



My Totem Project

Community Art Center Introduction: Founded in 1932, the Community Art Center is a neighborhood institution committed to the following mission:

To cultivate an engaged community of youth whose powerful artistic voices transform their lives, their neighborhoods, and their worlds.

The Art Center has established an excellent track record of providing creative, challenging learning opportunities to low-income, high-needs youth. We do this in the context of a family-like environment with intensive social and emotional supports including academic help, mental health and transportation services and up to three full meals a day. Our programs promote our organizational values: We believe in the power of young people, we believe in the power of artistic expression, we believe in taking care of ourselves and each other and we believe in creating positive change in our neighborhood and beyond.

The Art Center achieves its mission through intensive, year-round activities for a core group of youth ages 5-19 and through youth-led community programming that engages local and national audiences in quality artistic experiences. For more information, we invite you to visit our facilities at 119 Windsor Street, Cambridge, MA and to review our website at www.communityartcenter.org.

Project Overview

The My Totem Project supports Community Art Center students, ages 9 to 12, in the exploration of identity, family and community through the creation of their own personal "totem poles." Each totem pole will be hand painted on 2' x 8' DiBond pieces. The final installation will consist of 18-20 panels hung vertically with 1' between each one, and will occupy approximately 60 feet of the chain link fence on the Third Street food truck lot. In the Pacific Northwest, the totem pole is often used as a symbol of welcome. The panels will welcome visitors to the lot, and will have collective visual impact through the use of a common color scheme and design features. Traditional totem poles include symbols that express cultural beliefs or recount familiar legends, clan lineages or notable events. Through the summer, students will learn about the history of totem poles and will create their own "pole" that, like a traditional totem pole, speaks to their story and what they believe in. Community Art Center Visual Art Teacher, Lionel Blaise, will oversee the artistic continuity of the project. The project will be supported by a visiting artist who will assist our youth artists and who will be responsible for creating 4-5 additional totem poles using themes contributed by our youth. The project will culminate in a celebration onsite featuring ice cream, music and a short presentation by our youth artists without interruption to the Food Truck program.