



## LIVE Arts Leah Dorian

### Living History, Telling Metis Stories

#### Overview

This presentation and activity will feature the art, writing, and traditional arts knowledge of Metis artist Leah Marie Dorion. She will focus on the Metis cultural wood working tradition and focus the subject for her popular children's book called, *The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity* (2012). The workshop will feature information about the traditional Metis arts regarding the dog mushing gear and regalia. The students will have the opportunity to make their own mini replica of a Metis style mini dog cariole/toboggan.

#### Artist Bio

Leah Marie Dorion is an interdisciplinary Métis artist raised in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada. Leah views her Métis heritage as providing her with a unique bridge for knowledge between all people. Leah's paintings honor the spiritual strength of Aboriginal women and the sacred feminine. Several of her artworks have been featured on book publications such as the *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, *We'Moon Journal*, *Canadian Journal of Women's Studies*, and *Herstory*. Leah is greatly influenced by the First Nations and Metis cultures within her family and community. The related subject matter contained within most of her artistic creations is deeply connected to her own Aboriginal philosophy, worldview, and culture. Women's earth based spirituality is another core element in her artistic creations.

The Metis people have a beautiful oral tradition of storytelling and artist Leah Marie Dorion has been greatly inspired by these cultural teachings and recently wrote and illustrated three children's books about traditional Metis culture which tells about the historic relationship the Metis people have to the land. All these three books are published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute publishing department located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

*Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story about generosity* (2012) is a story about the role of the give-away customs and traditions in Metis society.

Within this collection of illustrations there is a beautiful representation of traditional Metis cultural symbols and a visual representation of traditional Metis lifestyle practices. As a Metis artist and storyteller Leah is able to construct images for children's books with a uniquely Metis style. Her illustrations integrate the vibrant colours historically used by Metis women in their beadwork and related designs.

Visual Arts

Grade 7-8

Broadcast

#### Curriculum Aims & Goals

##### Creative/Productive:

The Students will make their own dog cariole/toboggan (possibly out of wood if teacher wants to enhance the activity).

##### Critical/Responsive:

The students can conduct further research about how to make tassels, pompoms, dog harnesses, dog whips, dog blankets, and fringes for their dog regalia and cariole/toboggan creation. The students will get to look closer at different Metis dog mushing gear especially Gabriel Dumont's photo collection of Metis dog mushers.

##### Cultural/Historical:

The students will look at how First Nations and Metis people used many types of dog related gear for their migratory lifestyle. The students will learn about how famous the Metis dog musher was in history and in contemporary northern Metis culture.

## Pre-Broadcast Preparation

The students will explore the story and illustrations in Leah Dorion's book 'The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity' (2012)

**Please read your students 'The Diamond Willow Walking Stick: A story About Generosity' by Leah Dorion.**

This book is available in many school libraries or can be ordered from ordered from Gabriel Dumont Institute Publishing Department in Saskatoon or

<http://www.amazon.ca/Relatives-Roots-Leah-Marie-Dorion/dp/1926795008>

After you have read through the book, challenge your students to go on line and research the history of Dog Regalia. Can they find historical and contemporary examples of Metis wood-work & dog regalia?

**You may also want to visit Leah Dorion's website at:**

<http://www.leahdorion.ca>

## Broadcast Program (1 hour)

**Artist Presentation 1:** Leah will share the story of her journey as an artist. The students will see how artist Leah Marie Dorion represents Metis Dog Gear in her stories and artwork. She will share images & stories about her Giant Alaskan Malamutes.

**On-Air Activity 1:** Game Show- Metis Terminology Multiple Choice

**Artist Presentation 2:**

Show and tell: Leah will show students examples of Mukluks with pompoms and tassels, Beaver Mittens with tassels and pompoms, Metis gauntlets gloves with tassels, sample Metis beadwork. Diagrams of Metis dog regalia, Dog Whips & harnesses. The students will learn how Metis women integrated trade items into their dog gear such as bells, bead, silk embroidery thread, wool, and ribbons. They will learn about Metis use of traditional items such a hide, buffalo hair, berry dyes, shaganappi, and quillwork.

**Artist Demonstration 1:** The students will learn about traditional construction materials and tools such as sinew, wood working, traditional rope, rawhide, shaganappi, and babiche. They will also learn about traditional glues.

**On-Air Activity 2:**

Dog Training 101. Exploring some dog training basics.

## Artist Demonstration 2:

Making a traditional Metis cariole/toboggan replica. Cutting tanned hide from a circle and practicing braiding the three strands; Steaming and Bending wood.

## Curriculum Outcomes:

Create art works using a variety of visual art concepts (e.g., positive space), forms (e.g., graphic design, photography), and media (e.g., mixed media, paint).

Analyze and describe how arts and pop culture expressions convey information about the time and place in which they were created.

## Teacher Guided Hands-On Activity (1-2 Hour)

The students will make a traditional Metis cariole/toboggan replica. They will learn about popular style and how historically Metis dog gear was considered popular in the 1800s. Metis women's work and dog regalia was highly sought out for its exceptional level of skilled workmanship and integration of available trade items. The students will learn about traditional construction materials and tools such as sinew, wood working, traditional rope, rawhide, shaganappi, and babiche.

### Materials:

Artificial sinew  
Single hole punch  
Cardboard stock in brown  
Coffee stir sticks and popsicle craft sticks  
White glue  
Hide of Canvas  
String or Twine  
Scissors

Step 1: Cut out the cariole/toboggan pattern from brown cardboard stock 11" by 14"

Step 2: Fold the curves at the front end with three bends

Step 3: Hole punch top and Hole punch pulling strap area and four holes for anchoring the top of cariole to base

Step 4: Cut small stripes of sinew and tie through the top holes to the base and wrap these two anchor cords

Step 5: Glue on wooden coffee stir sticks to the base and weight with rocks until dry

Step 6: Glue on mini craft stick cross ways in four equally spaced sections

Step 7: Tie two pieces of cord/rope to the pulling strap holes