



Strand: Visual Arts
Level: Grade 7
Content: 45 minute broadcast +
teacher-guided activities
Broadcast: May 7 2015,
9:30- 10:15am

LIVE Arts Leah Dorian

Living History, Telling Metis Stories

Overview

This presentation and activity are based on a children's book called *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A Story About Generosity* (2012) by Métis artist Leah Marie Dorion. During the broadcast, Leah will discuss how she uses the art form of illustration to create visual representations of Métis culture. Students will have the opportunity to make their own interpretation of a traditional Métis horse blanket.

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, 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.

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Creative/Productive:

Students will make their own miniature interpretation of a horse blanket out of felt or fabric.

Critical/Responsive:

Students will look at different styles of Métis horse blankets, and learn to differentiate traditional horse regalia from newer versions.

Cultural/Historical:

Students will learn about the importance of horse gear in the migratory lifestyle of First Nations and Métis people. Leah will discuss the popularity of the Métis pad saddle during the height of the fur trade on the plains.

Pre-Broadcast Activity

1. Please read *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A Story About Generosity* with your students.
2. After you have read through the book, return to each illustration and challenge your students to find examples of horse gear.
3. Ask your students what materials they think were used to make the gear in Leah's images.

Pre-Broadcast Activity Materials/ Resources

You will need one copy of *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity* by Leah Marie Dorion.

This book is available in many school libraries or can be ordered from the Gabriel Dumont Institute Publishing Department in Saskatoon;
<https://gdins.org/product/the-diamond-walking-willow-stick/>

Broadcast Program (45 min)

Artist Presentation 1: Bio

Leah will share the story of her journey as an artist and introduce the students to her illustrated book *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A Story About Generosity*.

On-Air Activity 1: PAIR & SHARE

In groups of two, ask students to create a list of clothing and other objects that are decorated with fringes and tassels.

Artist Presentation 2: Show and Tell

Leah will show students examples of mukluks, beaver mittens, Métis gauntlet gloves, and other items decorated with tassels, pompoms, fringe and beadwork.

On-Air Activity 2: Old and New

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 Presentation/ Demonstration: Patterns

Leah will discuss the use of traditional patterns in Métis art and craft, and the history and concept of patterns as part of Métis cultural heritage. What are some of these patterns? How are they passed on?

Leah will demonstrate how to cut out the horse blanket pattern and introduce basic appliqué techniques using glue.

Curriculum Outcomes

www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca

CP7.12 Use image-making skills, tools, techniques, and problem-solving abilities in a variety of visual art media.

CR7.3
reflect Examine and describe how arts expressions of various times and places reflect diverse experience, values, and beliefs.

CH7.2
importance Investigate how Indigenous artists from around the world reflect the importance of place (e.g., relationship to the land, geology, region, urban/rural environments).

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

Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity (45-60 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 discussed the importance of horse regalia in Métis culture. In this activity, students will create their own interpretation of traditional Métis horse blanket.

Materials and resources for hands-on activity:

- One piece of red, blue or black 8 ½" x 14" felt per student. Old blankets or blanket-weight fabric such as wool or corduroy cut to these dimensions may also be used.
- A variety of other colours of felt, or fabric. Smaller pieces are ok.
- Sharp scissors that can cut felt or fabric
- Buttons, fringe hide or suede fragments, sequins, ric rac, ribbons, bells, hide, yarn
- Acrylic gel
- OPTIONAL: Needles, thread and scissors
- OPTIONAL: If making tassels, pompoms, or fringes by hand, you will also need cardboard, yarn, and/or embroidery floss.

Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity continued

STEPS:

1. OPTIONAL: Have students research how to make tassels, pompoms, and fringes by hand.
2. Cut out the horse blanket pattern from white paper 8 ½" by 14". Patterns are posted on the LIVE Arts website under Visual Arts Resources at:
<http://liveartsaskatchewan.com/resources/visual-arts/>
3. Place pattern on to the selected horse blanket fabric and cut out. Students may use masking tape to hold pattern in place while they cut.
4. OPTIONAL: Have students make pompoms, tassels, and/or fringes to use on their horse blankets.
5. Decorate horse blanket with fringe, felt, wool, tassels, ric rac ribbons, bells, beads, sequins by sewing or using acrylic gel to fasten these items (refer to Leah Dorion's broadcast demonstration).