

Our collage image began with what felt like an explosion of creativity and offerings. Each of our group members is an incredible artist with strong individual styles and so when we initially came together to brainstorm, a literal deluge of ideas poured forth. Stephanie drew on a large dry erase board as each member shared different symbols and inspirations as they arose. By the end of this first session, although we had rotated through multiple different drafts, a few core elements had remained present: a tree, hands, individual symbols, a rainbow, and the ocean. After a week of allowing the symbols to percolate, we reconvened to share individual mural sketches we had created in hopes that a clearer direction might show itself. Soon we saw that each version had undeniable strengths and decided to compile the elements of the four in our final mural that following weekend. This left some uncertainty, but also proved to allow a powerful space for spontaneity and flexible collaboration during painting. Our group's eagerness to support the collective image and mindful communication around consent throughout the mural day allowed a remarkable shared sense of ease and flow. Each member seemed to fit in seamlessly and fill empty spaces on the mural as it progressed from a chalk sketch to a fully formed circle.

What emerged was an image with surprising balance and presence. The circle shape is perhaps the most striking aspect of the design and we chose the circle for its power to contain and also to break the mold of rectangular murals. As an added bonus we found that it neighbored our beloved teachers Magdalena and Deb's piece quite nicely. Within our circle is a combination of hard edges and softer organic lines, representing the relationship between structure and flow, force and receptivity. In particular, the hands in the form of a tree are meant to represent the sense of compassion and holding that has been an essential resource through the challenging journey of our SWC careers, cultivated both internally and in relationship with peers. These hands also depict an embodiment of our creative healing power as artists and human beings, grounded in its connection to the earth. Between the hands rests an eye, our representation of intuition. This eye gazes forth at a beautiful rainbow of colors that contains the whole spectrum of possibility and experience. What will we create from this place of knowing? Below the tree, deep blue ocean waves crest up and in, representing the churning depths of the psyche and soul that we have learned to appreciate and draw from. And lastly, each group member included an animal as a personal symbol. The lizard depicts connection to ancestors, the unicorn depicts embracing uniqueness, the sailboat depicts setting one's own course, and the bear has a personal meaning.

In creating this piece we hope to leave a legacy of resiliency and hope- an honoring of the depth, self-compassion, self-empowerment, and creative potential that we have needed to find our way through the challenges of becoming art therapists. We hope that everyone who sees it receives a reflection of their deservingness to trust themselves, trust the vision they have for their life's art, and trust their power to create it, however that might look.