

Neskowin students connect with nature through art

By KIRA RUBENTHALER
The News Guard

Green. Eyeballs. Breeze. Tag. Roots. Leaves. Good.

Those are some of the words Neskowin Valley first- and second-graders used to describe what they love about the giant spruce tree outside their school.

They came up with the words as part of a nature journal exercise led by visiting artist Andie Thrams.

She had the students write their words on bits of paper they tucked inside a collaborative art book made by the whole school.

Thrams brought the students journals and had them explore writing and imagery, connecting their creations to the natural world.

As well as being an art form, Thrams said journals can also be a resource to gather information for later use.

"So to go outside and be sketchy and jot down notes and stuff," she said.

As a finale to their nature journal work, last Wednesday the first- and second-graders drew thank you cards for the William Colville Foundation, which funded Thrams' trip to the school.

She gave the students paint and evergreen sprigs to use as brushes, explaining that the soft twigs were cedar and the pokey ones were spruce.

Thrams, who was an artist-in-residence at the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology three years ago, works with field journals, drawing and writing directly on the page in forests in the Pacific Northwest, Alaska and California.

"I'm interested in artwork that grows out of the experience of being outdoors," Thrams said. "What I asked the kids to do is pay attention to what is going on outside of themselves."

Then she had them turn inside themselves.

"It's kind of the idea of using the

journal to record what you observe and then having an internal response," Thrams said.

First- and second-grade teacher John Fiedler said the

journals add another component to the

students' art education, and the kids treasure their books.

"We've been taking nature walks," first-grader Jared Bergerson said. "We've been writing about the walks."

Jared said they have been learning about leaves and rocks.

"This has been a nice class to be in in first grade," he said. "Because we're learning about lots of stuff."



GETTING CLOSE TO NATURE — First- and second-graders at Neskowin Valley School drew with spruce and cedar "brushes" as part of their work with California artist Andie Thrams