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Teacher as a researcher

We set out to view the opening of the new Australian Gardens at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Cranbourne. The array of coloured soils, plant and tree species related to climate regions and cultural significance were extensive and provoked for us questions about the links between culture and land. In listening to the education officer, the value of sharing oral stories was powerful as was the education officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens(RBG) in Melbourne when we participated in the Indigenous Resource Trail. Together with some of my colleagues we attended a professional learning seminar 'Connecting to Country- Sharing the Stories'. Three artists shared their expertise, one of whom, as a sculptor, workshopped with us. We gained an understanding of community installations representing history and structures using natural materials which in some cases were not permanent but ephemeral. This concept was one we would pursue during our investigation this year.



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A sense of history

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A sense of place - developing relationships

The viewing of photographs by renowned photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand who in sharing his observations and memories of places he has visited offered another lens, the 'land from above' using aerial photography. This was a further provocation for the children to share new ways of telling a story. The children discussed their memories of places that they had visited with their families. What aspect of this memory would they make visible and remain with them after returning. This was an opportunity to facilitate different ways of seeing and making visible one's thoughts as well as exploring how groups made visible a memory or story through a collective experience and therefore the perpetuation of this for future generations.



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A sense of land - the land and its resources, stories unfold

We participated in an Indigenous Resource Trail that highlighted the history and resources of this area. After visiting both gardens the impact of what had been shared was significant to previous visits we may have made with family and friends. The children explored the concept of story telling using resources in this area to create a collaborative story.



























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Mark making meaning

The idea of 'mark making meaning' was ever present as both the teachers and the children documented their understandings during this investigation. Marks in paint, print, natural materials... the children became detectives in search of the detail, recording their findings and their thinking about its meaning.

The children were curious in exploring the technique of engraving 'lines of meaning' to share their ideas from the naturally occurring patterns of the land. They were further surprised by the effects of these lines when using a printing press to print of copies of their design. The moment of suspense when turning the wheel of the press and then printing their design, to be admired and reviewed by their peers was visible. As too, the children's realisation that one could add another layer of lines to the design and reprint with additional information.



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The past, present and the future

Marks engraved, marks painted, marks woven, marks sculptured. In some instances marks made by individuals, but largely marks shared by a group. The idea of collaboration and community were for us a major factor. The painting by the 22 women was very detailed. It inspired me and made me think. In response to the children listening to a story about one of the collaborative paintings in the exhibition one child responded; If I had known when I was young there I would have looked for it too. At the end of their two years together our classes traditionally leave a memory for the school and for themselves of their time together. Leaving their mark... The idea of a 'story pole' as named by one of the children instilled in this group our philosophy of group learning, support and collaboration. An individual is as strong as the group.









































We are all part of one land.



The 2013 year began with the Year One teachers and Helene our art educator deliberating on what our Year One investigation might be and where we thought it may lead. After much discussion and several meetings our umbrella statement was to be, 'We are all part of one land'. We knew we wanted our children to gain an insight into their land and what the indigenous people had contributed to its history. We also wanted the children to have an understanding of their own history and to contemplate what they may contribute to this amazing continent we inhabit. As researchers we spent an afternoon at the Cranbourne Botanic gardens with the thought that these gardens may have something to offer us in regards to our investigation. Back at school we looked at landscapes of Australia in a broad sense and especially at the landscape we spend much of our time in, namely our school, Bialik College. The visit to the Cranbourne Gardens with the children didn't

eventuate. Instead we found ourselves at the Royal Botanic Gardens(RBG) on the Indigenous Heritage Trail with Trevor their indigenous educator.

