

“Slocan Valley”

Our Journey of Learning

By

Valhalla Children’s Center

2010



It all began...

One day when I was visiting a friend of mine in Republic Washington, I noticed that everyone I spoke to knew the names of the area's mountains.

In comparison, I knew very few names for the mountains that were all around my home and they were much more spectacular.

What about other people in Slocan Valley, did they know the mountain names? What did the children know?



I asked the children: “Do you know if any of the mountains around us have names?”

Right away Torin says: “I do, Frog Mountain! I see it every time we go to Nelson.”

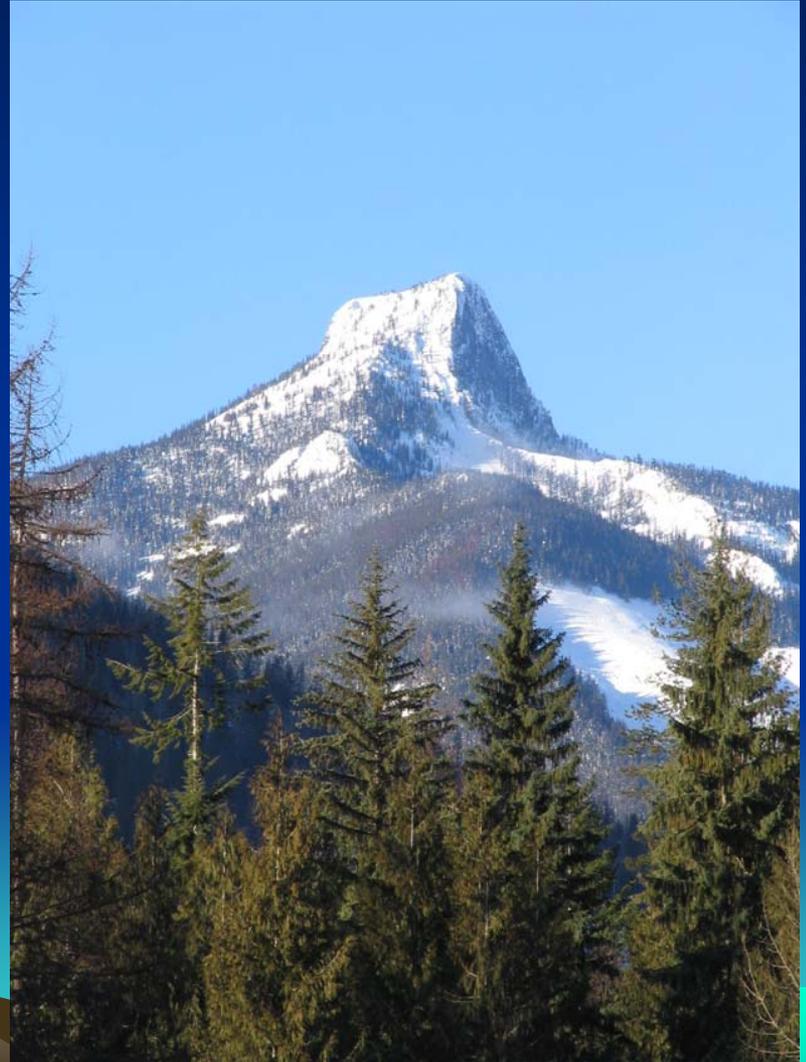
“Do you know anything about Frog Mountain that you can tell us?”

Torin: “I think it’s a frog.”



Frog Mountain

- We read Frog Mountain, the Sinixt “survival story”
- Discussed creation of mountains by volcanoes.



N: "What about the mountains around Valhalla daycare? Do any of them have names?"

All the children just looked at each other.

"I don't know." some said

N: "Maybe we need to go take a look at what is out there."

During the discussion that followed, we planned to walk to the beach and see what we find.

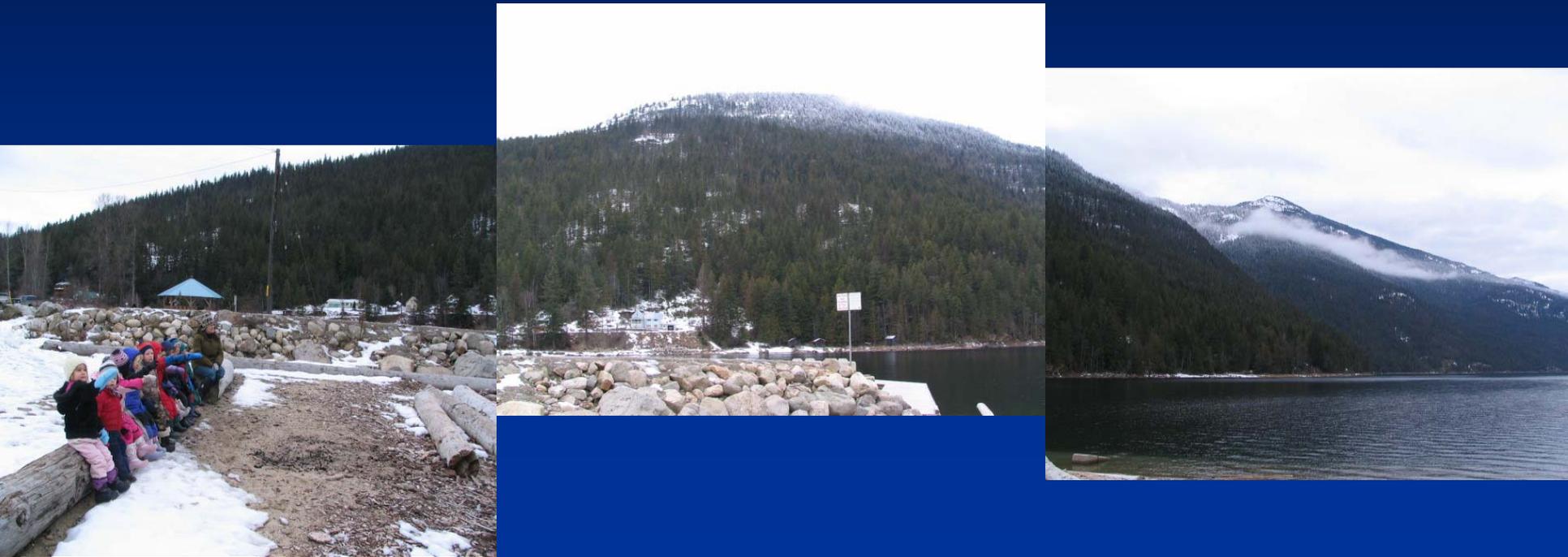
"We are going on a mountain hike
And what are we going to see?"

