



Whittling Away

Owl - St. Nicholas: Jr. Camp

Background

This project took place during the Jr. Camp summer program at Owl ~ St. Nicholas. We started this project at the beginning of July 2018 and ended at the end of August 2018. The children that participated in this project ranged from ages 4-7 years. We had 26 children enrolled in the summer camp program but not all the children participated at one time. The educator highlighted in the project is Ashley Vandermey. RECE.

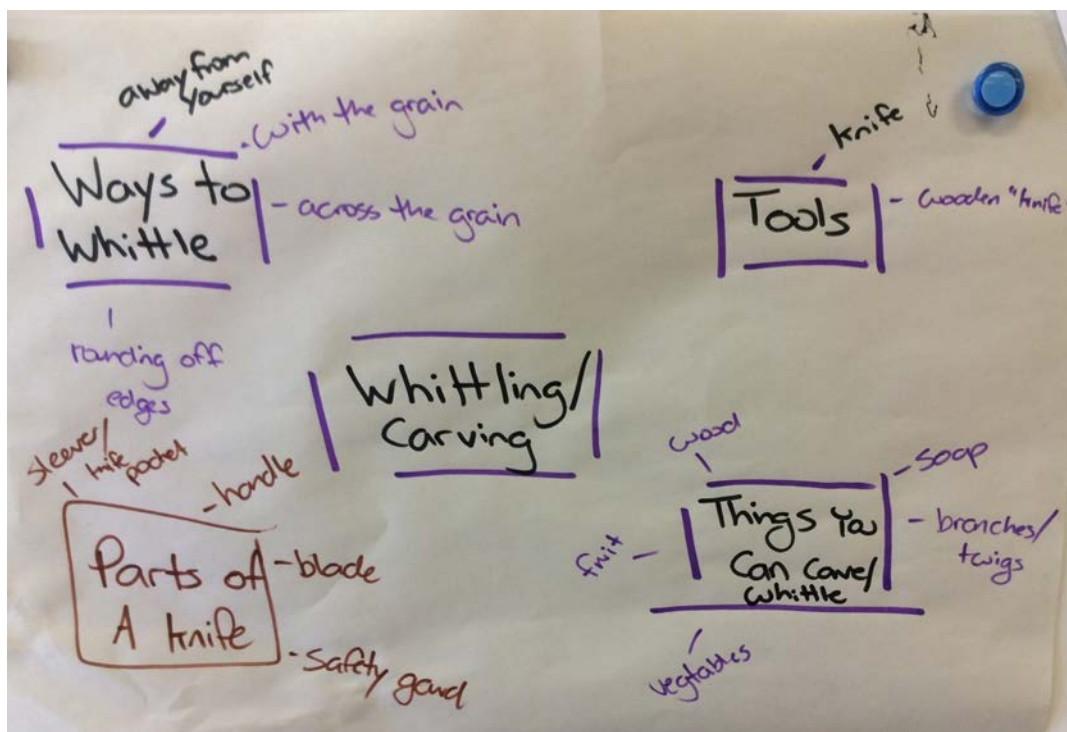
Phase 1: Beginning the Project

This summer we introduced whittling and carving to the Jr. Camp children. This project started with us exploring the forest behind the centre. Ashley brought a handsaw into the forest with us so the children could cut up fallen tree limbs. The children had a great time with this so Ashley decided to bring it into the classroom but use a different tool this time, a children's beginner whittling knife. The children were very curious and interested when Ashley gathered them around and showed them the knife. She talked about how we could use the knife to whittle on tree branches and suggested we investigate what else we could whittle. The children had many questions and were very eager to start, which is how our project was born.

We first started out by asking the children what they knew about whittling and what it was. None of the children knew anything about the topic. Ashley then told them what it was. She asked them what they think we could use to whittle. The children said paper, wood, and trees. They also suggested we could use other tools to cut things with, like a saw. The children were very interested in if we could cut the wood into different shapes or use cookie cutters on the wood. They also wondered what types of objects we could carve on; like vegetables and sheep. This started our project off by investigating and researching on whittling.

