Native expression| Teaching strategies & visual art of the Fort Peck Reservation

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NATIVE EXPRESSION:

TEACHING STRATEGIES & VISUAL ART OF THE

FORT PECK RESERVATION

by

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Native Expression: Teaching Strategies & Visual Art of the Fort Peck Reservation

Committee Chair: Randy Bolton

Native Expression: Teaching Strategies & Visual Art of the Fort Peck Reservation was a project that involved teaching method research and the creation of a body of artwork based on cultural images by the Native youth at Frazer High School. This project enabled me to incorporate Native American Art in the correct contexts in my teachings. It is through this project that I hoped to gain a deeper understanding of myself as a teacher, artist and of the culture in which I teach.

The Fort Peck Indian Reservation is alive with culture and tradition. The students are familiar with common cultural symbols. They see, live and experience them daily through family and community life. This project allowed my students to visually bring out images from their culture with personal interpretations. The students studied, interacted with and interpreted traditional and contemporary images from their culture while working with a variety of materials. Through these experiences, students were able to construct fresh creations that were dynamic expressions of their culture.

This project allowed my students to grow and strengthen their understandings of culture, tribal identity and aesthetics in art. Through Native Expression, I have gained a heightened awareness of, and respect for, the reservation and its people. The body of artwork created during this year speaks to and demonstrates these cultural understandings. As a teacher, I adapted to meet the cultural needs of my Native American students in Art Education. This transformation allows my students to embrace traditional art forms as well as create exciting new ones.
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Intent of Final Creative Project  
Native Expression: Teaching Strategies & Visual Art of the Fort Peck Reservation

Thinking back to my experience in the Creative Pulse program, I gained so much personal insight into myself as a person, artist and teacher. The overall experience has changed the way I see, demonstrate and explore creativity. The two summers I spent in Missoula were full of creative thought, activity and demanding course work. For my first field project, I pursued a direction in my personal artwork. I dove into the world of woodcarving. During that project I experienced many difficulties and discovered that the subtractive process of woodcarving did not make sense to me. As a sculptor, I enjoy the additive process of ceramics. Through this field project, it became clear to me that I needed to challenge my professional life and career as an art teacher. During my second summer in the program, I decided that my final project needed to take place in my classroom.

For the past five years, I have taught art on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in northeast Montana. During this time, I did not include, nor was I required to teach about Native American Art in the regular curriculum. As a non-Indian teacher on a reservation, I had not felt comfortable or knowledgeable enough to approach the teaching or creating of Native American Art. Being raised and educated in an urban area, I was not exposed to this type of art nor did I understand how to go about teaching with it. This project forced me to confront this barrier in my teaching abilities and to design lessons that allowed students to incorporate Native American Art elements in their artwork.

Through this endeavor, I sought to expand my teaching abilities to support the cultural needs of my students. This meant a change in my teaching strategies needed to
take place. The initial stages of the project began with research in Indian Education. I then set out to research Native American Art regions, explore the cultural considerations and reconsider my teaching practices for Native American students. Through the course of the year, *Native Expressions* developed into a body of student artwork that was based in specific cultural and personal symbols. The body of artwork included: twelve-inch tipi models, two-dimensional drawings, acrylic paintings, rawhide shields, dreamcatchers and sandstone paintings. The students also participated in a bulletin board contest and Indian Health Board of Billings poster contest. The process of this project was documented through photographs (see list of all appendices).

A main focus of this project was to develop new understandings about the culture in which I teach and live. Numerous questions arose as to the significance of such a project. Is it important to teach and create with traditional and contemporary objects? Am I capable of teaching Native American Art to Indian students? Will I be crossing cultural boundaries in this rural community by approaching this subject? Will students accept my new teaching strategies? How would incorporating Native American Arts impact my teaching, reshape my Art curriculum and change my relationships with students? How would the use of traditional materials help shape and form students’ identities as tribal members? Finally, what can my role as a non-Indian play in this learning and development?

My project needed to be grounded in accurate information, so I enrolled in a course at the Fort Peck Tribal Community College in Poplar, Montana. The course was entitled, *Raven’s Voice: Cultural Foundations in Indian Education*, it was instructed by Iris HeavyRunner. It was through this course that I learned an overview of the history,
philosophy and ethics of Indian Education specific to Montana Indian tribal groups. This course stressed the importance of having cultural resilience factors present in the classroom. I learned that including Native language, music and dancing in the classroom would foster resilience among Native American youth. This course gave me the initial background knowledge I needed to ensure that my new lesson plans would be accurately based in a Native American context.