Gnoah noticed cracks in the road:
"How do they get there?"

Autumn: "do all birds go tweet, tweet?"
Serena insisted they did. But along comes a bluejay, three crows and a flock of sparrows. Autumn got her answer.



“Wow, there are lots of mountains!”



- Sitting on a log...
- “What is that mountain’s name?”

We found many mountains. What next?

- Research mountains and their names (Google, parents)
- Volcanoes: pictures, stories, models (clay? mache?)
- Stories: [The Mountain That Loved the Bird](#)



Although there was a lot of interest in Frog Mountain and volcanoes, the Slocan Valley was larger and more diverse than that. This was an opportunity for each child to share their own opinion on paper and see what other topics were of interest to the children.



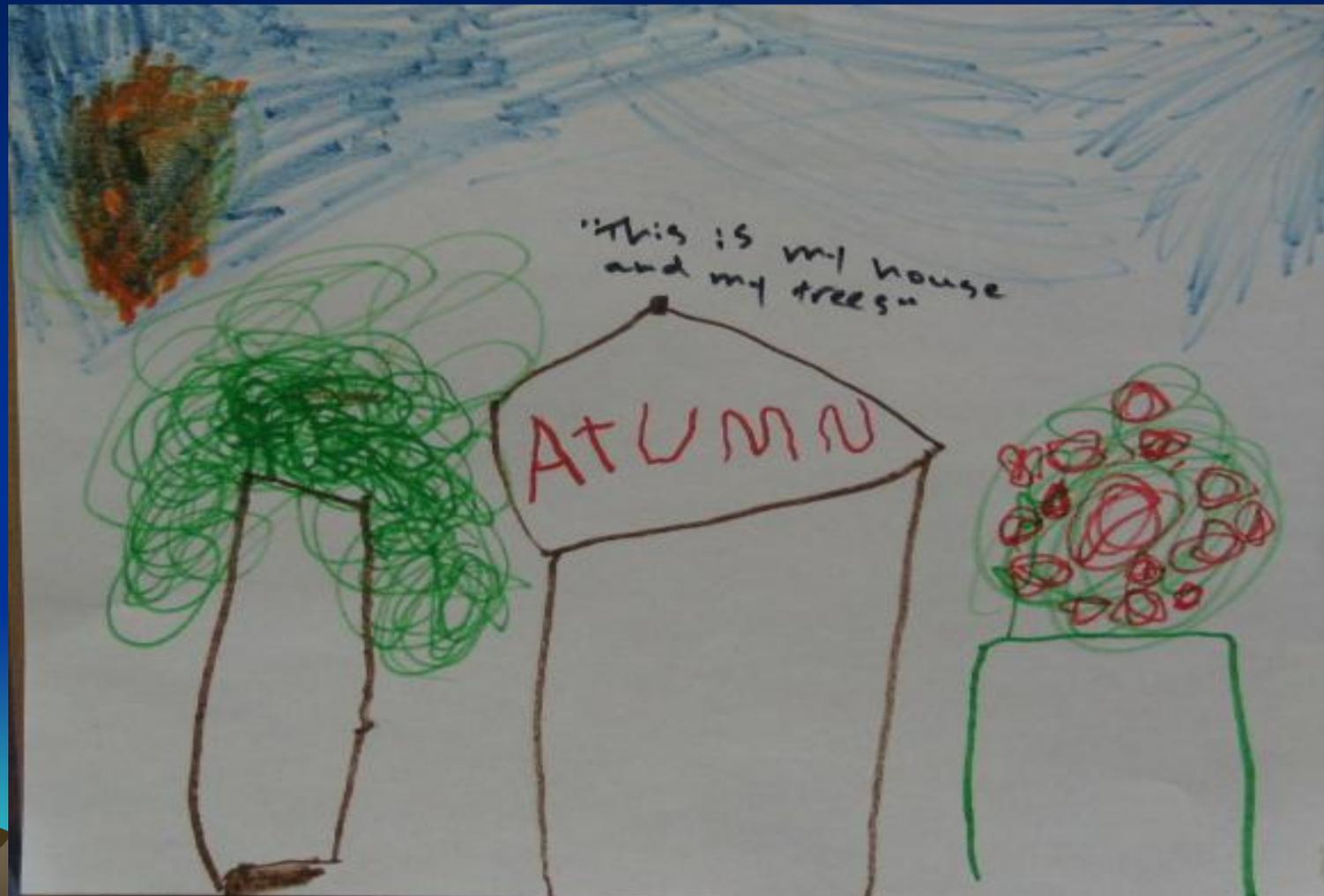
Discussion: What do you think of when you think of the Slokan Valley?

“This is Slokan Lake, the beautiful sky, it’s a sunny day and that’s my dad.”

