrook and District School

Location: Coldbrook

Artists: Ken Schwartz and Megan Hepburn

Grade: 7 and 8

Project description:

At Coldbrook and District School in the Annapolis Valley, artists Ken Schwartz and Megan Hepburn worked with the grade 7 and 8 students on a project that explored identity, self-expression, and community. The students painted self-portraits and wrote stories about their

community. In May, the students visited The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts to see an exhibition of their artwork at the Centre and participate in a hands-on art making activity.

The students have also sent digital copies of their artwork and writing to a school in Thailand (arranged by teachers at Coldbrook and District School) and arrangements are underway to have the school in Thailand send artwork to Coldbrook.

Ken Schwartz is a Canadian theatre director, playwright, arts activist and CEO of CoastArts, the umbrella organization that governs both the Ross Creek Centre and Two Planks and a Passion Theatre. Artist Megan Hepburn works in painting, drawing and installation. Her work has been shown across Canada, in Germany and Finland.

The Ross Creek Centre for the Arts is a multi-disciplinary arts education and development centre based on 178 acres of farm and forest in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley. The facilities and programs are designed to serve the artistic and cultural communities of Nova Scotia, of Canada, and of the world, with a focus on professional artist development, youth education and Aboriginal arts programming.

Project name: Tales (From Away) And Tellers (Of The Day)

School: Digby Elementary School

Location: Digby

Artist: Linda Marie Coakley

Grade: 5-6

Project description:

This project incorporated music, dance and choral speaking to introduce students to various cultures through assorted lively folk tales from around the globe. The students read selected stories, viewed performances incorporating different languages and people from around the world and researched a folk tale's country of origin and its traditions. The objective for the students was to develop their own way to "re-tell" the folk tale dramatically in one's own style.

The curriculum connections are Language Arts, Social Studies, Art and Music. The students' reading, viewing, speaking and listening skills were enhanced, their specific points of view were developed and researching facts broadened their appreciation of the cultures they studied.

Project name: The Art of Flying Machines

School: Frank H MacDonald Elementary School

Location: Thorburn

Artist: Barbara Conrod

Grade: 6

Project description:

The project theme was *“Observing Flight in Nature for Inspiration for my personal Flying Machine”*. The students studied what Alexander Graham Bell and Leonardo Da Vinci observed from birds in flight, spent time outdoors observing birds and went on a day trip to Trenton Airport for a tour. Guided by visual artist Barbara Conrod, the students designed and built flying machines as part of their Science Unit on Flight.

.....

Project name: Music, Movement, and Healthy Self-Expression

School: Antigonish Education Centre

Location: Antigonish

Artist: Rebecca Wild

Grade: 3

Project description:

The purpose of this project was to introduce the students to an alternative and healthy way to express themselves in a non-linguistic manner. This project also helped the students connect to their true inner self and give them a sense of empowerment.

The project began in September with a “Kick-off” activity taking place at an event in the community of Antigonish called *Antigonight: Art after Dark*. Guided by Rebecca Wild, the students performed a creative interpretation of the evolution of life. The project continued through the fall at the School, as the artist taught the students techniques in music and movement to help release and express their feelings and create a sense of wellness. The students also developed a story to be told/performed through their newly learned techniques. Throughout the experience the students also had opportunities to discuss their thoughts, ideas and feelings about their new experiences in a respectful environment. The project tied in with outcomes from Language Arts, Health, Music and Physical Education.

Rebecca Wild is a musician and teacher of various musical instruments and a gentle soul who has a vested interest in the spiritual, emotional and physical wellness of youth. Rebecca also teaches music interpretation and improvisation, expression through music and movement and percussion from different parts of the world.

Antigonight: Art After Dark, is a festival for all the arts. It celebrates the rich arts community of northeastern Nova Scotia and features interactive and performance art up and down Main Street and along the sidewalks, in storefronts, alleyways, nooks and crannies of downtown Antigonish.

Project name: Powerful, Positive, Peaceful Citizen

School: H.M. MacDonald Elementary School

Location: Antigonish

Artist: Maureen St. Clair

Grade: 4-5

Project description:

This past fall, Maureen St. Clair, a self-taught artist who began painting while living in Grenada, West Indies, worked with H. M. MacDonald Elementary School's grade 4/5 class and their teacher Tiffany MacNeil. Guided by Maureen, the students created a wall mural at the school by painting their self-images. The images reflect what makes them powerful, positive and peaceful citizens.