After I completed the *Raven's Voice* course, I began visiting with local reservation community members and gathering natural materials with students (see Appendix 7). Together on field trips students and I collected willows, sandstone and bones. The students suggested these specific materials to work with in the classroom because they are abundant natural resources in this area. Some of the students had previously worked with willows. They were familiar with the process of preparing the willows for use by soaking them until flexible. I let their expertise guide me through this process. While visiting with community members, they shared with me the best areas along the Missouri River brush to cut willows. They also informed me of where the best slabs of sandstone were located at Fort Peck Lake. Using traditional Plains materials was also important for this project so I ordered cow rawhides from Tandy Leather Company in Billings.

Providing students with a variety of experiences in creating and viewing Native American Art was also personally important. Local artists, books, posters, slides, field trips, artifacts, Indian Art magazines and a variety of materials were some of the things we looked to for guidance and inspiration. It was my hope that the students would feel pride in the works they created using cultural images. In past years, I have seen students
express pride in other artwork, especially ceramic projects. By creating more personal, culturally based art, the students would hopefully feel an even deeper connection to their work and to themselves. In his book, *Where There is No Name for Art*, Bruce Hucko makes the point that children need to have the opportunity to recognize and express the whole of who they are. What better way to help students understand themselves than to work with images from their culture? Not only are their art projects coming from themselves as individuals, but they are now exploring a deeper connection to their cultural and artistic heritage.

This project is an ongoing and ever changing dynamic of my teaching. It is through the original intent of this project that I gained the background knowledge and confidence to move forward. During my professional career as an art teacher, I have continued to grow and expand my knowledge of Native American Art and teaching strategies. Because of this project, I have laid a strong foundation from which to build for the future.

**Cultural Considerations**

Despite the hardships of the past and present, Native American cultures have and will survive. This survival is visible in arts, crafts, religious belief, food, ceremonies and customs in life. It is important for teachers to be aware of and sensitive to certain cultural considerations of Native Americans including their art. The Montana Office of Public Instruction has documents available for teachers to address these issues, such as *Essential Understandings of Montana Indians* and *Indian Education for All*. Local Fort Peck Community College educators also have a wealth of information on culturally sensitive
issues. These are great resources that I often turn to with questions. Through my educational research, I learned that cultural considerations are important while designing lessons with my Native American students.

In order to engage my students in critical thinking about Native American Art, I needed to expose them to a number of different traditional art objects through museums, field trips, personal collections, books, poster reproductions, magazines and local artists. In my classroom, I organized a section of references about Native American Art. The references are in the front of the class where many supplies are centrally located. It consists of books and Native Art magazines such as *Southwest Art* and *Native Peoples*. I also regularly displayed traditional and contemporary Native American Art posters on classroom and hallway bulletin boards. My classroom decorations changed to be more culturally supportive. I displayed a painted longhorn skull, star quilt designs and newspaper clippings of Native American Artists. Through this repeated exposure, the students developed their own artwork which incorporated Native American elements.

The cultural region where I live and teach is the Great Plains. Traditional Plains art objects were originally designed to be functional and intimately involved with life. Traditional Plains objects consist of: moccasins, drums, petroglyphs, cradles, tipis, beadwork, jewelry, quillwork, regalia, leatherwork, pipes, clothing, quilts and narrative paintings. These art objects served as reflections of cultural beliefs, ideas, knowledge and religion. Most objects were made from highly decorated animal skins. Objects were made to serve social, personal or religious purposes, not just to be admired for aesthetic qualities. Yet, craftsmanship and beauty were admired and revered. North American Indian languages actually had no equivalent word for 'art' because creating artful objects
was part of daily life. Beauty and design simply became integral parts of the object’s function.

I had many students volunteer to bring in some of their own artifacts to my classes over the year. They brought beaded moccasins, arrows, leatherwork and even old photographs of their families. Some of these objects inspired students with color schemes, design motifs for drawings and the yearning to work with rawhide. Many students still have relatives who create these traditional objects today. In this community, it is common for people to prepare their own hides for brain tanning. Many locals make their own drums for use in Pow-Wows. Hand drums are also commonly made here. Many students have Aunties or Grandparents who quilt and bead. Star quilts are given away at special ceremonies throughout the year. Beadwork is seen on moccasins, traditional dance outfits, and even on common objects such as pens, lighters, key chains and watchbands.

