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**Teaching Report on the Multicultural Art Education and  
Teaching Styles at Camp White Pine**

**Li Fang**

**A Thesis**

**In**

**The Department**

**of**

**Art Education**

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Teaching Report on the Multicultural Art Education and Teaching Styles at Camp White Pine**

**Li Fang**

This report describes and analyzes an art educational event that took place in the summer of 2001 at Camp White Pine. This event was a Chinese New Year Festival, along with its related workshops and preparations. My analysis focuses on two themes: a) how this event is an example of multicultural art education; and b) how the teaching practices used by myself and other staff exemplify certain theoretical models of art teaching method. From this analysis, I offer my own assessment of the positive and negative aspects of this kind of multicultural art education event, and brought out the question: How can we art educators avoid a shallow and unilateral understanding of Chinese culture? As part of the staff, this experience also offered me the chance to observe the staff practicing various teaching styles and methods by using models of teaching methods from the art education literature.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report describes and analyzes an art educational event that took place in the summer of 2001 at Camp White Pine, Ontario, Canada. This event was a Chinese New Year Festival, along with its related workshops and preparations. My analysis focuses on two themes: a) how this event is an example of multicultural art education; and b) how the teaching practices used by myself and other staff exemplify certain theoretical models of art teaching methods. This specific Chinese cultural theme offered me an excellent chance to observe staff and campers' behaviors and responses, as indications of their awareness and understanding of another, unfamiliar culture. I analyze the multicultural dimension of the event by using concepts about the significance of multicultural art education in today's Western society. From this analysis, I offer my own assessment of the positive and negative aspects of this kind of multicultural art education event. As part of the staff, this experience also offered me the chance to practice or to observe other staff practicing various teaching styles and methods. Using models of teaching methods from the art education literature, I classify the practices used at Camp White Pine, and then assess their impact on the campers. I offer my own perspective on the most effective teaching styles and methods that I observed.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method I employed in this study was participant observation. Danny L. Jorgensen (1989) thinks participant observation "is appropriate for studies of almost every aspect of human existence. Through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what

is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why—at least from the standpoint of participants...” (P.12)

As a participant observer, I was able to “observe and experience the meanings and interactions of people, from the role of an insider.” (Jorgensen, 1989) My research methods consisted of documenting and recording events, followed by editing the material, locating relevant literature, and then analyzing the materials in light of the theories found in the literature. I obtained written consent for thesis research from the Camp Director Mr. Adam Kronick and the Creative Arts Director Ms. Sarah Kronick. ( See consent form at the end of thesis)

Based on my own experience, I strongly agree with Jorgensen (1989) about that “the relationships between the participant as observer, people in the field setting, and the larger context of human interaction is one of the key components of this methodology. The character of field relations heavily influences the researcher’s ability to collect accurate, truthful information.” (P.21) My role as cultural resource provider allowed me to observe what the characteristics of a good program initiator are for a special art educational event. As time went on, my role in the teaching team involved lots of interactions with the other staff. In the staff meetings, I provided information about Chinese New Year’s customs, tales and traditional ceremonies. We discussed projects based on the cultural information and then planned accessible art projects for each Creative Arts area. I was also responsible to provide instruction about specific samples to other staff. For example, I provided my own traditional jewellery to a staff member who worked in the Copper Shop. She adopted some oriental aesthetic elements such as red and gold colour combination, and Chinese calligraphy, for copper enamel

bracelets and necklaces. During the planning process for the event, we applied staff's various selected opinions to the festival, which made the Chinese New Year more diversified.

My role as art teaching member offered me a chance to observe the development of this event and to explore effective teaching strategies from an insider's viewpoint. I photographed the various events from art making process to final products. Also, I thought that the photos would accurately represent the original atmosphere of the festival. I placed myself as inconspicuously as possible in every occasion while I was taking the pictures. However, some campers still wanted to pose and exhibit their art works in front of the lens, which was not the result that I wanted. I thought it is extremely important that the results of the study be recorded. I kept a journal about unique experiences and other interesting things that occurred during the event.

As an Arts and Crafts staff member, the stable friendship between me and other staff helped me to observe closely and truthfully how their personalities influenced their teaching styles and strategies. Because of the camp's close interpersonal environment, I had plenty of opportunities to gather the campers' primary feedback through casual conversations. These immediate experiences were very valuable sources of data. In addition, my unique role as the only Chinese person in this Jewish summer camp also provided some data about multiculturalism.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE TEACHING SITE,**

### **PARTICIPANTS, AND EVENT**

I begin this discussion with an overview of Camp White Pine's setting, environment, and Creative Arts programs. I introduce the Program Director, the staff, the campers, and my unique role as a cultural resource person on the camp's art teaching team. I describe the program planning process, the teaching activities of the staff, the events that occurred, and the art works that were made.

The Haliburton highlands is an area of small lakes, pink rocks and forest. Camp White Pine is located on a private lake in this region of Ontario. Each summer, its 1600 acre site is home to Jewish boys and girls from around Canada. The camp offers a wide range of activities to satisfy every interest. All activities are geared to the age of the campers and have full time qualified instructors, who offer encouragement and opportunities for campers to learn while having fun.

The Creative Arts Section is a busy area in the camp. Campers create individual and group projects, and use the arts in the development of thematic activities. The Creative Arts section consists of many programs including painting, drawing, and all kinds of crafts. The Pottery Shop instruction includes pottery wheels, hand building, and a choice of regular or raku firing. In Copper Enamelling, campers can make jewelry, bowls and plaques. In Woodworking campers learn the safe use of tools under supervision. Projects include treehouses, go-carts, toys and games.

During each summer, the Creative Arts Section participates in special events involving the entire camp. During a campwide event, campers are involved in making costumes, decorations and many other interesting projects. The emphasis of each event is on the campers' involvement in program development, rather than staff entertaining the children. Campers design the sets and make costumes and props for the performance. Thus, the campers learn to collaborate with their peers and instructors. They acquire increasing independence and creativity with the support of the staff.

Ms. Kronick was the Creative Arts director in the summer of 2001. She planned projects and theme ideas for all the Creative Arts areas. She has worked as the Creative Arts director for more than twenty years. Also, she is an experienced illustrator. During the precamp training, Ms. Kronick organized a Creative Arts staff meeting in which she introduced the routines of the different Creative Arts areas, and asked the staff about their plans for the summer. Besides, she required all the staff to submit material requirement sheets so that she could order enough art supplies for the future art projects. Furthermore, she mentioned some rules and safety issues. During the summer, Ms. Kronick held regular meetings with the staff in order to solve problems and plan new ideas from diverse perspectives. Above all, she was the leader of the Creative Arts program.

Arts and Crafts is the biggest part in the Creative Arts section. Here, campers worked on a lot of individual and group projects. We offered a variety of projects such as: expressive painting, card making, picture frames, puppet making, tie and dye, quilting and candle making. During the summer, the campers made plenty of gifts for their loved ones. For them, art works were the best gifts to bring home.

In the summer of 2001, Arts and Crafts was staffed by four staff members. Besides me, there was another woman and two men. We all have professional skills in art and experience in working with children. In addition, we received extensive precamp and inservice training, and regular supervision. We were all interested in , and knowledgeable about, art and children. We were involved in initiating and taking care of routines in the Arts and Crafts activities. During the precamp training, we were required to submit idea proposals. Thus, we had an 'idea file' for summers projects.

The campers ranged in age from seven to sixteen, and lived in six sections that function as mini camps. Most of the campers came from Canada; there were also a few international campers this particular summer. In addition to 'cabin activity' periods, campers were able to pursue their favorite activities each day during the 'free choice' periods. The campers learned countless new skills in a non-competitive atmosphere, pursuing individual interests and having fun.