To begin this journey of creating peace and art together, the students built a large painted panel which they brought to the *Antigonight: Art After Dark Festival*. At the Festival, the students, their parents and participants from the community worked together to create a collage on the panel art by adding words and messages of peace.

Project name: History as Layers and Lines

School: Wolfville School

Location: Wolfville

Artist: Terry Drahos

Grade: 3-6

Project description:

What is unique about the town of Wolfville is its long and well-documented history. This ArtsSmarts project explored Wolfville's history through names of people and places and the creation of portraits and landscapes, looking at the cultures that most influenced Wolfville's history: the Mi'kmaq Nation, French, and English.

Wolfville is also home to an abundance of historic building and places. The students did walking tours of the town and discussed who built various buildings, what happened at various locations, what they were/are called, their function and design. Then the students created mixed media landscapes depicting the geographic area and the historic buildings.

Visit Terry's blog which documents this ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia project:

<http://historythroughlinesandlayers.tumblr.com/>

The artist involved in this project was Terry Havlis Drahos. Terry has lived and worked in the Annapolis Valley for ten years. She is primarily a painter but has also worked on various sculpture and conceptual art pieces. Her current work involves incorporating photographs of dormant trees into an abstract ground www.terryhavlisdrahos.com.

Project name: ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia Artist in Residency

School: Saint Joseph A MacKay

Location: Halifax

Artist: Melissa Marr

Grade: P-6

Project Description

This year, ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia ran its first artist-in-residence program. Experienced ArtsSmarts artist Melissa Marr worked with the teachers at St Joseph A McKay Elementary School over the course of the entire school year. The residency began in September; Melissa attended the first staff meeting where she met the teachers, solicited input for the goals of the residency and engaged everyone in a hands-on felting workshop. Over the next nine months, Melissa worked with the teachers as well as the students, teaching art techniques and modeling methods to integrate art-making into a variety of subject areas across the curriculum. For example; the grade 4 students created 3-dimensional animal habitat dioramas in Science class.

In June, the teachers met with Melissa and the ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia Coordinator to talk about the residency's successes and challenges. The results of this meeting will be published on the ArtsSmarts Nova Scotia website in July.

Project name: Diversity Mural

School: Temperance Street School

Location: New Glasgow

Artist: Charleen O'Pray

Grade: 3, 4 & 5

Project Description

The vision for this project was for the forty grade 3, 4 and 5 students to collaborate and work with artist Charleen O-Pray, 2-3 teachers, and several volunteers from the community in the planning and painting of a highly visible school mural to be located at the entrance leading to the school gymnasium. The aim was to have the mural represent the diversity of the school and neighboring communities so all students, staff, and volunteers feel welcomed to the school. This mural is a compilation of the students' ideas with design assistance from the artist. Students were involved in the planning, the painting, and the presentation of the mural.

The students also encouraged participation from all school staff and community members, to generate positive dialogue, as the students shared their ideas visually and orally, celebrating with pride and respect their own work and the work of others. The project tied in with social studies outcomes focused on People and Places in Nova Scotia.

There was also an extra focus on the PEBS program (Positive Education Behavior Success) at Temperance Street School. The ArtsSmarts project enabled all members of the school community to work together and be involved in a positive way. In this process, the students not only benefited from learning about what makes a strong and healthy community but the artist also helped them to see art making as a real part of life and encouraged them to explore different art materials.

.....

Project name: Drawing and The Brain
School: Halifax Central Junior High
Location: Halifax
Artist: Heather Wilkinson and Melissa Marr
Grade: 7 and 8

Project Description

The guiding question for this project was: *How can art make us more engaged in the world around us?* Using the brain as a theme, and drawing as an entry point into creativity, artists Heather Wilkinson and Melissa Marr (of Wonderneath Studio) guided the grade 7 and 8 students through a project which was designed to stimulate creative thinking and connect with the larger world, to "think globally" and look at how creativity and the arts can put people in touch with themselves and other cultures and allow them to see connections and differences. The students explored drawing through sensory observation and engaged in exploratory art workshops. The project tied in with both art and science curriculum goals.