

Interpretive Guide & Hands-on Activities  
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts  
Travelling Exhibition Program

## ***Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control***



# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## The Interpretive Guide

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The Art Gallery of Alberta is pleased to present your community with a selection from its Travelling Exhibition Program. This is one of several exhibitions distributed by The Art Gallery of Alberta as part of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program. This Interpretive Guide has been specifically designed to complement the exhibition you are now hosting. The suggested topics for discussion and accompanying activities can act as a guide to increase your viewers' enjoyment and to assist you in developing programs to complement the exhibition. Questions and activities have been included at both elementary and advanced levels for younger and older visitors.

At the Elementary School Level the Alberta Art Curriculum includes four components to provide students with a variety of experiences. These are:

- Reflection:** Responses to visual forms in nature, designed objects and artworks
- Depiction:** Development of imagery based on notions of realism
- Composition:** Organization of images and their qualities in the creation of visual art
- Expression:** Use of art materials as a vehicle for expressing statements

The Secondary Level focuses on three major components of visual learning. These are:

- Drawings:** Examining the ways we record visual information and discoveries
- Encounters:** Meeting and responding to visual imagery
- Composition:** Analyzing the ways images are put together to create meaning

The activities in the Interpretive Guide address one or more of the above components and are generally suited for adaptation to a range of grade levels. As well, this guide contains coloured images of the artworks in the exhibition which can be used for review and discussion at any time. Please be aware that copyright restrictions apply to unauthorized use or reproduction of artists' images.

The Travelling Exhibition Program, funded by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, is designed to bring you closer to Alberta's artists and collections. We welcome your comments and suggestions and invite you to contact:

**Shane Golby**, Curator/Manager  
Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex Region 2)  
**Ph:** 780.428.3830; **Fax:** 780.445.0130 **Email:** shane.golby@youraga.ca

# Table of Contents

## This package contains:

Curatorial Statement	Page 2
Visual Inventory - List of Works	Pages 3-4
Visual Inventory - Images	Pages 5-10

## Talking Art

Art and Cross-Curriculum Connections	Pages 12-21
Artist and Curator Biographies/Statements	Pages 22-23
Artist Interviews	Pages 24-26
The Blackfoot Confederacy - An Introduction	Pages 27-30
Pow Wow Dances/Designs	Page 31
Art History: Art Movements, Genre and Methods	Pages 32-51

## Visual Learning and Hands-on Projects

What is Visual Learning?	Page 53
Elements of Design Tour	Pages 54-59
Reading Pictures Tour	Pages 60-64
Perusing Paintings: An Art-full Scavenger Hunt	Pages 65-66
Exhibition Related Art Projects	Pages 67-84
Glossary	Pages 86-87
Credits	Pages 88-89

Syncrude Canada Ltd., the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Art Gallery of Alberta

# Curatorial Statement

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## ***Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control***

The Blackfoot word *nitssaakita'paispinnaan* can be translated into English as “we are still in control.” It is a term used when a person is still in self-control. It is an important word that Blackfoot people remember because it tells how we are free to make our own decisions; that we are in charge of who we are and how we want to live.

The word also connotes “a-group-of-people-who-are-still-doing-things-as-we-were-taught-to-do-them.” It takes an incredible amount of self-control, hard work, and knowledge to live like this, especially when people from outside the group are persistently trying to force or entice us to stop doing things this way. As Blackfoot people, however, we continue to have this knowing about who we are, and how to do things as we have always been taught. This kind of internal power is growing stronger, not weaker, and it is interwoven with the lands, waters, and skies— *siksikaissksahkoyi*—that we have protected here (now southern Alberta and northern Montana), since time immemorial.

The exhibition *Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control* honours this; not only in subject matter, but also in method of creation. It features work by three contemporary Blackfoot artists—Kristy North Peigan, Smith Wright, and Lori Scalplock. We all began our process by visiting with Blackfoot ceremonial knowledge keeper *Kayihtsipimiohkitopi* (Kent Ayoungman), who shared about Blackfoot ways of life, knowledge, *siksikaissksahkoyi*, and about ways-of-doing-things-as-we-were-taught. We had other opportunities to visit with him too, and those visits helped us learn more about ourselves as Blackfoot people. They also inspired these artworks.

For Kristy North Peigan, the visits evoked an exploration of Blackfoot ways-of-doing-things-as-we-were-taught within the context of technology and modernism. Smith Wright was moved by the richness of Blackfoot culture beneath the surface of what is seen in society, and the profound importance of Blackfoot women in this space. Lori Scalplock chose to dedicate herself to a traditional Blackfoot women's transfer ceremony for the rights to do porcupine quillwork and use traditional Blackfoot designs like her ancestors.

Our artworks and collective creation process enact *nitssaakita'paispinnaan*. The Blackfoot people, culture, and ceremonies are still here, still alive. Everything now with us in *siksikaissksahkoyi*—the cities, modern society, newcomers—is nested within this well of life, and so Blackfoot ways-of-doing-things-as-we-were-taught continue to shape society here to this day.

*This exhibition was curated by Troy Patenaude and Kent Ayoungman and organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program. The AFA Travelling Exhibition Program is supported by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.*

*This exhibition was made possible through generous sponsorship from Syncrude Canada Ltd.*

## Visual Inventory - List of Works

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Kristy North Peigan  
*Screen Ghosting*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
16 inches x 24 inches  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

Kristy North Peigan  
*Upload*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
18 inches x 24 inches  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

Kristy North Peigan  
*CyberTribal*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
18 inches x 24 inches  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

Kristy North Peigan  
*Red Carpet*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
18 inches x 24 inches  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

Kristy North Peigan  
*Vaporwave-Signals*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
18 inches x 24 inches  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

Kristy North Peigan  
*Ghosting*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
18 inches x 24 inches  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

Lori Scalplock  
*Mothers are the Foundation of our families*,  
2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
9 inches x 7 inches  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Lori Scalplock  
*Fire in the night*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
9 inches x 7 inches  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Lori Scalplock  
*Payotapayaki's Tipi*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
9 inches x 7 inches  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Lori Scalplock  
*Renew, Recycle*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
9 inches x 7 inches  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Lori Scalplock  
*Hair Tie*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide,  
Delica Beads  
9 inches x 7 inches  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Lori Scalplock  
*Medallion*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide,  
Delica Beads  
9 inches x 7 inches  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiiksiinaki*  
*(All Around Snake Woman) #1*, 2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
24 inches x 12 inches  
Collection of the artist

Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiiksiinaki*  
*(All Around Snake Woman) #2*, 2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
24 inches x 12 inches  
Collection of the artist

## Visual Inventory - List of Works

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Smith Wright

*Mootwistsiiksiinaki*

*(All Around Snake Woman) #3, 2019*

Crackle paste and acrylic on board

24 inches x 12 inches

Collection of the artist

Smith Wright

*Mootwistsiiksiinaki*

*(All Around Snake Woman) #4, 2019*

Crackle paste and acrylic on board

24 inches x 12 inches

Collection of the artist

Smith Wright

*Mootwistsiiksiinaki*

*(All Around Snake Woman) #5, 2019*

Crackle paste and acrylic on board

24 inches x 12 inches

Collection of the artist

Smith Wright

*Mootwistsiiksiinaki*

*(All Around Snake Woman) #6, 2019*

Beadwork, crackle paste and acrylic on board

24 inches x 12 inches

Collection of the artist

**Total Images:** 18 framed 2D works

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program  
**Visual Inventory - Images**

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Kristy North Peigan  
*Screen Ghosting*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP



Kristy North Peigan  
*Upload*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP



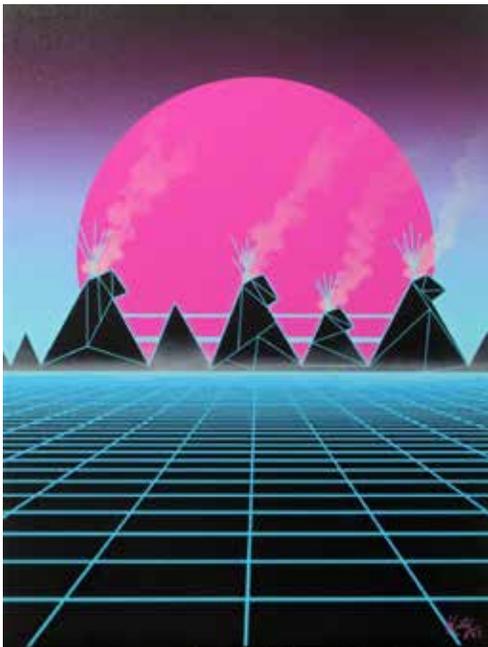
Kristy North Peigan  
*CyberTribal*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP



Kristy North Peigan  
*Red Carpet*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

# Visual Inventory - Images

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Kristy North Peigan  
*Vaporwave-Signals*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP



Kristy North Peigan  
*Ghosting*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program  
**Visual Inventory - Images**

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Lori Scalplock  
*Mothers are the Foundation of our families*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock



Lori Scalplock  
*Fire in the night*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock



Lori Scalplock  
*Renew, Recycle*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
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Lori Scalplock  
*Payotapayaki's Tipi*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
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# Visual Inventory - Images

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Lori Scalplock  
*Hair Tie*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide, Delica Beads  
Collection of Lori Scalplock



Lori Scalplock  
*Medallion*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide, Delica Beads  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program  
**Visual Inventory - Images**

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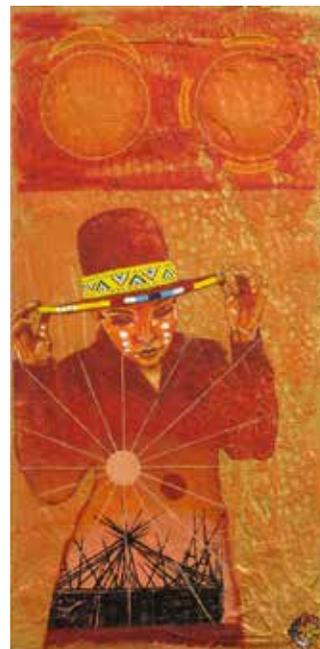
Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #1*,  
2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #2*,  
2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #3*,  
2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #4*,  
2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist

# Visual Inventory - Images

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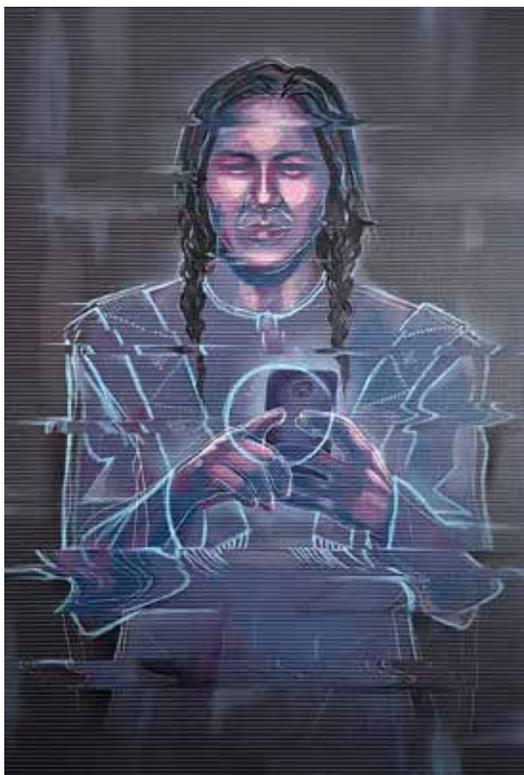


Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #5*,  
2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #6*,  
2019  
Beadwork, crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist

# Talking Art



Kristy North Peigan  
*Screen Ghosting*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

## CONTENTS

Art and Cross-Curriculum Connections	Pages 12-21
Artist and Curator Biographies/Statements	Pages 22-23
Artist interviews	Pages 24-26
The Blackfoot Confederacy - An Introduction	Pages 27-30
Art History: Art Movements and Genre	
- Pow Wow Dancing/Designs	Page 31
- First Nations Art in the Twentieth Century	Pages 33-39
Art Styles, Genre and Methods:	
- Indigenous Quillwork	Page 40
- Beadwork	Pages 41-42
- Abstraction/The History of Abstraction (A Survey)	Pages 43-49
- Portraiture - a brief survey	Pages 50-51

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Art Curriculum Connections

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The following curricular connections taken from the Alberta Learning Program of Studies provide an overview of key topics that can be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition *Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control*. Through the art projects included in this exhibition guide students will be provided the opportunity for a variety of learning experiences.

### LEVEL k-6

#### REFLECTION

Component 2: ASSESSMENT: Students will assess the use or function of objects.

Concepts

- A. Designed objects serve specific purposes.
- B. Designed objects serve people.
- C. Designed objects are made by people or machines.

Component 3: APPRECIATION: Students will interpret artworks literally.

Concepts

- A. Art takes different forms depending on the materials and techniques used.
- B. An art form dictates the way it is experienced.
- C. An artwork tells something about its subject matter and the artist who made it.
- D. Colour variation is built on three basic colours.
- E. Tints and shades of colours or hues affect the contrast of a composition.
- F. All aspects of an artwork contribute to the story it tells.

### Grades 5 and 6

Students will interpret artworks for their symbolic meaning

Concepts

- A. Artistic style affects the emotional impact of an artwork
- B. An artwork can be analyzed for the meaning of its visible components and their inter-relationships.
- C. Artworks contain symbolic representations of a subject or theme.

#### DEPICTION

Component 4: MAIN FORMS AND PROPORTIONS: Students will learn the shapes of things as well as develop decorative styles.

Concepts

- A. All shapes can be reduced to basic shapes; i.e., circular, triangular, rectangular.
- B. Shapes can be depicted as organic or geometric.
- C. Shapes can be made using different procedures; e.g., cutting, drawing, tearing, stitching

## Art Curriculum Connections continued

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Component 6: QUALITIES AND DETAILS: Students will represent surface qualities of objects and forms.

Concepts

- A. Texture is a surface quality that can be captured by rubbings or markings.
- B. Textures form patterns.
- C. Primary colours can be mixed to produce new hues.
- D. Colour can be lightened to make tints or darkened to make shades.
- E. Images are stronger when contrasts of light and dark are used.
- F. Details enrich forms.

COMPOSITION

Component 8: UNITY: Students will create unity through density and rhythm.

Concepts

- A. Families of shapes, and shapes inside or beside shapes, create harmony.
- B. Overlapping forms help to unify a composition.
- C. Repetition of qualities such as colour, texture and tone produce rhythm and balance.

Component 9: CRAFTSMANSHIP: Students will add finishing touches.

Concepts

- A. Finishing touches (accents, contrasts, outlines) can be added to make a work more powerful.

EXPRESSION

Component 10 (i) PURPOSE 1: Students will record or document activities, people and discoveries.

Concepts

- B. Special events, such as field trips, visits and festive occasions can be recorded visually.
- C. Family groups and people relationships can be recorded visually.
- D. Knowledge gained from study or experimentation can be recorded visually.

PURPOSE 2: Students will illustrate or tell a story.

Concepts

- A. A narrative can be retold or interpreted visually.

PURPOSE 4: Students will express a feeling or a message.

Concepts

- A. Feeling and moods can be interpreted visually.
- B. Specific messages, beliefs and interests can be interpreted visually or symbolized.

# Art Curriculum Connections continued

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## Grades 7-9

### ENCOUNTERS

#### GRADE 7

Students will:

- investigate natural forms, man-made forms, cultural traditions and social activities as sources of imagery through time and across cultures
- understand that the role and form of art differs through time and across cultures
- understand that art reflects and affects cultural character

### COMPOSITIONS

Components 2: Students will experiment with techniques and media within complete compositions of two and three dimensions.

### ENCOUNTERS

Sources of Images: Students will identify similarities and differences in expressions of selected cultural groups.

Concepts:

- A. Symbolic meanings are expressed in different ways by different cultural groups.
- B. Different cultural groups use different materials to create images or artifacts.

Transformations Through Time: Students will recognize the significance of the visual symbols which identify the selected cultural groups.

Concepts:

- A. Artifacts can have religious, magical and ceremonial meanings.
- C. Visual symbols are used for identification and status by people in groups.
- D. External influences may have modified the imagery of a cultural group over time.

Impact of Images: Students will search for contemporary evidence relating to themes studied.

