

# Children and elders connect with art in Nanaimo



Students from Bayview Elementary School and elderly residents at Chartwell Malaspina Gardens Care Residence participated in an intergenerational art project called Connecting the Generations.

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CHILDREN and elders have connected through art over the last few months thanks to an intergenerational art project called Connecting the Generations.

The project was created through funding from the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Schools Foundation.

It connected Grades 1-2 and Grades 5-6 students from Bayview Elementary School with elderly residents at Chartwell Malaspina Gardens Care Residence.

“It was just amazing to see how excited the children were to come and meet their elder,” said Yvonne Vander Kooi, project coordinator and lead artist. “It was gorgeous to see over time ... a relationship begins to emerge and becomes important to both of them.”

Each elder was partnered with one to two children.

Vander Kooi said the art created revolved around the themes of identity and belonging.

These themes were explored through a series of questions given to the children and elders each day. Questions such as, what's your favourite memory as a child? Or what is the most important lesson you have learned in your life?

"It's been wonderful to have the opportunity for our elders to have time with the children," said Hilary Manning, general manager of Malaspina Gardens. "Many either don't have family or families that aren't close enough to visit."

She said it gave the residents purpose and a chance to share their stories. They looked forward to seeing the kids, she said. The project also aimed at creating a legacy for Malaspina Gardens.

"All artwork will be hung at Malaspina and be left as a gift at Malaspina Gardens," said Vander Kooi.

There were 26 pieces of art created through various mediums such as charcoal, pastel, paint, drawing and collage.

"The work itself records their experiences, stories of there time together," said Vander Kooi.

To mark the end of the project a celebration was held at Malaspina Gardens on Friday.

About 25 children and 14 elders participated in the project.

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