

Avanza 1 Students & Proyecto Mural

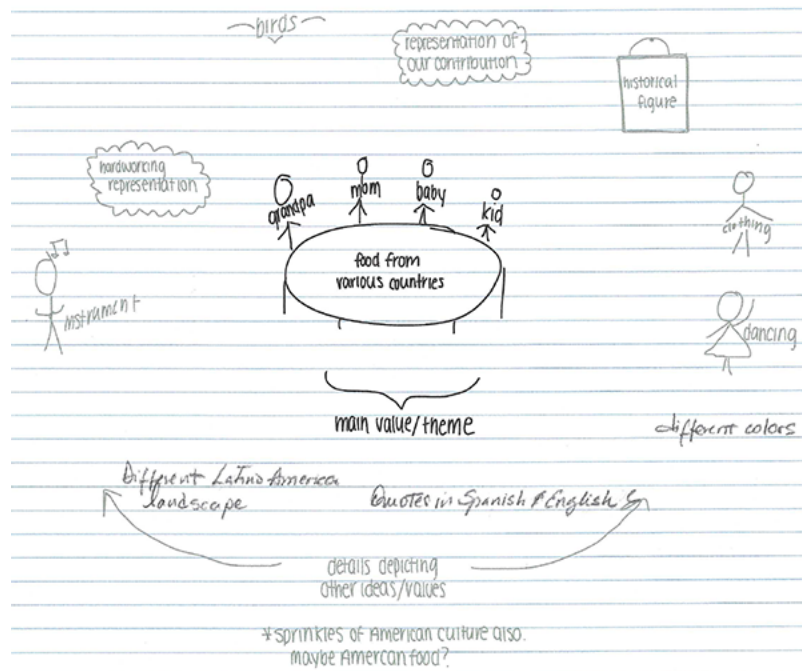
The tunnels by Franklin Avenue are known to be dark, scary, and altogether unpleasant to pass through, and the area nearby is known to have the largest concentration of Latinx in Bend. In an effort to make the tunnels more enjoyable to pass through, the city of Bend is allowing them to be painted, and Central Oregon Landwatch and Mecca Bend have designated a tunnel to include artwork depicting Latinx culture to welcome and recognize the Latinx there. High school students Sinai, Madeline, Nicole, Edgar and Perla participated in a focus group to talk with two artists who are involved in painting the tunnel.

At this focus group, various Latinx community members contributed their personal ideas for the mural. “Although a good amount of us were from different countries, backgrounds, and ages, we all shared things that made us alike, things that we could all relate to, and at the same time things that were unique to each of us,” explained Bend High sophomore Madeline. Some ideas that the participants expressed they wanted displayed through the mural included the representation of various Latinx cultures, their determination and family values, and the traditions and beauty of Latino America. They also provided some ideas as to how the artists could achieve this and what might be in the mural itself, and these included bright, vibrant colors, dancing, music, and a united family. The artists, Melinda Martinez and Carly Garzon Vargas, were given the challenging task of listening to everyone’s thoughts and ideas and in turn attempting to display these in or through the mural. Bend High junior Sinai marveled: “It was amazing to know that the artists were taking notes from the community and were really taking their suggestions into consideration.” After hearing all the participants’ thoughts and ideas, the artists began planning and researching potential options for the mural.

At the second focus group meeting, participants added more ideas that they came up with during the week, and the artists presented slideshows that consisted of inspiration and ideas for the mural. These included a timeline of Latinx history and generations, a collage of small murals integrated into one, kids and teens with big aspirations, and an incorporation of Central Oregon's famous outdoors. Madeline expressed her joy at being able to participate in this focus group, stating, "I enjoy hearing their thoughts and how their faces would light up when they agreed or related to an idea, or how someone's voice would change to express the excitement of something that's meaningful to them." Although the final product for the mural was still unclear, the participants agreed that the artists had great ideas that depicted the messages they wanted seen in the mural.