In the third week of the camp, Ms. Kronick held a meeting to plan the summer's camp-wide special event. First, we discussed the theme of the event. We considered many themes such as : Valentine's Day, Halloween Party, Masquerade, and so on. Ms. Kronick thought that we should use a different theme other than those Western festivals which already had been used in past summers. She noticed that I have the knowledge of traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, she asked me to think about some Chinese festivals. I suggested the Chinese New Year Festival because it is the most important festival in Chinese culture and has fabulous traditions of celebration. Moreover, I have the knowledge about Chinese New Year customs and crafts which would make the special event accessible. Besides,

the other Creative Arts staff showed strong interest in this theme. As a result, we decided to use Chinese New Year Festival as the theme of the summer's camp-wide special event.

Then we started to plan the process, routine and content of this program. After a few meetings, we developed an organizational structure for the event. The program would be divided into an introduction to the event's program, the week-long preparation, and the actual Chinese New Year celebration. The program introduction would be a mini play which informs the campers about the upcoming event and motivates their interest. During the week-long preparation, the campers would make costumes, props and decorations for the Chinese New Year celebration which would consist of a parade, festival games, a Chinese dinner and a fashion show. All the Creative Arts staff agreed that this festival would be a great opportunity for the campers to enhance their respect for the outlook, values and behavior from another culture. We hoped that the campers would develop an open mind toward all cultures, and better understand people from different ethnic and cultural groups.

### **THE PROGRAM INTRODUCTION**

The festival was introduced to the campers in a mini play created and performed by all the Creative Arts staff. Ms. Kronick was the director of this play. I participated in the process as a cultural resource person. Ms. Kronick had a meeting with me and another experienced staff member. She asked me to introduce some important customs and ceremonies related to the New Year theme. I recommended a few customs such as: a) Chinese people wear red clothing during the New Year celebration to represent happiness and to keep evil things away from them; b) ancestral Chinese people regard broken

glass as a sign of bad luck during the New Year period; and c) Children get a red envelope filled with candy and money, which represents wishes for prosperity. Then we started to combine this information with the actual play. After a few discussions, we decided the outline of the play: The Empress of ancestral China went to Camp White Pine with her translators. They met some drunks who were Celebrating the North American New Year. The conversations between the characters gave the campers some background information about Chinese New Year customs and informed them about the upcoming week-long preparation.

As the director of this play, Ms. Kronick wrote a script for rehearsal. She handed out the script to everyone at the Creative Arts staff meeting. We chose characters we liked and then started to rehearse the play. The first time was not very satisfying because the staff were not familiar with the script. Therefore, the director agreed to give us a few days to memorize our dialog. Also, she required every staff member to make his or her own costumes. Three days before the actual play, we rehearsed it for the second time. This time was much better because we had better understanding of the script. Besides, we rehearsed at the lake shore which would be the site of the actual performance. The director borrowed the staff some Chinese traditional clothes that her parents bought in China, and the staff also made some costumes such as fans, hats, and Chinese dresses. In order to represent the dragon dance, I spent a few evenings made a fabric dragon. A Woodshop staff member made wooden dragon head and tail, then he assembled the parts onto a canoe to make an excellent dragon boat.

Finally the performance day came. After supper, all the staff went to Arts and Crafts for make up and costume preparation. Then we went to the lake



shore to wait for the campers' arrival. At the right hand of the lake was a swimming dock which was connected to the lake shore by a wooden bridge. These would be important settings in the play. As the play described, the staff divided into three groups: three drunks stayed at the lake shore; the Empress and her translators got on a dragon boat which floated behind the swimming dock; and the dragon dance team waited on the wooden bridge.

At the beginning part of the play, the conversation told the campers about the week-long program and some interesting customs:

Drunk 1 : I must have drunk too much. I am seeing some strange sights!

Drunk 2 : Me too! I have never seen the likes of this before. What is with the dragon boat?

Translator 1 : We have come from BeiJing, from Sechuan, Hunan and the coldest regions of Greater China on route to Toronto. We decided to stop on the shores of this peaceful lake.

Translator 2 : We heard about this Camp White Pine. We heard that the campers, as you call them, have much spirit, strength and wisdom. It is a beautiful place. The lake lies peaceful and calm and the white pines grow strong and tall.

Translator 3 : We come as representatives of China to extend our hands in friendship. We are going to stay in this place for six days. During that time, we wish to share with you some of the glories of our culture, our arts, our crafts and food.

...

Empress : ( points to the drunks' clothes) Is this how you dress for New Year? What are these pictures on your clothes? Are these the symbols of your people?

**Drunk 1 :** This here is a Camp White Pine logo. There are tons of other logos such as Addidas, Roots, GAP...

**Empress :** In China we wear red on New Years. Red represents happiness in our culture and it can protect our people from evil spirits. The symbols of the dragon are seen everywhere.

**Drunk 2 :** Dragons? What is up with that?

**Translator1:** Dragons are symbols of strength. We believe that the Chinese people are the children of dragons.

**Drunk 3 :** I will toast to that! ( He takes a deep swig and throws down his bottle on the ground.)

**All Chinese :** You broke it ?!

**Drunk 3 :** It is just glass. I will pick it up!

**Empress :** We consider the broken glass as sign of bad luck during the New Year period.

**Drunk 3 :** I am sorry, I didn't know that! ...

This play successfully stimulated the campers' interests because of its humorous conversations and naive performance. However, a few staff members tried to mimic a Chinese accent in their dialog because they thought it would enhance the comedic atmosphere. Furthermore, they did it spontaneously without informing anyone. So I was offended. I could understand that the staff members wanted to attract the campers' attention by using funny accents. But I though they needed to consider more carefully before they actually apply it to the play. I also noticed that some TV shows also use oriental or other ethnical groups' accents to create a funny atmosphere. It reflected that Western people need to show more respect to the people from other countries since Canada is a multicultural society. As the only Chinese person in this North American Jewish camp, I felt

sometimes a few campers and staff members' behaviors or questions made me feel uncomfortable. I remember that one female staff member asked me some questions about the "one child policy" in China, and her expressions showed that she regarded Chinese as cold-blooded people who do cruel things in order to maintain the policy. I admitted that there are a lot of political issues in China. However, I did not think that Western people should simply equate China's realities to the impressions they received from Western media.

### **THE WEEK-LONG PREPARATION**

The campers spent plenty of time in the Creative Arts section for the week-long preparation. In general, Arts and Crafts was the busiest area among all the Creative Arts areas. We were open from ten o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon. Usually we were open five periods everyday, and each period was about one hour long. The campers could come here as booked 'cabin activities' in the first four periods. In the fifth period, the campers were able to pursue their favorite activities as free choices.

### **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND ATMOSPHERE**

The atmosphere in the art room was very casual. Arts and Crafts, to the campers, was a place in which to explore their creativity and to learn new techniques. The art room, to the staff, was a place in which to create interesting art works with the campers and to stimulate their creativity. The atmosphere was relaxed, permissive and not restrictive because the staff

wanted the campers to have fun while learning and creating art works. We hoped that they could look back upon the summer with fond memories.

After the campers entered the art room, usually twelve to sixteen campers at one time, the staff usually would talk about the art projects we were going to make in that period. Then one staff member would introduce the steps of the projects briefly. Then other staff members would guide the campers to get necessary materials. The campers could choose their own places to work. Some preferred to work with their close friends; some liked to work alone; some liked to sit on the floor. A few campers liked to work on the porch because they wanted to get fresh air. In general, they were allowed to work any way they felt comfortable as long as they behaved themselves.

