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## **The Circle of Friendship**

Winter Art Collaboration in the  
Schoolyard

### WHAT

The Circle of Friendship winter artwork was built in the yard shared by the Napapiiri Secondary School, the Nappari Youth Club and the Naavametsä Day Care Centre as a cooperative team project. The work consisted of two walls made of snow, a ski jump and sculptures. The highlight of the project was a winter art event for the pupils, day care children and their parents.

### WHO

Elina Rissanen took part in the Circle of Friendship Project on behalf of the Winter Art Education Project. She worked as the winter art specialist and took part in the planning, organisation and documentation of the project. Also, she led the pupils and youth in ice sculpting. Markku Åström and Salla Koivuniemi performed project studies for the art education program through the project and took part in all parts of the project. Åström was mainly responsible for leading the groups in snow

construction and for the reporting and evaluation of the project.

Tiina Särkelä and Hanna Jokinen, art teachers at the Napapiiri Secondary School, were in charge of the project and acted as contact personnel. They supervised the pupil groups in the planning and carrying out of the project. They were also responsible for the planning of the schools' Valentine's Day and for working together with the Naavametsä Day Care Centre on the adventure trail and slide. The Napapiiri Secondary School tourism classes and prefects actively participated in planning and carrying out the friendship week and the winter event. The physical education teachers also played a central role in supervising the making of the snow blocks during class time.

Nella Lehtosalo and Marika Kähkönen, contact personnel for the Nappari Youth Club, took part in planning and organizing the themed evening, and also took part in making other practical arrangements. Miisa Jylhä and Ritva Järvenpää were the contact personnel for the day care centre. They were responsible for supervising the groups of children and the building of the adventure trail and slide into the day care centre's yard.

## WHERE

The Napapiiri Secondary School, the Nappari Youth Club and the Naavametsä Day Care Centre are located at the Arctic Circle, just outside the city of Rovaniemi. The Napapiiri Secondary School has 560 pupils and about 50 teachers. The school has two art teachers. The school emphasises tourism, entrepreneurship and art classes.



### 1. Snow Construction

Photo: Elina Rissanen

## GOALS

The goals of the project were to create collaborative activities in the yard area, to build a functional work which the pupils,

children and youth could call their own, and to make winter art a part of the school's, day care centre's and the youth club's programs. In addition, the goal was to motivate the pupils, teachers and youth club leaders so they would actively take part in the planning and carrying out of the project. The main objective was to make an operation model, which could also be used in future projects.

## METHODS AND WORKING

### PRACTICES

The work group met regularly to consider the project's goals, content, methods of action and timetables. Friendship was chosen as a theme, and it felt to be a natural starting point for a cooperative activity. The opening ceremony for the work was planned for the same week as Valentine's Day. In a way, all of the activity focused on Valentine's Day and the school's themed week events.

The starting point for the winter art was to make sure that the children and youth who were not familiar with art, could enjoy it as well. The art teachers considered the friendship theme in their art classes starting at the beginning of the year. The teachers came up with inspiring material on art and architectural history such as

kinetic art, modern and abstract sculpture and Gaudi's architecture. The goal was to increase the pupils' interest in examining and observing their own environment and society, as well as the other cultures.

Focus was also placed on the surrounding symbolism, from which the pupils then created their own friendship symbols for the winter art project.

In practice, the work consisted of building from snow, which was done during the physical education classes and with the youth group, as well as snow sculpting and the creation of a photo exhibit in the ice windows of the snow wall.



## 2. Snow construction

Photo: Hanna Jokinen

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION



## 3. The Circle of Friendship

Photo: Elina Rissanen

The Circle of Friendship Project started from a fairly simple goal: to create cooperative activities in the Napapiiri schoolyard area. The goal was to get the secondary teachers and pupils, people from the youth club as well as the younger and older ones from the day care centre, to collaborate in the planning and carrying out of a work that they could all call their own. In addition, the goal was to introduce winter art to new people, so that the valuable local know-how would remain and develop in the area.