Having a mural in the center of Bend displaying the beauty of Latinx culture is a huge step toward recognizing and appreciating Latinx here. In the focus groups, it was clear that the participants wanted the community to recognize Latinx determination, hard work, and the unique and special contributions that they are proud to bring to Bend. Sinai reflected on her overall experience, saying, "Going into the focus group, I was completely nervous and unaware of what to expect, but it ended up being such an amazing experience seeing our Latinx community members bring their cultural differences to create one beautiful mural. It was especially a positive experience when community members, as well as the artists, responded and agreed with my ideas - and even expanded on them!" She was honored to be a part of a project with such importance, and Madeline agreed, eagerly adding, "Not only was this a safe place to discuss and share our cultures, but also those topics that are so meaningful to us in the Latinx community and of course the place we call home, Bend." Madeline suggests, "I would really recommend that anyone who has the chance to get involved should."

Here is our sketch about Proyecto Mural.



The Interview with the Artists.

During the interview, two artists were asked some questions about a project that they were going to do in Bend, representing the Latinx community. I personally liked experiencing this interview, because it gave me some insight on what the plan was for the mural project. It explained how the Latinx community was going to be represented, how they would react to the mural, and it gave me some background knowledge on both the artists and their artistic interests, and how they possibly could incorporate their inspirations into the mural. When asked what their current vision about the mural was, they wanted to see all the types of things that define the Latino culture, as well as openly inviting other ethnicities to see the background and culture of Latinos. Veronica Rosado was quoted as saying, “The vision the two artists have for the mural is for it to represent the Latinx people, bring homage to the history surrounding our culture, and be a colorful piece of artwork that brings comfort to others”. Regarding collaboration on the project, they plan on doing separate parts of the mural due to slightly differing visions for it, and then

they will meet up and combine their ideas. When asked what they thought the impact of the project would be on the Latino community, they said that Latinos would relate to and feel proud of the mural, symbolizing their culture and making them feel at home, in a sense. Carly Garzón drew her inspiration from protest art as well as public street art, and Melinda Martinez draws her inspiration from classic pieces, some renaissance art, and simple, ordinary art that brings comfort. This is their first time collaborating surprisingly, and they might want to continue working with each other in the future.

Our presentation at The City Council meeting.

