When developing this lesson, I thought about my middle school students and the relationships I have with all my students. As a teacher, striving to build the kinds of foundations of “self-awareness” discussed in Zaretta Hammond’s *Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brian* (2015), I aim to connect with my own culture in the classroom as well as facilitate and environment for my students to connect and assemble theirs. A lot of time is spent making art in the art room and putting one’s self in their work can be very vulnerable for both teachers and students alike. Therefore, I have created a lesson to give students the space to create an artistic assemblage infused with their culture.

As a medium and vessel, I envision using a box as a starting point. I chose a box because it gives students the ability to keep some aspect on the inside the box and share other aspects outside the box. The inside of the box allows for a safe space for personal expression and the space to express the many creative layers of culture and the outside of the box might represent the more visual aspects of culture that people see day in and day out.

As I was rereading Hammond’s text, I was reminded how easy it is to “ignore the quality of our interactions with students and instead focus primary on the curriculum. In culturally responsive teaching, relationships are as important as the curriculum” (73).
know that I can be a teacher that wants to get down to the work of the day’s objectives, sometimes not spending enough time on the social and emotional cultural needs of my students. However, I am reminded that deep connections with my students is the way for them to be comfortable sharing and expressing beyond the basic requirements.

My teaching motto prior to going to Metlakatla was let’s get busy! Let’s get doing something! Let’s make something! Let’s teach something! I could not help, but think why so much time was wasted. I could have a packed curriculum for the week full of actives, crafts, games, speakers, music, art! But, this so-called “wasted time” was spent playing baseball on the beach, swimming in the ocean, making new friends, melting their boots by the fire, making memories. My thinking about the way I spend time in the classroom was transformed. I realized I can teach art even better when I afford the space for my students to be themselves as artists. I have been a teacher that hasn’t left much room for this kind of flexibility. I see now that many of my students need relationships more than lists and they need a person who cares about them as human beings. This is more important than a person who want to make sure the classroom is clean and check list accomplished.

I am developing this lesson as a project to give students time to create an assemblage that is infused with their culture and the opportunity to share it with the class. It is a tool for us to go home, collect items (photos, etc.) from our families that have symbolic meaning. I look forward to participating in my own cultural identity box to share as well. This lesson will give students and myself time to get to know one another on a deeper level and build meaningful, life-changing relationships.
Identifying Individual Culture(s):
Dimensions of Diversity

- Work Background
- Religion (Childhood)
- Economic Class (Childhood)
- Geographic Location
- Sexual Identity (Dis)-Abilities
- Relationship/Parental Status
- Education

WHO ARE YOU?
How Do Your Dimensions of Diversity Influence Your:
- Experiences?
- Values and Beliefs?
- Attitudes and Behaviors?


WHAT IS CULTURE?

Environment
Beaviours
The way we do things around here
Values and attitudes
Fundamental assumptions and beliefs

The invisible causes
The visible signs
Cultural Assemblages
A deeper look into your culture from the inside and out.

“A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people.”
-Mahatma Gandhi

Objective:
Students will create cultural assemblages about themselves and their cultural identity. Students will reflect on their culture and personality while using symbolism to represent themselves in their artwork.

Materials:
Small boxes (gift, shoe, cigar box would work)
Personal items (photos, trinkets, materials, magazine clippings)
Paint brush
Glue (hot glue)

Procedure:
Students will look and discuss “Identifying Individual’s Culture” and “What is Culture?” Then, they will complete a written Culture Card.

We will look at artist like Joseph Cornell and Lucas Samaras, both artist who create art in small boxes and brainstorm how they can represent themselves on the inside and outside of the box. Outside of the box could be the cultural references that people see like their clothing, food, hair, food, music, things that they show to the outside world. Inside the box will be a place to reflect upon the things that make up our cultural identity that people can’t see like our view on the world, spirituality, concept of time, relationship to animals and nature, personal space, and the things that we keep hidden from others.

Students will explore symbolism and how they can represent realistic and abstract concepts in their cultural assemblages.

Students will paint their boxes and bring in a minimum of 3 personal items from home or nature.

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary the definition of symbolism is the art or practice of using symbols especially by investing things with a symbolic meaning or by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Cultural Food</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How you identify yourself culturally.</td>
<td>List of traditional food dish(es) your family enjoys.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Activities</th>
<th>A Picture of Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities or events that are important to your culture.</td>
<td>Draw a picture of you and/or your family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Six-word memoir & Personal Snapshot:** (on back of card)