Visit to the RBG

Trevor welcomed us with a traditional Tanderrum, a welcoming ceremony where each of us was invited to place a gum leaf into a small fire so that we were all participants in the ceremony. We were then shown many pieces of equipment that were traditionally used for hunting and gathering food. Trevor invited us to his supermarket which made everyone giggle until we realized that he was serious. He introduced us to plants which were used for tea, for medicines, for general eating and for medicine and relaxation. The children were in awe of his knowledge and the use of what they had only minutes before viewed as ordinary plants. This day will stay with them forever as Trevor captured their imaginations and they understood that the first people had respected nature and used it sparingly for their subsistence. It also caused us to reflect on the question " If the first people came to Australia over 50,000 years ago , how does Trevor know so much about them?"

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Visit to the Ian Potter Centre

The RBG had proven to be the ideal provocation and the children had had their appetites for knowledge of their land and the first people ignited. Following our visit to the RBG we had uncovered rock art and several other ways in which the indigenous people told their stories. This prompted a visit to the Ian Potter Centre to see many indigenous works of art first hand. Before the children visited, the teachers again spent a morning as researchers and learners at the Ian Potter Centre so that we had some prior knowledge before taking the children. This meant we could also raise some questions and present some provocations to the children before their visit so that they too had some prior knowledge before their visit. With great excitement, the children spent the morning viewing, drawing and contemplating questions of what we saw. We saw firsthand the different methods which were used to pass on stories and the richness of the indigenous art. Many questions were posed and many memories were laid.

















What has been handed down to us?

A major part of our investigation led us to ponder what has been handed down to us from our ancestors. The indigenous people felt the necessity to pass their traditions on their ongoing generations to keep their culture alive. With this in mind the Year one teachers asked the children and their parents to discuss what they had had passed down to them from their forebears. With this question they were asked to also consider this in the light of their Jewish culture which is an integral part of their lives. They were asked to fill out a survey to return to the class for ongoing discussion and contemplation. It was also vital to consider why it is important to have traditions and culture passed down. What does it mean to you to have something carried over to you from your family who has gone before you?

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What is our story

As a conclusion to our investigation, we thought it would be extremely meaningful to pass on something of ourselves. We wanted to hand on our story to the next generation coming through the ELC, to leave something of ourselves for them to reflect on. We needed to design our story, the journey we had taken together over the last two years and to decide what individual stories were important to include in the collective story of 1K 2013. How would we present this symbolically to represent our story? After much mindful thought and collaboration, we decided to leave a story pole as a gift for the ELC. For practical purposes the design we settled on was to be in five sections. This allowed the children to divide into five groups to choose the areas of our story they thought were the one important ones to include in our story. We had previously collaborated on the design of a class flag using symbols, so the process was familiar to each group. They each had a scribe who wrote down their ideas. Then there was a great deal of discussion until they reached a consensus with their ideas. Once this was decided it was a matter of working on the symbols to be used for each group's message and finally we were ready to transfer all this to clay to form the final product, our story pole. Set in the ELC, we would be able revisit this to remind us of our journey together. Importantly, it would also allow our collective history to be read by others and treasured in a setting where both individually and as a group, we had learnt together and known that we are all indeed all part of one land.

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Making the Pole

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Reflections

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How it all started

Our on going investigation this year has focused on the children discovering their identity based on learning about aspects of their past and how this shapes their developing identity. There was a particular focus on how different traditions, customs and cultural aspects of their families have shaped their identity.



Visting the Royal Botanic Gardens

This journey began when students visited the Royal Botanic Gardens. During this visit the children met Trevor. Trevor is the Indigenous Education Officer at the Royal Botanical Gardens. Trevor shared with the children stories about how he learnt from his older generations to do certain things. He spoke about how he used different tools and about how he learnt to use different plants. Furthermore he explained how his elders had learnt from their elders.













Meeting Trevor

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The children also took part in a Tanderrum, an Indigenous welcoming ceremony to the land. The ceremony highlighted the respect the Indigenous people have for their land and their shared responsibility in sustaining our environment. Trevor explained how this ceremony has been handed down from one generation to another for thousands of years and how it forms a very important part of his identity.

The children also investigated how such traditions form an important part of Trevor's life and how they have made him the person he is.

And how does that relate to us?