My new lesson design began with two-dimensional art projects. Students were asked to find a specific piece of Native American Art that struck them. They listed the visual elements of the piece and worked to discover the meaning behind them. By dissecting the elements, students became inspired with new ideas. Medicine wheels disguised as basketballs with feathers hanging from them, paintings of traditional shields with our school logo as the central design and detailed portraits with traditional regalia were some examples of the works created in this lesson (see appendix 2).

Traditional art objects have specific social, economic and spiritual functions. These objects are imbued with cultural ideals, beliefs and knowledge. These are excellent tools for learning about people, place and art. Today, many museums display
these objects. They are cataloged and preserved for future generations. Although these exhibits provide good learning experiences, they are significantly distanced from their tribal context and creator. The original creator of the object did not invent the object with a museum audience in mind. The object itself had personal meaning and value that a museum display cannot replicate. This distinction must be clarified to students while studying these objects. I was surprised to find that students clarified this notion to me through personal stories.

While teaching about Native American Art, I tried to be specific to each tribe’s identity and not make generalizations. The distinctions between tribal arts are recognizable in the variations of color and design in objects. Indians of the Plains developed their own set of artistic conventions and aesthetic concepts based upon what was readily available to them. The Montana Office of Public Instruction further explains this concept in Essential Understandings of Montana Indians #2:

There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined and redefined by many entities, organizations and people. There is a continuum of Indian identity ranging from assimilated to traditional and is unique to each individual. There is no generic American Indian (Falcon, p.4).

Teachers need to be aware of and acknowledge this notion in order to develop a better understanding of Native Americans for themselves, as well as with their students. Applying this understanding to art is crucial for students while studying the variation between tribes. Students and I looked to a wide variety of tribal arts. This helped us to understand that no two tribes, even if they come from the same cultural region, can be generalized as identical.
Implications for Teaching about Native American Art

Through my educational research, I learned that helping Frazer students form connections about traditional Plains art and contemporary Plains art is significant to their lives. Richard Conn addresses how art communicates culture and serves in the formation of identity in his book *Circles of the World: Traditional Art of the Plains Indians*. Plains art objects gave factual accounts of experience or accomplishment. Winter counts painted on animal skins are an example of factual accomplishment. Art also serves in forming cultural identity. I experienced this notion first hand while working with the traditional Plains materials of animal skins.

Using traditional materials in the classroom is quite valuable. These materials help students establish identities as Indians and tribal members. Boehme discusses the significance of how Native American objects can be used as learning tools today:

As Native people seek to preserve, or, perhaps regain their cultural heritages, they may seek out tribal objects in museums and personal collections as links to the past. These objects provide continuity to the present, since they embody the philosophies, beliefs, and changing life of the people…For Native people today, the object speaks to the spirit and endurance of tribal cultures and provides a key to understanding the past, the present, the people who went before them, and their own generation (24).

Indian artifacts hold many teaching possibilities about the past and the present. My classroom has transformed by including the study and use of these objects. Including the material of rawhide during this project was also important for me to see what the importance of using traditional Plains materials was.
I discovered that one of the best methods for teaching Native American Art uses a comprehensive traditional and contemporary approach. To aid in the traditional approach, I brought in local artists, tribal elders and actual artifacts into my classroom. While looking at contemporary Indian artists’ work and range of materials, I addressed the contemporary approach. Utilizing both approaches allowed for the students to create dynamic expressions of their culture.

While creating painted shields made of rawhide I used this comprehensive traditional and contemporary approach. The traditional aspect consisted of working with the actual hide. The hides needed to be soaked, cut, laced and dried properly. Preparing the hide for class by soaking it was a learning experience for me. The day my class was to begin cutting the hides for the shields, it had not soaked long enough to soften. I had to quickly change plans and leave the hide to soak another evening. By the next day it had soaked too long and began to swell. The water also began to smell awful. I had to fully dry the hide and start the process again, this time with advice from someone who had expertise in working with hides. When the rawhide was finally ready for class, I was surprised at the willingness of the students to touch and work with the wet hide. The students showed me how to cut lacing strips. The trick was to cut a spiral into a circle about one-quarter inch thick. They told me that the evenness of the strip becomes very important when it comes to lacing. After the shields were constructed, we looked at contemporary narrative paintings and other materials that could be added to the shields. Then the students sketched their ideas directly on the shields and painted with acrylic paint (see appendix 3).
Through the experiences I have had on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation over the past five years, I have come to my understandings about this culture. I learned values, beliefs and traditions from the people of Fort Peck. I also learned that a teacher on a reservation must take the initiative and effort to learn about the culture. I have seen many teachers come and go who have not taken the time to understand this culture.