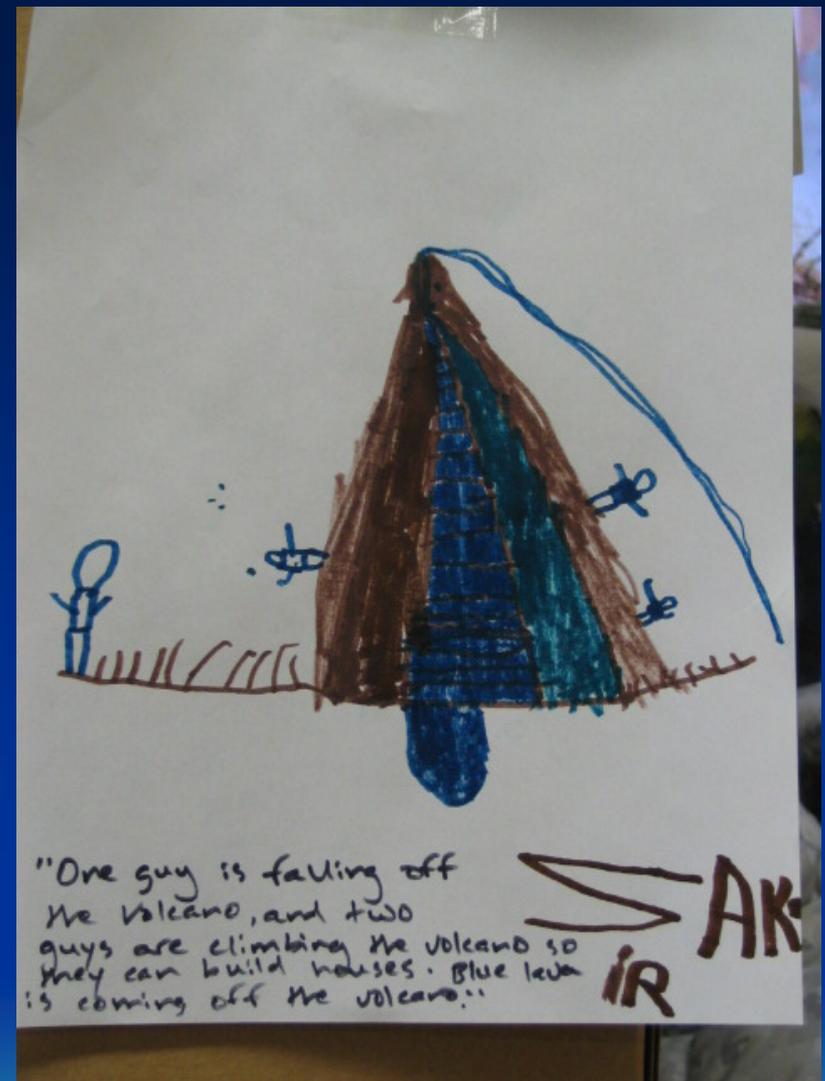
By: Serena



Autumn loves her trees. She talks about them and draws them often.



- Faye Ella's & Zakir's:



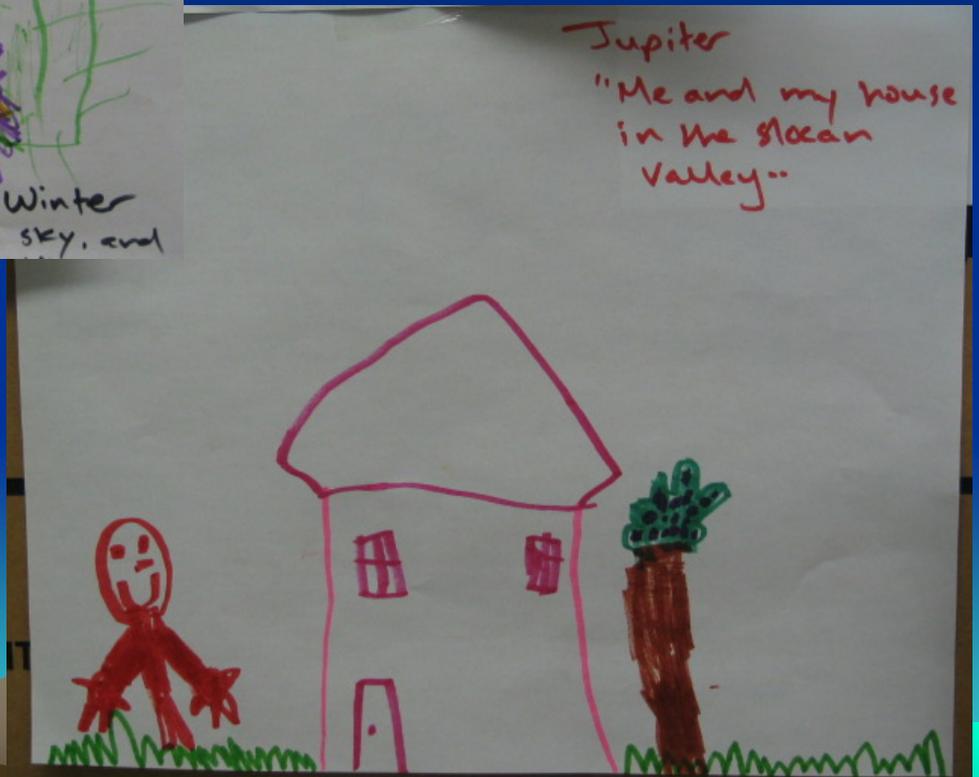
Zakir spoke to mom about his concern that Frog Peak might explode and hurt all the people.



Jupiter: "Me and my house in the Slocan Valley."

"A purple sky and lots of Trees."

by: Winter





"Two schools" "When I think of the Slocan Valley, I think of the Vallican whole school, and Natalies".

Conclusion: The Slocan Valley was their home and their illustrations showed a sense of safety.



What next?

- from mountains to trees, rivers, animals, people.
- From creation of mountains (volcanoes, etc.) the first people to their ancestors to now

“Mountains Road”

For 3D work, we chose paper mache, it is less brittle and the children can add to it each time they come. Also we had a large supply of recycle paper to access.

The children gave their project a name: “Mountains Road”. The tearing and mooshing began:



First day...



“Zakir Mountain”:

He spent a long time putting pressure onto his volcano mountain to make it smooth and just the way he liked it.

Harlow: “it is a mountain with a hole in it. The lava comes out of the top”.