Besides giving the instructions, the staff would talk to the campers one-to-one during the period in order to give them individual attention. The staff and camper relationship was close to friendship. The campers were welcomed to ask any questions and contribute new ideas and suggestions. Also, the individual conversation helped the staff to know each camper better. The campers talked about their interesting experiences during the day. Some campers consulted the staff with the problems they had during the art making process.

Because of the multicultural goal of this art educational event, I explained some Chinese customs related to the art projects they were making. For example: While we were making the 'good luck sign', I explained that luck-paper is always red because it is concerned with happiness and wealth in Chinese traditional culture. Chinese people like to hang the 'good luck sign' upside down because 'upside down' has the same

pronunciation as 'coming' in Chinese. Therefore, the upside down 'good luck sign' suggests the meaning, 'good luck is coming'.

## **SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE**

We required the campers to behave appropriately yet we gave them enough freedom for self-expression. We required the campers to respect every person under all circumstances. Any camper who offended anyone physically or verbally would be asked to leave the art room right away. Also, there was absolutely no graffiti allowed anywhere in the art room. Any camper who wrote or painted anything on the room's facilities would be asked to clean it at once. Otherwise, his or her name would be sent directly to the camp director's office and to be announced in front of the entire camp. If some campers were particularly naughty, the staff would use eye contact first to stop them from fooling around. If necessary, staff would then call them by name to get their attention or directly ask them to behave themselves.

There were some rules in the art room in order to maintain the normal atmosphere and to ensure the campers' safety. These were: First, the campers should listen to the staff's instructions under all circumstances. Second, the campers under twelve years old are not permitted to use dangerous items such as: the hot glue gun and the chisel. Third, the campers must ask the staff to get extra art supplies from the back room. Fourth, the campers are encouraged to share ideas and materials, and to help each other.

Most of the campers were very cooperative and well-mannered. They related to staff as big brothers and sisters with whom they could consult,

discuss problems, create interesting art projects, and share their fun summer camp experiences.

The rules were strictly applied. A few campers' names were announced in front of the entire camp because they wrote their names on the art room's poles. Some campers were asked to leave the art room because they bullied other campers or were mean to the staff. We used the rules to change some campers' bad behaviors.

## **MUSIC**

Music was allowed in the art room to enhance the atmosphere. However only soft music was played to avoid the class atmosphere from being overly 'hyped -up'.

In one class at the very beginning of the summer, a staff member played "Who Let The Dogs Out" which was a very popular song among the children. The campers obviously got excited because of the hyperactive music. They stopped their ongoing art works to sing along with the rhythm. Some excited campers even began to chase each other. The staff had to turn the music off to maintain the normal classroom atmosphere. After that lesson, we decided only to choose soft music to play. Besides, we always put the volume low so that we could communicate with the campers easily.

## **Clean-up**

The Arts and Crafts clean-up rule encouraged every camper to clean his or her own work area at the end of each period. The clean-up was very important to us because we only had twenty minutes to clean-up and prepare for the next period.

At the last five minutes of each period, the staff would ask the campers to stop working on their projects and start to clean their work area. Sometimes, the campers were not very energetic for clean-up because they wanted to finish their ongoing projects. It was a challenge for the staff to mobilize the campers to clean-up in the short five minutes. We divided the campers into two groups for a clean-up competition. This strategy worked very well because most of the campers wanted to win. Meanwhile, we gave the campers specific instructions such as guiding them to place the art supplies in the right space, supervising them to clean brushes correctly, and so on. Also, we had one staff member responsible for collecting the unfinished art works and labelling them.

### **ART MAKING PROJECTS**

During the week-long preparation, every group had their own assigned art projects to work on. Ms. Kronick ordered some special art materials for the festival. The art projects consisted of individual and group projects.

Some of the individual projects involved making costumes for the campers themselves to wear at the parade and the fashion show. The Chinese lantern was a popular project among the campers. In order to integrate with the Chinese New Year theme, I suggested that we use Chinese calligraphy to decorate the lanterns. I wrote some Chinese characters' on posters so that the campers could copy them for their own purposes. At the beginning, the campers seemed to lack confidence about their Chinese calligraphy because they had never done this before. I put up paper in the front of the art room to demonstrate some characters step-by-step so that the campers could follow the instruction easily. Some campers wanted to write their names in Chinese

for their lantern's decoration. Some campers also asked me to teach them simple greetings in Chinese. Most of the campers were very curious about Chinese language. They told me that they thought Chinese symbols were so beautiful and that they almost look like tiny pictures. I explained to them that Chinese characters were indeed developed from drawings. For example: the Chinese character for "water" looks like three waves. On the other hand, some characters were developed from the meanings which they represented, such as : the character "man" consists of the symbol "farm" and "strength" because in ancestral Chinese society, only men work on the farm. The campers were attracted to such interesting stories about Chinese language. Also, I thought those stories helped them to understand Chinese culture better, and from an insider's perspective.

The mask and hat were another staff member's idea. He got the inspirations from the outfit of Kung Fu fighters. Those projects were younger campers' favorites because they were simple to make and looked dramatic. These projects also satisfied some campers' interest about the mysterious Kung Fu.

Clothing design was an important project for the fashion show. I found that the girls were much more interested in it than the boys. Because most of the campers were not good at sewing, we let them use glue and safety pins instead of needle and thread. Most of the dresses were simply cut but the campers made a lot of effort in decorating. They even designed their own hair and make up styles for the fashion show. Some girls made purses to match their dresses. One girl told me that the girls in her cabin were very excited about the upcoming fashion show, and they talked about it almost every night. Obviously, the campers showed a very strong desire to exhibit





The costumes made by the campers during the week-long preparation.

Picture 1. 2.

their talents. Those girls worked a long time on the preparations and they were deeply involved in the fashion show.

The group projects involved making decorations for the parade, the fashion show and the dinner. The group projects required cooperation, while the individual projects required personal artistic skills. The campers had opportunities to learn how to collaborate with their peers through these team-oriented projects.

One project was drawing a big dragon which would be used as a prop for the fashion show. We explained to the campers about some important features of a dragon. In traditional Chinese tales, the dragon is a mysterious strong creature that has the power to control wind, storm, thunder and lightning. Dragon is described as a royal creature which has a snake's body, a phoenix's claws, a deer's horns and a bull's nose. It is a symbol of loyalty, strength and power in Chinese culture. According to the knowledge that they had learned about the dragon, the campers started to draw an outline of the dragon. They got involved and gave suggestions about details and colours. They were divided into several groups and each group had its own specific responsibility. Some campers volunteered to be team leaders to distribute duties to their peers and to collect suggestions from everyone in the group. Some campers helped to prepare the art supplies, such as cutting the paper, mixing the paints and cleaning the brushes. Some campers started to paint. The campers functioned well as a unit.



The campers are working on the dragon sign.

Picture 3.

## **Chinese New Year Celebration**

The celebration was a half-day program. The campers had opportunities to exhibit their art works to the entire camp and to participate in various activities.

### **PARADE**

The parade started after lunch. The campers wore the red clothes, hats and masks which they made during the week-long preparation. They decorated a wagon with their lanterns, good luck signs and happy new year signs. A few older campers set up a broadcast system to play music and to introduce the information they had collected about China. I was very surprised to hear what they knew of China, from folk customs to political issues. Being Chinese, I did not want to criticise their viewpoints on China's human right problems. Again I thought that they obtained most of the information from Western media which might contain misunderstanding and distort the Chinese reality. However, as an art educator, I was glad to know that this Chinese New Year Festival enhanced their awareness toward another culture and ethnic group. Especially for the older campers as they were not only interested in the Chinese arts but also the history and politics of China. The awareness certainly was a part of multicultural art education.