According to Arts Content Standard 5, in the Montana Standards for Arts, students need to understand the role of Arts in society, diverse cultures, and historical periods (McCulloch, p. 7). Of foremost importance is that students be knowledgeable about arts of their own culture. Only then can they explore the relationships of arts in other cultures. The students at Fort Peck teach me about the art from their culture. They know its significance and are willing to share this understanding with me. In turn, I help them to understand the larger scale of the significance Native American Art has in relationship to the world.

Along with accommodating for different learning styles in my classroom, it was important to meet the cultural needs of my students. Bergstrom, Cleary and Peacock explain how, by utilizing certain teaching methods, a teacher can be more effective with Native students:

Positive teaching characteristics include having cultural knowledge, using encouragement, using explanation, using examples and analogies, having high expectations, being fair and demanding respect for all learners, being flexible, being helpful, being interested in students, listening and trying to understand, and using multiple approaches (106-161).

Utilizing these strategies when teaching Indian students ensures success for all, as it would with any culture or group of students. I strive for these actions daily with my
classes. By being consistent in positive approaches to teaching, I have built high levels of trust with my students.

To help understand students in the classroom better, I volunteered to serve on a committee that plans the events during Native American week, which takes place each September. I helped students design and decorate a float for a parade in Wolf Point. Our school’s theme was *Capture Your Dreams* and we constructed two extremely large dream catchers with willow hoops. I shared some new ideas with the committee and arranged for a drawing and bulletin board contest for the high school and junior high (see appendix 6). This was the perfect place for me to implement my new lessons. Students took this contest seriously and took pride in their artwork. Having the opportunity to get to know some of the students outside the regular class schedule, while working on the float, was helpful in the development of our relationships inside the classroom.

Another teaching practice took place outside of school on an overnight field trip to Great Falls. We visited the Charlie Russell Art Museum (see appendix 8). This was many of my student’s first museum experience. We viewed Russell’s paintings, a Karl Bobmer exhibit, and the museum’s permanent collection. The students were really excited about some of the contemporary Indian artwork of Kevin Red Star. This experience showed me that these students needed to be exposed to as many art experiences as possible in and outside the classroom.
Native American Cultures hold unique and exceptional visions of the world. They developed rich cultures based upon respect for the natural world. The art objects of the past were created dependant upon place, time and tradition. These often utilitarian objects were products of effort. The objects developed out of the necessity of life’s demands. Growing crops, cutting wood, hunting animals and conducting life with the tribe are examples of activities that allowed for creative inventions. Some of these early inventions were moccasins, medicine pouches, weapons, tools, household implements, baby carriers and toys.

Widespread misconceptions that all Indians are alike are prevalent, even in education. Generalizations concerning Native American Art are also common. The reality is that these generalizations are not accurate. Jamake Highwater identifies and describes eight different cultural regions in his book *Arts of the Indian Americas: Leaves from the Sacred Tree*. The eight regions are the Northwest Coast, Great Basin and Plateau, Pacific Central Coast, Southwest, Great Plains, Midwest, Southeast and Eastern Woodlands. Each region is culturally distinct and within each region there are distinctions from tribe to tribe. There is variation in materials, techniques and decorative designs. Each culture developed its own unique and recognizable style.

This research was necessary in my project in order to understand regional distinctions clearly so they could be articulated in my lessons. I discovered there is such a wealth of diversity and variety of Native American Arts from this country. The
following paragraphs will give a brief overview of the eight cultural region and some general characteristics of each.

Highwater’s book begins with the Northwest Coast region. It consists of a narrow strip of coastal Alaska south into Washington State. Native artwork from this region was primarily carved objects and sculptures. Powerful totem poles and ivory tusk carvings are the most recognized Northwest Coast art objects. Masks that were carved from wood for use in their potlatch ceremonies are present, and limited amounts of weavings were also constructed in this region.

