

ClayToGo Partner Spotlight: Anishinabe Academy



L to r: A participant decorates their sculpture with colored slips. A tray of finished sculptures waiting to be brought back to NCC for firing.

During the fall of 2025, Northern Clay Center's outreach program, *ClayToGo*, partnered with Anishinabe Academy (Minneapolis) for an in-school residency. Anishinabe is located just one mile from Northern Clay Center, in the Longfellow neighborhood. They are dedicated to serving and educating families through an Indigenous lens, with about 80% of their students of Native American backgrounds and 87% qualifying for free or reduced lunches.

The majority of our partners face barriers accessing educational art experiences, often due to financial limitations. *ClayToGo*'s mission is to provide access to clay to schools and their communities. One way that NCC lessens some of these barriers is by offering grant funds to partner organizations help with costs. The benefits of *ClayToGo* programming are vast—connecting with more of our shared community as well as building curiosity and confidence in youth.

Led by our talented teaching artist E.C. Comstock, this residency program ran for a total of 20 hours, reaching two dozen students in 3rd to 5th grade. Comstock talked about how meaningful it was to see the evolution of the students' relationship with clay over their time together. They worked on many different projects over the course of this program, one of them being the imaginary landscape project, where students created an island out of an upside-down pinch pot and sculpt anything on it to represent a moment in time, a place, a fictional realm. Comstock noted the impact and voice that clay can give to their students. "My favorite day was when a couple students landed on depicting dreams they've had, which they told me about while sculpting. What an incredible thing for a young neighbor of mine, who I'd never met a week prior, to be sharing the details of their dreams with me!" Clay is another device for us to be sharing parts of ourselves and what an impactful thing that is.

Our partner at Anishinabe, Siena—who helped make the program possible—had great things to say about the residency. She said that her students loved working with clay and that she "noticed them thinking outside of the box and challenging themselves to be more creative." One student, who is known for making intricate sculptures out of clay, expressed how he loved making the imaginary landscape which is notable since it was a new idea for him, expanding his idea of what is possible.

If you have a school or organization that is interested in working with clay as a part of a residency or after-school program, please contact the Community Engagement Coordinator at outreach@northernclaycenter.com or 612.339.8007 x313. Thank you for your interest in programming with us!

