

Artwork from Innisfail Middle School becomes part of Anne Frank House collection

For Immediate Release, March 30, 2017: An art series created by a Grade 8 student at École Innisfail Middle School has reached the attention of staff at the world-renowned museum in Amsterdam.

Ashley Arthur was inspired to create the five designs in artist's pencil and Prismacolor pencils, after her Language Arts class studied 'The Diary of Anne Frank'. Many of her classmates also depicted the novel study project through art, including unique art journals, but it was Ashley's sharp interpretation of some of the book's classic passages that caught the attention of her teacher – and subsequently the Anne Frank House museum staff.

"This book is on the Language Arts curriculum list for Grade 8 students, but I have only chosen it for a class study once before," said Erin Baker, whose passion for history and reading is the perfect fit for her role as Social and LA teacher. "It requires a certain level of awareness and emotional maturity for students this age to be able to handle the subject matter, because they are harsh lessons. You can't study The Diary of Anne Frank without discussing the horror and tragedy of the Holocaust, which is a disturbing topic for any age. But this group of students is very sensitive and interested in social issues and global responsibility. They were impacted by the book and touched by the personal story, because they discovered Anne Frank was going through some of the same things that they are – in terms of feelings and relationship issues.

"I try to visit places that will enhance my teaching, and I had just been on a trip to Holland and to the Anne Frank House last November. We had been talking as a class about prejudices and other social issues that are present in the world right now. Young people are adamant about standing up for people's rights, and this class felt compelled by the story and its place in history. Every student project that came from this was some of the best work these kids have ever done, because I think every person in this room felt compassion for the story. The projects that came from it were great – and Ashley's was phenomenal. This is an amazing accomplishment for her!"

The Diary of Anne Frank was first published 65 years ago, and the house in Amsterdam which became her family's hiding place during World War II has been a museum for over 50 years. It is visited by over one million people every year and contains a number of sections that display student learnings and responses from around the world. Some of these pieces become part of an international exhibit that travels to schools and communities, while others are stored as archives to become part of future exhibits onsite.

"I felt really touched by the story, because I'm the same age as she was when she wrote it," said Ashley. "There were many times in the book that we had the same thoughts and I admire how positive she was. She didn't have any of the freedoms that we have, but even when she was terrified and in hiding she still thought that most people were really good at heart. I think she would want to remind people of that today – that most people are good. Everyone in our whole class was touched by her story. We talked about different groups being targeted right now, and I think everyone took away important messages from the book. Anne Frank was full of hope right to the end of her story, and I was really excited when I was told they were interested in the work I did to honour her."

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For more information, please contact:

Sandy Bexon, Communications (403) 227-7085 / cell (403) 391-3220

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