



## LIVE Arts Leah Dorion

### Living History, Telling Metis Stories

#### Overview

This session will give students the opportunity to participate in a live broadcast with Métis artist Leah Marie Dorion. The presentation and related activities are based on Dorion's popular children's book *Relatives with Roots: A Story about Métis Women's Connection to the Land* (2011). During the broadcast, Leah will describe how she uses the art form of illustration to create visual representations of Métis culture, Métis and First Nations worldviews, and traditional forms of Métis artwork. Leah will also demonstrate basic appliqué and beading techniques using glue.

Please see page 2 for a **Pre-Broadcast Activity** and page 4 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, Canada. 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, art exhibitions, 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.

Strand:	Visual Arts
Level:	Grade 6
Content:	45 minute Broadcast + Teacher Guided Activities
Broadcast:	May 6, 2015, 1:30- 2:15pm

#### Curriculum Aims & Goals

##### Creative/Productive:

Students will make a small felt creation inspired by the beadwork and applique techniques used by traditional Métis artists.

##### Critical/Responsive:

Students will have the opportunity to respond to the art and illustrations from the *Relatives With Roots*. They will learn about Dorion's creative process and how she creates book illustrations.

##### Cultural/Historical:

Students will learn how Métis women made and shared patterns for beadwork designs using paper and birch bark. The history and importance of appliqué ribbon work in Métis culture will also be explored.

## **Pre-Broadcast Activity**

This activity will allow students to explore the story and illustrations in Leah Dorion's book *Relatives with Roots: A story about Métis Women's Connection to the Land* (2011).

1. Read *Relatives with Roots* by Leah Dorion with your students.
2. After you have read through the book, return to each illustration and **have you students find as many insects as they can.**
3. Discuss the role of the bees and other bugs in the environment.

### **Pre-Broadcast Materials/ Resources:**

***Relatives with Roots: A story about Métis Women's Connection to the Land*** 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 <https://gdins.org/product/relatives-with-roots/>

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

**Artist Presentation 1:** Leah will share the story of her journey as an artist. She will introduce the students to illustrated book, *Relatives with Roots*. She will refer to the turtle charts at the back on the book to explain how First Nations and Métis worldview are connected.

### **Activity 1: PAIR & SHARE**

Students pair with a partner and share;

- Their favorite plant
- Their favorite tree
- A place on the land where they feel peaceful and happy

### **Artist Presentation 2:**

Leah will show students birch bark baskets and items with traditional Métis beadwork such as moccasins, tobacco pouches, and gloves. She will also show examples of the plants in the story such as rose hips, sage, muskeg tea, wolf willow beads, tobacco, and birch fungus.

### **Activity 2: Spot the Metis 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: Working with fabric and appliqué**

- 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)

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| <b><u>CP6.11</u></b> | Investigate and use various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes to express ideas about identity. |
| <b><u>CP6.12</u></b> | Demonstrate increased skills and problem-solving abilities in a variety of visual art media.                    |
| <b><u>CR6.2</u></b>  | Investigate and identify ways that the arts can express ideas about identity.                                   |
| <b><u>CR6.3</u></b>  | Examine arts expressions and artists of various times and places.   |
| <b><u>CH6.1</u></b>  | Investigate how personal, cultural, or regional identity may be reflected in arts expressions.                  |
| <b><u>CH6.2</u></b>  | Identify ways that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists express cultural identity in contemporary work.      |

## Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity (30-60 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 was used in traditional Métis artwork. In this post-broadcast activity, students will make artwork inspired by the story *Relatives With Roots*. Students will make a felt creation inspired by their favorite plant.

1. Give each student a blue or black piece of background felt. Make the other colours of felt accessible.
2. Ask students to make a paper pattern for their plant using pencil on 8 ½" x 11" bond paper. Students can then cut out individual parts of their flower to use as a pattern.
3. Students should use their pattern to cut out petals, stems, and leaves from a variety of colours of felt.  
TIP: Use small pieces of masking tape to hold the pattern in place while students cut.
4. Students can use white glue or acrylic gel to glue the pieces of felt to the larger background piece.  
TIP: After gluing, students may tape the pieces of felt down so they do not fall off while they are drying.  
OPTIONAL: Students may also stitch the felt pieces down rather than use glue.
5. Once dry, students may add beads, buttons, sequins and other related objects using glue or acrylic gel.  
OPTIONAL: Students may sew on beads, buttons and sequins rather than use glue.

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

- All colours of felt for cutting out flowers/plant 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