To give a greater context to this understanding, as a teaching team we thought it was important for the children to investigate what traditions and customs have had been handed down in their families and what role this has taken in forming their own developing identities. As a teaching team we compiled a survey that was sent home to students' families. The children were encouraged to fill out the survey together with their families.



Dear Parents,

As part of our on-going investigation into culture, community and communication students have been investigating how stories are passed down from one generation to another.

During our visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens the students met Trevor. Trevor told the children stories about how he learnt from his older generations to do certain things. He spoke about the use of different tools and how he learnt about the use of different plants. Furthermore he explained how his elders had learnt from their elders.

In the classroom we reflected on these conversations by investigating other ways skills and stories can be passed down, such as through dance, drawings and rituals.

We now want to link this idea of passing down skills, traditions, customs or rituals to our own families. This could be things like cooking, sewing, going somewhere etc. In term three we will be further investigating the key idea question:

What skills, traditions, customs or rituals have been passed down in your family?

To assist us with this investigation please assist your child with filling out the survey below.

What has been passed down to you?

How to make Chalkah
french toast

Who taught you?

my mummy, my paddy, my
nana and my papa

Anoushka

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What skills, traditions, customs or rituals have been passed down in your family?

To assist us with this investigation please assist your child with filling out the survey below.

What has been passed down to you?

Handwritten response: a Love of music

Handwritten response: a love of art

Who taught you?


	80	4000	
music	nothing	mum	Dad
art	nothing	safta	Ake

Who did they learn from??	Catherine taught Dad
Safta taught Mam	
music + art,	music / Xi

How did they teach you????

everyone
Sung to me
~~safta took me to Galleries~~

Do you teach anyone else this?

yes  teach my friends

If possible, please email me photographs, videos or other evidence of your child/ family practising this skill, tradition, ritual or custom. If you are unable to email, please send a hard copy.

Please return the survey and evidence by Monday ,July 22nd or before

I thank you in advance for your assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Rachel

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As part of our on-going investigation into culture, community and communication students have been investigating how stories are passed down from one generation to another.

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What skills, traditions, customs or rituals have been passed down in your family?

To assist us with this investigation please assist your child with filling out the survey below.

What has been passed down to you?

Football - My passion for football has been passed down from my Dad & from his dad before him. There is a culture of football obsession in his family.

Who taught you?

Since a very young age I have enjoyed watching & playing football with my dad & my brother. He has always bought me footy cards & it is always very exciting to share in the opening of the packets.

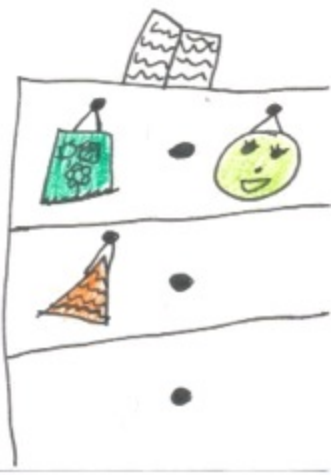
My family, traditions and my identity

In discussing the information from the surveys the children realised how different they all were and that they all had come from different pasts and backgrounds. We later pondered if they had been taught or handed down different traditions or skills would they be different people.