Concepts:

- A. Religious, magical or ceremonial images used in contemporary society can be identified.
- B. Authority, power or politics in contemporary society may be described in image form.
- C. The ways people generate visual works can be influenced by a number of factors.

## Art 10-20-30

### Art 10

Transformations Through Time

Concepts:

- A. Works of art contain themes and images that reflect various personal and social conditions.
- B. Technology has an affect on materials used in image making.

# Art Curriculum Connections continued

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## Impact of Images

### Concepts

- A. Simplified form communicates the purpose and function of designed objects.
- B. The function of an artwork can be emphasized by its decoration.

## **Art 20**

### ENCOUNTERS

Students will:

Sources of Images: Recognize that while the sources of images are universal, the formation of an image is influenced by the artist's choice of medium, the time and the culture.

### Concepts

- A. Different periods of history yield different interpretations of the same subject or theme.
- B. Artists and craftspeople use the possibilities and limitations of different materials to develop imagery.
- C. Different cultures exhibit different preferences for forms, colours and materials in their artifacts.

## **Art 30**

### COMPOSITIONS

Students will:

### Components

USE PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS SOURCES FOR IMAGE MAKING.

### Concepts

- A. The selection and presentation of perceptions, conceptions and experience as visual content for artworks is an important aim of the artist.
- B. Planned and spontaneous methods of working are ways of developing visual images.

### ENCOUNTERS

Students will:

Sources of Images: Research selected artists and periods to discover factors in the artists' environments that influenced their personal visions.

### Concepts

- A. Personal situations and events in artists' lives affect their personal visions and work.
- B. Historical events and society's norms have an affect on an artist's way of life and work.

### Transformations Through Time

Analyze the factors that generate a work of art, or an artistic movement: The experiences of the artists and the impact of the culture.

### Concepts

- A. A specific artistic movement and its works of art are influenced by the members' philosophic theme, stylistic identity and relationship to the community in which they exist.

# Art Curriculum Connections continued

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## Impact of Images

Question sources of images that are personally relevant or significant to them in contemporary culture.

## Concepts

B. Imagery can depict important aspects of the student's own life.

## Curriculum Connections continued

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**This exhibition is an excellent source for using art as a means of investigating topics addressed in other subject areas. The theme of the exhibition, and the works within it, are especially relevant as a spring-board for addressing aspects of the Science, Social Studies and Language Arts program of studies. The following is an overview of cross-curricular connections which may be addressed through viewing and discussing the exhibition.**

### **ELEMENTARY SCIENCE**

1–5 Students will identify and evaluate methods for creating colour and for applying colours to different materials.

- i. Identify colours in a variety of natural and manufactured objects.
- ii. Compare and contrast colours, using terms such as lighter than, darker than, more blue, brighter than.
- iii. Order a group of coloured objects, based on a given colour criterion.
- iv. Predict and describe changes in colour that result from the mixing of primary colours and from mixing a primary colour with white or with black.
- v. Create a colour that matches a given sample, by mixing the appropriate amounts of two primary colours.
- vi. Distinguish colours that are transparent from those that are not. Students should recognize that some coloured liquids and gels can be seen through and are thus transparent and that other colours are opaque.
- vii. Compare the effect of different thicknesses of paint. Students should recognize that a very thin layer of paint, or a paint that has been watered down, may be partly transparent.
- viii. Compare the adherence of a paint to different surfaces; e.g., different forms of papers, fabrics and plastics.

# Curriculum Connections continued

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

### K.1 I am Unique

**General Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the multiple social, physical, cultural and linguistic factors that contribute to an individual's unique identity

#### Specific Outcomes

#### Values and Attitudes

*Students will:*

- K.1.1 value their unique characteristics, interests, gifts and talents
- K.1.2 appreciate the unique characteristics, interests, gifts and talents of others:
  - appreciate feelings, ideas, stories and experiences shared by others

#### Knowledge and Understanding

*Students will:*

- K.1.3 examine what makes them unique individuals by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
  - What are my gifts, interests, talents and characteristics?
  - How do my gifts, interests, talents and characteristics make me a unique individual?
  - How do culture and language contribute to my unique identity?
- K.1.4 explore how we demonstrate respect for ourselves and others by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
  - What are the origins of the people in our school, groups or communities?
  - How can we show interest and sensitivity toward social, physical, cultural and linguistic diversity in the school, groups and communities?
  - How can we show respect and acceptance of people as they are?

### 1.1 My World: Home, School, and Community

**General Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how identity and self-esteem are enhanced by their sense of belonging in their world and how active members in a community contribute to the well-being, growth and vitality of their groups and communities.

#### Specific Outcomes

#### Values and Attitudes

*Students will:*

- 1.1.1 value self and others as unique individuals in relation to their world:
  - appreciate how belonging to groups and communities enriches an individual's identity
  - appreciate multiple points of view, languages, cultures and experiences within their groups and communities
  - demonstrate respect for their individual rights and the rights of others
  - recognize and respect how the needs of others may be different from their own

# Curriculum Connections continued

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## SOCIAL STUDIES CONTINUED

- 1.1.2 value the groups and communities to which they belong:
- appreciate how their actions might affect other people and how the actions of others might affect them

### 1.2 Moving Forward with the Past: My Family, My History and My Community

**General Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how changes over time have affected their families and influenced how their families and communities are today.

#### Specific Outcomes

#### Values and Attitudes

*Students will:*

- 1.2.1 appreciate how stories and events of the past connect their families and communities to the present:
- recognize how their families and communities might have been different in the past then they are today
  - appreciate how the languages, traditions, celebrations and stories of their families, groups and communities contribute to their sense of identity and belonging
  - recognize how diverse Aboriginal...communities are integral to Canada's character
  - acknowledge and respect symbols of heritage and traditions in their family and communities

#### Knowledge and Understanding

*Students will:*

- 1.2.2 analyze how their families and communities in the present are influenced by events of people of the past by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:
- How have changes affected my family over time?
  - In what ways has my community changed over time?
  - How have changes over time affected their families and communities in the present?
  - In what ways have Aboriginal...and diverse cultural groups contributed to the origins and evolution of their communities over time?
  - What connections do we have to the Aboriginal...and diverse cultures found in our communities?
  - What are some examples of traditions, celebrations and stories that started in the past and continue today in their families and communities?

### 2.1 Canada's Dynamic Communities

**General Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how geography, culture, language, heritage, economics and resources shape and change Canada's communities

# Curriculum Connections continued

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## SOCIAL STUDIES CONTINUED

### Specific Outcomes

#### Knowledge and Understanding

*Students will:*

2.1.3 investigate the cultural and linguistic characteristics of an Inuit, an Acadian and a prairie community in Canada by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions for inquiry:

- What are the cultural characteristics of the communities?
- What are the traditions and celebrations in the communities that connect the people to the past and to each other?
- How are the communities strengthened by their stories, traditions and events of the past?
- How do the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the communities studied contribute to Canada's identity?

#### 4.2 The Stories, Histories and Peoples of Alberta

**General Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the role of stories, history and culture in strengthening communities and contributing to identity and a sense of belonging.

### Specific Outcomes

#### Values and Attitudes

*Students will:*

4.2.1 appreciate how an understanding of Alberta's history, peoples and stories contributes to their own sense of belonging and identity:

- recognize how stories of people and events provide multiple perspectives on past and present events
- recognize oral traditions, narratives and stories as valid sources of knowledge about the land, culture and history
- recognize the presence and influence of diverse Aboriginal peoples as inherent to Alberta's culture and identity

#### Knowledge and Understanding

*Students will:*

4.2.2 assess, critically, how the cultural and linguistic heritage and diversity of Alberta has evolved over time by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:

- Which First Nations originally inhabited the different areas of the province?
- What do the stories of Aboriginal peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land?

# Curriculum Connections continued

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## SOCIAL STUDIES CONTINUED

### 4.3 Alberta: Celebrations and Challenges

**General Outcome:** Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of how Alberta has grown and changed culturally, economically and socially since 1905

#### Specific Outcomes

#### Values and Attitudes

*Students will:*

- 4.3.1 appreciate the factors contributing to quality of life in Alberta:
- value and respect their own and other cultural identities
  - demonstrate respect for the rights, opinions and perspectives of others
  - demonstrate respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in Alberta
  - value and respect their relationships with the environment

#### Knowledge and Understanding

*Students will:*

- 4.3.3 examine, critically, Alberta's changing cultural and social dynamics by exploring and reflecting upon the following questions and issues:
- In what ways has Alberta changed demographically since 1905?
  - In what ways have Aboriginal peoples and communities changed over time?
  - In what ways have music, art, narratives and literature contributed to the vitality of the culture, language and identity of diverse Alberta communities over time?