### **GAMES AND ACTIVITIES**

After the parade, the campers were invited to participate in Chinese games and activities that were organized by all the Creative Arts staff. There were dragon boat racing, chopsticks games, Chinese chess, tea ceremony, body painting and Tai Chi.



The parade

Picture 4.

I was in charge of the tea ceremony with another staff member. We used some cushions and a low table to arrange a peaceful corner. We explained to the campers that they need patience to appreciate the tea ceremony and to gain relaxation through the peaceful atmosphere. I thought the tea ceremony was a fresh cultural experience for these campers, who are used to 'fast food'. We boiled water to make the green tea and flower tea, then the campers had to wait until the tea cooled down. Some campers did not understand why we used boiling water to make the tea and why we do not add ice cubes to help cool the tea faster. I told them that Chinese are very critical about tea. People have high requirements about tea quality, water and tea wares. Normally, the finest tea is grow at altitudes of 3,000 to 7,000 feet. People often use spring water, rainwater and snow water to make tea. Among them the spring water and the rainwater in autumn are considered to be the best. Fine water must be pure, sweet, clean and flowing. The art of drinking and serving tea plays a major cultural role in China. It inspires poetry and songs. Mutual love of tea cements lifelong friendships. For centuries, the ritual of preparing and serving tea has held a special place in the hearts and minds of Chinese people. We told them that patience was the essential philosophy of the tea ceremony. We also explained that they could observe tea leaves' movement in the water and learn to enjoy harmony with their environment. Because of the limited facilities, we could not present an authentic tea ceremony to the campers. Chinese tea wares consist of mainly teapots, cups, tea bowls and trays. Chinese prefer pottery wares to other materials. The purple clay wares made from YiXing, JiangSu province are the best choice.

To complement the feminine character of the tea ceremony, we also included the masculine side of traditional Chinese culture, exemplified by the dragon boat races and chopstick games. These games required the campers to have good physical and to cooperative among themselves.

## **CHINESE DINNER**

After the games and activities, a Chinese New Year dinner gratified the campers' appetites. Our staff decorated the dining hall with the red paper crane mobiles and dragon signs made by the campers. Before the dinner, Ms. Kronick greeted the entire camp and explained that the crane mobile represented all of our good wishes to the campers. Also she introduced the food customs: fish is always served to symbolize prosperity and wealth accumulation in the New Year's feast. Long noodles are the symbol of long life in China, so youngsters and seniors all will have a bowl of Long Life Noodles to promise a healthy life. Ms. Kronick's lecture was interesting. But it was neither a good time nor good place to lecture on customs to four hundred hungry campers before supper in the noisy dining hall. The campers were too hungry and excited to pay attention to the lecture.

However, the dishes prepared by kitchen staff certainly offered the campers a look at Chinese culture from an inside angle. In the feast, the main courses were fried rice with a variety of vegetables, noodles and spring rolls. As we all know, food is an important part of Chinese culture. Chinese food emphasizes the perfect combination of colour, aroma and flavor. For Chinese, food should satisfy not only the tongue and the appetite but also the eyes, the nose, the imagination, and the mind. For example: the fried rice combines with many colorful ingredients. The rice was a main ingredient

and mushroom, red pepper, bamboo root, and eggs were secondary ingredients of contrasting colours. They were cooked appropriately incorporating the proper seasonings and sauce to create an aesthetically attractive dish. As an essential factor of Chinese cuisine, fragrant aroma certainly stimulates one's appetite. For the fried rice, the chef used scallion, fresh ginger, garlic and other seasonings to add richness to the rice without covering up the natural flavor of the ingredients. Taste is the most important aspect of a perfect dish. The well-prepared fried rice tasted rich to those who like strong flavors, but not over-spiced to those who prefer a milder taste.

### **FASHION SHOW**

After dinner, there was a fashion show. It was a chance for campers to show their design and performance talents. Campers, especially the girls, were very excited about the fact that they were going to perform like real models in the dresses they designed and made.

After dinner, Ms. Kronick announced that all of the fashion show models were going to meet in ten minutes at the Arts and Crafts room for make-up. She required all the staff to get ready for their preparations. We divided into three groups: one group was in charge of face make up; a second group was responsible for hair style; and a last group helped the campers put their dresses on. In order to produce an exotic atmosphere, we used thick black eye liner to accentuate the models' eyes and braided their hair into a Chinese bun style. During the make up process, some girls were talking about who would be the most beautiful girl among the models. Some girls even asked the staff to make special effects on their make up.



Around eight o'clock, the campers arrived on Pine Stage. At the entrances, some staff handed out red envelopes filled with candies, which represent blessings in Chinese custom. The fashion show started soon after. The models displayed their elegant dresses and costumes, strutting to the rhythm of the music. Moreover, we used a fog machine to create a misty atmosphere. The narrators of this fashion show were a group of boys. It seemed that they did some research on Chinese folk culture. They introduced the historical origin of the rice hat: in the south of China, rice farmers usually wear umbrella-shaped bamboo hats to protect themselves from rain and sun. The interactions between the models and the narrators were very effective. The models displayed their costumes while the DJs introduced their opinions about the clothing and the designer's inspiration.

I noticed that most of the models and narrators were 'popular kids' in their sub-group or in the entire camp. They actively participated in all the activities and they were very confident. I thought that we should have given more opportunities to less popular kids in the fashion show. This was a limitation that I found in the show.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Multicultural Art Education**

The literature in art education related to multiculturalism is extensive. The awareness of diverse cultures existing in North American and other Western societies has captured the attention of many scholars in the field of art education. Their research poses numerous questions, such as why is multicultural art education necessary? And how do we understand different cultures in a multiethnic society?

F.Graeme Chalmers (1996) advocates a cultural approach “ which implies respect for behaviors, dispositions, outlooks and values that are not solely from one dominant culture.” (p.4) He states that one of the most important reasons for multicultural art education is the diversified ethnic combination in the North American population. Multiculturalism provides students chances to understand each other’s cultures better, and to deal with art and life under any circumstance. I agree with Chalmers that a multicultural approach is for everyone, regardless of ethnicity or other differences. We should encourage study of each other’s art forms, customs and traditions. One does not have to be Chinese to celebrate Spring Festival. One does not have to be female to study women’s art. One does not have to live in Africa to create African crafts.

Through the Chinese New Year Festival, I noticed that some children with the dominate Western cultural background needed to expand their understanding of other cultures. One day at the art room, I sensed that a young camper were staring at me. She looked into my eyes for a few seconds and then said: “Your have nice eyes.” I was surprised somehow, and responded, “Oh? Thank you.” The girl smiled and asked me another question: “Do Chinese people all have dragon’s eyes like yours?” I was not sure why she called my eyes ‘dragon’s eyes’. She was very young after all. Nevertheless, her fantastic impression about the relationship between dragon and Chinese people reflected that her understanding of Chinese culture was limited. Chalmers (1996) also points out that “children who live in culturally homogeneous societies need multicultural education even more than others.” (p.5) Through observing my own feelings as a Chinese person living in Canada, I felt more cultural conflicts in small towns than in big

cities such as Montreal and Toronto. I have been living in Montreal for almost two years, and I rarely found that Montrealers paid special attention to me because of my Asian facial features. On the contrary, when I was in small towns, I noticed that my appearance bought me much more attention from the people there than people in Montreal. I often felt that I was stared at by many people, which made me feel uncomfortable. I thought that the homogeneous cultural environment in the small town probably limited the people's understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

On the other hand, the same limited understanding and oversimplification about the Western culture also circulates throughout China. For example, the following are thoughts from my American friend who studied Chinese and ink painting in China for one year: "...Being American in China subjects an individual to several stereotypes. The biggest and most common one would be that of the mass media. Everyone thought that I listened to Celine Dion, the Backstreet Boys, and other such contemporary popular music. The biggest industry would have to be movies from Hollywood. It was amazing that newly released cinema can find its way into China after production was finished. I would assume that based upon the age group of most Chinese students, their interests are mostly lying in Western media culture. One could expect this kind of stereotype... The older generation perceived me in a different way. Maybe they were afraid of what kind of thoughts that I might bring with me, the kind of influence I would have on these young students..."