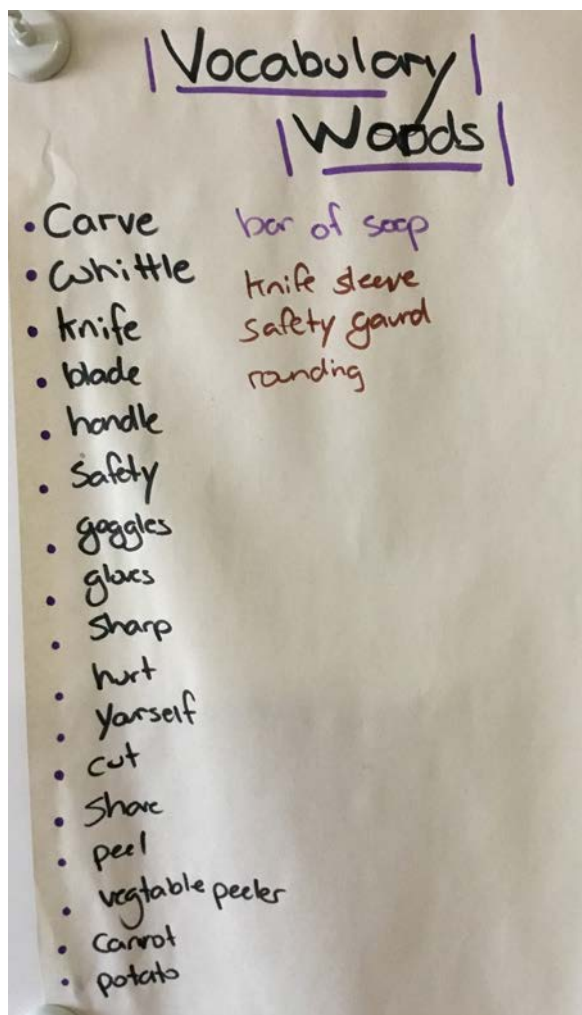
| What we know | What we want to know | Whom we can ask |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take wood, place it in something to change its shape – Lilly • Use a cookie cutter to cut wood – Audrey • Use Scissors to cut wood – Shrey • Wood cutter – Gabriel • Use a saw to get pieces of wood off – Noah • Bash wood with hammer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to cut or carve wood? • Can we make different shapes? • Can we carve pumpkin, paper, sheep, carrots or potatoes? • Tools to use to carve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We asked John Pearce our special guest any questions we had pertaining to our project. |

At the beginning of the project we started a web on the different sub-topics that we could learn about whittling as well as topics that could come from sub-topics. As we learned more and more about whittling and carving our topics started to grow around our sub-topics.