Reflection:

I noticed that this first day most of the children were exploring with putting holes in the top of their mountains. Later some chose not to keep them but some did. Was it because of our discussions of volcanoes, their imitation of their peers, or from a fascination of unknown apparent dangerous things? (eg, guns, bears, racing cars, etc.)

They worked in close proximity of each other with very little conversation, their focus was on their own project. They kept going back for more mache until it was all gone. Then they spent their time finishing and smoothing and the conversations began to increase.



Mateo: "Mine is called Road Peak."

Torin: "I am making Frog Peak." (Torin often would not participate in anything that appeared like his perception of an "art" project but anything new and unknown to him, he would "check it out" and that is why I went with 3D).

Autumn: "I am making a cave. There is a bear living in there."

The next day:



Jupiter and Faye Ella joined us. We tore paper and mooshed up more mache.

Faye Ella made up a song and we all sang as we softened the torn paper:

“Mache, mache, we sing mache!” (over and over)



Serena: "me and Autumn are making an island".

Jupiter: "I am making a volcano. The lava is coming out of here". (he points to the top).



We googled Valhalla mountain range and found some pictures to download and we added them to our documentation board.

We googled volcano erupting and watched a video of volcanoes erupting.

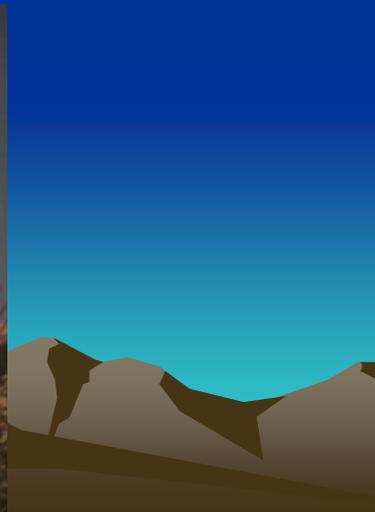


Mt. Prestley

Mt. Gimli & Mt. Asgaard



Dag



I also share my pictures of Pillar Rock:

- a sacred place of the Okanagan peoples.
- It reminded me of Faye Ella's mountain.



"I want to make it high"

Ming Lo Moves the Mountain Story Discussion

How can a person move a mountain?

Harlow: “cut it in half.”

Jupiter: “break it into rocks, move them and put them together.”

Autumn: “cut into a triangle and move to another place.”

Harlow: “get a big dump truck and lift it up.”

Mateo: “take a rock, lift it up and put it somewhere else.”

Soma: “cut into pieces, move it and glue it back together by the lake.”

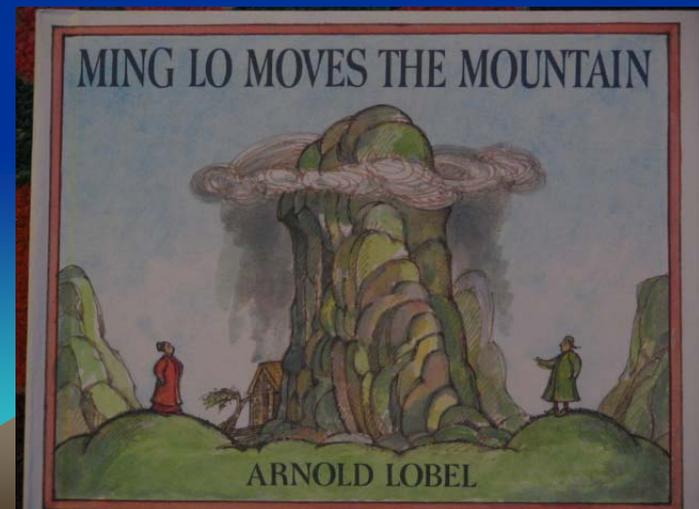
Winter: “move trees and move the mountain.”

Myles: “you have to get a lot of workers and cut down the highest mountain and cut it up into small pieces, bitties, take it into your hand and dump it into the lake and leave in there in small bitties.”

Serena: “you pull all the rocks out and move them into a different direction.”

Conclusion; We all agree!

- It is a big job! And a heavy job!
- It will have to be done in pieces, with lots of helpers
- Rocks are a large component of mountains, but there are also trees.



Faye Ella's Journey

Faye Ella spent a lot of time experimenting with her mache mountain. She made her mountain shape change from “pat-pat” flat, to “up high” and even to “a volcano”.

One day on a walk, she spotted something on her snowsuit. “I have it on my snowsuit!” she calls out to me.

Then she saw it on the log...no words. Her eyes went from snowsuit to log and back again, over and over.

Other children came over.

Faye Ella: “How did the mache get on the log?”

Taz: “from Faye’s snowsuit.”

Soma: “from Faye’s snowsuit.”

Jupiter: “I don’t know.”

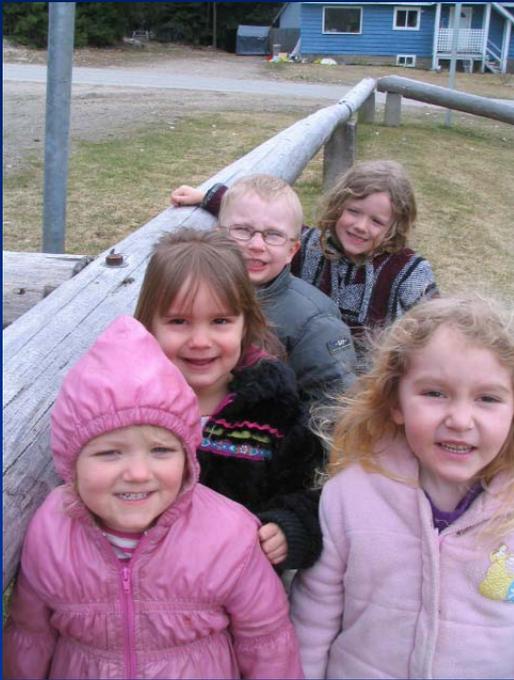
Torin: “maybe it got taken there by the wind.”

