

# Identity/Ancestry Mandala Project

## Grades 9-12 Visual Arts

### Big Ideas

Visual Art is essential to building culture, expressing and exploring personal identity, and revealing insights into the human experience.

### Curricular Competencies

- Create artistic works individually and collaboratively using imagination, observation, and inquiry
- Demonstrate creative thinking and innovation by using ideas inspired by exploration
- Engage in appropriate risk taking to express thoughts and emotions
- Apply artistic skills that engage the body and mind
- Identify and initiate inquire and effective critique strategies
- Apply thinking skills in the exploration, design, creation, and refinement of artistic creations
- Apply knowledge and skills from other areas of learning in the planning, creating, interpreting, and analyzing of artistic creations
- Anticipate audience and make design choices with an understanding and respect for impact on that audience
- Communicate ideas and express emotions through art making
- Use drawing and painting to communicate and respond to social and environmental issues occurring locally, regionally, and globally as they connect to personal values
- Create artistic works to reflect personal voice, story, and values in connection with a specific place, time, and context
- Explore Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge, other ways of knowing, and local cultural knowledge to gain understanding through artistic works
- Make connections through drawing and painting among individuals in a learning community on a local, regional, and global scale

**Goal/Objective:** To create a mandala, a circular and visual representation, that incorporates your own families ancestry and reflects your unique experience living in this world.

### Materials:

- Pencils, erasers, glue sticks and scissors
- Pencil Crayons
- Paper for initial sketching out of ideas (newsprint/white paper)
- “Good” paper for final product: Watercolour Paper or Thick Cartridge Paper
- Sharpie Markers: fine tip and regular tip
- Watercolours and Ink + Watercolour Paper (if needed)
- Dylan Thomas’ print (from Salish Weave Collection, Box 2) displayed in classroom

### Background:

A **mandala** (Sanskrit: **मण्डल**, lit, *circle*) is a spiritual and ritual symbol in Hinduism, representing the universe. In common use, "mandala" has become a generic term for any diagram, chart or geometric pattern that represents the cosmos metaphysically or symbolically; a microcosm of the universe.

Inspiration from Salish Weave Collection (to have displayed in your classroom from Box 2)  
Dylan Thomas’ *Mandala* (2010).

Written by: Ali Donnelly, Art Educator, SD 79.



*This is a Salish version of a contemporary mandala. The mandala originates in East Indian religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. These geometric paintings represent the cosmos from a human perspective. They are used as meditation tools to grab the viewer's attention and help him achieve deep states of meditation.*

*After seeing the beauty of Buddhist mandalas, I decided to do a Salish version. I enjoy doing cross-cultural art because art is one of the only practices that appears in all cultures known to man. Art is one of the things that makes us human and bridging different cultural art forms helps me feel the unity of mankind. – Dylan Thomas*

### **Method and Process:**

- 1: **RESEARCH** your ancestry. Ask your family or whoever it is that you live with..
- 2: Draw/create an **IMAGE** that represents your ancestry. 4 images are ideal. If you are of mixed ancestry, it could be 2 each or however many different cultures you come from. **4 different images** are needed for this project
- 3: Using a pie piece template, design **4 DIFFERENT** pie slices. They will include:
  - The image that you created to represent your ancestry
  - A border
  - Nature represented (mountains, trees, etc)
  - Colour
- 4: After you have created 4 different “pie” pieces that incorporate the above criteria, copy the images to the diagonal pie piece. It will be a mirror image of the one opposite. This is the rough copy.
- 5: Transfer the images onto a “good” piece of paper. I would recommend either a smooth watercolour paper or a thick cartridge paper. Create a circle and re-create the pie template sections. Draw the images into the sections just as you did for the good copy.
- 5: Add colour. Pencil crayons, pencil, markers are encouraged to give it a slick and dry medium look. (However, if you are ambitious, watercolour with an ink outline would look great!)

### **Here are some results from Art Foundations 11 Class (2017):**

This students ancestry is German and British:

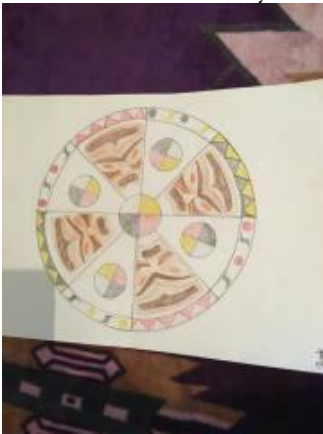


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This was a combined project by two students. They chose to work together and incorporate images that they liked including influences from popular culture.

This student's ancestry is Indigenous Hawaiian as well as Coast Salish.



### **Wrap Up:**

Have your class hang up their Mandala's on the wall and have a walk-through Art Show. Have each student present their Mandala and explain what their ancestry is, how they visually represented it as well as what and why they chose to add the other aspects of the project. Celebrate each other and our unique backgrounds!

As Dylan Thomas says:

“Contemporary indigenous artists working in the realm of traditional art occupy an interesting space in the creative world by trying to simultaneously draw equal inspiration from the future and the past; like a cedar tree growing in the rain forest, parts of their spirit digs deeply into the rich and nutritious soil of their artistic heritage, which allows the rest of their spirit to grow and reach towards the infinite possibilities of the open sky. This blending of deep history with infinite possibility is epitomized by the current state of Coast Salish art”

This is the inspiration and motivation behind this Mandala/Ancestry project.

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