



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 Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity* (2012). The workshop will feature information about visually representing Metis Culture through the art form of illustration. The students will have the opportunity to make their own horse blanket inspired by the story and make their own interpretation of traditional Metis horse blankets.

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 5

Feb. 26, 2013

1:30pm-2:15pm Broadcast

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Creative/Productive:

The Students will make their own miniature horse blanket out of either felt or corduroy fabric (possibly wool if available).

Critical/Responsive:

The students can conduct further research about how to make tassels, pompoms, and fringes for their horse blanket creation. The students will get to look closer at different Metis horse blankets especially Gabriel Dumont's horse blanket, gear, and pad saddle.

Cultural/Historical:

The students will look at how First Nations and Metis people used many types of horse gear for their migratory lifestyle. The students will learn about how famous the Metis pad saddle became popular during the height of the fur trade on the plains.

Pre-Broadcast Preparation

The students will explore the story and illustrations in Leah Dorion's book 'The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity' (2012)

Please read your students 'The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity' 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 illustrations and challenge your students to find examples of horse gear in the illustrations.

Ask your students what materials they think were used to make the gear in the Leah's images.

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 share the story of her journey as an artist. She will introduce the students to her latest illustrated book 'The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity'. She will discuss the traditional Metis uses of the Willow Tree

On-Air Activity 1: PAIR & SHARE

Have students share with a partner:

All of the examples they can think of where fringes and tassels are found on clothing and on other items.

Artist Presentation 2:

Show and tell: Leah will show students examples of Mukluks with pompoms and tassels, Beaver Mittens with tassels and pompoms, Metis gauntlets gloves with tassels, sample Metis beadwork.

On-Air Activity 2:

Is it old or is it new? Picture based game using images of horse regalia. Teachers will keep track of how many answers their students get correct.

Artist Demonstration:

How to cut out the horse blanket pattern using 11" by 14" paper and use folding techniques.

Pattern cutting- traditional patterns; history and concept of patterns being part of Metis Cultural heritage. What are some of these patterns? How are they passed on?

Curriculum Outcomes:

Create art works using a variety of visual art concepts (e.g., positive space), forms (e.g., graphic design, photography), and media (e.g., mixed media, paint).

Analyze and describe how arts and pop culture expressions convey information about the time and place in which they were created.

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

During the broadcast Leah Marie Dorion will talk about the importance of horse regalia in Metis culture. In the teacher-guided activity, students will have the opportunity to make their own miniature horse blanket inspired by the story “The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity’ and create their own interpretation of traditional Metis horse blanket.

Materials:

Felt 8 ½” x 14” for each student; or pieces of blue, red, black- cut up old blankets for the blanket for more durability, blanket weight material in solid colours will do.

Colours of felt

Buttons, fringe hide or suede fragments, sequens, ric rac, ribbons, bells, hide, yarn

Needles, thread and scissors

Acrylic gel

Step 1: Cut out the horse blanket pattern from white paper 8 ½” by 14” (patterns posted on the LIVE Arts website under Visual Arts Resources at: www.liveartsaskatchewan.com).

Step 2: Trace pattern on to the selected horse blanket fabric (felt or material)

Step 3: Cut out pattern

Step 4: Decorate horse blanket with fringe, felt, wool, tassels, ric -rac ribbons, bells, beads, sequens by sewing or using acrylic gel to fasten these items (refer to Leah Dorion’s broadcast demonstration).