Faye Ella: “mache on my snowsuit from the log.”

What next? Paper making? Collecting a scraping from the log?



After the snow melted, we went back to the place where Faye Ella found the mache.



“It is still here!”



Torin's journey



The children who want to do more for their landscape, make the mache for the day and Torin is always there tearing along with everyone and his attention to the job is very positive.

Torin: "I am getting good at tearing paper. Look, the bowl is almost full!"

Torin speaking about this picture, says: "I was playing a guitar with my brain."

His mother says, "Torin now carries crayons and paper with him so he can draw his valley."

Natalie: "I also see that he is now wanting to paint at the easel and draw his ideas on paper with enjoyment and confidence."

Zakir's Journey

Zakir's sympathetic heart has been troubled about the effect on his beloved valley if a volcano erupted and he shares his concerns with his mom and Natalie.



Zakir's mom: "Zakir would come home and tell me about the moountain he was making. He told me it was frog mountain and it was a volcano that was made when a frog entered it long ago. He also said that he hopes that it never explodes as the whole valley would be covered in lava. He was excited to show me the real frog mountain when we drove to town."

Winter's Journey

Winter would not participate in the mache mountains but she always stood just behind the children that were and watched very intently. A week later after some of the children had mostly finished their mountains, she came closer and touched the mache with her finger. A few minutes later, she reached in to the tub and took out a little bit and placed it on the work surface. Soon she was engrossed in making her mountain but always with one hand up in the air.



Winter's fear of messy appears to have disappeared! She proudly shows her mom and dad her progress every day.

As the Reggio project work has shown repeatedly, every child is important for the group's learning. As Winter learned from the others before her not to fear the material, she also with her participation has been able to help others learn from her input into the project.



Mateo's Journey

Before this project: Mateo didn't like being too far from his brother. Whatever Harlow was doing, Mateo had to do and wherever Harlow would go, Mateo had to be right beside him.

During the project: we have seen Mateo's priority shift from his brother to his own interest in the project. He has begun to create what he wants with the materials, not what his brother does.

Now we see: Mateo off on his own or with other children, as a creative participant of the group.



Zakir: "We made this mountain together."

Natalie: "Does it have a name?"

Mateo: "It is named Two Brothers."

The Mountain That Loved A Bird

Story Discussion

Zakir: “Not even one blade of grass, or tree, or root.”

Autumn: “I think the bird would sound like tweet, tweet, tweet.”

Mateo: “the bird would sing la-la-la.”

Torin: “the bird would cheep.”

Zakir: (regarding the mountain crying) “that one tear will turn into a river.”

Natalie: “what is this picture telling us?” (the last one in the book)

Zakir: “the tree is getting older.”

Harlow: “she made a nest.”

Autumn: “that more branches are growing.”

Winter: “a bird sitting on a tree.”

Torin: “Joy is laying more Joys.”

Natalie: “what does Joy mean?”

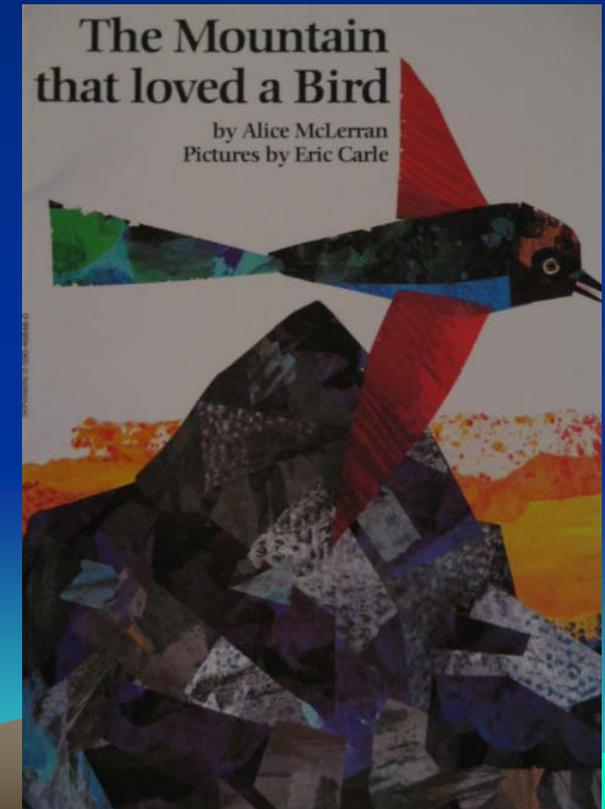
Torin: “joy in the world...happiness.”

Winter: “make the mountain happy.”

Autumn: “mountain.”

Mateo: “mountain.”

Harlow: “a bike.”



Eric Carle Art Project

Step # 1:





Step #2



In pairs, we cut, glued mountains.



Our “Mountains Road” is ready for painting

Reflections of Educators and Parents:

- The interest and energy still continues, each child enters the project space to check on its drying, to add something else, or to point out their contribution to each other or a parent.
- There is a very keen interest in “volcanos” and they speak of them as a mysterious, powerful force which often replaces “superhero” play.
- They are sharing their project with pride to parents daily and others outside of daycare. When we invited the Valhalla Wilderness School kids to come over, the children were amazingly very comfortable when talking about their project with them.



A Closer look...

Zakir: "I feeled it was missing something, a point at the top."