## LANGUAGE ARTS

K.4.3 Students will use drawings to illustrate ideas and information and talk about them.

2.1 Use knowledge of context, pictures, letters, words, sentences...in a variety of oral, print and other media texts to construct and confirm meaning

5.2.2 Experience oral, print and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as historical fiction, myths, biographies, and poetry

6.4.3 Demonstrate attentive listening and viewing. Students will identify the tone, mood and emotion conveyed in oral and visual presentations

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Artist and Curator Biographies/Statements

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## **Troy Patenaude**

Troy Patenaude is of mixed Métis heritage from around Lake Huron. He has spent most of his life, however, in the prairies and mountains of *Siksikaissksahkoyi*. Troy is lucky to have a father, Robert Patenaude, who always taught him to pay attention to this, and to respect where we are. This made an imprint on Troy and motivated him throughout his life. Troy's mother, Marilyn, is an artist, and so Troy also grew up with creativity all around. He received his PhD from the University of Calgary, where he studied Canadian art and cultural history within a context of decolonization. Troy is passionate about intercultural sharing work and envisions a future where all ways of life here are mutually contributing to our collective wellbeing. He is the Director of Cultural Development at Fort Calgary, and teaches at the Alberta University of the Arts.

## **Kent Ayoungman**

Kent is from the Siksika Nation and has a passion for anything related to the *Siksikai'tsitapiwahssinni*. Since childhood, he has dreamt often about the traditions of the *Siksikai'tsitapi*. He has actualized these "gifts of knowledge" by actively participating in the Blackfoot societies and ceremonies. At a young age, Kent was also very fortunate to have his late grandfather, Arthur Ayoungman Sr., there for him, and to encourage him in living the Siksika way of life. Kent has also translated these gifts into creating works of art in mixed media. He is especially adept at making "authentic" Siksika clothing, accessories, and horse gear. He is knowledgeable about old designs, the symbolism in these pieces, and the protocol related to ownership and use.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Artist and Curator Biographies/Statements

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## **Kristy North Peigan**

Kristy North Peigan is a Blackfoot artist from the Piikani Nation. She is a graduate of the Alberta College of Art and Design, where she received a Bachelor of Design in Illustration. Kristy is a spirited young artist with a passion for producing fantastical works, and specializing in splicing culture with popular media. She enjoys doing this through a dynamic artistic process using many mediums, from digital to traditional, and usually combining them. More often than not, Kristy also serves her artistic ideas with a side order of geekiness that is lovingly expressed through DIY fashion and costuming. She is currently freelancing in the city of Calgary.

## **Lori Scalplock**

Lori Scalplock is a Blackfoot artist from the Siksika Nation. She is known for designing and creating powwow dance regalia and contemporary garments that are inspired by her Blackfoot culture. She has studied Fashion Design and Merchandising at Lethbridge Community College. Lori has also studied Fine Arts at the University of Calgary, where she is currently studying Education at the Werklund School of Education. Lori has years of experience as a beadwork artist and seamstress, and is now exploring quillwork, a traditional Blackfoot artistic practice, for this exhibit. When Lori was a toddler, her Great-Grand-Mother Margaret Bad Boy introduced her to the powwow circle. Lori enjoys dancing at powwows and her participation in powwow dancing has inspired her to create and teach art.

## **Smith Wright**

Smith Wright is a Blackfoot artist from the Siksika Nation. He is currently majoring in Painting at the Alberta University of the Arts in Calgary. Smith's grandparents raised him within traditional Blackfoot culture, and this encouraged his interest in art from a very young age. Pop culture also inspires him, and enhances his method of blending both contemporary and traditional art forms. Smith draws from fantasy, folklore, comic books, movies, and music, and dabbles in a wide variety of mediums that also include jewellery, sculpture, and printing. Beadwork is also a dominant and reoccurring element in his work. Smith has developed these mediums together into a rich creative style. He aspires to break new ground and spread awareness about Native people while using history, current events, and even stereotypes to inform his audience.

## Artist Interviews

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### Kristy North Peigan

Kristy was born in Fort Macleod, Alberta. She spent her childhood being raised on the nearby Piikani Nation reserve. As a pre-teen, her family moved to Calgary, where she lived as a teenager and young adult, and she still lives there today. Kristy has been drawing ever since she could hold a pencil, and was always drawn to art. In her words, “I never really wanted to do anything else. I always felt I had things I wanted to express, and that through art I could find my voice.”

Kristy’s earliest artistic influences were video game culture, books, and similar forms of escapism, especially while living in Calgary. A central identity marker for her has been her experiences as an urban Indigenous person. Like other youth, she was captivated by technology, social media, and modern society, but she was also Blackfoot. Her art practice helped her to explore being Blackfoot, not as something strangled or eradicated by technology, but as something able to grow, change, and thrive alongside it.

Kristy’s embrace of this duality—modern and traditional, reserve and city—is what animates and instigates her art work. She describes her subject interests as technology, culture splicing, and pop culture all married to life on the reserve. Being in the city, Kristy has at times felt less connected to family on the reserve. She’s able to bridge this gap through her art, both at the level of conception, and in her choice of mediums and other forms of expression.

Digital painting is an important medium to her because it is the industry standard for video games and pre-production in movies. Oil painting is important because of its fluidity. Together, these mediums help her achieve high levels of realism, or sometimes surrealism, depending on the subject matter. Kristy’s creative process also allows her to know the endgame first, then she can get and apply the clearest forms of expression to achieve that.

In *Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control*, Kristy continues this exploration at the limits of her artistic abilities, in order to express, without rigidity, how she feels and sees the world. Kristy says that her work in this exhibition aims to:

“explore my self-identity as an Indigenous person, and how this marries to my experiences in life as a human being.”

She states that the artworks are more about evoking emotions than conveying absolute messages. They may be tongue-in-cheek sometimes—through strategic juxtapositions or colour placements—but it is not part of her desire to be negative or confrontational. Kristy wants viewers to feel like they are engaged in these encounters with her art and life, but in a calm and safe place, which is exactly where she was when painting them.

## The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Artist Interviews continued

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### Lori Scalplock

Lori was born in Bassano, Alberta and raised on the Siksika Nation reserve. She grew up on the family ranch and fondly remembers a childhood full of horses, cows, crops, and a garden. Her dad still tends to his cattle today. Lori grew up connected to the land. Two memories in particular capture her imagination: playing and having fun outside, and picking plants and berries with her great grandmother, Margaret Bad Boy. Her great grandmother had a large influence on her life; one that still resonates deeply today. Lori did not know what she had then, but now really appreciates it.

Lori was also immersed in a life of the arts. Her family is a family of artists, and on her dad's side, everyone was always making things. Lori's great grandmother also started her powwow dancing at just sixteen months old. As a child, Lori would often play with beads while watching her aunties and grandmothers beading. Her aunt Lucille Wright eventually helped Lori learn the art of First Nations beadwork, and Lori's artistic efforts blossomed from there.

As a teenager, Lori had a vision of becoming a fashion designer and making her own powwow dance regalia. Her participation in powwow dancing also inspired creations in other mediums, and Lori soon began formal arts training. During this training, Lori developed skills in fashion design, sketching and pattern drafting, sewing, painting, and she explored sculpture and performance art. Whatever her medium, she is moved to making beautiful things; something that is pleasant to look at, like powwow dance regalia. Yet, this is not just about aesthetics either. In her own words, "our [Blackfoot] art has been considered a craft, but it means so much more to me, and it helps preserve our culture."