In brief, multicultural art education is important to everyone. "Multicultural art education's intent is to help students develop positive intergroup attitudes. Multicultural art education advocates cultural

understanding through art.” (Lin, 1997, P.62) Dissanayake (1988) suggests that art education may focus on the aesthetic aspects of art works. However, these elements should be related to utilitarian purposes and special cultural and social meanings in different groups of people. During the week-long program, we introduced the campers to many customs in Chinese culture. For example, the colour red has important status in Chinese society. Chinese people use red as a dominant colour for New Year’s decorations and clothing. Chinese wedding ceremonies also use red to represent good luck and blessing for the marriage. The newly married couple must wear red in their wedding. The colours white and black are absolutely taboo colours for Chinese New Year and Weddings because Chinese people regard these two colours as representing sadness and evil. White and black are colours for funerals. With this in mind, it is not hard to understand why these colours are taboo colours in Chinese culture. I thought this knowledge would be very practical for the campers, to avoid unnecessary cultural conflicts in their daily lives. Every culture has its unique perspectives toward aesthetic elements. For instance, many Western cultures regard green as the symbol of life, while Japanese people consider green as the colour of death. In short, listening carefully to other cultures’ voices definitely will help us to understand each other more.

Billings (1995) introduces the two most discussed approaches in multicultural art education: issue-oriented and theme-oriented curriculum. The issue-oriented approach advocates a socially reconstructive function of art. It emphasizes how art works influence viewers, and encourages viewers to examine public issues critically through the art works. The theme-oriented approach emphasizes experiencing cultural traditions

through motifs and aesthetic aspects of art works, leading to recognition of diverse cultures. The Chinese New Year Festival tended to follow the theme-oriented approach, in that the campers built up fundamental understanding about Chinese traditional culture by participating in preparations, celebrating the festival, and acknowledging the cultural diversity represented by the festival. For the young children, the close contact with Chinese traditional arts and crafts, and the entertaining celebration were more attractive and accessible than serious lectures about multiculturalism.

In the parade, some older campers set up a broadcast system to play music and to introduce the information they had collected about China. They even talked about China's human rights situation. In my view, their opinions were deeply influenced by Western media. Out of politeness, I did not want to criticise their viewpoints on China's human rights issues. However, as an art educator, I was glad to know that this Chinese New Year Festival enhanced their awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups. Especially the older campers, were not only interested in Chinese arts but also in China's history and politics. China was not simply a geographic term for them anymore. They wanted to learn the language and the culture. They wanted to travel in China someday. They hoped to know what Chinese people's daily life really is. They tried to understand why this world's biggest communist country plays such an important role in today's economic development. I thought the campers' enthusiastic involvement consolidated their learning in this multicultural art education event.

I thought this multicultural art educational event certainly had a positive impact on the campers, in that it was successful in enhancing their

experience with motifs and aesthetic aspects of the various art projects. During the week-long preparation, I found that the campers were very enthusiastic about Chinese calligraphy, and they wanted to learn it. Consequently, I taught them the correct sequences to write Chinese characters. Furthermore, I gave them some instructions about the usage of ink and brush in calligraphy, and the important aesthetic effects of unpainted area in Chinese traditional ink painting and calligraphy. Some campers were particularly interested in this knowledge. Moreover, I was very happy to notice that they applied the knowledge to their other art works. A girl especially came to the Arts and Crafts room to show me a plate she made at the Pottery Shop. She wrote her name in Chinese characters as the decorative patterns for the plate, and she applied different brush strokes to create a rich texture for the background. Her colour selection also showed a strong influence from Chinese calligraphy: the background colours were black and white, and her name was written in red. I think the Chinese New Year Festival brought to the campers not only a fresh cultural overview, but also a different aesthetic perspective. These theme-oriented activities offered the campers a deeper recognition of Chinese culture through their personal involvement.

Chalmers (1996) also emphasizes that we need to “promote cross cultural understanding through the identification of similarities within and among cultural groups.” (p.5) From my viewpoint, the Chinese New Year Festival somehow seemed to ignore the acknowledgement of cultural similarities, and instead emphasized cultural differences. On the other hand, the simplified information packaged in exotic stories and anecdotes in this event disclosed that we needed a deeper approach towards representing Chinese

culture. It was obvious that the festival oversimplified Chinese culture and marginalized contemporary Chinese culture. This is a phenomenon which seems to be prevalent in Western society. For instance, Lin (1997) presents an example in her critique: “There was a concert for Taiwanese composers whose compositions were performed by the Vancouver symphony orchestra. Some compositions strongly reflected the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic classics similar to Dvorak and Rachmaninoff. Through personal communication, there were some comments from white Canadian music professors, claiming the music was not being Chinese, but merely an imitation of Western classical music.” (p.55) This phenomenon reveals that Westerners perceive Chinese culture as a distinctively different style. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why contemporary Taiwanese composers were charged with losing their tradition.

Earlier in this report, I noted that the staff wanted to capture the campers’ curiosity by emphasizing the exoticism of traditional Chinese culture, and so this information was highlighted in the festival. I worried that the limited theme misled the campers into viewing Chinese culture as a static and old-fashioned culture. Some campers were curious about the outfits that the staff wore at the mini play. They asked me whether or not I wore the same old-time clothes when I was in China. When I was introducing Chinese calligraphy, a few campers asked me if Chinese literature should be read from right to left, and from top to bottom, which in fact are sequences to read ancient Chinese literature. They thought Chinese people are still very superstitious because the customs presented in the program seemed odd to them. Mythical mountains, temples and bamboo woods were doubtless the landscape they associate with China. It was hard for most Westerners to

picture the people having breakfast in KFC and going to a rock concert in China. A staff member asked me where did I get my stylish army pants. He was obviously surprised when I told him that I bought them in China. Also, some of my North American friends told me that they were astonished by Chinese cities' modernization on their first trip to China. They felt that China's reality is very different from the previous impression that they got from the Western media. The major information about China available in the West suggests that China is mysterious, tranquil and exotic. Hart (1993) states that "the connotative meanings of traditional defined by the Western art world serves as a tool for stereotyping the differences from the standard of modernist Western cultural productions. Traditional non-Western culture is to be considered unchanged over the centuries, frozen, and timeless." (p.43) Therefore, it is not hard to understand the above phenomena.

I felt the festival somehow drew the campers' attention by presenting an idealized Chinese culture that fits this common Western perception. In her critique of Western perceptions, Lin (1997) notes that "the notion of Chinese culture is constructed by the Western gaze which selects the exotic cultural traditions that represents the opposite of many of the canons in Western cultures." (p.57) With this in mind, it is not difficult to understand why there are so many oversimplified understandings about Chinese culture in Western society. It is not surprising that contemporary Chinese culture, which itself synthesizes other cultures' influences, is marginalized, or as Heidi Van Mierlo (1997) states, "contemporary Chinese visual arts are still almost unknown." (p.7)

Lin (1997) suggests that "it is important for teachers to examine their own conscience and to be aware of their responsibility to gain knowledge of



a broader historical and social-cultural context while engaging with ethnic cultures.” (p.66) Nevertheless, Chinese culture was presented in an idealized Western way in this Chinese New Year Festival. To me, this was a limitation of this multicultural art educational event. This limitation also brought out an important question : How can we avoid a shallow and unilateral understanding of Chinese culture?

