



Strand: Drama
Grades: 6,7,8
Content: 45 minute broadcast + hands-on activity

Storyweaving: **LIVE Arts with Yvette Nolan and Michelle Olson**

Overview

Students will be led through a process called storyweaving, a theatrical technique used by Spiderwoman Theater to share our own stories, using gesture, voice, song, movement, and repetition. Yvette Nolan and Michelle Olson, both First Nations theatre artists, use this technique to create work to share stories from their Indigenous perspective. Together, students and artists will examine our personal connections to this land and to each other and weave them together to create a short theatre/movement piece that explores how we live together here in a good way.

* Please see pages 3-4 for a **Teacher Guided Post-Broadcast Activity**. This activity will give students the opportunity to apply what they have learned during the broadcast.

Artist Bios

Yvette Nolan is a playwright, director and dramaturg who works all over Canada. Most recently, she directed *Bearing for Signal Theatre*, and co-directed *Map of the Land, Map of the Stars* with Michelle Olson for Gwaandak Theatre in Whitehorse, Yukon. From 2003-2011, she served as Artistic Director of Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto. Her book *Medicine Shows* about Indigenous theatre in Canada was published by Playwrights Canada Press in 2015, and *Performing Indigeneity*, which she co-edited with Ric Knowles, in 2016. She is an Artistic Associate of Signal Theatre.

Michelle Olson is a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation (Yukon) and the Artistic Director of Raven Spirit Dance. She studied dance at the University of New Mexico with Bill Evans (contemporary) and Andrew Garcia (Pueblo Social Dances), Banff Centre for the Arts in Aboriginal Dance under the direction of Marrie Mumford and Alejandro Roncerio and furthered her performance training with Full Circle First Nations as an Ensemble member under the direction of David MacMurray Smith and Margo Kane. Through her studies with the Laban/Bartenieff and Somatic Studies International, she received her certification in movement analysis. Michelle works in areas of dance, theatre and opera as a choreographer, performer and movement coach and her work has been seen on stages across Canada.

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Creative/Productive

Students will explore their connection to the land using stories, gesture, voice, song, movement and repetition.

Critical/Responsive

Students will examine their own relationship to the land.

Cultural/Historical

In the post-broadcast activities, students will learn more about the land that they live on.

Pre-Broadcast Preparation

Watch video biographies starring Michelle and Yvette (available near the bottom of this page: <http://www.liveartsaskatchewan.com/michelle-olson-and-yvette-nolan/>)

Broadcast Program (45 min)

1. Introductions
2. Warm-up
3. Demonstration: the elements of storyweaving
4. Activity: storyweaving together
5. Activity: stories about the land- each classroom comes up with 3-4 sentences
6. Activity: adding gestures, movements and sounds
7. Activity: putting it all together
8. Artist Conclusion: Q & A (5min)

Resources required during broadcast:

- Teacher will need a whiteboard or chalkboard to record the students' ideas
- Students will need a little space to stand and move

Saskatchewan Curriculum Outcomes:

CH6.1

Investigate how personal, cultural, or regional identity may be reflected in arts expressions.

CP7.5

Use drama elements, strategies, negotiation, and collaboration to help shape the direction of the drama and/or collective creation.

CP7.6

Express ideas about the importance of place (e.g., relationships to the land, local geology, region, urban/rural environments) in drama and/or collective creation.

CR7.1

Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works using analysis, personal interpretation, and research.

CR8.1

Respond to professional dance, drama, music, and visual art works through the creation of own arts expressions

CH8.4

Examine and respond to the work of artists who incorporate more than one art form in their work (e.g., combining poetry and music).

Activity 1 – The Land on Which You Live (60 minutes)

1. What do we know about the land?

As one large group or in small groups, brainstorm with students: what do they know about the land that they live on? Questions could include...

- What are the nearest towns?
- What are some landmarks?
- Who lived here before you?
- What kind of animals live here?
- What are the nearest First Nations communities?

Materials and Resources

- Students will need paper and pencils for writing.
- If you would like to show your class another example of storyweaving, Michelle and Yvette have provided the following excerpt:
Map of the Land, Map of the Stars
<https://vimeo.com/233535370>
password: liveartsmap

2. Research the Land

Invite students to conduct additional research about the land that they live on. Students could interview a family member or family friend, or they could use the internet to learn more. Help students create a list of questions or search terms before they conduct their interviews or research.

Note that students can research the questions from #1 if more information is needed. Other possible questions could include:

- How is the land used?
- What kind of geography do we have (flat, mountains, etc)?
- What kind(s) of ecosystem(s) do we see? (forest, coastal, wetland, etc)
- Is the land important to our community?
- Are we using the land well or harming the land? Examples?

3. Storyweave

- Have the class break into small groups of four or five students. Have each student take a turn telling a very short story about the land to the others. After each student tells her story, the listeners choose and repeat one word or phrase and an accompanying gesture from the story. One member of each group should be responsible for taking notes.
- After each student has had a turn, invite them to work together to storyweave these words and images into a small performance piece of 1-2 minutes.
- Have students respond to each groups' performance piece. Encourage students to comment on what features of each performance they thought were unique or effective.

Activity 2 – Storyweave a performance with the whole group (60 minutes)

1. After completing Activity 1, invite one student from each group tell her story to the class.
2. Choose one of the stories to storyweave. Invite students pop up and repeat gestures and words from the chosen stories.
3. Break the class into smaller groups, one for each part of the storyweaving. For example there could be three groups, one for Text, one for Gesture, one for Sounds.
4. Conduct the story.
5. Following the presentation have students reflect on their work and discuss how they might change or refine the performance if they were to do it again.