



Metis Art and Stories in the Classroom with Leah Marie Dorion

Leah Marie Dorion is a Métis person with cultural roots to the historic community of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. She is a passionate interdisciplinary artist and educator committed to sharing Métis culture and history.

Overview

Why were bison essential to people living on the plains, prior to the time of Treaty negotiations (1870s)? What does the bison represent today? This LIVE Arts broadcast will feature contemporary artwork and storytelling by Métis artist Leah Marie Dorion, based on her newest children's book publication, *Métis Camp Circle: A Bison Culture Way of Life* (2019) published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute. The Gabriel Dumont Institute is a Saskatchewan Métis book publisher based in Saskatoon. Leah will read from the children's book, discuss the importance of bison (past and present), explain the use of Métis symbolism, and discuss the composition and design of the illustrations.

Leah Dorian will guide students through a live drawing activity and learn to draw and paint a bison as inspired by Leah's particular style of creating and imagery. In the post broadcast activity, students will create an original bison illustration on paper as inspired by the teachings and concepts presented by Leah. The students will then have the opportunity to develop a creative story based on their illustrations. Through this activity students will gain insight into how visual artists use artwork to bring stories to life!

Strand: Visual Art
Grades: 7 & 8
Content: 45 minute broadcast + hands-on activity

Classroom Setup:

- Students will need desks and chairs for drawing and writing.

Materials:

- Smart board
- White board or black board
- Device to access YouTube (can also be the smart board)
- Speakers (good sound level is important for this lesson)
- Each student will need for the BROADCAST:
 - 1 Pencil
 - 1 Eraser
 - 1 Black Sharpie
 - 3 @ 8"x11" Paper (for sketching and writing)
- Each student will need for the POST BROADCAST activity in addition to list above:
 - 1 canvas or canvas hard board or heavy stock paper for the painting.
 - Access to acrylic or tempura paints
 - Access to brushes and painting supplies

Broadcast Program (45 minutes)

Curriculum Aims & Goals

Aim:

The aim of K-12 Arts Education is to enable students to understand and value arts expressions throughout life.

Creative/Productive:

Students will inquire, create, and communicate through dance, drama, music and visual art.

Critical/Responsive:

Students will respond to artistic expressions of Saskatchewan, Canadian and International artists using critical thinking, research, creativity and collaborative inquiry.

Cultural/Historical:

Students will investigate the content and aesthetics of the arts within cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts, and understand the connection between the arts and human experience.

Creative/Productive

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

CP8.10 Create visual art works that express student perspectives on social issues (e.g., poverty, racism, homophobia, sustainability).

Critical/Responsive

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

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

Cultural/Historical

CP7.11 Investigate and use various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes to express ideas about place.

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

CH8.2 Analyze the influence of social issues on the work of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists, and share results.

Teacher Guided, Post-Broadcast Activity

Bison Illustration/Painting

45-60 minutes

This activity is to allow students space to practice drawing/designing and then proceed to painting their own plains bison inspired by Métis cultural teachings. While working on their artwork, students are encouraged to come up with a real or imagined story about the bison.

The lesson plan includes drawing, painting and writing activities.

Prepare for the Activity

- Refer to the list on the first page.
- Prepare students by having white paper (drawing items-pencil /erasers) ready to practice drawing bison
- All colors of acrylic or tempura paint (all items for painting) need to be ready in the space
- If possible, have a display of some of Leah's children's books for reference and ideas.
 - The Giving Tree: https://www.leahdorion.ca/gallery_the_giving_tree.html
 - Relatives with Roots: https://www.leahdorion.ca/gallery_relatives_with_roots.html
 - My First Métis Lobstick: <https://www.leahdorion.ca/projects.html>

Proposed activity schedule

- 1) Have students sketch their bison and draft ideas of a plain piece of paper. Students may have completed this step during the video broadcast.
- 2) Begin drawing their good copy bison sketch on a heavy stock paper, canvas or canvas hardboard with pencil.
- 3) Black sharpies can be used to brighten outlines before painting.
- 4) Paint the bison using the techniques learned in the broadcast.
- 5) In the artwork and story,
 - a. Grade 7 students are encouraged to think about place. Where is the bison? Where are the bison now?
 - b. Grade 8 students are encouraged to think about a current social issue and integrate it into the bison artwork, through symbolism and colour.
- 6) After the paintings are done, ask students to title their bison painting and imagine a short story about the artwork. Students that are finished painting early can began writing the story. Students are encouraged to share their stories with the class or in partners. The stories can be imagined but rooted in knowledge about the bison.