Native Americans

Mela, Hugo and Emmet exploring our Native American props.

The month of November naturally leads into a study on Native Americans. We explored Native American tribes and their lifestyles, concentrating on the Plains Indians. The children enjoyed learning about the food (buffalo), shelter (tipis), transportation (horses), communications (picture writing), tools (arrow heads) and culture of the first Americans. Concentrating on the close relationship that the Native Americans had with their environment, we began the unit with a study of the landforms found in the Midwest. Working with a partner, the children researched a particular landform by reading about the characteristics and observing photos. After reconstructing their landform out of colored clay, the pair shared their model with the class, explaining what they had learned and answering any questions.

Savanna and Shaylee constructing their model.

Mae and Emmet sharing with the class.

Important Notes

- It is that time of year! We go outside as often as the weather permits. Please send snow pants, boots, mittens and hats that are labeled with your child's name.
- Please remember to send shoes with your children if they wear boots to school.
- Our classroom can be hot; dress your child in layers.
We teachers offer the children experiences that build on earlier skills plus extend the time, attention and energy needed in the activity in order to help the children grow. This unit on Native Americans offered many opportunities to do just that. Many Native American tribes were excellent weavers. We built on the children’s earlier skill of patterning by introducing weaving. Over and under was heard repeatedly as the children worked on their looms. The task required the children to spend more time than they previously had been spending on activities. Our expectations of your children are increasing, and they are rising to meet them with beautiful success.

OBSERVATIONAL DRAWINGS

Drawing is an important part of our kindergarten day. We work on drawing lines, drawing shapes, drawing faces, drawing people, drawing animals, filling the white space, adding details, adding words, and building stamina.

Along with expressing our feelings and emotions, drawing helps us gain fine muscle control and strengthen eye-hand coordination. We develop our perceptual abilities by becoming aware of color, shape, form line and texture as we try to replicate them through our representations. Drawing gives us the opportunity to make choices and solve problems.

Children learn to value diversity as they compare each other’s art and see that people express themselves in different ways.

Drawing in kindergarten is a social activity! We share, wait our turn, ask for help and offer compliments or support. Vocabulary is enhanced as we share our observations and techniques with others.
This month, the children tried many different Native American foods: butternut squash, popcorn, dried apricots, cherries, pomegranates, beef jerky and buffalo meat and “everyone’s favorite” Fry Bread served with honey! Surprisingly, every one of the foods were “liked” by the majority of the class!

During the harvest season, Native Americans prepared for the winter months by drying foods. Dried foods kept longer without spoiling and were easier to store and carry. When out fishing or hunting or gathering, people enjoyed a small meal of dried fruit, nuts and perhaps pemmican. Pemmican was a mixture of pounded dried meat, berries or dried fruit and buffalo fat.

After researching the drying process with the children, we decided to try drying some foods. We are fortunate to have a food dehydrator at the Children’s School, so we made fruit leather out of flavored applesauce. The children devoured the fruit leather in 5 minutes! The children also tasted several fresh fruits versus dried fruits.

The Native American masks had varied purposes, from entertainment to spiritual and/or medicinal purposes. Many tribes believed that when a person donned a mask for specified ceremonies or rituals, the actual spirit of the animal depicted entered the individual wearing it and thus the individual was able to share this creature’s power, be it strength, purpose, wisdom, etc.

The children began this multi-step project by first painting a recycled cereal box a background color, next painting facial features and colorful designs, and last embellishing the mask with straw, moss and feathers. This week long process resulted in colorful and unique masks!
THREE SISTERS

The Three Sisters are an ancient method of gardening using an intercropping system that grows corn, beans, and squash simultaneously in the same growing area, which is typically a rounded mound of soil, often called a hill. **Corn** is the oldest sister. She stands tall in the center. **Squash** is the next sister. She grows over the mound, protecting her sisters from weeds and shading the soil from the sun with her leaves, keeping it cool and moist. **Beans** are the third sister. She climbs through squash and then up the corn to bind all together as she reaches for the sun. Beans help keep the soil fertile by converting the sun's energy into nitrogen filled nodules that grow on its roots. As beans grow, they use the stored nitrogen as food.

NOVEMBER SCIENCE EXPERIMENTS

This month, we concentrated on science experiments that focused on the natural world, especially the 3 sisters.

**Sprouting Indian Corn:**

**I wonder...**what will happen when we place an ear of Indian corn in a dish of water.

**I think...**Mrs. Armbruster recorded the children’s predictions. The children made many interesting hypotheses and were amazed when the corn sprouted!

**I learned...**that the corn seeds will begin to sprout while still on the cob.

**Planting the 3 Sisters:**

**I wonder...**which seed will sprout first.

**I think...**the children made their predictions and “planted” their 3 seeds in a ziploc baggie with a moist paper towel. The bags were taped to the window and checked daily.

**I learned...**that the beans sprouted the quickest but the corn plant grew the fastest.

**Animal Pelts:**

In the Science Center, the children explored a variety of animal pelts including bear, skunk, badger, rabbit, cow and coyote. Deer antlers and a cow skull were also available.

**Sprouted Indian Corn**  **The 3 Sisters sprouting**  **Pryns exploring the animal pelts.**
Math in the kindergarten is practiced throughout the entire day. The children begin the day answering the “Question of the Day”. The results are counted and tallied each day by the “Helper”. The concepts of equality, more and less are practiced.

Morning work may consist of counting, recognizing and writing numbers. Games such as rolling a dice, counting the dots and blotting out that number on a paper help with these skills.

Each week the children rotate the jobs of Number Helper, Math Spinner, Guessing Jar Helper and Snack Helper. The Number Helper writes the number of days that we have been in school to add to our 100 block chart. The helper also completes a chart by writing the number, spelling the word, recalling the numbers before and after, identifying the tens and ones, and then showing the number with tally markers and stickers. The Guessing Jar Helper asks each friend to make a ‘good guess’ of the number of items in the jar. At the end of the week, the items are counted and the children can check their guess. Snack Helpers set the tables for our daily snack. One to one correspondence is put into practice.

During our morning circle, the Weather Helper graphs the daily weather and reports on the changes in the graph. The calendar helper practices writing and recalling the day’s date.

Specific math skills such as patterning, sorting, graphing and adding are presented by the teacher in various ways during our morning group. The Smart Board, manipulatives, and books are all used to introduce a topic. Children practice the skill several times with a teacher in a small group. Once the skill has been mastered, the children are then asked to complete the task independently to check their competency.