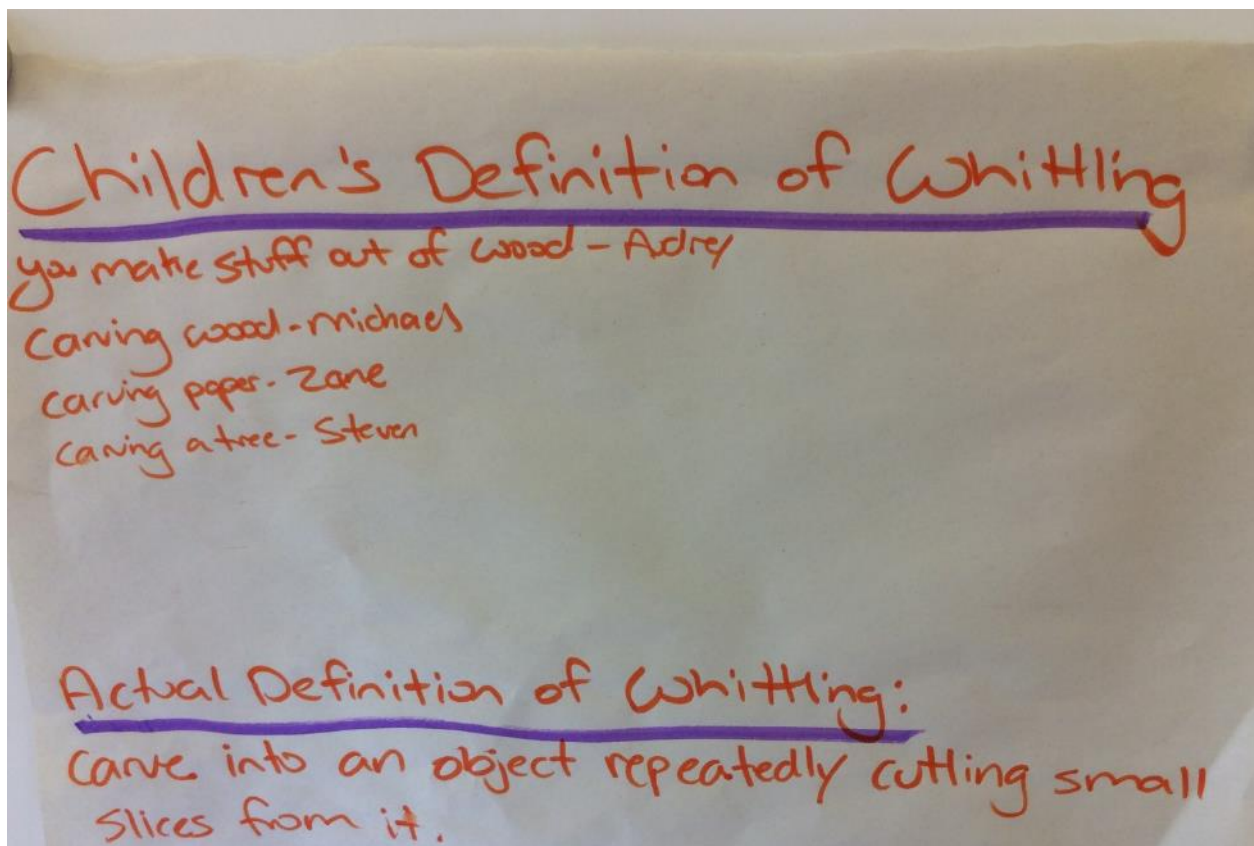


Phase 2: Developing the Project

We developed a vocabulary list, at the beginning of the project, of words that the children already knew or new ones they never heard before. As our project developed, we added more words to our list as our vocabulary grew.



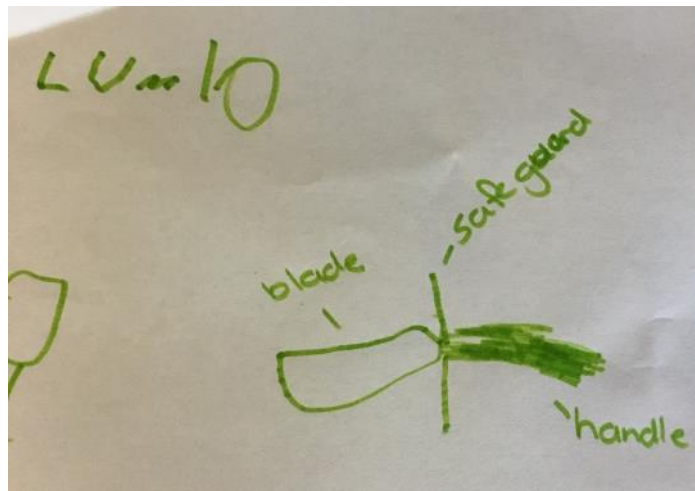
At the beginning of the project, we asked the children what they thought the definition of whittling was. At first, the children did not understand what the word 'definition' meant. Therefore, Ashley gave them a few examples of definitions on things that would be common for them, like a cow and a car. Once they realized what they were being asked, the children started coming up with some definitions of whittling. Ashley then read what the actual definition was and some of it matched with what the children came up with.



All about the knife

Before we started using a real knife, we talked about the safety around using a knife. We also talked about the different parts of a knife; handle, blade, spine, edge, finger guard and the knife sleeve. This gave us some familiarity with the knife; let the children be more comfortable with the tool, and a respect for the knife. We talked about when and with who are they allowed to use knives. The children all yelled "an adult!" We then talked about which part of the knife is the safe part to hold and what end is the dangerous part to hold. Lilliana (5 years old) said, "You hold the handle when you are going to use it." Shrey (5 years old) said, "You do not touch the blade. It can cut you very badly." We also watched a video on safe handling a knife. Allowing the children to use a sharp tool not only allows the children to learn to have respect for the tool but also a sense of respect from the educator to the children as we put trust in them to use the knife.

A few of the children wanted to draw a picture of the knife. Ashley placed it on the table for the children to be able to get a closer look at it. Lumio (5 years old) finished his drawing and Ashley asked him if he was able to label the different parts and he labeled them as Ashley wrote them down for him.



Practicing with a vegetable peeler.