As Lori grew into adulthood, her artwork expanded in its purpose. She began to wonder if she could make a connection to her Blackfoot ancestors through the contemporary world. She is now also more interested in challenging herself creatively, which became an impetus for her artworks in ***Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control.***

Lori had never quilled before now. She dedicated herself to learning the skill for this exhibition, and underwent the work for having the rights transferred to her in ceremony to quill and use traditional Blackfoot designs. Quilling appealed to her because it was an art practiced by her ancestors before contact with the Europeans. She now uses it to express connection to her Blackfoot culture in this contemporary world, and wants people encountering these works to take away an awareness that the Blackfoot are still here:

*I love the lifestyle we live, our cultural practices. We've been so oppressed, but as much as colonization has tried to keep us down, we are still thriving and practicing our culture.*

## The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Artist Interviews continued

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### Smith Wright

Smith was born in Bassano, Alberta, just outside the Siksika Nation reserve of the Blackfoot Confederacy. He was raised on the reserve by his grandparents. From early on in life he practiced art and had many important influences. One of the first was his grandfather, a skilled carver in his own right. When Smith would go to his grandfather's workplace after the day at kindergarten, his grandfather would get him to draw while waiting. Smith also remembers watching his mother and grandmother beading, as well as seeing his late father's horse drawings in the house, which all left an impression.

From a similarly young age, Smith's brother and uncle got him interested in comic books. His favourites to read were Conan, Spiderman, and Wolverine, and it was not long before he started to draw like he saw in the comics. As Smith grew older, he began emulating favourite comic book artists and was later developing his own characters. He eventually wanted to explore other contemporary mediums besides comics, and so enrolled in the Alberta College of Art (now Alberta University of the Arts).

While in formal art school, Smith's art was enriched in ways he had not expected. Many different styles and genres interested him, and he still finds himself constantly experimenting today. When asked now to describe his artistic style, Smith says "experimental," as he loves exploring ways to provide modern twists on traditional concepts. Drawing got him started, but now he tends to gravitate towards painting. He says that he fell in love with colours—mixing colours, seeing colours, and creating colour schemes.

Despite all this experimentation, however, contemporary art school did something even more for Smith's art. In a paradoxical way, it inspired him to tap into his own cultural roots—and the political realities of Indigenous people in Canada today—more than ever before. His art practice became a path towards cultural rediscovery and a deepening understanding about who he really is. This is now the predominant motivation for everything he creates. He wants to use his art to spread awareness and be a powerful platform to show a side of Indigenous people not seen in mainstream society.

In ***Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control***, Smith continues this journey. Here, he is doing it particularly for murdered and missing Indigenous women. He wants these women to be seen not as numbers, statistics, or stereotypes, but as so much more: for the beauty and cultural significance they embody, which is immeasurable and beyond words. Women were and are vital to the thriving of Blackfoot culture and communities. Many aspects of Blackfoot traditional and ceremonial life cannot be done without women, and yet they are frequently dehumanized and misrepresented in mainstream society. Smith aims to counteract this tendency:

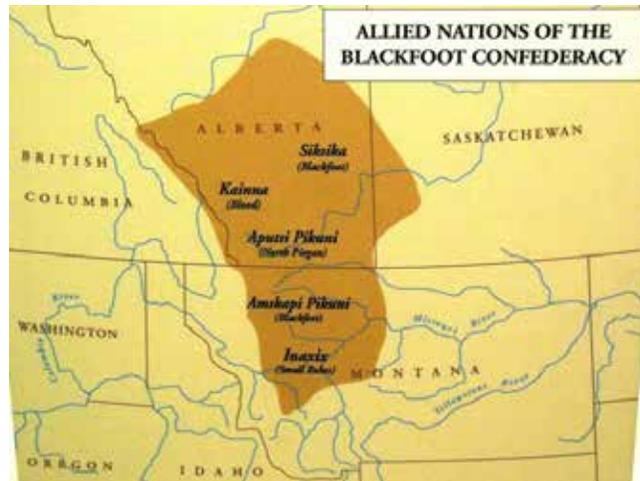
*I want my art to help people view us differently. They don't see us; they don't see our hard work, or that there's so much more to us than they've been taught. I want to show people all that they don't see.*

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# The Blackfoot Confederacy - History and Culture: an Introduction

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**The Blackfoot Confederacy refers to four Indigenous nations which make up the Blackfoot people.** Three of these - the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Kainai (Blood) and the Northern Piegan reside in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia in Canada. The fourth nation, the Southern Piegan, are located in the United States. The nations have their own separate governments ruled by a chief, but come together for religious and social celebrations.



Map of Blackfoot Territory

**The Blackfoot Confederacy refers to itself as Niitsitapi or 'the people' and their traditional territory as Niitsitpiis-stahkoi or 'Original Peoples Land'.** This territory stretched from the North Saskatchewan River, in the area where Edmonton is today, south to the Yellowstone River of Montana, and west from the Rocky Mountains to east past the Cypress Hills. Due to cultural and language patterns, anthropologists believe the *Niitsitapi* originated from the upper Northeastern part of North America and, by 1200, began moving west in search of more land, eventually settling in the Great Plains. Whatever the nations' origins, the confederacy is considered to be the oldest residents of the western prairie region.



Alfred Jacob Miller  
*Hunting Buffalo*, approx. 1858  
Walters Art Museum  
Baltimore, Maryland

**The Blackfoot Confederacy was a buffalo-hunting culture.** During the summers they followed the bison herds as they migrated between what are now the United States and Canada. The buffalo were used for meat while fur and tanned hides, sinew, bones and dung were used for clothing, shelter, decoration, tools and fuel. The Blackfoot nations also hunted deer, moose, mountain sheep and other large game while women gathered berries and root vegetables. In the fall the people would begin shifting to their wintering areas, in camps along wooded river valleys, where they remained for almost half the year.

Before the introduction of the horse, the Niitsitapi hunted buffalo in two main ways. First, they often used camouflage to creep up close to the feeding herds. Hunters would take buffalo skins and drape them over their bodies to blend in and mask their scent. In this way they could get close to the buffalo and, when close enough, attack with arrows or spears. A second method used for hunting was using 'buffalo jumps'. Hunters would direct the buffalo into V-shaped pens and then drive them over cliffs. Afterwards hunters would go to the bottom of the cliff and harvest

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# The Blackfoot Confederacy - History and Culture: an Introduction continued

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as much of the animals as they could carry. One of the more famous buffalo jump sites is at Head-Smashed-In, Alberta.

**The introduction of horses to the western Plains in the early 1700s revolutionized Blackfoot life.** Horses were used for hunting and made both following and harvesting the buffalo herds much easier than previously. Besides their use in hunting, the introduction of horses also allowed for a significant expansion of Blackfoot territory. The Blackfoot were traditional enemies of a number of other Indigenous groups such as the Crow, Cheyenne, Sioux, the Shoshone, Flathead, Nez Perce and their most dangerous enemies, the Plains Cree and their allies the Stoney and Saulteaux.



Head-Smashed-In-Buffalo-Jump  
near Fort Macleod, Alberta

The Shoshone acquired horses much earlier than the Blackfoot and soon occupied much of present-day Alberta, most of Montana, and parts of Wyoming. Once the Blackfoot gained access to horses in the early 1700s, however, they pushed back and by 1787 explorer David Thompson reported that the Blackfoot had conquered most of Shoshone territory and controlled the territory from the North Saskatchewan River in the north to the Missouri River in the south.

**The Blackfoot came into contact with Euro-American hunters and traders by the mid 18th century.** In 1754 Anthony Henday of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) met a large Blackfoot group in what is now Alberta. The HBC encouraged the Blackfoot to trade by setting up posts, such as Fort Edmonton and Rocky Mountain House, along the North Saskatchewan River. While trade enabled the Blackfoot Confederacy to become the richest and most powerful group in the Western plains, contact also exposed the Indigenous peoples to infectious diseases. In 1837 the Niitsitapi contracted smallpox. This outbreak eventually killed 6,000 people and effectively ended Blackfoot dominance on the plains.

While the Blackfoot, like other Indigenous groups, often had hostile relationships with Euro-North American traders, trappers and settlers, they largely stayed out of the major conflicts of the 1800s. When the Sioux approached the Blackfoot for assistance in their war with the United States Army in the 1870s, Crowfoot, one of the most influential Blackfoot chiefs, dismissed them and threatened to join with the North West Mounted Police to fight them if they ever came back to Blackfoot territory. The Blackfoot also chose to stay out of the Northwest Rebellion, led by Louis Riel, in 1885.