The Great Basin and Plateau region is made up of Idaho, Nevada and Utah. Parts of Oregon, Washington and Montana are also included. This region is most known for its fine basketry. The baskets were exceptional in weave and design. This region is also known for paintings on animal skins.

Highwater goes on to describe the Pacific Central Coast region, which consists primarily of California. The Native Art of this region was primarily basketry. These fine weavings were embellished with ornamentation of feathers and shells.

Arizona and New Mexico make up the Southwest region. Original pottery is most famous from this region. The tribes of this region used strong color as well as figurative and geometric designs. Weavings and sand paintings also come from this region. Most recently, silversmithing has become a popular artistry in the Southwest.

Another region is the Great Plains. The states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and parts south into Texas make up this region. These Indians were seasonal buffalo hunters. Most of their art objects were made from animal skins. These skins were highly decorated for social, personal and religious purposes. Plains Indians
are known for porcupine quillwork, beadwork, painted hides, ledger art, pictographs and regalia. They used geometric designs and curvilinear patterns on these objects.

The Midwest stretches from the Great Lakes south to Alabama and from Oklahoma eastward to Tennessee and Georgia. The tribes of this region were carvers and stone sculptors. Most of the objects that came out of this region were made of stone, shell and bones. These Natives also created beadwork and pictographs.

The Southeast region lies from the Atlantic Ocean west to eastern Oklahoma and from the southern Appalachian Mountains down into Florida. The Southeast region is known for its ceramic containers. These containers were decorated with geometric lines. Basketry and cloth patchwork were also created in this region.

The final region Highwater covers is the Northeast or Eastern Woodlands. These tribes were fine painters. This region is scattered from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Erie and South to North Carolina. Many Native people from this region were stone carvers. They also created false face masks, wampum belts, cornhusk masks and dolls. The people of this region are also known for body art, which consisted of designs that were tattooed or painted on the body.

All of these regions experienced change in their material and artistic culture over time. It is a continual yet constant process. New materials were acquired through intertribal trade or introduced by Europeans. While viewing art from all these cultural regions, I learned to identify characteristics of each region. It also became important to me as a teacher to have discussions about these distinctions in my classes. By doing this geography and history of artifacts, I learned of cultural distinctions and their significance.
Project Significance

The significance of *Native Expression* centers on achieving a fuller and deeper understanding of the culture and place in which I live and teach. My cultural understandings are now greater due to my educational research. I gained an overview of Native American Arts. Implementation of Native American Art lessons has changed how I teach art. Seeing the student artwork created due to this project has also expanded my cultural understandings. The significance of adapting my teaching approaches to the specific cultural needs of these Native American students was an important transformation that needed to take place in my teaching abilities. While conducting an interview, I realized the long-term importance that my new teaching strategies could actually have.

When a teacher or instructor can incorporate an Indian student’s traditions in a classroom a new dynamic is formed which allows that student to see the inherent value of their culture as an equal to anything that modern education can offer. It is that kind of blending or cross-cultural exchange that helps shape the new and important ways we identify ourselves as tribal peoples (Smoker-Broaddus, interview).

It is this perception and action in students that I strive for in my teaching. To aid students in their development of identity through the visual arts is rewarding for me as a teacher and as a person.

The symbols chosen to represent this community’s culture in the body of student artwork undoubtedly will bring a heightened awareness of, and respect for, the reservation and its people to all its viewers. The Frazer students furthered their artistic skill development in creating art derived from cultural symbols. These Native American
students are proud of their artistic heritage, and equally proud of their skill and creation of art. The traditional and contemporary Native American Art forms we looked to, field trips and classroom activities have opened my students to creating art. They are inspired to grow as learners and Native American youth as they reflected on the artistic expressions that are so abundant in their ancestry and community.

**Unexpected / Expected Results**

Some unexpected results occurred though the process of this project. The helpfulness of local reservation community members for advice, knowledge and direction greatly impacted this project. They offered me a wealth of information about working with certain materials such as rawhide and willow. The students painted slabs of sandstone loaded with cultural symbols and meaning (see appendix 5). I was also surprised by the intensity and involvement in the completion of the student’s art projects. In the past, students have sometimes lost interest half way through a project. This year I did not find that to be the case. During the construction of the twelve-inch tipi models, the concentration students had in arranging the skewer stick as tipi poles was amazing. It became a long frustrating process because of the scale of the sticks. These students would not give up until their tipi was standing. The students showed me how to lay the poles down in a tripod to begin the arrangement. Many students had set up actual tipis before and showed the rest of the class how to begin the tripod. While working on this project, many students shared personal stories with me about their experiences in tipis. After constructed, the models were designed with cultural and personal meanings (see appendix 1).
Through this project, my relationships with students strengthened because of my efforts to understand them and their culture. A new level of trust was established that was not present in earlier years. The students felt comfortable in sharing methods of working with materials, expertise they have gotten from their elders, and to experiment with new materials. The students also see me more as a normal person and can communicate more openly with me. It seems like the students can sense my openness and willingness to understand them better as individuals and their culture.