We first practiced using a vegetable peeler to make sure we had the right form and were safely handling the peeler as it too has a handle and a blade. The children practiced on carrots, potatoes and even tried on the sticks. The children were quite amazed at how easily the vegetables skin was coming off. Gabriel (4 years old) was trying it, looked up, and said, "I have never used a peeler before." Most of the children had a turn using the peeler. Scarlett (6 years old) and Maria (5 years old) both said they wanted to help their parents at home with a peeler. Allowing the children to use the peeler built their confidence for how to use the knife.



Maria (5 years old) practicing using proper hold and techniques as she was peeling the carrot.



Micheal (7 years old) got right into the peeling and was able to peel all the skin off his carrot. He commented that he wanted to help mom and dad out at home.

Time to use the knife

The next day we went over the rules and safety again and this time actually used the knife. The children had to wear a safety glove while holding onto the branch and Ashley went over the technique again. The children held the stick with the safety glove and with the other hand holding the knife they started to whittle away at the branch. They made sure to whittle away from their body and in a downward motion, this is called a 'push stroke'. Noah (6 years old) said, "I have never been allowed to use a knife before." Lilliana S. (5 years old) said, "This is hard, using the peeler was easier." Ashley then reminded them that whittling takes time and patience. Whittling just takes small slices from the branch just a little at time.

Once the children worked at it over a few days and had more practice with whittling they began to appreciate the work that they were accomplishing. They started to notice that their bark was completely off their branch and they now were slicing pieces of the inner bark. They compared the other half of their branch and they noticed that the bark and the wood underneath were a different color and texture. Zoey (6 years old) said, "Part of my branch looks naked!" Micheal (7 years old)

said, “I never knew what a branch looked like under the bark.” It was great to watch the children because even though it was challenging for them they were focused and in the moment of the task. They did not seem bothered by background noise or distracted with it. Whittling has benefits that allows the children to practice and assess the risk of whittling, exploring the properties of the branch, the different layers and textures of the branch and to be in the moment with something and to really focus and be one with a tool.

“Whittling is an activity that allows children freedom, flexibility and a chance for a lot of personal space to connect with their sense of self and their natural environment” (Clare Warden)



Owen (5 years old) using the knife for the first time and getting a feel of how to whittle on the tree branch.



Some of the children were able to notice the first layer of bark peeling away from the branch.



Maria (5 years old) said, "there are big pieces of bark coming off my branch."

The different thickness in branches made a difference on how much bark came off and if it was easier to whittle. The thicker the first layer of bark made the whittling easier and more gratifying to the children as they were able to really see the changes made to their branch.

First Drawings

Now that the children got a feeling of whittling and what it was all about. We decided to ask the children to draw a picture that they think resembles whittling. The children were given paper and something to draw with and all of the children started to draw. Children drew a picture of a stick or their stick that they were working on. It was interesting to see how each of them thought of a stick when they thought of whittling.



Camilo's (4 years old) first drawing was a picture of a stick. The little lines that are around the stick are the pieces of bark coming off the branch from him whittling.

Our carving expert

We brought in a carving expert to talk to the children on how he started carving. John talked about how he started out using bars of soap and potatoes. He showed us some of his carvings he has been working on. John said he is working on carving different types of hats. His next hat he is working on is a baseball hat.

John then brought out special knives he carved out of wood that we would be using to carve our own bars of soap. We all walked over to the tables where he then showed us his soap carvings. John told us that we would be carving out a heart out of the bar of soap. John first drew a heart shape onto the soap and then demonstrated how we were to carve away the soap so our heart would stand out. The children were quite focused during the carving activity. They took their time as not to cut or carve the heart shape. This process took the children two hours to complete.

Once the carving was done, we painted our hearts either orange or red. Lilliana was quite proud of herself as she showed John her finished work. Some of the children carved the soap so much that the heart just stood out on a thin layer of soap where others liked how they carved their heart to just stand out and be raised slightly on the soap bar. Gabriel (4 years old) looked at Ashley and said, "Wow, I never knew you could carve something out of soap. I have never done anything like this before. I have to be careful not to carve right through the heart."

John was quite impressed on how well the children focused and paid close attention to the activity he brought in for us. It was great seeing how eager the children were to learn and the focus that they had. Following through with this task and sticking with it, allows the children to realize that if they put effort into something the end result will pay off. It really taught them to use their fine motor skills in a different way, to learn to have a steady hand and be proud of something they achieved on their own.



John is showing the children the different carvings he has been working on or finished products. The children had many questions and were listening attentively to what he was saying. Maria (5 years old) asked, "why do you like carving?" John said, "I like using my hands and the smell of the wood."