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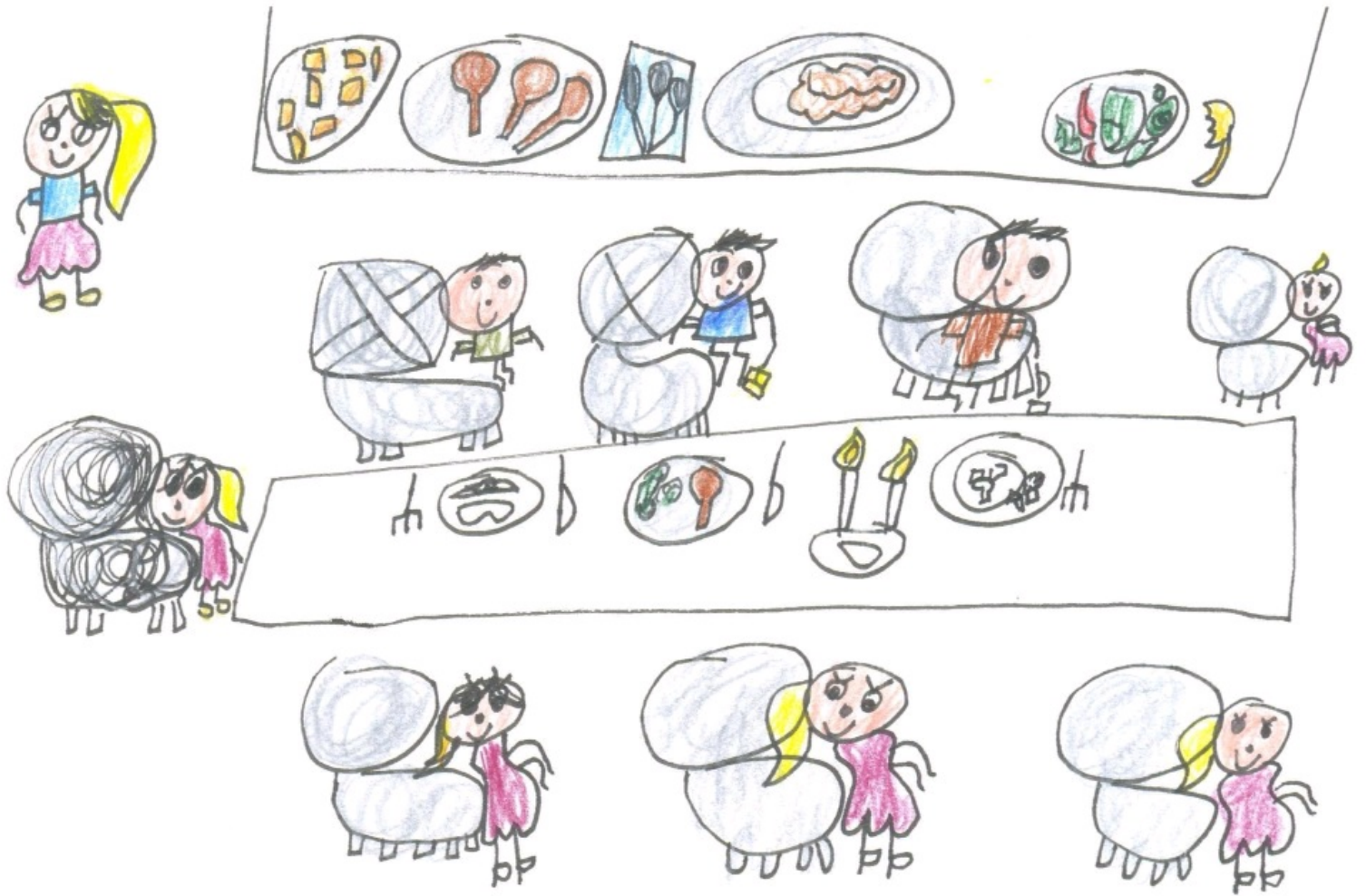




