



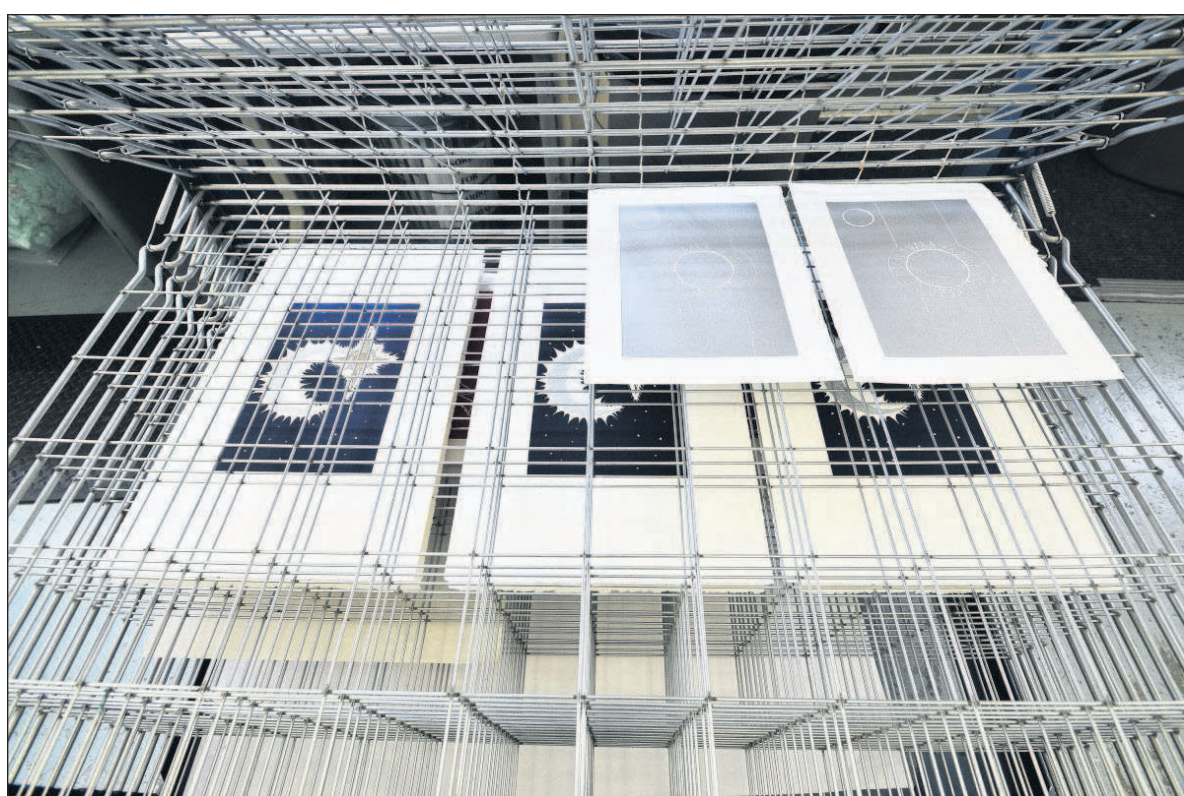
Young artists go solo for festival/2C



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Prints dry as students fine-tune their work.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Cutting between worlds

Nixyaawii students learn to create linocuts exploring tribal identity in modern world

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

After they're cut, inked and run through a press, the prints made by Nixyaawii Community School students at Crow's Shadow Institute of the Arts reveal more than just art.

Traveling from one Umatilla Indian Reservation institution to another on May 12, four Nixyaawii students in the studio that day were diligently working on their linocuts — carvings made into linoleum blocks resembling giant stamps.

Crow's Shadow print master Frank Janzen moved from student to student, smoothing out a carving on one of the linocuts, teaching a new color technique and offering reminders that time was of the essence. This was their last day in the studio before their showcase.

"It's right down to the wire," he said.

Nixyaawii senior L'Rissa Sohappy had multiple linocuts in the print she was working on, requiring multiple runs through the press.

With each pass through, a new element of the print would be revealed, the dark background, a star, a sun.

Sohappy said her inspiration for the print just popped into her head, but another print had more concrete origins.

Sitting on one of the work tables was a linocut with an elk carved into it. In immaculate cursive below the elk was the name of Sohappy's late father and the phrase "Yánwa inmí tamnápa," or "Forever in my heart" in Umatilla.

Janzen remarked that Sohappy's cursive was the best he'd seen in a linocut.

On the opposite end of the studio, Nixyaawii sophomore Helena Peters was trying a new coloring technique Janzen had just taught her.

On a table, Janzen painted different shades of blue in lines that were spread out vertically. Janzen put a metal roller over the paint and applied it to Peters' linocut of a clouded sky, creating a color gradient effect that made it look like the clouds were above a dawning horizon.

"Clouds are like my favorite thing in the entire world," she said.

Peters said she originally drew the clouds from her home patio and found the whole printmaking processing relaxing. With it being her first year at Nixyaawii, Peters said she was excited to continue taking classes at Crow's Shadow.

A passion for printmaking could even follow a student outside of school.

Sohappy plans to enlist in the military once she leaves high school, but she's considering a return to printmaking once she's out.

Michelle Van Pelt, a career/post secondary counselor at Nixyaawii, said it's not unusual for the Nixyaawii studio time to stoke a passion for art in students.

In its third year, Van Pelt said Crow's Shadow essentially acts as an advanced art class at a school that doesn't have the funding to offer a robust arts curriculum.

After making prints at Crow's Shadow, Van Pelt said some students have been inspired



to go to art school or even become a print master.

For tribal students, there's also a cultural component. As a part of a portfolio, Nixyaawii students were asked to create a print based around the theme of "Walking Between Two Worlds," reflecting on the challenge of negotiating tribal identity with the modern world around them.

Van Pelt said the students struggled to identify with the theme until they received a visit from a tribal elder, Antone Minthorn.

Minthorn told them about his childhood growing up on the reservation, where he would speak English at school before returning home to speak Nez Perce.

The class culminates in the Nixyaawii Community School Student Print Exhibition, which will feature work from all six students that participated in this year's class.

The students get to price their own work and keep any proceeds made from sales, and it's not unusual for non-family members to purchase some of their prints.

Van Pelt said students often use the money they make from print sales for summer programs like Upward Bound, a college prep program.

"They're investing in themselves with the money," she said.

Crow's Shadow will host an open reception at their 48004 St. Andrew's Road gallery on Tuesday from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The work will continue to be featured at Crow's Shadow through June 30.



Staff photos by E.J. Harris

TOP: Nixyaawii senior L'Rissa Sohappy checks to see the quality of the linocut prints she was working on recently at Crow's Shadow Institute for the Arts outside of Mission. ABOVE: Sophomore Ermia Butler rolls ink on her print matrix. BOTTOM LEFT: Helena Peters, a junior, watches as master printer Frank Janzen demonstrates how to make a "rainbow" gradated ink pattern while working on linocut prints. BOTTOM RIGHT: Freshman Tyanna Broncheau rolls out ink onto a roller in preparation of making a print.