**The Blackfoot Confederacy was one of the last First Nations group to enter into treaties with the American and Canadian governments.** By the 1860s and 1870s the virtual extermination of the buffalo by European-American hunters and government policies coupled with encroaching settlement in what is now the United States and outbreaks of disease

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# The Blackfoot Confederacy - History and Culture: an Introduction continued

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Crowfoot  
1830-1890



Red Crow  
1830-1900

made Indigenous peoples more and more dependent on government assistance. A treaty was signed on the American side of the 49th parallel in 1855 but it was not until 1877 that the Blackfoot signed Treaty 7 in Canada.

**Treaty 7 was primarily a peace treaty intended to facilitate a means of peaceful co-existence with the white government.** Key signatories for the Blackfoot Confederacy were Chief Crowfoot of the Siksika and Chief Red Crow of the Kainai. Treaty 7 involved an area of 50,000 square miles of land south of the Red Deer River and adjacent to the Rock Mountains. The Kainai had a reserve of land designated for them along the Bow River. Red Crow, however, was not consulted on this, preferring traditional lands further south, and so refused to settle the Kainai on the reserved lands. In 1882 a new reserve for the Kainai, comprised of 708.4 square miles, was surveyed with a southern boundary set at 9 miles from the border with the United States. In 1883, however, this land was re-surveyed without consulting the Kainai and reduced to 547.5 square miles. The Kainai have never accepted these various adjustments and continue to advance the claims to the lands identified by Chief Red Crow.

**Traditionally, the peoples of the Blackfoot Confederacy were nomadic buffalo hunters with a fluid but highly organized social structure.** Because of the nomadic nature of their lives, the people were divided into many bands which ranged in size from 10 to 30 lodges, or about 80 to 240 people. The band was the basic unit of organization for hunting and defence and consisted of several households that lived and worked together. Band membership was fluid and typically coalesced around bonds of kinship and friendship where family was highly valued. Bands came together during times of celebration or war to form tribes or nations which are groupings that are culturally and linguistically related.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# The Blackfoot Confederacy - History and Culture: an Introduction continued

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**In tribes, leadership skills were highly valued.** During times of peace the people would elect a peace chief who could lead the people and improve relations with other tribes. During times of war a war chief was chosen. This role, however, was not elected but needed to be earned by those who had successfully performed various acts of bravery. Within the Blackfoot nation there were also different societies, such as war, religious or women's societies, to which people belonged. Each of these societies had functions within the tribe and members were invited into societies after proving themselves by recognized passages and rituals.

The Blackfoot continue many of the cultural traditions of the past and hope to extend these to their children. There is a significant effort to learn Pikuni, the official language of the Blackfoot, and various societies and ceremonies previously banned, such as the Sun Dance, have been revived.



Sundance ceremony, 1908  
Library and Archives of Canada

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## First Nations Sacred Places and Practices

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The art pieces created by Lori Scalplock in the exhibition ***Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control*** are Blackfoot inspired designs commonly used on dance regalia in Pow Wow dancing. Scalplock has been participating in pow wow dancing since she was a toddler and this activity inspired her to create art.



Pow wow dances are expressions of Indigenous spirituality, history and culture which allow communities to gather and share Indigenous cultural traditions. An important component of a pow wow are the dancers who dance around a circle to the beat of the drum, displaying their style of dance.

Dancing around the circle represents the cycle of life and its ongoing connection to all things in this world. Most often the dancers move in a clockwise motion to follow the direction of the sun. The Grand Entry, the beginning of each pow wow, starts in the 'Eastern Doorway' as the sun rises in the east. Pow wow dances, drum music and songs, and regalia or outfits are sacred elements of the a pow wow, meant not only to entertain but also to tell important stories about personal and cultural history.

While pow wows are believed to have originated with Plains Indigenous peoples, cross-cultural exchanges have produced various regional variations of pow wow dances. There are several different dance styles which are divided by gender - some for male dancers and others for female dancers. There are also dances that are specific to certain First Nations, or that commemorate certain events or elements of nature.

Pow wows can be categorized as traditional or competitive. Traditional pow wows are held in local communities and do not have dance and drum group competitions. Competitive pow wows have dance categories that are gender and age-specific. Most dances are also categorized by age: adult, teenager/youth and 'tiny tot'. The judges evaluate the competitive dance scores based on dance category as well as regalia and dancing abilities.

Regalia is appropriate for the dance category or style. This includes not only the dress or outfit worn, but also the accessories such as moccasins, eagle feather fans, hair roaches, jewelry and make-up. Regalia is unique and sacred to each dance and clothing and accessories are made with care and attention, holding deep meaning and spiritual significance to the dancer. Regalia is adorned with various materials. Some outfits feature intricate beadwork while others use ribbons, shiny materials, or the use of traditional materials such as porcupine quills.

## Art History and Art Movements

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The artworks in the exhibition reflect a variety of artistic modes or styles of expression and concerns which are characteristic of both First Nations art practices over time and western art practices. While all periods of history have witnessed aspects of innovation in various realms, no period has witnessed such profound and rapid change in a multitude of areas as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These centuries witnessed major technological advancements, changes in political and social systems, and changes in how mankind actually perceived the world; changes which continue to impact the world into the 21st century. The art realm was one segment of society which was dramatically affected by changes in all these areas. In art these changes were expressed by revised notions of what is considered art and through the use of new means of art production and new and challenging methods of art expression.

The following analysis examines the history of various First Nations and western art movements as these are relevant to the artistic expressions of the artists in the exhibition.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Art and Art Styles: First Nations Art in the Twentieth Century - a brief survey

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Lori Scalplock  
*Fire in the night*, 2019  
Quillwork on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

While First Nations peoples have been creating visual imagery for millennia it was not until the 1960s that their imagery was recognized by the Canadian Art establishment as anything more than cultural artifacts or records. The first Indigenous artist to achieve any recognition in Canada was Norval Morrisseau who developed what has come to be termed the Woodland School of art. In 1973 Morrisseau joined artists Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray, Eddy Cobiness and Joe Sanchez, to form a group which came to be called the 'Indian Group of Seven' whose mission was to spread the word about Native woodland art. This group has had a tremendous influence on the First Nations artists who have followed them.

## Norval Morrisseau

**Norval Morrisseau (1932-2007)** was one of Canada's foremost aboriginal artists and founder of the Woodland Style of painting. Born near Thunder Bay, Ontario, on the Sand Point Reserve, Morrisseau was an Ojibwa shaman and self-taught artist who painted for more than 50 years, gaining an International reputation as one of Canada's original master artists. Morrisseau was brought up by both of his maternal grandparents. His grandfather was a shaman who schooled him in the traditional ways of his culture while his grandmother, a Catholic, made sure he was familiar with Christian beliefs. According to accounts, it was the conflict between the two cultures that influenced Morrisseau's outlook and became his art.



Norval Morrisseau  
*Fish Unity in Cosmic Sea*, n.d.  
Serigraph on paper  
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

## Norval Morrisseau continued

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Morrisseau was known for taking traditional icons expressed in his native culture in rock art and birch bark scrolls and translating these images in the Western media of easel painting and printmaking. He was also fascinated with modern European painting, which he was exposed to by his first Anglo-Canadian patrons in 1959.