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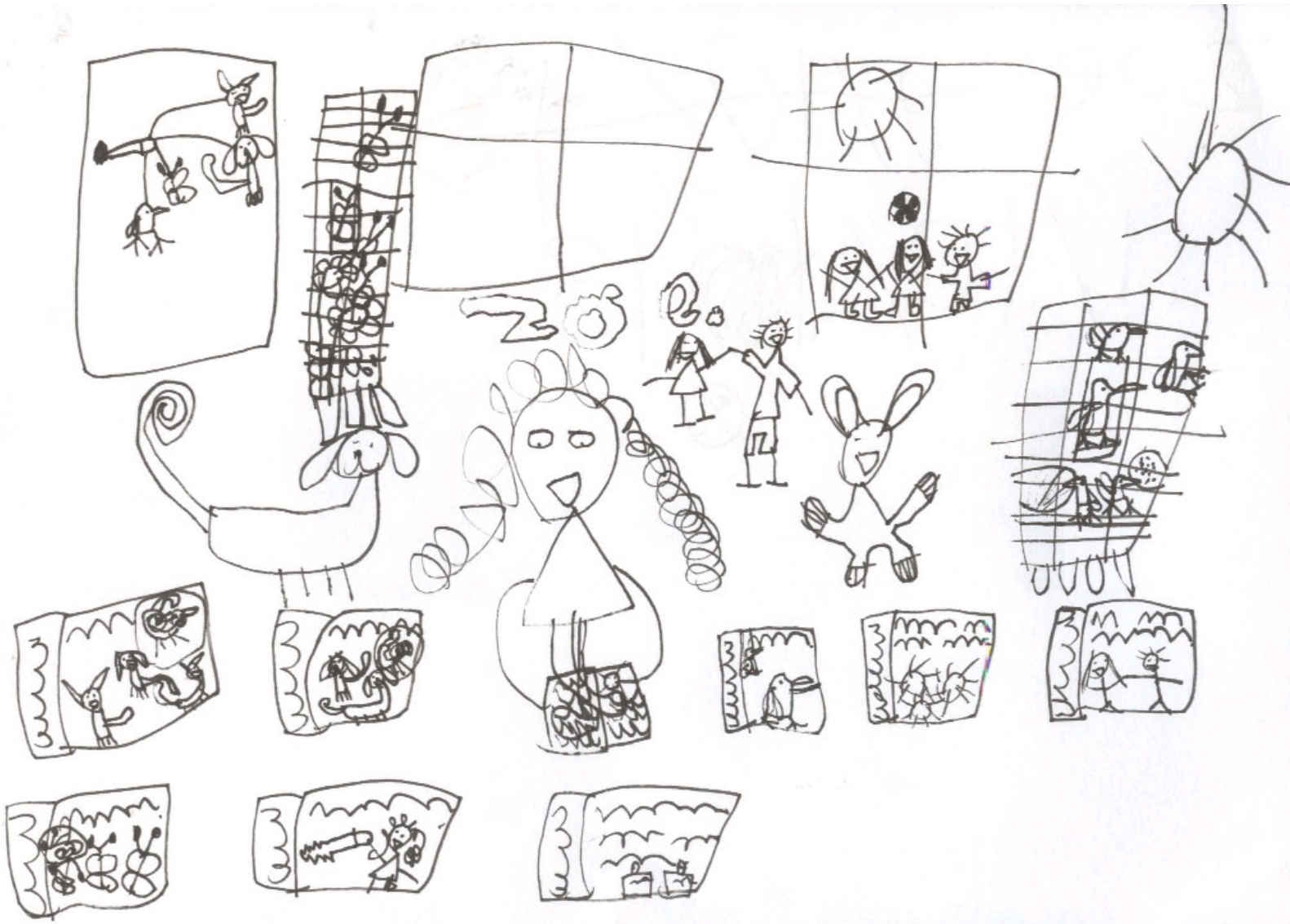
Year 1E

What is our footprint?

This year, our children have been researching and exploring ways in which history, traditions and understandings are passed down through different cultures. We began with a specific focus on our Australian Indigenous Culture and how stories, traditions and understandings have been passed down through generations over time. After then considering what has been passed down in each of our families, we explored ourselves as a class group. We found that we also share many things such as learning experiences, stories, memories, problems and games. We wondered then that if we were to tell a story of who we are in Year 1E, what would we share. What is important for us to share so that other people know we were a group who formed our own bonds? What mark would we leave behind for others to remember us by?

What has been passed down to us?

As a part of our research, we have explored things that have been passed down in our own families. Some families have special heirlooms that have been handed down from one generation to the next, some have secret family recipes, some have Jewish customs related to festivals or weekly Shabbat gatherings, some have skills that have been taught amongst them, and others have sporting passions that have been followed. Whatever it is, these are things that create special bonds in each family.



