Serena's



Jupiter's



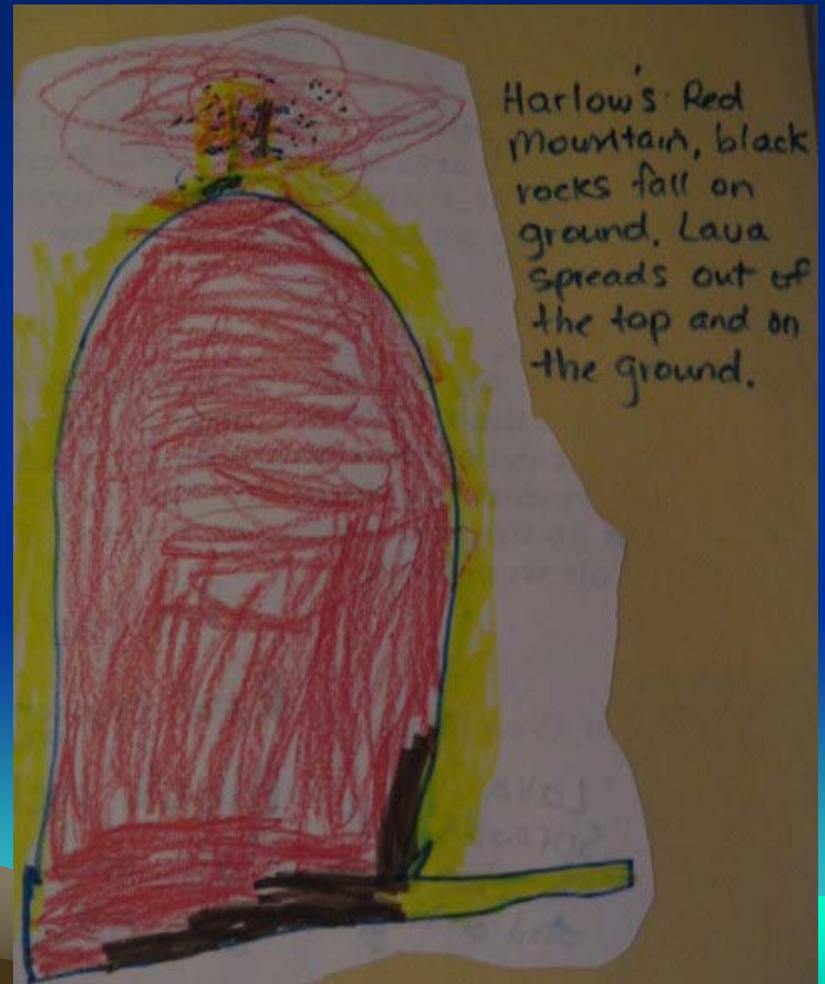
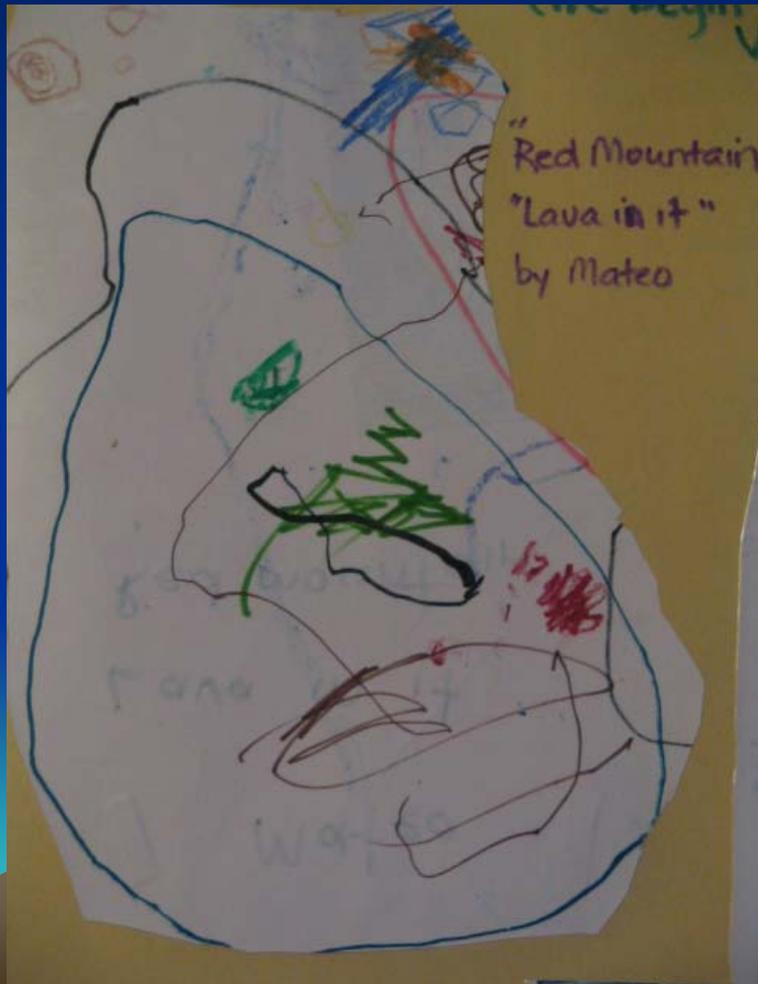
Harlow's