John showing the children how to start carving the bar of soap. Zain (5 years old) asking if it was hard. John responded, "Not too hard, no. I drew on an easier shape for you children to start with, so you're able to get a handle of carving. I would not want to make it too challenging or else it will be frustrating for you not fun and I want you to learn something while I am here."



Audrey (6 years old) starting the process of carving out the heart on the bar of soap. She is using a wooden knife only made out of and carved from wood. She is focused on her carving and is proud of the outcome when she finished.



Maddie (5 years old) carefully and slowly carving away at the bar of soap. She would watch, as it would crumble to the table. She made sure to keep her soap shavings in a pile as to not make a mess.

Carving fruit

The children have been interested and asking what else we can carve besides tree branches and soap. They asked if we could carve foods, so Ashley, along with the children watched tutorials on how to carve fruits and vegetables. The children were in such excitement when watching the videos, yelling out the ones they wanted to try to make. They would yell what the person would be making as it was all starting to come into shape. After the tutorials, we all decided as a group to make a crab and turtle out of apples and then carve strawberries into roses.

Our wonderful cook, Lynette, purchased our fruit for us and the children were eager to get started. We use a different type of knife that we got from the kitchen. We talked about the different parts of the knife and Steven (5 years old) said, "It's just like our knife we used on the branch." We talked about the safety around knives again and whom we are to use the knives with. Ashley reminded the children that even though it is a kitchen knife that it was still sharp and not to touch the knives in their kitchen at home, unless their mom or dad are with them and said its ok.

We decided to work on the green apple turtle first. We watched the tutorial again systematically and the children followed right along. Ashley would ask them what we do next, the children were able to answer and cut the pieces according to the video. It was great seeing how excited and how well they followed through with the instructions. They took turns and when the crab and turtle were finished, they were ecstatic that theirs looked just like the video. We displayed them for the parents to see our creations as the children were proud of their accomplishments.

We then moved onto carving our roses. The children one at a time, each watched how to carve their strawberry. With focus and a steady hand, the children were able to create a flower with a strawberry. Jacob (5 years old) said, "I didn't know you can make flowers out of strawberries." Nathan (5 years old) said, "This is cool!" The children did an amazing job with this new skill they learned. They were very excited to show their parents and teach them how to make roses at home. Dominic (5 years old) said, "Can I eat mine, I want to see if it tastes different." After eating it Ashley asked, "Did it taste different?" Dominic smiled and said no.

Being an educator, I never thought of carving food until they asked about it. I like how they asked about carving food because it gave us more to think about during the project and what else we could carve. It was a different feeling for them cutting or carving through the fruit. As with carving the wood, branches and soap, the fruit allowed them to compare the differences in the smells, texture and fragileness of the different materials/objects.



Shrey (5 years old) using a kitchen knife to help cut up pieces of apple for our green apple turtle.



Iremide (4 years old) found a craft stick to use to help the turtles head stick onto the apple. He stuck the stick through one of the strawberries. Then along with Ashley's help, they placed the stick through the apple.



Alice G "I know that I have to place my hands on top of the apple so I don't hurt my fingers with the knife"



Final product.



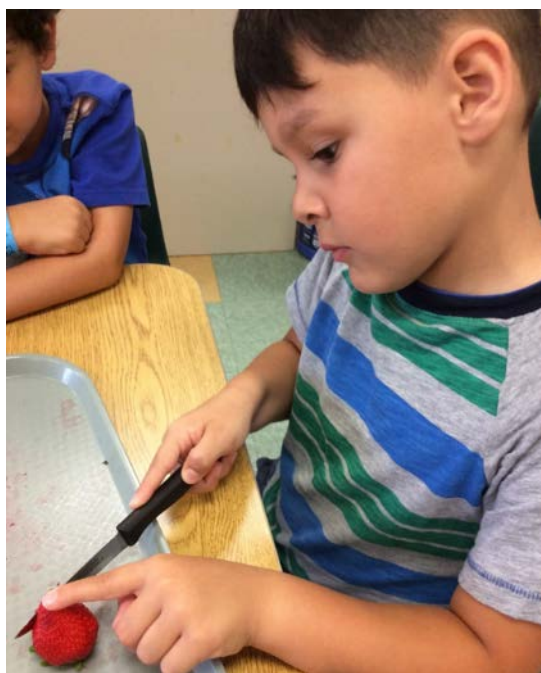
Placing the pieces of the back legs of the crab together. Noah (6 years old) found it a little tricky fanning out the apple slices. The apple slices were a little slippery and would slide off one another.