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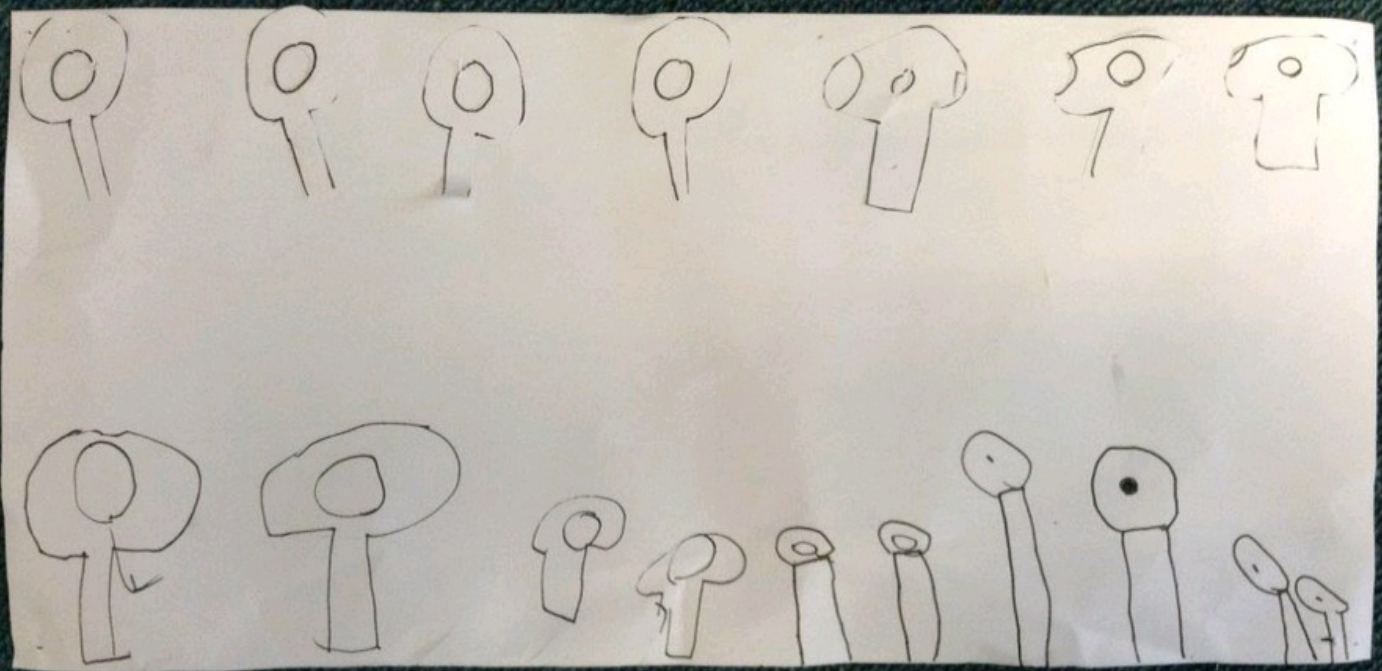
Story Pole Plans

Kind and caring



We are kind and caring. It is important for us to share our story so that we can share what we have done over the year with the people who come to Bialik. We used umbrellas as a symbol for looking after each other. We look after each other in the classroom and in the playground. We help each other all the time.