Morrisseau's first exhibition was in 1962 and throughout his career he received numerous distinctions. In 1970 he became a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art. In 1978 he was made a Member of the Order of Canada and also received honorary doctorates from McGill University in Montreal and McMaster University in Hamilton. In 1995 The Assembly of First Nations presented him with its highest honour, a presentation of an eagle feather. In 2006 Morrisseau had the only native solo art exhibition in the 127 year history of the National Gallery of Canada. Shortly before his death Morrisseau had a major solo exhibition entitled *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist*, at the National Museum of the North American Indian in New York City. As stated by Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine following Morrisseau's death:

*Norval Morrisseau's courageous and often controversial approach to his work was instrumental in encouraging First Nations people to know their spirituality, history and culture in order to better understand themselves.*

Norval Morrisseau could lay claim to being the creator and spiritual leader of the Woodland Indian art movement, not only in Canada but in the northeast United States. He developed his style independent of the influence of any other artist and was the first to depict Ojibwa legends and history to the non-native world. In Morrisseau's work there is little attention to figurative modelling, and no delving into the problems of perspective or pictorial depth. Instead, he presented stylized versions of what he knew: the bears, loons, fish and other animals and the people in the town around him. **The rudiments of Woodland, also called the pictographic style or x-ray style, paintings are expressive formline; a system for transparency and interconnecting lines that determine relationships in terms of spiritual power. For Morrisseau, the use of bright, contrasting colours were also a key resource in his repertory of symbols.** His manner of separating form into areas of distinct colour is reminiscent of stained glass and may have been a result of his conversion to Christianity and frequent trips to a Catholic Church when he was recovering from tuberculosis in his early 20s. He used connecting lines to depict interdependence between forms and colours. Three generations of native artists have followed in Morrisseau's footsteps, producing variations of the Morrisseau style using heavy black outlines to enclose colourful, flat shapes. As expressed by Morrisseau himself:

*I want to make paintings full of colour, laughter, compassion and love....If I can do that, I can paint for 100 years.*

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Art History: The Indian Group of Seven

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Norval Morrisseau's work showed that native artists and native art could stand shoulder to shoulder with other contemporary Canadian artists and his success inspired other artists to follow. In 1973 the Winnipeg Art Gallery held a groundbreaking exhibition entitled *Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1171* which featured work by First Nations artists Jackson Beardy, Alex Janvier and Daphne Odjig. This breakthrough exhibition was one of the first exhibitions in Canada to address First Nations art within an aesthetic as opposed to an anthropological framework and showed that native artists truly had a unique contribution to make to the art world. The exhibition was followed, in 1973, by the foundation of the "Professional Native Indian Artists Association". Daphne Odjig was the driving force behind this group which also included Alex Janvier, Jackson Beardy, Norval Morrisseau, Eddy Cobiness, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez. The group, which came to be called 'The Indian Group of Seven', an informal name given by Winnipeg Free Press reporter Gary Scherbain, had as its main aims the development of a fund to enable artists to paint; the development of a marketing strategy involving prestigious commercial galleries in order to allow artists to exhibit their work; the stimulation of young artists; and the establishment of a trust fund for scholarship programs for emerging artists.



Daphne Odjig  
*Companions*  
Acrylic on Canvas



Carl Ray  
*A Medicine Bag*, 1972  
Ink, Acrylic on Paper  
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection



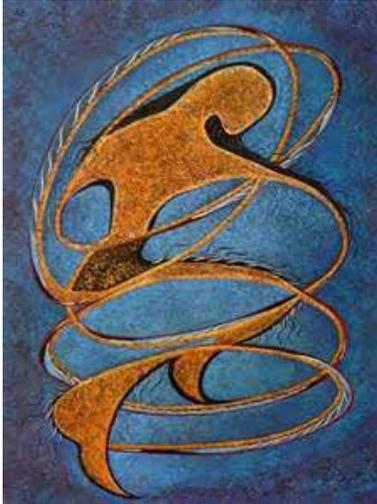
Jackson Beardy  
*Untitled (Bird)*, 1967  
Acrylic, Gouache on Board  
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

## The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Art History: The Indian Group of Seven

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While united in their aims, the members of the Indian Group of Seven followed their separate artistic visions. Carl Ray, who apprenticed under Norval Morrisseau, was strongly influenced by the Woodland Style of painting developed by Norval Morrisseau, using heavy dark outlines to render forms and shapes within forms and focusing on native legends and healing. Eddy Cobiness and Alex Janvier, while initially influenced by the Woodland style, gradually evolved to more abstract forms.



Eddy Cobiness  
*Hoopdancer*  
the Bearclaw Gallery, Edmonton



Alex Janvier  
*Lubicon, 1988*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
Art Gallery of Alberta Collection

Daphne Odjig, whose work is often associated with the Woodland school, claims that she is not part of the school as her works incorporate the importance of womanhood and sense of family while others in the group were concerned with a spiritual quest. Odjig's work is also different in that she was influenced by Picasso's cubism but within an Aboriginal context, fusing together elements of aboriginal pictographs and First Nations arts with European techniques and styles of the 20th century.

The Indian Group of Seven had three shows throughout Canada and disbanded in 1975. Though the groups 'life' was brief, however, it was extremely important for moving native art into the mainstream of the Canadian art world and influencing younger native artists. As expressed by Daphne Odjig:

*If my work as an artist has somehow helped to open doors between our people and the non-Native community, then I am glad. I am even more deeply pleased if it has helped to encourage the young people that have followed our generation to express their pride in our heritage more openly, more joyfully than I would have ever dared to think possible.*

(Odjig: *the Art of Daphne Odjig*, pg. 78)

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Art History: Indigenous Artists of Southern Alberta - an introduction

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Members of the Indian Group of Seven received both national and international recognition and their efforts in gaining recognition for art produced by Indigenous artists have borne fruit with many of Canada's most important contemporary artists, such as Kent Monkman from Ontario, being of Indigenous heritage.

In Alberta itself there are a number of contemporary artists of Indigenous heritage who have made their mark on the provincial and national art scene. Two important forerunners of this recognition were Gerald Tailfeathers and Joane Cardinal-Schubert.



Gerald Tailfeathers

**Gerald Tailfeathers (1925-1975)** was born at Stand Off, Alberta, and died at the Blood reservation. Tailfeathers was one of the first Indigenous Canadians to become a professional artist and came to prominence in the 1950s.

Tailfeathers had extensive formal art training. He began his artistic training at Saint Mary's Lake Summer Art School. In 1941 he studied at the Banff School of Fine Arts under the guidance of Charles Comfort, Walter J. Phillips and H.G. Glyde. In 1942 he attended the Provincial Institute of Art and Technology in Calgary (now the Alberta College of Art and Design), studying commercial design. Tailfeathers also attended Summer Art Schools in Glacier National Park (Montana) with New York portrait painters Winold Reiss and Carl Link and was influenced by the cowboy school of painting led by Charles Russell. Working as a graphic artist for the Hudson's Bay Company, he continued his fine art practice and produced a large volume of works in charcoals, pastels, watercolours, oils, pen and ink and in sculpture.

Gerald Tailfeathers' works exhibit a romantic and nostalgic vision of the Blood people's life in the late 19th century. His works feature warriors in their traditional activities of warfare, hunting and ceremonial life. While his career spanned a period when Indigenous art wasn't really recognized by galleries or the buying public, he did receive important commissions for paintings for the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal, the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, and for Canada Post. His works can be found in the collections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, Quebec; the department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa; the Galt Museum in Lethbridge, Alberta; and the Glenbow Museum in Calgary.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Art History: Indigenous Artists of Southern Alberta - an introduction continued

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## Joane Cardinal-Schubert (1942-2009)

Joane Cardinal-Schubert was born in Red Deer, Alberta, in 1942. Through her art and life she honoured her identity and Kainai (Blackfoot) heritage, demonstrating her values of representing the indigenous experience and history. Cardinal-Schubert was a multimedia, visual, and installation artist. Although best known for her paintings and installations, throughout her long and successful career she engaged in an impressive range of other activities as curator, writer, lecturer, poet and activist for First Nations artists and individuals engaged in the struggle for Native sovereignty. Her writing has been published nationally and internationally in art magazines, catalogues, and books and she also served as an editor of Fuse magazine.



Joane Cardinal-Schubert  
*Warshirt - Self Portrait*  
Collection of the Art Gallery of Alberta

Cardinal-Schubert completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a double major in painting and print making in 1977 at the University of Calgary. She also received a certificate from the Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary and in 1983 received a certificate in Management Development for Arts Administration from the Banff Centre. Cardinal-Schubert served as Assistant Curator at the Nickle Arts Museum at the University of Calgary from 1979 to 1985. She was also a lobbyist for the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA) and an outspoken advocate of Native causes.