From my perspective, I think Westerners need to view Chinese culture as a developing culture which consists of contemporary culture and the remembered traditions, as Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) describe : “ The elements of tradition or cultural production are selectively transmitted. Part of the tradition is chosen to be remembered, just as some parts are purposely forgotten.” (p.59) In my opinion, one of the key elements of the understanding of cultural representation between the West and non-Western cultures is the notion of tradition. In the Chinese New Year Festival, much of the attention focused on Chinese antique culture, and detached from contemporary Chinese society. The repetitive information about ancient traditions, such as the exotic play, the staff’s antiquated costumes and so on, gave the campers an impression that Chinese culture is unchanged and archaic.

Lin (1997) reminds us that Westerners should not be trapped in romanticizing Chinese culture, and mainly looking at its exotic traditions. Allied to this view, Lin (1997) claims that art educators need to teach students more about contemporary Chinese culture, which synthesizes other cultural influences. With China’s increasing economic growth and developing international relations, Chinese contemporary culture is going through the process of evolution. Contemporary Chinese culture is not

restricted to stereotypical, historical objects. For example, the book Another long march: Chinese conception and installation art in the nineties (Chris Driessen & Heidi Van Mierlo, 1997) documents the evolution of Chinese contemporary art.

I wish we could have presented more contemporary Chinese music to the campers in order to prevent them from viewing Chinese music as languid and boring. For example, they could have also listened to Tang Dynasty, a prominent rock band in China, who successfully incorporate Beijing opera with rock music elements. Their album Back To Tang Dynasty In Dreams offers audiences a virtual music tour which synthesizes Western rock music's influence while maintaining the soul of Beijing opera.

With the Internet gaining popularity in China, many artists have started using it not only as a tool but also as a new space to show their art works. Hou Hanru (1997) introduces some of these artists: "...while producing computer art works, Feng Mengbo has set up connections with artists from other countries by using the Internet, while Zhou Tiehai from Shanghai, who has been working intensively with computer-generated images, sounds and so on, has created his own web site [http://www.shanghai\\_ed.com/tiehai.htm](http://www.shanghai_ed.com/tiehai.htm) ." (p.83) Certainly, there is a lot more information Westerners need to know about contemporary Chinese culture, for them to acknowledge the hybridity of Chinese culture.

However, by emphasizing contemporary context, I do not mean to negate the traditional Chinese content in this Chinese New Year Festival, or to advocate only the teaching of contemporary Chinese culture. My purpose is to call Western art educators' attention to the oversimplified presentation of

Chinese culture. I hope that we can develop a wider lens for looking at the contemporary realities of non-Western cultures and their complex synthesis of historical traditions and the process of evolution.

## Teaching Models in Art Education

The literature on theories of teaching models is abundant. For this report, I will use Arthur D. Efland's (1995) article on art teaching conceptions to analyze the Arts and Crafts staff's teaching practices. Efland (1995) mentions four teaching models which help art educators know specifically what responsibilities they have toward students' various learning needs. These models are: a) Mimetic-Behavioral model, b) Pragmatic-Social Reconstruction model, c) Expressive-Psychoanalytic model, and d) Formalist-cognitive model. Through my observation, I found that Arts and Crafts staff applied aspects of two of these teaching models, in our teaching practices.

### 1. Mimetic-Behavioral Model

This model views teaching process as a way of providing models for students to imitate. Learning, described as new behaviors, are noted in the learner's repertoire. The model suggests that "successful teaching places the student under the control of the stimulus situation." (Efland, p.30) Arts and Crafts staff controlled the stimulus by providing samples for the campers to look at. However, we wanted the campers to develop their art beyond simply imitating the samples, by exploring various techniques and experimenting with many media. For instance, I showed a sample mask to the campers, and gave some technical instruction of mask making such as : they need to be aware of the mask's size and to make sure the masks fit their faces; they can

use strong contrasting colour combinations to make the mask noticeable from a distance, and so on. Then I left the lesson open-ended. I encouraged them to think about using different materials for the masks, and I hoped they could bring their personal styles to the masks' decoration. I told them that my sample was only one of the many options in mask making, and I expected them to explore more possibilities instead of simply copying mine. The art works evolved during the class period as the campers tried out materials, techniques and styles. I was very happy to see their masks showed various aesthetic styles. Some masks showed a strong Asian influences by using simplified colour combinations and Chinese characters. Some masks revealed the artists' personal preferences by combining favorite cartoon characters with the art works. Some tended to be material-oriented by experimenting with various materials. In brief, I wanted to stimulate the campers to extend their imagination through the art making process. I agree with the mimetic-behavioral model that teachers should control the learning process in the classroom. On the other hand, my teaching practices also gave the students enough freedom to explore their personal interests. I think lacking awareness of students' learning needs is a limitation of the mimetic-behavioral model.

Efland (1995) states that "instruction utilizes specific stimuli placed in the learning environment by the teacher." (p.30) Arts and Crafts staff stimulated the campers' creativity and helped them to put their ideas into concrete form through talking, questioning, and discussing instead of directly working on their art works. Even though the mimetic-behavioral model views teaching as presenting the students with models to imitate. The Arts and Crafts staff wanted to motivate the campers' creativity beyond

simply copy the samples. I think the mimetic-behavioral model exaggerates the imitative aspect of learning and marginalizes the importance of inspiration in creative process. My teaching experiences suggest that the campers benefited more through staff's offering "stimulus" as inspiration for students to discover themselves, find out their main interests, needs and preoccupations.

I remember that one girl came to Arts and Crafts and asked for some materials. However, she sat in front of the table and stared at the materials for more than five minutes. I knew that she might need some inspiration to start. Then I asked if she had a specific object in mind. She told me that she wanted to make a unique doll for her mom but she did not know how to make the doll unique. "I think it would be nice if you make a doll just look like yourself." I suggested. The girl seemed to like this idea, replying, "Great! My mom will love it! But how can I make the doll exactly look like me?" I tried to capture her features : "Well, you have nice dark curly hair and beautiful brown eyes. You can use brown wool and brown beads for the doll's hair and eyes." Then I added, "I think it would be great if you can add more personal elements to it. What is your hobby?" The girl got excited: "Wow! I like this idea! I am a great soccer player in my school!" I suggested: "You can design a nice sports wear for your doll." "Really! I am going to make a nice outfit for my doll, and running shoes ..." She got a lot of ideas from our short conversation. As a result, she made a unique soccer player doll that looked just like her, as she said. This experience approved that appropriate stimulus for inspiration is effective in art teaching.

The Mimetic-behavioral model points out that "the teachers should control content, sequence and intensity of the instructions." (Efland,1995)

Although this is true, I would also respect students' different learning interests. In one class, during the week-long preparation, a camper said that he was already tired of the Chinese New Year theme because he had done many art works related to this theme in other Creative Arts areas. He said : "Does it has to be a Chinese New Year project? I want to make something else." However, one staff member believed that everyone should follow the lesson plan, and he forced the camper to make the project. The child did it very cursorily and the art work was not satisfactory.

In this instance, this lesson did not achieve its expected educational aim because the staff member lacked respect for the camper's specific learning interests. I think the mimetic-behavioral model excessively emphasizes bringing the students under control, and somehow ignores the students' learning needs. I perceive this as another limitation of the teaching model. Instead of simply forcing everyone to follow the formulaic lesson, I would be conscious of students' interests while maintaining control of the teaching. If I were the staff member, I would have let the camper explain the specific reason for not wanting to do the project. If the reason was acceptable, such as he felt bored of the repetitive Chinese New Year theme, I would then allow him to choose another theme that interested him more. I believe that a child can not work at his or her best unless he or she is truly interested in the subject.