We are problem solvers



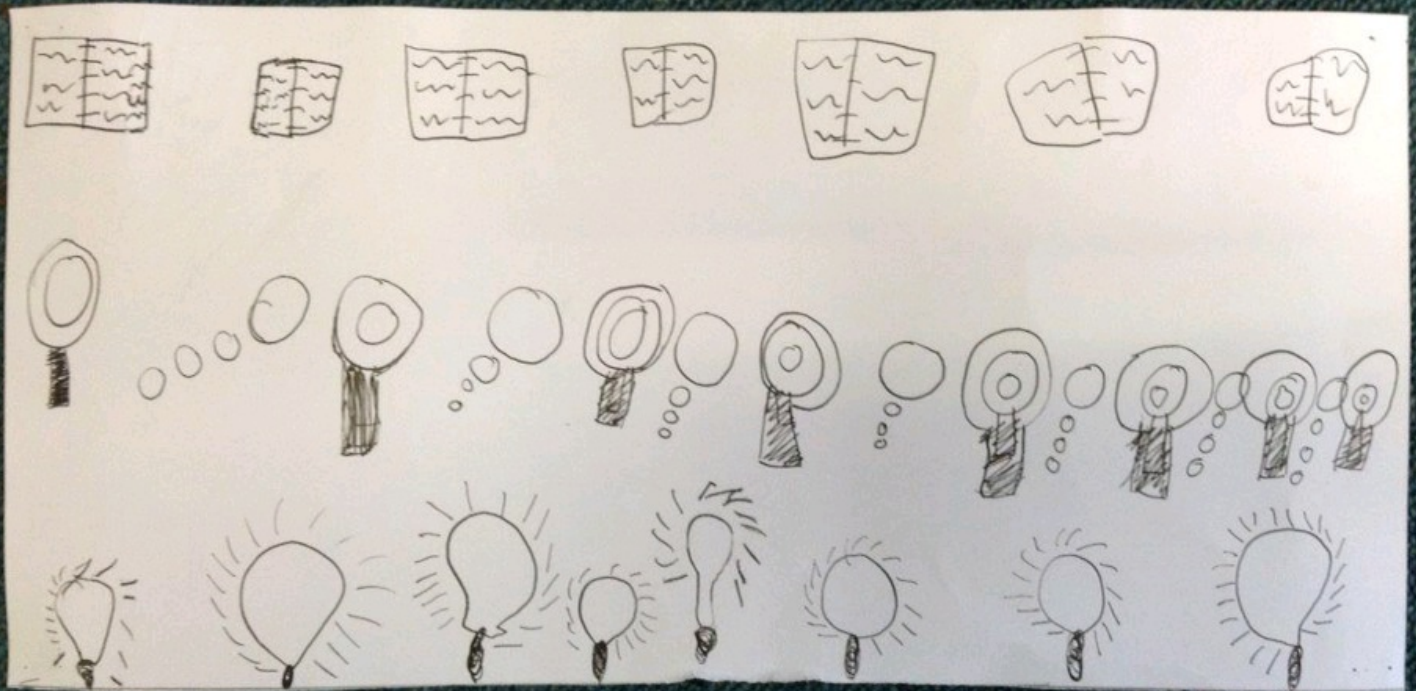
It is important to tell our story so that when people come into the school, they will know who we are. We used the symbol of a magnify glass to represent ourselves as problem solvers and explorers.

We are a team



It is important to tell our story so that other people know who we are. We made a line of people holding hands to show we are a team. We do lots of different things together. We learn together, we play together and we talk together.

We are thinkers and learners



It is important to tell our story so that people understand who we are and so that we can pass on our learning to other people. We used a magnifying glass to represent that we are explorers and a light bulb to show that we have bright ideas. The journals show how we document our learning and research information.

We are all unique



It is important for us to share our story so that when people come to visit us they know what we did at Bialik and who we are. We used people's faces because we are all different. We have different ideas, we draw differently, we are all different people and we all look different.

Exploring with Clay

As a part of the planning that went into creating their story poles, the children had the opportunity to explore the use of clay and how it might be used in their designs. The children manipulated the clay in different ways, exploring various techniques and moulding the clay into different objects. They also practised creating some of the symbols they had chosen to use.

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Creating the final product

Together with our Arts Educator, each group created their part of our story pole using clay slabs. They used two techniques using different tools. This involves carving into the clay slab and creating their symbols from a clay piece and adding to the slab using slip (a clay and water glue).

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Story Pole Reflections

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