Red apple crab



Steven (5 years old) very proud of his carving of a rose out of a strawberry.

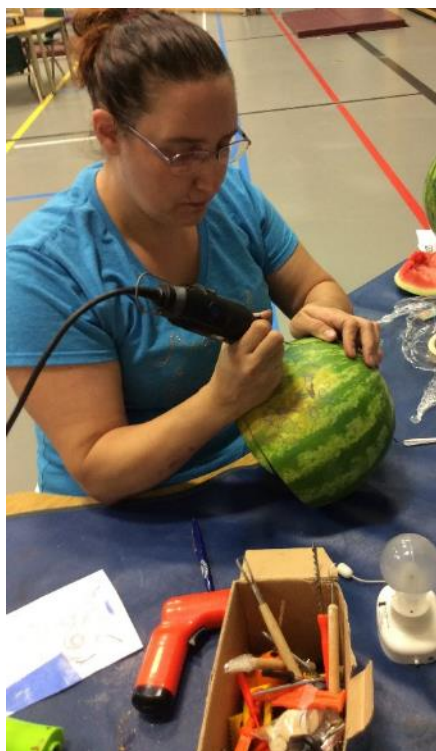


Dominic (5 years old) using his fine motor skills to carefully carve out a rose.

Carving a watermelon

Judy, our supervisor, brought in someone to show us how she shaves off the outer layer of pumpkins. Since pumpkins are not in season, Terri showed us on a watermelon. This was her first time shaving off the outer layer of a watermelon. We thought since this was similar to whittling where you only take off small shavings off wood or tree branches, that this was fitting for our project. She first showed us to carve the bottom and place the candle/lamp in through the bottom. She also showed us what carbon paper was and how she uses this to get her picture onto the watermelon/pumpkin. You can draw a design on this special paper and it will leave the design on the object on the other side.

Before she began, we shared our knowledge of carving and safety procedures to always follow while carving or whittling with her. She was impressed with our knowledge and shared some of her own with us. Just like when carving a pumpkin, we had to remove the inside of the watermelon before tracing on the design. She showed us how to carve an owl into the watermelon using special tools. After she was done she placed a light inside and it glowed just like pumpkins you carve at Halloween. The children were all very impressed. We were very excited to share our watermelon owl with our moms and dads and tell them all about how she did it.



Terri using her special tool to shave off the layer of watermelon to create her picture.



Using the carbon paper to get the design from the paper to the watermelon



Final product

Carving stamps out of potatoes

After watching tutorials on fruit carvings, the children wondered if there were vegetables we could carve out of. Zoey asked, “what about potatoes?” We found many tutorials on how to make potato stamps. The children liked this idea and wanted to try it. Instead of using them as stamps though, the children wanted to paint them like our soap carvings we did. We talked about what shapes would probably be the easiest to carve out and we thought of a star, square and rectangle. The children thought the square would be the easiest because it just consisted of four straight and equal sides. The children first cut both ends off the potato so it could sit flat on the table and it would then reveal the inside of the potato. They then drew a picture of the shape they wished to carve. Once drawn they started to carve the shape out. The children found this the hardest so far to carve. Nora said, “I like carving the soap more, it was easier.” as she grunted while carving the potato.

Carving Wet Floral Sponge

Judy suggested we try carving with wet floral sponge. When taking it out of the packaging Lilly said, “It feels like cotton candy.” Reese said, “No, it’s a sponge. It’s hard, not soft and fluffy.” Once the children had a piece of their own, they realized it was soft in the sense they could make a finger print very easily. With this carving, we used butter knives as the sponge was really soft and didn’t take much to carve pieces off. As Ashley handed them out she asked the children to think of something they can carve out of the floral sponge before digging into it. Reese said, “I want to make a car.” Lilly made a house, a garden and a car. Lumio made a waterfall, Basil said, “Look I made a candle.” as he pretended to blow it out. Scarlett turned her big block of floral sponge into this little mouse and a little home for her mouse to fit right inside. It was so cool to watch them as they all took the same size block and created something totally different and different sizes than everyone else.



Scarlett (6 years old) carving out the inside of the floral sponge. Ashley asked what she was making and she said, “You have to wait and find out.”