In the staff teaching practices, two kinds of exemplars were presented to students: artistic technique demonstration and behavior demonstrations. The mimetic-behavioral model involves identifying each behavior to be acquired by the learners, and then structures the related learning process in a series of detailed objectives. Arts and Crafts staff applied this model when we gave

technique demonstration in order to help the campers grasp design aptitudes, arts and crafts abilities, visual perception, and so on. Through the step-by-step demonstrations, the campers observed the detailed procedures of art making which helped them to perceive the knowledge concretely.

For behavior demonstrations, I presented myself as a role model of appropriate behavior for the students to imitate. As a teacher, I should know specifically what to do and what not to do in the classroom. Most of the Arts and Crafts staff were mature and responsible. However, in one instance, a twenty-year-old staff member was a little bit undisciplined. One day, he brought in his hammock and hung it in the art room for his “preclass nap”. The other staff and I worried that the hammock would affect the teaching by distracting the campers’ attention. Not surprisingly, the campers wanted to climb up and swing on it. They even had arguments about who would be the first one to use the hammock. The other staff and I were very annoyed by the noisy atmosphere and we had to get rid of the hammock. In that class, we spent half of the class time trying to mitigate the campers’ hyped-up behaviors.

I am not an advocate of a rigid and static class atmosphere. However, I have to consider what the acceptable behaviors are in my classroom because my behaviors are exemplars for my students, as Efland (1995) states: “ the power of teaching in behavioral theory is seen in the convincingness of demonstrations that bring the student under control.” (p.30) The above young staff member did fairly good demonstrations in artistic techniques since he was a very talented artist. However, he lacked of awareness towards his responsibility of being the campers’ role model for acceptable behavioral in the Arts and Crafts room.

## **1. Pragmatic-Social Reconstruction Model**

**This model connects pragmatic aesthetics with the view that education is an instrument for social reconstruction. “One constructs knowledge of art by encountering artistic problems through personal and social living. The learning task involves the intellectual reconstruction of knowledge as new experience alters or confirms previous views of the world.” (Efland, 1995, p.31) Efland also suggests teachers with these views would not impart formally organized knowledge but would organize learning around life-centered situations. Summer camp’s sprightly teaching environment provided Arts and Crafts staff enough opportunities to combine situations in camp life with the teaching content.**

**This teaching model advocates the experience with a powerful art project which may alter the learners’ views of reality. For instance, Arts and Crafts staff noticed that some campers liked to use fancy art supplies such as glitters and sparkling paints to make their art works gorgeous, and they seemed to lack interest in plain materials. We wanted to help the campers understand that they could create great art works without these fancy materials. Therefore, we designed a special project for them. The staff required the campers to find materials from nature, and bring the materials to the art room. The campers collected rocks, feathers, pine cones, flowers and leaves. Then, the staff supervised the campers in creating art works from these natural supplies. Some campers painted patterns and cartoons on the rocks to make paperweights. Some campers used branches to make picture frames. Some campers used feathers and pine cones to create cute animals. The campers said that they had a lot of fun transforming these simple**



materials into art works. Furthermore, they understood that any kind of material could create great art works as long as it is used creatively.

Efland (1995) suggests such life-centered activities as gardening, interior decoration, and setting up window displays of merchandise as instances in which art knowledge becomes a potential instrument in problem solving. In the camp, one such life-centered activity occurred at the end of the summer. The campers directed a play to culminate their camp experiences. They were responsible for decorating the stage and for prop design. The task required the campers to use their abilities in problem solving, aesthetics, artistic techniques and imagination. Some older campers were in charge of making a huge picture of the pinewoods and placid lake. Their first encountered problem was the paper: the available paper was not big enough to cover the stage's wall. However, smart campers solved this problem very quickly. They used dark tape and staples to join many pieces of paper into a huge surface. The next challenge was to paint on such a big surface, and to control the whole image while several campers worked on different areas at the same time. The campers needed to think about how colours mixed to make particular shades and tints, which would make the painting attractive when viewed from a distance. They needed to know what qualities of these colours can create a pleasant combination in this huge painting. In this example, the campers used their artistic knowledge to solve the encountered problems.

Through the such life-centered situations, the campers also enhanced their interpersonal skills. During the week-long preparation, one cabin group was in charge of making paper crane mobiles for the dinning hall's decoration. The procedures for making the cranes were a little bit

complicated and some campers felt frustrated. The staff could not give individual instruction to every camper since only two staff members knew how to make the crane. A few campers volunteered to help the staff offer instructions to the other campers, since they already learned it at school. They explained the procedures and demonstrated the steps to their peers. Some of them asked the other campers to do the easier steps first and then they finished the remaining difficult steps. The campers' cooperation helped them to finish this project. The group project provided a life situation for individual camper to solve problems as a unit. The volunteer campers had a chance to help their peers, and the finished projects gave them a sense of pride.

The pragmatic-social reconstruction model also claims that "the learning task involves the intellectual reconstruction of knowledge as new experience alters or confirms previous views of the world." (Efland, 1995, p.31) During the Chinese New Year Festival, the campers had chances to make decorations for the festival and they learned many interesting stories about Chinese culture. They also participated in the traditional games and activities which helped them to look at Chinese culture more deeply, and from several angles. By the end of the week, a lot of campers could write their names and other simple words in Chinese. Some of the campers became interested in Chinese society, and they told me that they wanted to go to China and to learn more Chinese. Even though the campers still had some stereotyped impressions about Chinese culture in mind, their concerns showed that they started to recognise China and Chinese people as an approachable culture instead of as a mysterious Far East society they had nothing to do with.

## **Art Teaching Strategies**

Teachers play active and very important roles in art classes. Using a variety of teaching strategies can keep teaching lively for teachers and students. Yet, teachers often settle into a few teaching strategies they find most effective. Since art is such a personal and individual subject for each child, teaching art is very challenging. David Burton (2001) analyzed the results of a national survey of art instruction in secondary schools in the United States. According to his analysis, the most popular teaching strategies among the surveyed teachers are studio-oriented approaches. I agree with Burton (2001) that one-to-one instruction is an effective teaching strategy. It benefits the students by obtaining individual instruction directed toward their own specific problems or needs. It benefits art teachers who get to know their students better, and thus be able to personalize instructions for each student. Based on my experiences, I noticed that the campers liked to be recognized as unique individuals rather than boys or girls among a group of campers. I remember that a girl asked me if I remember her. Being honest, I could only recognize her face, but I did not know her name. But I did not want to upset her, so I said, "Of course, you are a blue dolphin girl." (which is the name of her cabin group.) She was not satisfied with my answer: "Do you know my name?" I felt very awkward at that moment. The girl seemed very disappointed because of my forgetfulness. With this lesson in mind, I tried hard to memorize as many campers' names as possible. By the end of summer, I could remember most of their names. I found that one-to-one instruction was an effective strategy for developing a better recognition of each camper. It is not easy to know all of the students' names and personalities. However, we definitely need to try our best to understand our students better. In the summer camp, the staff and the

campers spent all the time together. Therefore, I had many opportunities to talk with the campers besides the actual class time. From the one-to-one conversation, I received the campers' feedback and some suggestions which helped me to know their specific learning interests or problems they encountered. The other Arts and Crafts staff also used this strategy frequently. The overall staff-camper relationships were pleasant, and reflected trust. Burton's (2001) study notes that "other strategies, particularly those appropriate to group instruction, appear to be used occasionally, but not widely or systematically." (p.136) My teaching practice with the campers confirmed that one-to-one instruction seemed more efficient than group discussion or small groups working together.