The practical preparations for the winter artwork consisted of bringing clean snow to the sculpting area and hauling sandy snow away. The snow pile that had piled up in the schoolyard could be used as the base for the ski jump. Friendship photos were also taken and copied onto transparencies before the actual activities

began. The youth group took the pictures for the photo exhibit. The youth from the youth club also came up with the idea of a ski jump, which added to the functionality of the schoolyard. Different kinds of experiments were done for the ice photos but in the end, thin sheets of ice were cut from ice blocks.



4. Photo gallery in snow wall

Photo: Elina Rissanen

During the snow construction week, snow walls were built with the help of moulds. The walls were 30 metres long and in some places they were over two metres high. The work was done by a few physical education classes working simultaneously for two consecutive periods at a time. Some of the pupils shovelled the snow from the tractor scoop while the others packed the snow in the large moulds. At the same time, smaller moulds were filled easily with the help of shovels and snow pushers. Working with the moulds and a tractor took from

morning until the afternoon, so the workdays were 7-8 hours long. Members of the youth club also worked for several evenings on the ice photos and the construction of the jump.



5. Construction of the ski jump

Photo: Elina Rissanen

The next week was sculpting week, and the art classes worked on the sculptures and reliefs under the supervision of their art teachers. The extra tools from the secondary school's handicraft classes as well as snow sculpting tools from the university were used. The pupils worked for two class periods, and in addition they could use their free time after school to finish up their work. During the same week, the frozen friendship pictures were set into the snow walls. The day care

centre's own sculptures were finished the same week with the help of the prefects.



6. Snow sculpting

Photo: Elina Rissanen

After the completion of the work, an opening was organised so that as many people as possible could enjoy the works, music, the video premiere and the competition. The day care children sang and the secondary pupils held a fashion show. The jump was taken with skis and snowboards, and the highlight of the evening was the premiere of the international PIPE project's video, which was projected onto the snow wall.



7. Video projected to the snow wall.

Photo: Elina Rissanen

Many people were invited to the opening so that locals could also take an interest in the project, and even get excited about participating in future projects. There was a large attendance at the opening. The feedback from the public as well as from the participants was positive, and the aim is to continue this type of cooperation in the future.



8. The community gathered to the event.

Photo: Elina Rissanen

## RESULTS AND EFFECTS

The most important goal of the project was the cooperative process rather than the artistic end result. When the project is examined from the perspective of its process, it becomes clear that cooperation was a strong resource. Each work group brought their own know-how to the work, and all of the groups worked in close cooperation with each other. The winter artwork was also a success both visually

and functionally. The friendship theme could be seen in the reliefs, in the sculptures that were on top of the wall, in the inside yard and in the frozen friendship pictures, which were sunken into the snow wall. The jump was still used actively, weeks after the project had been completed.

Having such a large group participate enthusiastically in carrying out the winter art project was the most significant achievement of the project. For many of the participants, taking part in this large a project and cooperation, was a first time experience. The project also pointed out the benefits of cooperative activity.



#### 9. The Circle of Friendship

Photo: Elina Rissanen

#### SUCCESSSES AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

+ The participants gained experience in carrying out a collaborative project.

- + The celebrating of the friendship theme brought new inspiration to the school's annual events.
- + The winter artwork was impressive and worked well with the content of the art classes
- + The cooperation between the different subjects was successful when the physical education classes participated in the snow construction.
- + The winter art event was warm and most likely changed many pupils' relationship with the yard in a positive way.
- All of the possible participants did not take part in the activities.
- The project may have felt to be more a part of the art subjects, and therefore it did not fulfil the goals of the winter art experiment.
- There were communication problems between the different participating groups during the construction and sculpting weeks, resulting from timetable difficulties.
  - By the end of the project, a bit of exhaustion and a fall in the working
  - morale was noticed

Translated by Aurora Nieminen