Maria (5 years old) seemed to enjoy just carving off small pieces at a time.



Basel (6 years old) was taking his time and making sure he was carving small pieces off bit by bit.



Reese (5 years old) was trying out different carving ideas, until she came up with a car.



Basel (6 years) was proud he carved out a candle. He put his mouth up to the candle and pretended to blow out the flame.



Scarlett (6 years old) revealed her final carving of a mouse and a little home for it.

Second Drawings

As the project went on, we asked the children to draw their second picture of whittling/carving. It was interesting to see that now they have been introduced to other types of things to carve on and ways of carving/whittling how their picture changed from their first one. This time their drawings consisted of themselves in the picture along with either soap or a stick in one hand and a knife in the other. Zoey and Lilly even made sure to add gloves on their hands for safety. Zoey (6 years old) said, "Ashley, I drew gloves on my hands just like how we wear them when we actually carve." Giving the children a chance to reflect on the project and allowing them to draw their representation allows for self-reflection as well.



Dominic's (5 years old) second drawing was a picture of himself with a branch.



Noah (6 years old) drew a picture of him holding a stick and a knife for his second drawing. He drew a picture of him outside because he said, "Whittling on the stick reminds me of outside."



Lilly (5 years old) drew herself whittling. She said, "I put gloves on my hands because that's how we have to be safe to use a knife."



Reese (5 years old) drawing herself wearing gloves "just like we do with the actual knife," she said.

Phase 3: Concluding the Project

During the summer, the children had been slowly working on their final project. As the summer went on and the more they whittled, they were becoming more confident and were really beginning to focus on the task. Once the children were happy with their stick and were able to whittle all the bark off at least half of their stick. Ashley brought out paint and brushes. We talked about what they could make out of their sticks, Alice (5 years old) said, "I want to make a scepter!" This made the children question what a scepter was and Alice told us that it was like a wand but princesses have them. This gave some of the other children ideas to make wands like wizards.

Once the children had their ideas and discussions seemed to dwindle, they got right to work. As the painting progressed, Ashley walked around asking the children how their project was coming. Lumio said, "I am making a wizard sword. I am going to make spells with it." Micheal (7 years old) and Zoey (5 years old) said, "I am making a wand." After the children were done making their wands, we walked around and looked around at how different everyone made their wands/scepters. Zoey said, "Wow we all made wands but they look so different." They were all very proud of their work and could not wait to show their parents what they have been working on all summer.



The sticks that the children finished whittling.



Alice (5 years old) concentrating to get her scepter just right.



Shrey (5 years old) working on the fine details for his wand. He chose to use a thinner brush to make smaller stripes and dots.



Nora (5 years old) proud of her Harry Potter wand she created. She said, "I have never had my own wand before."



Zoey (5 years old) was quite proud of her wand, she mixed white and black paint to make grey so it would look like her wand was made out of metal.



Micheal (7 years old) said "I am going to try and make spells with my magical wand."

It has been great seeing all the different objects that we have been able to carve, and whittle on throughout this project. From a project that just started using a tree branch to carving soap, strawberries, wood, floral sponge, potatoes and finishing it off with magical wands carved and whittled all on their own from a tree branch.

Teacher Reflections

Ashley Vandermey, RECE:

With this project, I wanted the children to have confidence in trying something new and learning a new skill. Developing a relationship on respect and trust between the children and myself, on allowing them to use a sharp tool. Giving them a task/project that takes practice and something that they have to slowly work towards gives them a sense of patience and pride seeing their final outcome. They get a sense of accomplishment in what they achieved and knowing they have the capability to use a sharp tool. I wanted to motivate the children knowing the desire that children have to learn and giving them a new skill to learn. I felt that I was able to achieve this by seeing how proud they were of themselves when they saw their branch bare with no bark left on it, knowing they had done that. Seeing their smiles when they were able to take something like a strawberry, watch a tutorial and carve a rose out of it. Seeing their eyes widen as I handed them a sharp tool to use on their own. I feel as an educator I am to observe and be aware of the skill set and to properly set the goals accordingly. The children should be given age appropriate experiences so that they have a positive experience during this project. This allows the task to be achievable for them as to not put stress or



frustration on them but also giving them a challenge to keep their interest and desire to learn. I feel like I really grew as an educator during this project, seeing how competent and capable children really are and love for learning they have.