Burton(2001) views demonstration as a major content in studio art class. I also think that demonstrations allowed the staff to specify the technical knowledge in a clear and detailed way, which helped the campers to learn more effectively. Especially for the younger campers, I found that demonstration was an essential teaching strategy. They wanted to actually see how to manipulate materials and art tools properly, the sequential steps involved in artistic process, and the creative possibilities that can emerge during a demonstration. Arts and Crafts staff applied some favorite demonstration strategies among the teachers: "teacher demonstrates step-by-step, showing a finished example and showing a progressive series of examples." ( Burton, 2001, p.138) In the survey, the rank order of the teaching strategies clearly shifts from teacher-centered, to teacher-student interactions, to student-centered activities. Thus the teacher should remain control during the demonstration.



The demonstrations in the art room

Picture 5.

I used step-by-step demonstration frequently in my teaching practices. During the Chinese New Year Festival, the campers needed to use Chinese characters as their art works' decoration. But Chinese calligraphy was a big challenge. They felt frustrated when they saw the sample I made, making comments such as, "I have no idea where to start." ; "I don't know how many lines are used in this character, it looks really complicated."; "I am having a hard time to assemble all these small parts together, and it doesn't look like a Chinese character at all." I thought that I should explain some specific sequences and rules to them. The correct way of writing Chinese is starting from left to right, from top to bottom and from outside to inside. Also, it is very important to fit each character into a square shape. (For this reason, a Chinese character is also called a "square-shaped character".) In order to help the campers to understand the content better and to visualize the abstract knowledge, I demonstrated Chinese handwriting by following these sequences and rules. Chinese calligraphy became accessible to the campers once they observed the entire process of writing, and they learned how to apply this knowledge to the actual practice. In this example, a successful demonstration helped the students process abstract knowledge concretely and to make the knowledge accessible.

In the analysis of motivational strategies, the most effective strategy used by the surveyed teachers is " working with a variety of media and processes", (Burton, 2001, p.136) suggesting that the 'breadth approach" is efficient. In Arts and Crafts, the art supplies ranged from paint, clay, fabric, and leather, to beads and feathers. The staff believed that by experimenting with a wide variety of materials, the campers learned important qualities of materials and were able to find their favorite materials to work with. We also encouraged the campers to experiment with mixing media to increase their



The camper is writing “Happy New Year” in Chinese  
Picture 6.

creative expression. I noticed that some campers were curious about unfamiliar materials, and they usually worked hard on those projects. A girl started her very first plaster mask and she really enjoyed it. She spent a lot of time on the project and she was not concerned that the plaster might soil her clothes. She said she enjoyed the texture of the plaster and the effect of light upon the texture. The breadth approach helped every camper to find his or her own favorite materials and to work on his or her best level. In addition, after experimenting with the various materials, the campers enhanced their understanding of those materials, which gave them confidence for future art projects.

“Exhibiting their art” (p.136) is the second strongest strategy for enhancing students’ enthusiasm and interests. The campers’ passion toward the fashion show and the parade confirmed the survey’s second finding. The art works made by the campers were personal and had significant meaning to them. Exhibiting their art works enhanced their self-confidence, and it was an important way to acknowledge their artistic accomplishments. The fashion show was an especially effective way to display their design and performance abilities. During the preparation, a girl told me that she had already phoned her parents to tell them that she was going to be a model in the fashion show. Some boys said they would put on all the decorations and props they made, and they would take a lot of pictures. Obviously, the public presentation for them was an important recognition of their talents, and it certainly instilled in them a sense of pride.

However, I think that some of the models in the fashion show paid too much attention to their appearance. Some of the girls asked the staff to make special effect on their make up. They required the staff to use thick black eye liners to accentuate their eyes and braided their hair into different



fancy styles. A girl asked me to apply a lot of lipstick on her lips. During the make-up process, the girls were talking about who would be the most beautiful girl among the models. I could understand about those young girls' desire to be beautiful, but I was worried that the fashion show might confuse those girls' value of beauty. I was concerned that they might consider gorgeous dresses and make-up as the only kind of beauty, and that they felt that the fancy costumes could bring them a lot of attention from other people. Since only a limited number of the campers participated in the performance, making them felt more noticed, and the other campers might have felt ignored. I think this was the limitation of this fashion show.

Burton (2001) suggests “ art teachers often need to ‘prime the pump’ with evocative images and provocative ideas to whet the students’ appetites for a new endeavor.” (p.136) I think the students’ interests frequently grew out of the teachers’ own enthusiasm, and knowledge of the subject. The staff mini play successfully stimulated the campers’ interests toward the Chinese New Year Festival because of the fresh theatrical presentation, the unusual costumes and the special props. These fine costumes captured the campers’ attention immediately: they all wanted to see it, to try it and to make it. As a reward of the staff’s hard work, the play and the costumes successfully motivated the campers’ enthusiasm for the Chinese New Year Festival. In brief, I think it was a very effective motivation.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this report, I described the Chinese New Year Festival in Camp White Pine and examined the multicultural education aspects of this event from my perspective as a Chinese participant-observer. In addition, I analyzed several

teaching practices used by myself and other staff, which exemplified certain theories and research finding related to art teaching.

As the results of this study, the following findings emerged:

This specific Chinese cultural theme art educational event enhanced the campers' awareness and understanding of another unfamiliar culture through the motivational play, the various Chinese art projects, and the varied games and activities.

Some negative aspects emerged during the event, revealing that Westerners' typical perceptions about Chinese culture need to be reexamined. This event exaggerated the exotic aspects of Chinese traditional cultural and ignored Chinese contemporary culture. My analysis about some campers and staff's oversimplified understanding about China also suggests that it is important for Westerners to view non-Western culture as a developing process rather than as a static cultural heritage. Some Chinese contemporary art resources were recommended in this report to help Westerners gain a better understanding about contemporary Chinese culture.

Based on my observation, the Arts and Crafts staff teaching practices demonstrated characteristics of Efland's (1995) mimetic-behavioral model and pragmatic-social reconstruction model. These teaching practices seemed effective in satisfying the campers' learning needs and personal development. The most efficient teaching strategies I used myself were one-to-one instruction, demonstration, and exhibiting students' art works. All of these helped the campers to acquire personalized instruction, to understand artistic knowledge better, and to acknowledge their talents.

## **EPILOGUE**

In summer 2002, I again worked as an Arts and Crafts instructor in Camp White Pine. About ninety percent of the campers from the previous summer also returned. Therefore, it was an opportunity for me to observe any lasting influences the campers received from the Chinese New Year Festival.

Surprisingly, a lot of campers still remembered many art projects we did previous summer, and many of them said they wanted to make these projects again. One camper told me that, during the last year, she chose China as a research topic for a school project. She explained that she liked the beautiful Chinese crafts and customs that she learned from the festival, and wanted to know more. I was very glad to hear this feedback from the campers, which confirmed that the Chinese New Year Festival had enhanced the campers' awareness towards Chinese culture.

I also noticed that Arts and Crafts staff again applied many of the same effective teaching strategies from the previous summer. I found that one-to-one instruction, demonstration, and exhibiting campers' art works continued to be satisfying strategies.

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## **CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

This is to state that I agree to participate in a program of research conducted by Li Fang of Art Education Department of Concordia University.

### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is Teaching Report on the Multicultural Art Education and Teaching Styles at Camp White Pine.

### **B. PROCEDURES**

This research describes and analyzes an art educational event that took place in the summer of 2001 at Camp White Pine, Ontario, Canada. The event was a Chinese New Year Festival, along with its related workshops and preparations.

### **C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPANT**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is  
NON-CONFIDENTIAL (i.e., my identity will be revealed in study results)
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.
- I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed.

**I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.**

**NAME ( please print )** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**WITNESS SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_