

## **The Journey of Magical Connection**

Although this unique mural process was something none of us expected a year ago, the image slowly evolved into one in which all members are seen. Our group utilized synchronous zoom meetings and the course discussion board as points of collaboration for personal symbols and design to emerge. Each one of us is distinctively represented in the final image. Our title encompasses the internal, communal and client connections we all felt through our time at Southwestern College.

Bekah: The raven has been an important, stable symbol for me during her time at Southwestern. It thrives in resilient climates of both Alaska and New Mexico and has shown up in person and vision as a reminder to transform and shape-shift during great times of transition. Although I am thousands of miles away, the raven helped me feel connected in this process.

Jacque: The Spirit Helper Hand is a symbol found on masks and other artwork from my Alutiiq culture. The hand, with a cut-off thumb and hole through the palm, represents the wisdom of the Spirit Helpers - to allow enough fish and game to pass from their realm to Earth, so that people will have enough to sustain themselves, but not so much abundance that they become wasteful. This hand also symbolizes the sharing of skills and knowledge that I am taking on as an art therapist, and the holding of space for others while they overcome their difficulties in life.

Shelby: The tree, to me, is a symbol of grounding, strength, resilience, and growth which encompasses my process at Southwestern. It has also been a symbol I have drawn throughout my life and I am always searching for trees as a way to ground into the present. The heart has popped up in most of my artwork throughout Southwestern to represent the love and compassion both my journey and my future work are rooted in.

Tash: The hummingbird symbol is a messenger of guidance that has stuck with me throughout my journey at southwestern. It has also been a symbol of inner tuition. The hummingbird has given me a positive energy in my journey, no matter the challenges. It symbolizes beauty, harmony, industriousness, and integrity. The most important aspect is a healer, a spirit who helps people in need. It is a reminder to love life. The color chosen represents protection from evil and good fortune.

Sara: The spiral represents my journey through southwestern college as I struggled with negative awareness of myself. The rainbow on the spiral is my acceptance of the negative aspects of myself. The purple lupines were constantly showing up in the art I did with Southwestern college. These flowers represent my growth, power, and positivity after a traumatic event.

As a group, we hope fellow students and community members are inspired and find grounding each of the symbols and stories our mural holds. The image represents the hope we are going out into the world with, as we launch onto a new career path as art therapists and counselors. It is a reminder of our individual pasts and intermingled presents where we have found such great connection. This painting is a way of leaving messages for those who come after us that encourage challenge and positivity in daily life. Our wish is for this image to be seen with honor and acceptance from all who encounter it.