



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, *Relatives with Roots: A story about Metis women's connection to the land* (2011). The workshop 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 of 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 4

Feb. 26, 2013

10:30am-11:15am Broadcast

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Creative/Productive:

The students will make a small felt creation inspired by the beadwork and applique techniques used by traditional Metis artists.

Critical/Responsive:

The student will have the opportunity to respond to the art and illustrations from the *Relatives With Roots* book project. The students will learn about the illustration and creative process that Leah Marie Dorion uses to create the imagery.

Cultural/Historical:

The students will learn about how Metis women passed on patterns and made patterns out of paper and birch barks for their beadwork patterns. The students will learn about why the Metis loved using the technique of applique in their artistic creations such as the use of ribbon work in the fur trade.

Pre-Broadcast Preparation

The students will explore the story and illustrations in Leah Dorion's book *Relatives with Roots: A story about Metis women's connection to the land* (2011)

Please read your students 'Relatives with Roots' 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>

After you have read through the book, return to each illustration and **have you students find as many insects as they can.**

Now discuss the role of the bees and other bugs in the environment.

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

Broadcast Program (45 min)

Artist Presentation 1: Leah will have her copy of relatives with roots and she will refer to the turtle charts at the back on the book to explain how First Nations and Metis worldview are connected.

On-Air Activity 1: PAIR & SHARE

Have students share with a partner: Identify their favourite: plant, tree, and place on the land where they feel peaceful and happy.

Artist Presentation 2:

Leah will show students birch bark baskets, items with traditional Metis beadwork such as moccasins, tobacco pouches, and gloves. Leah will also show examples of the plants in the story such as Rose Hips, Sage, Muskeg Tea, Wolf Willow Beads, tobacco, and Birch Fungus.

On-Air Activity 2: Spot the Metis Influence

Leah will share the Gabriel Dumont Institute study prints of Metis style beadwork and she will also refer to Christie Belcourt's Medicines to Help Us study prints to help show the influence of Metis beadwork in contemporary art.

Artist Demonstration: Working with fabric and applique is a key feature of this art-based activity

-Demonstration stitches and using the sequins and beads

-Demonstration of cutting and applique of the felt flowers

-Demonstration of using acrylic gel or glue for the applique items

Curriculum Outcomes:

Create art works using a variety of visual art concepts (e.g., organic shapes), forms (e.g., kinetic sculpture, mural), and media (e.g., wood, wire, and found objects)

Respond thoughtfully to a variety of contemporary Saskatchewan arts expressions.

Analyze and respond to arts expressions of various Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis artists.

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

During the broadcast Leah Marie Dorion will talk about how applique was used in traditional Metis artwork. In the teacher-guided activity, students will make a felt creation inspired by the story Relatives With Roots. The student will select their own plant and make their own felt creation.

Materials:

All colours of felt for cutting out flowers/plant imagery (pink, red, grey, yellow, orange, green, blue, purples, white, brown, etc.)

Large piece of felt (Dark blues or blacks) approximately 8" by 11" for each student that will be the background colour

Teachers will need to pre-cut a background felt for each student

Sharp scissors that can cut felt

Masking tape for temporary hold

White glue

Acrylic gel and brushes (Access to water to wash brushes/rags, containers)

Needles and thread

Buttons, beads, sequins, embroidery floss and related needles

Step 1: Give each student a background felt.

Step 2: Make accessible the other felt colours.

Step 3: Demonstrate and show Leah Dorion's pre-made models (images posted on the LIVE Arts website under Visual Arts Resources at: www.liveartsaskatchewan.com).

Step 4: Students can cut out their plant image freehand or they may wish to create a paper pattern for their image. This can be created using pencil on 8 ½" x 11" bond paper. After the pattern is completed in pencil, it can be outlined in marker. Then the individual parts can be cut out and traced onto an appropriate colour of felt.

Step 5: Cut out your leaves, stems, and other parts of the plant.

Step 6: Use white glue or acrylic gel to apply the pieces of felt.

Step 7: Use masking tape to hold the pieces of felt until they are dry so they don't fall off.

Step 8: Once dry add beads, buttons and sequins and other related objects to your creation.

OPTIONAL-If is student is confident they do not have to use glue or acrylic gel and they can stitch on the applique pieces.