A general transformation of my teaching strategies, curriculum and subject matter knowledge is growing and evolving. New ways I motivate and inspire students also developed. Looking to traditional and contemporary Indian art supports the cultural needs of these students in art education and life. Students are asked to look inside themselves for direction from personal experiences and their culture. This change in my teaching has opened up the door for choice of subject matter in many of these students’ artworks.

This project also yielded some expected results. Students created beautiful artwork loaded with cultural symbols and meaning. This is especially evident in the artwork for the Indian Health board of Billings poster contest (see appendix 9). The background knowledge I gained about Native American Art, symbols and culture benefits my teaching now more than ever. Repetition of some common symbols like the circle are present in many artworks. Plains people considered the circle to be an ideal form with no beginning nor end (Conn, p. 8). This explains why these youngsters, descendants of Plains Indians, naturally incorporate the circle into their artwork. I see the circle appear
in many paintings and drawings that are culturally relative. For example, the use of a medicine wheel was common in student design.

The material culture available to these students continually changes. Like their ancestors, they must use the materials available to them to create art. According to Howard Gardner, artists typically begin by mastering techniques developed by their predecessors; and if a technique is not already available, they will try to devise one (Gardner, p.196). This is especially true of Native American youth that are learning artistic traditions from their elders. For example, the beadwork that is seen on common objects like watch bands and lighters is a reinvention of the traditional beadwork that their elders did on moccasins and dance outfits. Youth may reinvent or experiment with a combination of a traditional approach with new material or design motifs.

**Effects on Teaching**

Professionally, my teaching shifted dramatically from teaching visual art to the full inclusion of these students’ artistic culture in the classroom. Personally, I gained new knowledge and confidence. Not only have I learned background knowledge in Native American Art, I have been successful in designing these lessons in art. The curriculum that I annually teach is marked by a shift to meet the cultural needs of my students. For example, I learned how to make dream catchers and taught students the steps. The three steps are to wrap the hoop, create the web and hang beads and feathers for the drop (see appendix 4). Because of this project, the relationships between students and I function at a new and dynamic level. Trust and mutual respect is now more evident in my classroom.
How I focus students’ thinking as I design their experiences in art also shifted. Besides building on previous knowledge, I encouraged students to work from their own personal experiences. This enabled students to have complete ownership of their ideas. They were invited to look at and shape their own perceptions of the world, their culture and the reservation. Focusing and studying traditional, functional and ceremonial objects of the past also inspired students. It aided them in design, subject matter and color choices. All of these strategies in designing these experiences in art enabled students to gain confidence in their ability to express themselves in this world as Native American youth.

**Personal Discoveries**

The approach I have taken to research history and the correct contexts of Native American Art was a comfortable approach for me to begin with. This plan ensured that I would not be put in an uncomfortable place or cross any cultural boundaries. Through participating in the *Raven’s Voice* course, I gained a wealth of information to help me design lessons for my classroom. Now that my educational foundation is growing stronger, I am becoming a resource for some of our school’s new teachers on how to design culturally appropriate lessons. This project has also shown my students that I am willing to learn from them, their culture and trust their knowledge of materials.

My personal artistic growth is also affected. Because of my student’s new enthusiasm about their projects, I am able to make the connection as to why it is so crucial to have personal meaning in artwork. It has also become tremendously important for me to pursue an artistic direction of expressing the experiences I have on the
reservation and with its people. Through this project, I feel that I am at a comfortable point with why I am here teaching and how I could express it in future artistic pursuits.

My teaching feels more deliberate and purposeful than it did prior to undertaking this project. It is my hope that shifting the way I approach teaching art will be strongly felt in this community and impact all the students I work with for years to come. Through Native Expressions, my students had the opportunity to express personal, cultural and symbolic meaning in the visual arts. They become part of a proud artistic tradition in this community.
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