



LIVE Arts Leah Dorian

Living History, Telling Metis Stories

Overview

This presentation and activity will feature the art and writing of Metis artist Leah Marie Dorion from her popular children's book called, *The Giving Tree: A Retelling of a Traditional Metis Story* (2009). The session will feature information about visually representing Metis Culture through the art form of illustration

Artist Bio

Leah Marie Dorion is an interdisciplinary Métis artist raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada. Leah views her Métis heritage as providing her with a unique bridge for knowledge between all people. Leah's paintings honor the spiritual strength of Aboriginal women and the sacred feminine. Several of her artworks have been featured on book publications such as the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, *We'Moon Journal*, *Canadian Journal of Women's Studies*, and *Herstory*. Leah is greatly influenced by the First Nations and Metis cultures within her family and community. The related subject matter contained within most of her artistic creations is deeply connected to her own Aboriginal philosophy, worldview, and culture. Women's earth based spirituality is another core element in her artistic creations.

The Metis people have a beautiful oral tradition of storytelling and artist Leah Marie Dorion has been greatly inspired by these cultural teachings and recently wrote and illustrated three children's books about traditional Metis culture which tells about the historic relationship the Metis people have to the land. All these three books are published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute publishing department located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. *The Giving Tree: The Retelling of a Traditional Metis Story* (2009) is based on a true story that she learned from Elder Frank Tomkins which teaches about the sacred law of reciprocity that was and continues to be an important aspect of traditional Metis values and beliefs. Within this collection of illustrations there is a beautiful representation of traditional Metis cultural symbols and a visual representation of traditional Metis lifestyle practices. As a Metis artist and storyteller Leah is able to construct images for children's books with a uniquely Metis style. Her illustrations integrate the vibrant colours historically used by Metis women in their beadwork and related designs.

Visual Arts

Grade 3

Feb. 26, 2013

9:15am-10am Broadcast

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Creative/Productive:

The Students will make their own Maple Tree drawing inspired by the Giving Tree story and learn about traditional Metis style beadwork forms and colours.

Critical/Responsive:

Leah Marie Dorion will discuss the illustration process and show the original sketches that were used to create the final images in the published story. Students will compare people to trees in order to examine the concept of "connectedness". How are human similar to trees?

Cultural/Historical:

The students will explore the symbols used in the Giving Tree story such as the use of the infinity symbol, circle symbolism, and representation of traditional Metis clothing (moccasins, tobacco pouches, etc.). The students will examine the Metis cart values wheel.

Pre-Broadcast Preparation

The students will explore the symbols used in the Giving Tree story- the use of the infinity symbol, circle symbolism, and representation of traditional Metis clothing (moccasins, tobacco pouches, etc.).

Please read your students the 'Giving Tree' by Leah Dorion

This book is available in many school libraries or can be ordered from ordered from Gabriel Dumont Institute Publishing Department in Saskatoon or <http://www.amazon.ca/Relatives-Roots-Leah-Marie-Dorion/dp/1926795008>

You could also have your students watch the following video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImSu9y-gsUM>

Have you students answer the following questions:

What small creature is sleeping in the hollow of the Giving Tree?

What is offered at the base of the tree when Metis people first arrive at the Giving Tree?

What item did mama forget to pack into the grub box?

What two offerings did the boy place back into the hollow on behalf of his family?

Name three Metis values that are expressed in the story the giving tree?

Broadcast Program (45 min) **STUDENTS WILL NEED A PENCIL AND PAPER DURING THE BROADCAST**

Artist Presentation 1:

Leah will bring her book, sketches and some original illustrations for the kids to see.

On-Air Activity 1:

Giving Tree Movement/Stretches Activity

Artist Presentation 2:

Leah will show students examples of Metis items from the giving tree such as a Metis sash, moccasins, polka dotted hankies, tobacco pouches. Leah will have students examine the Metis cart values wheel

On-Air Activity 2:

Snowball activity. Leah will ask your students questions about her Metis heritage and they will each write their answer on a piece of paper crush it up like a snow ball and throw it into the center of the circle and every students reads someone's answer.

Artist Demonstration:

Leah will demonstrate how students can make their own Maple Leaf creation inspired by her book the Giving Tree.

On-Air Activity 3: Students will compare people to trees in order to examine the concept of "connectedness". How are human similar to trees?

Curriculum Outcomes:

Create visual art works that express ideas about the natural, constructed, and imagined environments.

Create art works using a variety of visual art concepts (e.g., contour lines), forms (e.g., drawing, sculpture), and media (e.g., pencils, pastels, found objects).

Respond to arts expressions that use the environment (natural, constructed, imagined) as inspiration.

Demonstrate an awareness of traditional and evolving arts expressions of Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis artists in own communities or regions.

Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity (30min-1 Hour)

During the broadcast Leah Marie Dorion will talk about how Metis women created pattern and used designs using pointalism. The Giving Tree Book Extension Activity includes having the students make their own Maple Tree drawing.

The Maple Tree template is posted under Visual Arts Resources at the LIVE Arts website:

www.liveartsaskatchewan.com

Materials:

1 piece of bristle board weight paper for each student 12"x12" (or alternatively 8 ½"x 11" heavier card stock)

Fine tip/standard Markers

Pencils and white erasers

pin/or finishing nail for student punch through the paper

Maple pattern on photocopied paper

Step 1: Hand out card stock

Step 2: Hand out Maple Leaf Pattern

Step 3: Place the Maple Leaf Pattern over cardstock

Step 4: Use the pin or finishing nail to poke through the shape of the Maple Leaf Pattern so a small pattern is left on the card stock paper located underneath

Step 5: Have students design their big idea for their maple leaf creation they can use the discarded hole punched paper if it is still useable for a place to try out their ideas

Step 6: Sketch design onto your final Maple Leaf Pattern

Step 7: Use the fine tipped markers to illustrate your leaf

Step 8: Write up your own artist statement explaining the symbol and inspiration related to your new Maple Leaf creation. Try to write at least one paragraph about your creation

Post-Broadcast

You may wish to explore Leah Dorion's exhibition on at the 'Allen Sap Art Gallery' at 1 Railway Ave. E., North Battleford, 306-445-1760