



Strand: Visual Arts  
Grade: 8  
Content: 45 minute broadcast +  
teacher-guided activity.  
Broadcast:  
May 7 2015, 1:30- 2:15pm

## LIVE Arts Leah Dorian

### Living History, Telling Métis Stories

#### Overview

This session will give students the opportunity to participate in a live broadcast with Métis artist Leah Marie Dorion. Leah will introduce her book *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A Story About Generosity* (2012), and discuss how she uses the art form of illustration to create visual representations of Métis culture. She will describe how her cultural background has influenced her artistic production, and provide other examples of contemporary art that have been influenced by Métis beadwork. Leah will also demonstrate the skills needed for students to make their own artwork using felt appliqué and beadwork.

Please see page 3 for a **Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity**. This post-broadcast activity will give students the opportunity to use what they have learned during the broadcast to create their own artwork.

#### Artist Bio

Leah Marie Dorion is an interdisciplinary Métis artist raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Leah views her Métis heritage as providing her with a unique bridge for knowledge between all people. An instructor at the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Prince Albert, Leah has degrees in Native Studies and Education. She has numerous creative projects to her credit including academic papers for the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, children's books, gallery showings of her art works, and several video documentaries that showcase Métis culture and history.

Leah's paintings honor the spiritual strength of First Nations women and the sacred feminine. The subject matter of her artistic creations is deeply connected to her own First Nations philosophy, worldview, and culture.

The Métis people have a beautiful oral tradition of storytelling. Inspired by these cultural teachings, Leah has written and illustrated several children's books about the historic relationship the Métis people have to the land. Dorion's books include beautiful representations of traditional Métis cultural symbols and traditional Métis lifestyle practices. As a Métis artist and storyteller, Leah creates images with a uniquely Métis style. Her illustrations integrate the vibrant colours historically used by Métis women in their beadwork and related designs.

#### Curriculum Aims & Goals

##### Creative/Productive:

Students will make their own felt appliqué and beadwork project.

##### Critical/Responsive:

Students will identify ways in which cultural identity may be reflected in arts expressions.

##### Cultural/Historical:

Students will learn about First Nations and Métis beading, appliqué and pattern traditions.

## **Broadcast Program (45 min)**

### **Artist Presentation 1:**

Leah will share the story of her journey as an artist and introduce students to her illustrated book *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity*. Using this book and other images of her work, Leah will discuss how the subject matter of her artistic creations is deeply connected to her own First Nations philosophy, worldview, and culture.

### **Activity 1: Pair and Share**

Students will pair up and share what kinds of images, visual styles, art or craft practices that are associated with their cultural background.

### **Artist Presentation 2: Show and tell**

Leah will show students examples of items with traditional Métis beadwork such as moccasins, tobacco pouches, gloves, and horse gear.

### **Activity 1: Spot the Métis Influence**

Leah will share prints from the Gabriel Dumont Institute depicting Métis beadwork. She will also show students prints from Christie Belcourt's *Medicines to Help Us* and discuss the influence of Métis beadwork in contemporary art.

### **Artist Demonstration:**

- Stitches and use of sequins and beads
- Cutting and appliqué of felt flowers
- Use of acrylic gel or glue with appliqué

## **Curriculum Outcomes**

[www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca](http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca)

CP8.12      Solve visual art problems using a variety of processes and media.

CR8.3      Investigate and identify how arts expressions can reflect diverse worldviews.

Refer to renewed Arts Education curriculum documents for further information on outcomes and assessment.

## Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity (60 minutes)

This post-broadcast activity will give students the opportunity to use what they have learned during the broadcast to create their own artwork. During the broadcast, Leah Marie Dorion described how appliqué and beading were used in traditional Métis artwork. In this teacher-guided activity, students will use felt appliqué and beading to represent an object or image that is significant to them.

1. Have students brainstorm a list of objects or images that have cultural significance for them. These could refer to the student's ethnicity, hobbies, or aspects of Canadian culture in general (hockey stick, ipod, musical instrument, etc).
2. Ask students to sketch a simple line drawing of their object using plain paper and pencil.
3. Use this drawing to create a paper pattern. Students may cut out shapes and transfer them to the felt pieces using chalk or marker.
4. Students should begin cutting out pieces of various colours of felt and appliqué them onto their larger background piece. Use embroidery floss with medium sized needles as Leah demonstrated during the broadcast.

\*It is possible to review parts of the broadcast at [ecast.edonline.sk.ca](http://ecast.edonline.sk.ca). See the access instructions you received when you registered for the broadcast, or email [liveartsaskatchewan@gmail.com](mailto:liveartsaskatchewan@gmail.com).

\*OPTION: If students are experiencing difficulty, they may also use white glue or acrylic gel to attach their felt pieces.

\*TIP: Students may use masking tape to temporarily secure felt pieces while they are being sewn on or while glue dries.

5. Now students may begin adding beads and sequins. Sewing is preferred however glue or acrylic gel may be used if students are experiencing problems.
6. Have students write up a short artist statement explaining their image and describing how the object depicted is culturally significant to them.

### **Materials and resources for hands-on activity:**

- All colours of felt for cutting out objects imagery (pink, red, grey, yellow, orange, green, blue, purples, white, brown, etc.)
- One piece of 8 x 11" dark blue or black felt per student (to be used as a background).  
***\*If smaller sheets of felt are not available, you may need to cut larger pieces down.***
- Beads, buttons, sequins and related materials.
- 8.5 x 11" bond paper and pencils
- Sharp scissors that can cut felt
- Masking tape for temporary placement
- White glue or acrylic gel and brushes
- Access to water to wash brushes/rags, containers
- OPTIONAL: Needles and thread

7. Ask students to present their artwork and statement to the class and discuss.