



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: 1 & 2
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

[CP1.7](#): Investigate a variety of formal and informal patterns in art works and the environment, and apply observations to own work.

[CP1.8](#)

Create art works that express own ideas and explore different forms (e.g., painting, drawing, printmaking) and media (paint, found objects).

Critical/Responsive

[CR1.1](#): Demonstrate understanding that the arts are a way of expressing ideas.

[CR2.1](#): Examine arts expressions to determine how ideas for arts expressions may come from artists' own communities.

Cultural/Historical

[CH1.2](#): Identify traditional arts expressions of First Nations and Métis artists.

[CH2.2](#): Describe key features of traditional arts expressions of Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis artists.

ELA: Comprehend and Respond

Students will develop their abilities to view, listen to, read, comprehend, and respond to a variety of contemporary and traditional grade-level-appropriate texts in a variety of forms from First Nations, Metis, and other culture for a variety of purposes including for learning, interest, and enjoyment.

[CR1.2](#) View and comprehend the explicit messages, feelings, and features in a variety of visual and multimedia texts (including pictures, photographs, simple graphs, diagrams, pictographs, icons, and illustrations).

Treaty Education Outcome: Historical Context 1.3

Explore the many ways people meet their needs from nature and the land on which they live. Indicators: Describe various uses (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) of buffalo, elk, moose, and caribou, now and in the past. Compare how people, past and present, live on the land (e.g., agriculture, ranching, trapping, fishing, dwellings, and modes of transportation). Explain how people helped and continue to help

Life Science: Needs and Characteristics of Living Things

[LT1.2](#) Analyze different ways in which plants, animals, and humans interact with various natural and constructed environments to meet their basic needs. (CP, DM, SI)

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.

The lesson plan includes painting and drawing activities with a storytelling component.

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 Mètis 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) After the paintings are done, ask students to title their bison painting and imagine a short oral story about the bison in the artwork. Students are encouraged to share a story that can be imagined or rooted in their knowledge about the bison.