



Poetry and Oral Stories in the Classroom with ecoaborijanelle

Overview

Join poet and performance artist ecoaborijanelle. Using spoken word, you and your students will get to work on creative expression through the theme of “wellbeing”, by connecting with your senses.

The broadcast will include performances by the artist as well as opportunities for students to respond through sharing and practicing in the classroom.

Artist Bio

Janelle “ecoaborijanelle” Pewapsconias (she/her) is a Nehiyaw spoken word poet from Little Pine First Nation. Janelle creates, writes and shares work that reflects pride in her culture but also brings stories that celebrates our resilience and strength. She believes in ahkamemowin (“ahh-gkaa-mey-moo-win” 5 syllables) – meaning having resilience and never giving up. Working to build community she brings the message: “your words matter, your words are alive, let us tell our stories with care”.

ecoaborijanelle is the 2017-18 Tonight It’s Poetry (TiP) Poetry Grand Champion, competing at 2018 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word and was a finalist at the 2019 Canadian Individual Poetry Slam in Vancouver. She has self-published her first chapbook, “kikawiyaw askiy: Mother Earth”, and is completing her second chapbook “nipiy acimowina: #PoemsForMotherEarth”.

ecoaborijanelle speaks from the experience of a Nehiyaw woman, but reminds everyone that her perspective does not represent all Indigenous people to Turtle Island.

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

Classroom Setup:

- Students will need room to move around and stand in a circle.

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)

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

[CP7.6:](#) 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.

[CP7.7:](#) Investigate improvisation using the voice, instruments, and a wide variety of sound sources from the natural and constructed environment.

[CP8.6:](#) Express student perspectives on social issues (e.g., poverty, racism, homophobia, sustainability, gangs) in drama and/or collective creation.

Critical/Responsive

[CR7.2:](#) Investigate and identify ways that the arts can communicate a sense of place.

[CR7.3:](#) Examine and describe how arts expressions of various times and places reflect diverse experience, values, and beliefs.

[CR8.2:](#) Investigate and identify ways that today's arts expressions often reflect concern for social issues.

[CR8.3:](#) Investigate and identify how arts expressions can reflect diverse worldviews.

Cultural/Historical

[CH7.1:](#) Investigate how artists' relationship to place may be reflected in their work.

[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).

[CH7.3:](#) Investigate and identify a variety of factors that influence artists, their work, and careers.

[CH8.2:](#) Analyze the influence of social issues on the work of contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit artists, and share results.

[CH8.3:](#) Demonstrate understanding of how contemporary artists use and incorporate new technology into their work.

Broadcast Program (45 minutes)

Timeline of Broadcast

- Artist Intro & Bio Video and Introduction
 - View the LIVE Arts video of the artist
 - Introduction of the students in a circle
- Artist lecture on 'Oral Story and Spoken Word Poetry' in this place
 - Artist sharing teachings and the importance of taking care and of using your voice wisely.
- "Your words matter, your words are alive, let us tell our stories with care" writing exercise
 - 5-4-3-2-1 Nature Exercise for Poets
 - Drawing from a list of words collected from a grounding exercise, we will create a spoken word poem in small groups of 4.
- Artist performance of *nipîy âcimowina* (water poems)
 - Reading of recent collection of poetry
- Review and wrap up
 - Lesson review and closing circle

Teacher Guided Post-Broadcast Activity

5-4-3-2-1 Nature Exercise for Poets

45-60 minutes

The “5-4-3-2-1 Exercise for Poets” is the post-broadcast exercise for the “poetry & oral story in the classroom with ecoaborijanelle”. This activity is to allow students space to share their reflections on their relationship to land you are on and water that surrounds you.

The lesson plan includes land based elements like nature walks and mindful grounding on the land during the writing and performing activity.

Prepare for the Activity

- Prepare student for nature walk and activity at your nearest park, ideally with a natural body of water nearby.
- Students will need adequate wear for the weather, a water bottle, and a notebook with a writing utensil.
- Also, please consider bringing special stationary for students who may not be able to bring their own from home. All our words matter.
- Additionally, you can bring a Bluetooth speaker with a device with access to YouTube on your nature walk. Search and que up a YouTube video “Water Sounds for Sleep or Focus”.

Proposed activity schedule

- 1) Invite students to sit in a circle with teachers and guests.
- 2) Begin the mindful writing session by having students sit/lay/position themselves comfortably for a mindful writing activity. Have students take pencils and notebooks out for this exercise.
- 3) Next, start the Water Sounds, and/or dim the lights. Students are suggested to close their eyes for the 1-3 minute quiet meditation moment. Teachers are then asked to read the following script to their students before going into the collaborative writing session:

This is a Nature Exercise for Poets, a land-based writing exercise for poets and learners of all ages. In this grounding exercise we will explore our five senses to remind us of the present. I ask you to quiet your mind, body, and voice and listen to my voice as we begin.

[Continue when your students are ready]

Let us take a deep breathe in and exhale out our mouths slowly.

[Do a couple big breaths before continuing on]

Let us begin.

5 - LOOK: Look around for 5 things that you can see, and whisper them out loud. For example, you could say I see green grass, I see a clear pond, I see a black fly, etc.

[Wait 15 seconds]

Now I ask you, if you are comfortable, to shut your eyes. Keep them closed.

4 - FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of 4 things that you can feel, and whisper them to yourself. For example, you could say I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the cool and warm air, I can feel the prickle of the grass, etc.

[Wait 15 seconds]

3 - LISTEN: Listen for 3 sounds and list them in your head. It could be the sound of the water, the sound of typing or the sound of your tummy rumbling.

[Wait 15 seconds]

2 - SMELL: What are two things you can smell right now? List them in your head.

[Wait 15 seconds]

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. Can you taste anything right now?

[Wait 10 seconds]

Take another deep belly breath and when you are ready, open your eyes.

- 4) Create a list of words based on the sights, textures, sounds, smells, and tastes students experienced on the board.
- 5) Based on those words, craft a poem collaboratively with the students. Types of poems you can create:
 - a. Haiku – a poem dedicated to nature in a 5/7/5 syllable count.
 - b. Free Verse – a poem with no formula or pattern.
 - c. Cinquain – a five line poem inspired by the Japanese haiku, A/B/A/B/B
 - d. Couplet – a poem with a pair of rhyming lines in a verse
- 6) In small groups or pairs, have each member practice reading the poem(s) as we practiced in the broadcast.
- 7) Time permitting, the students can practice reading to the whole class their interpretation of the poem.
- 8) Close the reading.