

North Central Wyoming News & Activities

for Thermopolis - Hot Springs - Big Horn Basin

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The Rainbow Snake Project

January 6, 2015

The rainbow snake was a creative project of Thermopolis Middle School students, working with Paul Taylor, Cheyenne, a native of Australia and expert in Australian aboriginal tribes. Students worked with Taylor and art instructor Jennifer Emery over several months. During that time, every student in the Middle School participated in the project, researching and writing the explanation or working on the painting. Jacky Wright, HSGLF education director, coordinated Taylor's visits with the schools.



Students start with a blank canvas. Paul Taylor (left) explains the concepts to one group of students.

The original was painted on canvas in the aboriginal dot-painting style. The completed piece is 18 feet long. It now hangs in the Middle School hallway. Explanatory panels with the story and explanation will be mounted sometime in January.

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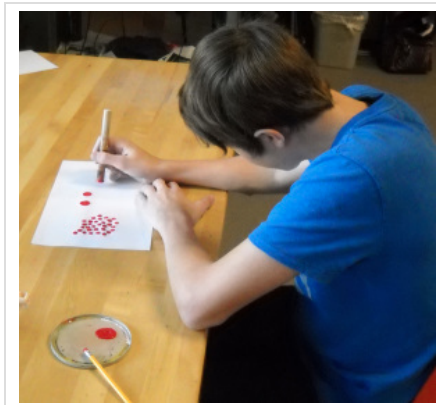
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Students practice the dot-pattern style on paper before work on the canvas.

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Students begin to fill in designs on the canvas.



Slowly, the design on the canvas begins to fill out. (Paul Taylor is mid-right.)



The final design becomes more apparent as more details go on the canvas.



Holding up the finished mural are (left to right) Jacky Wright, Paul Taylor, Jennifer Emery.

Taylor's residency was sponsored by Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation through a grant from the Wyoming Arts Council, with additional support from Hot Springs County Schools District #1. Mounting for the mural, along with digital photography and a portable replica of the rainbow snake, was made possible with additional funding from Glade Edwards Foundation, Thermopolis, and Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation.

Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation is proud to have been part of this project.

Below is the explanation written by the Middle School students.

What the Rainbow Snake Mural Means



Our Mural Story: Hot Springs Rainbow

Our mural is inspired by Australian Aboriginal culture and dot painting tradition. Our design reflects the stories of the Rainbow Snake, a major Spiritual Ancestor who carved out the rivers and shaped the land throughout Australia. The Rainbow Snake teaches the people to care for their water, to share their water, and to care for their country.

Our Rainbow Snake Mural is called Hot Springs Rainbow!

The dots represent drops of water, the rain fills our rivers. The dots also represent all the plants, birds, animals, insects and people that drink and are made from this water, our lifeblood.

The head of the Rainbow Snake is a bobcat head. The bobcat represents our school mascot. It is a symbol of pride in our schools and a feeling of togetherness as a community.

The body of the Rainbow Snake represents the Bighorn River. The river starts as the Wind River, which travels from the northern end of the Wind River Canyon through the Wedding of the Waters. This is where the Wind River officially becomes the Bighorn River, passing through Thermopolis and the Hot Springs State Park.

At the Tail of the Rainbow Snake, past the dark area that represents the Wind River Canyon, is the Boysen Reservoir.

In the heart of the Rainbow Snake, we put a paw print to represent the children of Thermopolis.

The lungs of the Rainbow Snake are the hot springs.

The Shoshone Indians called the hot springs the "smoking waters". The hot springs were known as having "healing water" and are still important to our

town today.

The red, yellow and green areas around the river represent the agricultural community of Thermopolis.

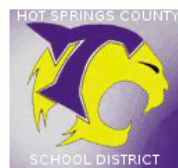
We included our famous Round Top Hill, Monument Hill, Buffalo pasture, and mountain ranges on the back of our Rainbow Snake to look like scales of a serpent.

Our mural was designed by our art teacher Jennifer Emery in consultation with our artist in resident Paul Taylor, who was sponsored by Jacky Wright and the Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation.

Every student in the Thermopolis Middle school, grades 5-8, helped to create this mural. From laying down the base colors, adding the dots, then putting on the final touches, our goal was to create community through the art process!

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