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ENC Presidents' Week Camp was filled with outdoor hands-on science education...and lots of fun, too



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Photos by Lana Johnson

In honor of Presidents' Week, naturalist Gigi Harvey is reading about President Martin Van Buren to the campers in a replica of a Tongva ki, a hut made of tules or willow reeds

The Environmental Nature Center (ENC) held Presidents' Week Nature Fun Camp for Kids from Monday, Feb. 19 to Thursday, Feb. 21. The camp welcomed children in kindergarten through 6th grade with age-designed crafts and activities, combined with a great deal of fun and laughter. The outdoor hands-on nature-based curriculum was led by knowledgeable ENC naturalists.



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Gigi Harvey's campers read through directions to create tiger art from recycled materials. This animal was chosen because President Van Buren owned two tiger cubs.

Campers explored and made natural crafts to take home using tools made from materials found in nature, such as making string from native plants, weaving and mask making. They explored the natural world, including traveling back in time and going on a "Native American Adventure" to learn about the tools, trade and customs of the native people of the Tongva (Gabrielino) and Acjachemen (Juaneño) people of Orange County. They sang and played music using authentic Tongva instruments, and used their senses of sight, touch and smell to understand the plants used centuries ago.

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Ashley Coleman, age 9, a student at Carden Hall, shares her finished tiger art

They enjoyed a trip through the redwoods to the waterfall to listen to the sounds and experience animal yoga, competed in paper boat races, discovered pictures in the clouds, embarked on a scavenger hunt, played a pollination game and discussed why pollinators are important and viewed insect parts under the microscope.



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Campers cut out magazine wildlife photos to create animal journals

Exploration of the animal and plant kingdoms took center stage. Campers found out about the differences between mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians and what made each of them unique. They created animal collages (cutting out wildlife pictures from magazines), plant collages (using leaf rubbings), made plant presses and kept nature journals where they wrote and drew what they observed. Arts & crafts were created from found objects or materials which were recycled or upcycled. Youngsters came away experiencing new friends and treasuring new memories.



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Liam Eide, age 7, a student at Top of the World, shares his animal journal

ENC is now enrolling for Summer Nature Camp. Geared toward ages 3 through grade 8 with three different camps offered by age/grade level, it runs from June 24 - August 15. Hours are 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. for a half day or 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. for a full day. To find out more information and what each of the week-long themed eight sessions cover, visit the website at www.encenter.org or call 949.645.8489.

Environmental Nature Center is located at 1601 16th St., Newport Beach.