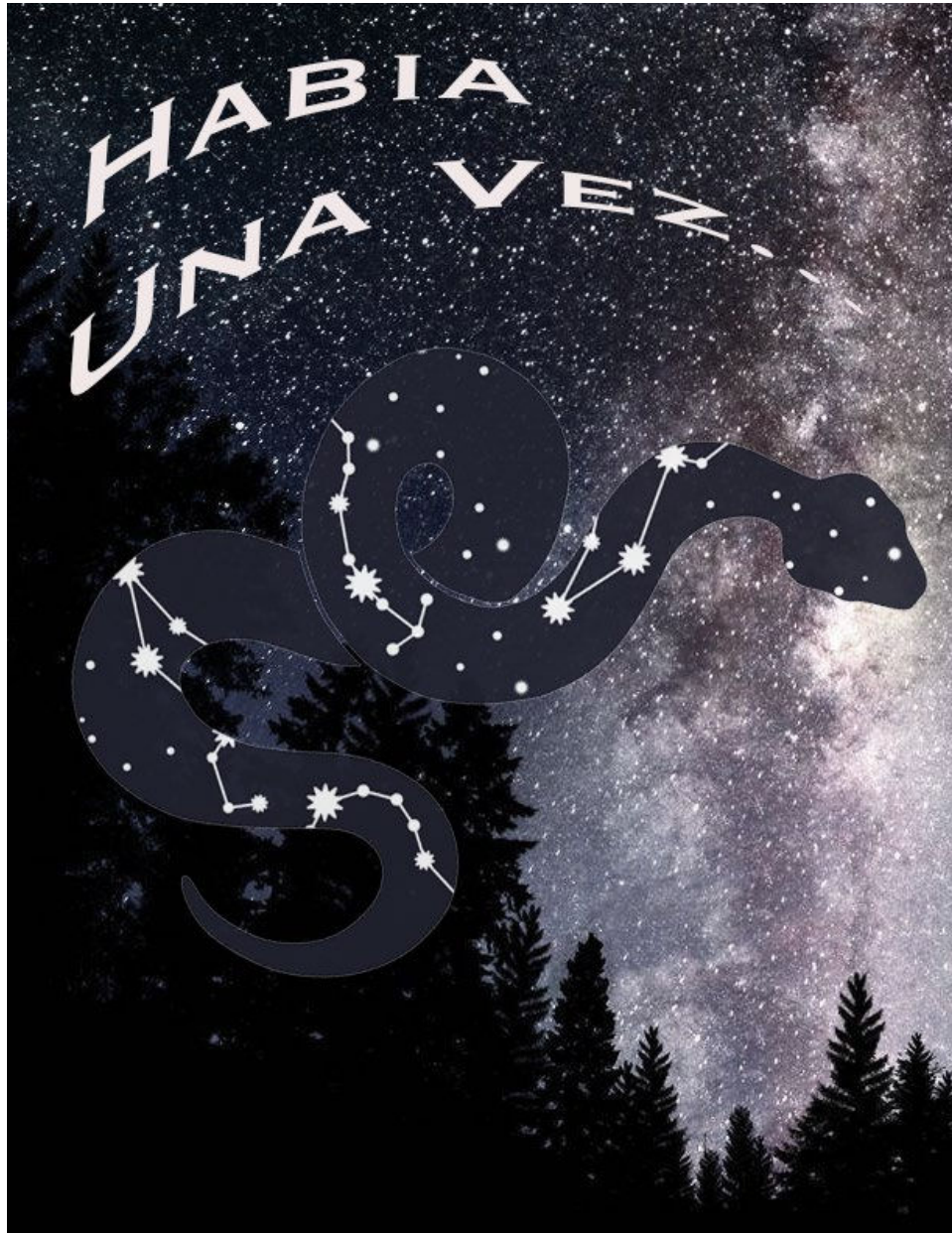


**Habia Una Vez**  
Vanessa Medellin, Math  
Mathew Chapman, Science  
Tracy French, Art  
6th Grade  
High Tech Middle North County



In this captivating interdisciplinary project, students immersed themselves in the diverse landscape of indigenous cultures, seamlessly blending arts, science, humanities, and math. The essential question for the project was “How can impactful stories lead to long-lasting shifts in our attitudes and behaviors?” As they explored the impacts of colonization on communities, meaningful conversations unfolded, enriching their understanding. From absorbing the wisdom of indigenous communities like Rincon Reservation to crafting constellations inspired by the storytelling traditions of the sky, students embarked on a holistic learning journey. The project’s centerpiece, *The Last Cuentista* by Donna Barba Higuera, guided them through Petra Peña’s poignant narrative, emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural histories. This initiative aimed to celebrate diverse thinking, create a platform for dialogue, and inspire a future that values a spectrum of perspectives, weaving together the threads of shared humanity and celestial storytelling.

#### **Teacher Reflection**

The meaningful connections forged between science, humanities, math, and art not only enriched the student’s understanding but also facilitated constant reflection, questioning, and dialogue. Witnessing the students actively engage with indigenous communities, creating a sense of community within our classroom and families, and delving into historical narratives has been profoundly rewarding. This experience reinforces the importance of diverse representation in the classroom and the profound value of connecting with one’s cultural roots through the exploration of origin stories. It is a testament to the power of fostering engaged, curious, and culturally aware learners.

—Matt & Vanessa

#### **Student Reflection**

Some things that I liked about this project were making a stamp. I enjoyed making a stamp because it was a fun experience to create. My stamp is about a man reaching for a star. My favorite thing was reading *The Last Cuentista*. This book is about a 12-year-old girl called Petra Peña. She was moving to a new planet called Sagan.

—Maya

What I enjoyed most about this project was when we started making our constellation drawings because of how we got to use our stars to have a connection to our constellation stories. I felt that this project was very fun to do because we learned about how people used to live and how unfair people were back then during slavery and colonization as well as how they were treated because of how they looked or their race and for being a part of an indigenous community.

—Emily

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