

Creative Message Exchange – Children and First Nation Artists

A set of beautiful messages were exchanged between children and First Nation artists after the Launch of the 'For Our Future' project. The Launch included a Smoking Ceremony, a Deep Listening Ceremony and a Concert of environmental songs involving children and community musicians. 200 people attended the Launch which took place at the Penguin Parade Visitor Centre.



After the Launch, Grade 4 students from Newhaven College drew images in response to their experience of the day. Three of the First Nation artists who helped facilitate the Ceremonies looked at the artworks and responded to the children's messages. They were Traditional Custodian Uncle Steve Ulula Parker (Boonwurrung/Yorta Yorta/Erub), Matua Arnold Thema (Maori), and Aurelio Denasha (Ojibway). The Creative Message Exchange revealed a strong sense of connection to Country and community shared by both the children and the First Nations' artists.



Here are some responses to the children's artworks from Uncle Steve Ulula Parker:

'As a First Nations Boonwurrung man, I have been moved by the way the images show the impact the Ceremony has had on young people. I see them understanding it in a visual way. The younger generation are understanding First Nations' culture. Our culture, our Country. That's what it's all about. We can tell the truth of what has happened. We can pass that on down to non-Indigenous people and embed it in generations to come. It can change our ways of thinking. It's a way of moving forward.

I am quite amazed at what the Bubup (children) are seeing.

The beautiful sunshine that was out that day.

Waa (Crow) in the sky and Bunjil (Eagle) in the trees

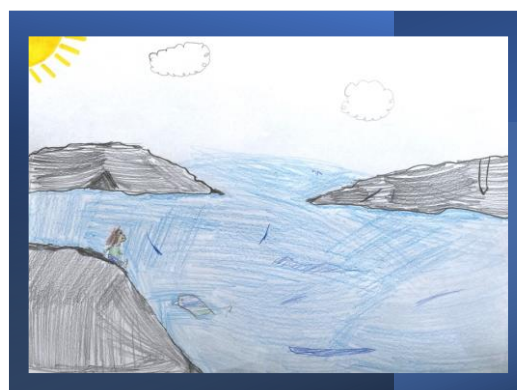
Footsteps on the land

A meeting place around the campfire.

Bunjil was there before everybody came out to that ceremony.

Bunjil was flying around above us

Watching, listening, connecting.



A quiet moment sitting on Country

Beautiful Country

Sun, bird, sky, water

Connecting

Earth meeting water and water meeting sky

All of the elements

And the colours of Earth

A deep sense of connection

Connecting to all of the world's cultures

Across the whole of the Earth.'



Maori Elder and musician Matua Arnold Tihema sent the following responses back to the children:

'I appreciate these images.

A younger generation has understood the need to care for Country.

There will be a continuation of what we have started.

Their interpretations say things in ways that words can't.

They are a response from the heart.

We need to appreciate what they've done and give them encouragement to go further into it.

The Deep Listening Ceremony was the opening of the invitation to engage

There was story, song, language, dance and poetry

There was such generosity

There was a sense of First Nations people connecting to offer this invitation

We pay respect to each other

Respect lies at the heart of Ceremony

It doesn't matter what religion you have what colour your skin is or what language you speak

We are all under the same sky.'

And finally, some responses from Ojibway dancer and story-teller Aurelio Denasha from Turtle Island:

'There is beautiful storytelling in these images.

It comes from the heart of a child.

Only a child could draw with this simplicity and make it so powerful.

When we sing, we are connected to the land

We are so connected that all the animals listen

They can hear that everybody is connected

I see life giving life

Being ready for birth

The birth of a new generation

A new generation is coming up

There are choices to make

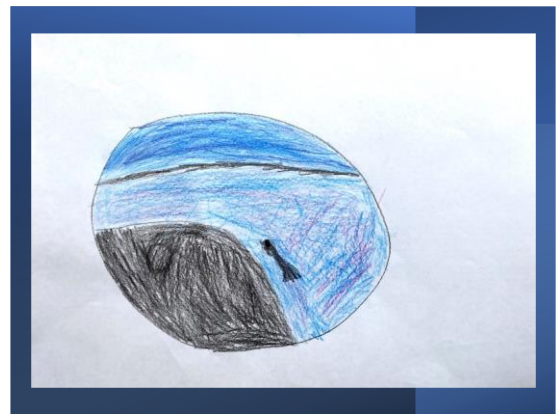
We have to be careful

What will we choose?

There is a sense of potential about to burst through

There is a message here

It is beautiful.'



Messages from the Creative Message Exchange will be displayed at exhibitions in Myli Libraries in Bass Coast (June 2023), Wonthaggi ArtsSpace (August – September 2023) and the Cowes Cultural and Community Centre (October 2023).