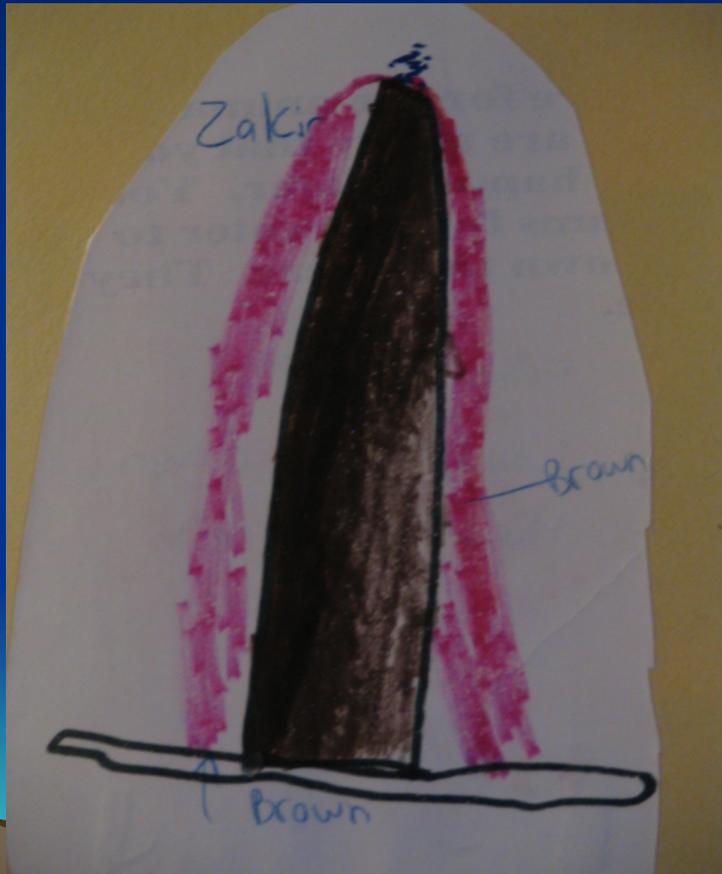
Mateo's Road Peak

Our Plans for Our Mountains:

We put our ideas on paper to think about what we wanted our mountains to look like when they were painted. The children planned which colours they wanted to mix up for using.



Zakir's Frog Mountain "Lava going down the mountain. Then there was a few people they didn't know it was a frog, so they named it 'Mountain'. Then they knew a frog jumped into it and they named 'Frog Mountain'."



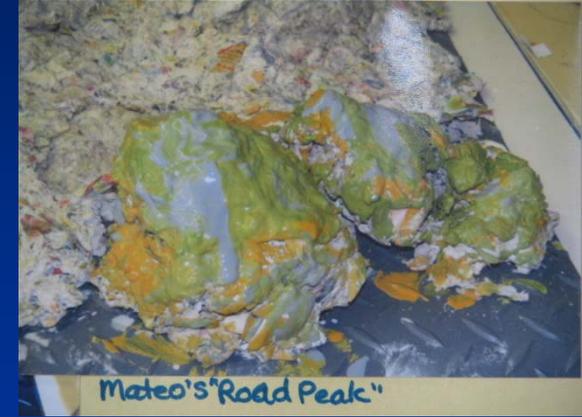
Autumn: "My dad falls into the volcano, red volcano, red lava spouting out. Tea in the volcano, also a menu mixed with a plant. The lava spews out the top like a horse that goes 'ney, ney.' Sawyer is the volcano."



Painting:



I have to reach from this side to paint my mountain."



Zakir: "There's the lake, the beach, parking lot. The fruit bush it doesn't have any fruit yet. This one has fruit. This is the tree in the light and this one is in the lake. It's roots are tied in a knot around something in the lake., so it doesn't fall down when the river is washing."



Zakir: "I put red on the side so it would look like lave."



Winter's mountain:



Day 1. Winter put on every colour very thick, one colour on top of the other.

Day 2. "There's the chocolate river!"



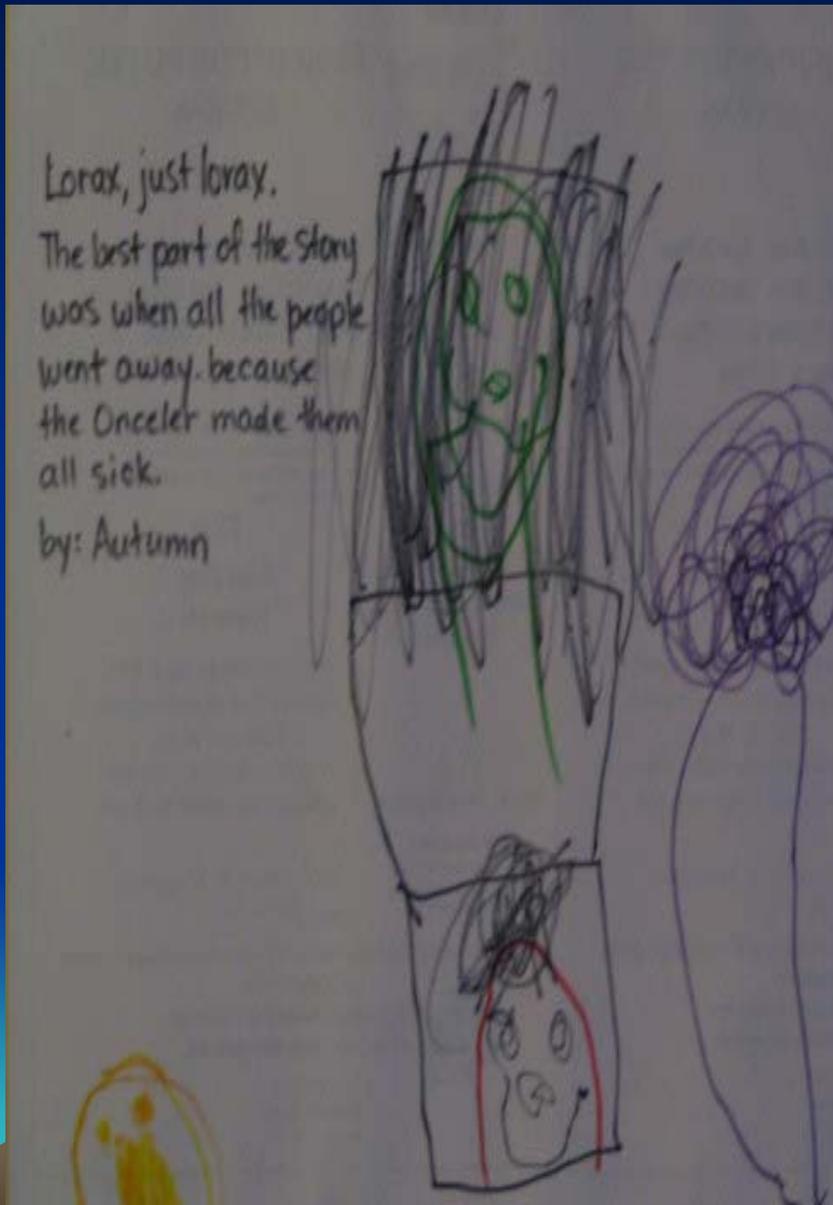
Winter's mom: "That looks just like the cake I made. When the cake broke, I filled the cake with melted chocolate to make a chocolate river."