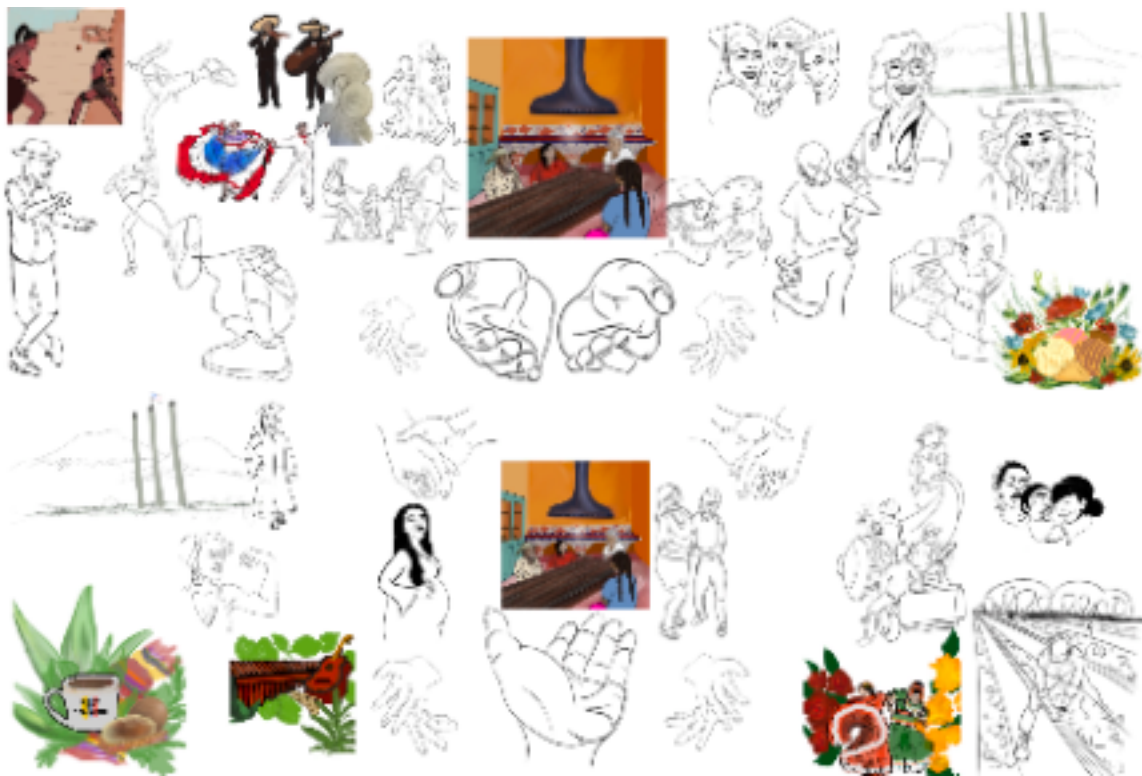
On January 20th, three students from different high schools talked to the City Council about the upcoming mural project happening in Bend, Oregon. The first student to speak on the subject was Madeline Magaña, 10th grader at Bend Senior High, who spoke about her experience attending the two focus groups through zoom on December 6th, and December 12th of 2020. According to her, these focus groups consisted of 20 to 25 participants from different age groups. The purpose of these focus groups was to brainstorm ideas for the different elements the mural might include. Also, this mural will be located at the Franklyn Avenue Underpass to make the area more welcoming, as most of the time this underpass can be dark and not friendly looking. Both focus groups consisted of sharing ideas and bringing those ideas to life through sketches. These sketches were made to give some ideas to the two artists of what the community would like to see in the mural. Madeline Magaña said that this mural project made her feel more connected with her community, even though a good amount of people participating were from different countries backgrounds and ages.

The second student to speak during this meeting was Nicole Cuevas, a senior at Bend Senior High, who shared the meaning behind the mural. "This mural is being created to provide the Latinx community in Bend something we can relate to and to make us feel that we belong in

Bend,” said Nicole. In other words, this mural is supposed to bring the Latinx community in Bend together. But that’s also not the only purpose of the mural, this mural is also supposed to educate the community of the culture every Latinx person is proud of. For example, all the beauty of Latin America has to offer like dancing, music, clothes, and all the other factors that make this community special. Another important part of this mural will be the representation of family, as Latinx people value family heavily because of the hundreds of sacrifices generations before them have made. Nicole said that sometimes as a Latina she doesn’t feel welcome or represented, and while there are certainly places in Bend where Latinx culture may be present, they are often small and secluded. This mural will allow her and Latinx people to feel welcomed and appreciated regardless of the difference of culture.

The final person to speak in this meeting was Veronica Rosado, 10th grader at Mountain View High School, who shared the expectations the youth have for the city of Bend. Some of her ideas had to do with how we can create a safe and welcoming environment in Bend as a community. She also addressed the ongoing issue of schools lacking a diverse faculty, that can facilitate communication with non-English speakers. Also, the potential idea of having a welcome night for new families in Bend to get familiar with the city, and the different aspects it has to offer. Another change she mentioned was the opportunity to have different students at city council meetings. The inclusion of students at city council meetings will ultimately increase the power of their voices and make them feel empowered. Her final suggestion was to increase the advertisement of Latino events happening around the city, as many events are unknown to the public.

Here are the artists first draft sketches. They will work on the incorporation of more colors and connect their sketches more fluently in the upcoming days.



Special thanks to Jacob Lehr. He is a 10th grader at Mountain View High School who participated in the City Council meeting as the group note taker. We will give you more updates about Proyecto Mural with more activities and more complete draft from the artists in our next articles. So, stay tuned!