All painted...

Slocan Lake in the middle,
The yellow beach and the parking lot
Trees and bushes with berries
Mountains all around



The Lorax: Story Discussion



Natalie: "Would you buy a thneed?"

Torin: "I would because we need curtains."

Winter: "Daddy needs money too, to buy food."

Natalie: "What are they doing with all the gunk coming out of the factory?"

Torin: "The fish have to walk out of the water and they will probably die."

Winter: "We have to fix the tree". (regarding the last tree being cut down)

Zakir: "We can save the trees by gluing them together with the sap. The sap is mountain syrup. All the other trees are gone. You can get a vacuum to suck all the gunk out of the water."

Torin: "We never saw the person telling the story."

Harlow: "It looks dark but it is not night time."

Autumn: "I think the clouds make it look like night time."

On the road to Valhalla...



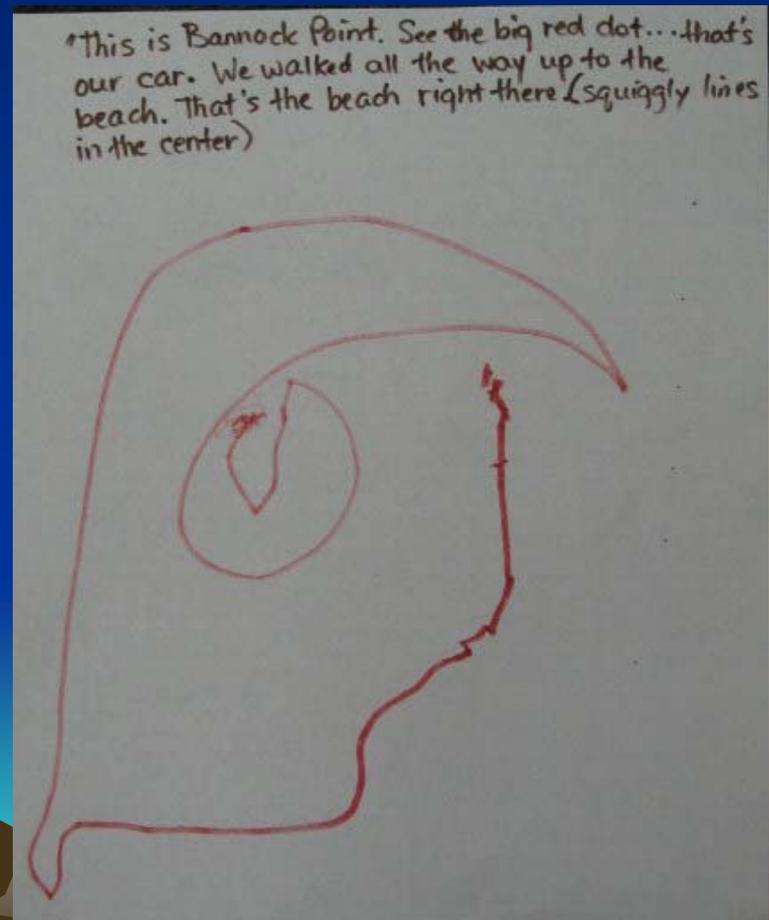
Taz: "Frog Peak with decorations on top."

Into our community...

We met with the young people and teacher of the Wilderness School. We shared our project with them and asked for their input about the mountains they are familiar with, those they hike and camp on.

The parents were asked to find out the name or names of the mountains they live on or next to.

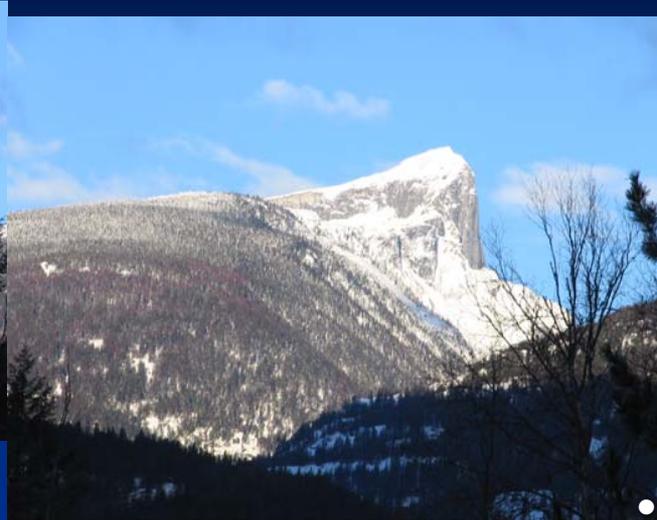
The children were asked about times they remember visiting up in the mountains.



Robertson



Dag



Gladshiem



- Highest peak in Valhallas
- Means “place of joy”
- In Norse myth was Odin’s meeting hall where the 12 highest gods met in counsel.

“This series on learning about the mountains is very exciting. My son Torin is now teaching us about the mountains in our back yard!

Jennifer Scott



Reflections

This project has been an exciting time for all of us. (children, ECEs and parents).

Parents looked forward to coming in and checking how the project was going, what was new and how their child contributed. They were “wow”ed by their children’s learning. Their image of their own children began to change to that of a competent, intelligent learner able to learn on their own and together. Every day it felt like a “learning community”, a place of “meaning making” (Carlina Rinaldi)

There were other questions or topics that came up we addressed or revisited later. (eg.volcanos, paper making). Their interest set the path.

It felt so easy to be there. There were no pre conceived goals for our learning, just possibilities of paths to head down. We came to encounter and dialogue”. Each child contributed to constructing a collective of shared knowledge. A proud ownership of their project became visible as they spoke about it with others (their families and the Wilderness School).

To be continued...