Throughout her life Joane Cardinal-Schubert received many awards, scholarships, and Canada Council grants for her work. In 1985 she became the fourth Albertan woman to be inducted into the Royal Canadian Academy. She was also awarded the Commemorative Medal of Canada in 1993 for her contribution to the Arts, and in 2007 was awarded a National Aboriginal Achievement Award. She was an advocate for Native artists and inspired and enabled Native artists to challenge and reclaim their creative identities. Her painting and installation practice is prominent for its incisive evocation of contemporary First Nations experiences and examination of the imposition of EuroAmerican religious, educational and governmental systems upon Aboriginal people. Joane Cardinal-Schubert believed that making issues known that needed addressing was important. As she stated:

*I suppose that I have advocated to have Aboriginal art exhibited in galleries and museums as a lot of artists have done. I just joined in and contributed what I could from my point of view. I suppose one of the more important issues I was involved in was saving the Alberta Aboriginal Art Collection from being sold off piece by piece. That involved telephoning a lot of collectors to not bid on the work. Fortunately, it was saved almost in its entirety.*

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Art History: Indigenous Artists of Southern Alberta - an introduction continued

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Cardinal-Schubert said her life and career was about ‘the joy of discovery, curiosity, the journey, the people met, experiences, learning, just being within the creative process.’ To the end of her life she said “there is still a lot to be done, mainly in figuring out how to continue to share my work in more innovative ways. Basically my career is, I think, to just keep working and everything will follow along. “

As described by artist and curator Jeffrey Spalding, president of the Royal Canadian Academy,

*Joane was a fiery, indomitable, free spirit. She is renowned as a ground breaking artist who fought tenaciously for recognition of the qualities of First Nations artists and inclusion of their issues and works in museums of art rather than anthropology. Her works are a wonderful admixture of societal critique and probing autobiographical inquiry.*

Joane Cardinal-Schubert passed away at the age of sixty-seven from cancer on September 16, 2009.

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# Art Processes: Indigenous Quillwork

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**Quillwork** is an art form unique to North America. A form of textile embellishment traditionally practiced by Native Americans, quillwork makes use of the quills of porcupines as an aesthetic element. Before the introduction of glass beads by Euro-North American traders, quillwork was a major decorative element used by the Indigenous peoples of North America to adorn rawhide and tanned hide moccasins, clothing, bags and other functional objects.

Lori Scalplock  
*Renew, Recycle*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

Indigenous quillwork is considered a sacred art and women had to go through a ceremony of initiation before taking up this art form. Among the Blackfoot people, quillworkers are given or transferred the right to do quillwork in ceremony. Many tribes, such as the Blackfoot, had quillworking societies with certain customs and traditions. In Blackfoot mythology, quillwork was taught to the People by Thunder, a spirit being. Plains quillwork is characterized by bands of rectangles creating geometrical patterns. These patterns are also found in plains painting.

Porcupine quills suitable for artistic use are two to three inches long and may be dyed before use. Quills are naturally pale yellow to white but readily take dye, which was originally derived from local plants and included a wide array of colours with yellow, red, blue and green being the most common. After dyeing the quills are flattened with specific bone tools or by being run through one's teeth. The four most common techniques for quillwork are appliqué, embroidery, wrapping and loom weaving. In appliqué, the quills are stitched into hide in a manner that covers the stitches. In wrapping, a single quill may be wrapped upon itself or two quills may be intertwined.



Blackfoot Quillwork - Knife and Sheath

# Art Processes: First Nations Traditional Art Forms and Materials: Beading

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**A second Indigenous technique of art production used in works included in the exhibition is that of beading.**

## **Introduction:**

Prior to the fur trade a variety of natural raw materials were used to decorate and embellish clothing and personal affects. Natural resources such as bone, hair, quills, shells, rocks and plant fibre were used. To prepare these raw materials for use is a labour intensive process. However, with the introduction of trade materials, Aboriginal art forms and techniques further developed in artistic expression. Though it is possible to date artworks based on the types of trade materials incorporated into the composition it must be recognized that the cultural stream remains consistent, rarely deviating from the spiritual and conceptual knowledge passed down from previous generations of artists.

Today First Nations Art can either be classified as traditional on the premise that the artwork remains free of European materials or is influenced by the cultural narrative and pedagogy as in being taught by community Elders and artists teaching consecutive generations over time. Aboriginal art is not stagnant as it has been a medium that reflects the natural and social environments of the artist. Prior to European contact the artworks were composed of natural materials and were seen as reflections of the diverse cultural interactions among tribes. With European goods being traded and utilized there was a natural development to reflect these new influences. Beads, objects of metal, and the use of commercial dyes exemplify this adaptation in the art.

Today contemporary artists continue to add their perspectives by further developing works that stick true to traditional values and principles. Aboriginal art also reflects the measure of non-Aboriginal influences as in artwork that is based on the European perspective.

*Ben R. Moses, 2007*

**Beadwork** is the art or craft of attaching beads to one another by stringing them with a sewing needle or beading needle and thread or thin wire, or sewing them to cloth. Most cultures have employed beads for personal adornment and archaeological records show that people made and used beads as long as 5,000 years ago. Beads come in a variety of materials, shapes and sizes and are used to create jewelry or other articles of adornment and also for wall hangings, sculpture, and many other crafts and art forms.



Lori Scalplock  
*Hair Tie*, 2019  
Quillwork on smoked Moose hide, Delica Beads  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

# Art Processes: First Nations Traditional Art Forms and Materials continued

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Beadwork is a quintessentially Native American art form and there are as many different Native American beading traditions, designs, styles and stitches as there are nations. American Indian beads were a common trade item since ancient times and it was not surprising to see abalone shells from the west coast in Eastern Cherokee beadwork or wampum from the east coast in Chippewa beadwork.

Most indigenous designs were frequently abstracted as geometric motifs before the influence of European culture. In the North-eastern Woodlands, however, curvilinear designs were an ancient component of tribal aesthetics. European floral patterns, introduced by the French Ursuline nuns of Quebec in the 17th century, merged with the curvilinear imagery of First Nations peoples and by the 19th century flower-decorated beadwork was the predominate art form among all Northeastern and Great Lakes Woodlands people.

Beadwork became an important means of cultural and economic resilience for First Nations people from the 19th century to the present. Through beading Native women continued to encode cultural knowledge and some tribes developed a duality of artistic styles: one created for sale to Euro-Americans for much-needed income while another style was used for sacred ceremonial regalia. As expressed by W. Richard West Jr., president and CEO of the Autry Museum of the American West:

*During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - an era of immense pressure, indeed cultural emasculation that pushed Native communities to abandon tradition, including its arts forms, and assimilate into Euro-American culture - the art of beadwork was a compelling instrument of preservation for cultural traditions and Native identity.*

Cowboys and Indians, August/September, 2016, pg. 104

Generally speaking, native beadwork can be grouped into beaded leather (usually clothing, moccasins, or containers) and beaded strands (usually used for beaded necklaces but also as ornamental covering to wrap around a gourd or other ceremonial or art object). For beaded leather arts, crafts people sew the beads onto a leather or cloth backing. Each bead may be sewn on individually or they may be attached in loops or rows of beads. To make beaded strands a crafts person stitches the beads together into strings or a mesh using sinew, thread or wire. Beading strands and beading onto leather are both very complicated, time-consuming and delicate tasks.

Most Native beadwork is created for tribal use, but beadworkers also create conceptual work for the art world and there are many Native artists employing beadwork in everything from decorations on running shoes to beaded portraits of pop icons.

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Art Styles: Abstraction

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*Of all the arts, abstract painting is the most difficult. It demands that you know how to draw well, that you have a heightened sensitivity for composition and for colours, and that you be a true poet. This last is essential.*

Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)

**Abstract Art** is a term applied to 20th century art styles created in reaction against the traditional European view of art as the imitation of nature.

**Abstraction stresses the formal or elemental structure of a work and has been expressed in all genres or subjects of visual expression.**

Characteristics of abstraction are seen in the works of all three artists in the exhibition.

**Like all painting, abstract painting is not a unified practice.** Rather, the term 'abstraction' covers two main, distinct tendencies. **The first involves the reduction of natural appearances to simplified forms.** Reduction may lead to the depiction of the essential or generic forms of things by eliminating particular and accidental variations.

Reduction can also involve the creation of art which works away from the individual and particular with a view to creating an independent construct of shapes and colours having aesthetic appeal in their own right.



Kristy North Peigan  
*Vaporwave-Signals*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North-Peigan/Kristy NP

**The second tendency in abstraction involves the construction of art objects from non-representational basic forms.** These objects are not created by abstracting from natural appearances but by **building up with non-representational shapes and patterns.** In other words, in this mode, abstract works are ones without a recognizable subject and do not relate to anything external or try to 'look like something'. Instead, the colour and form (and often the materials and support) are the subject of the abstract painting.

Whatever the tendency in abstraction, it is characteristic of most modes of abstraction that they abandon or subordinate the traditional function of art to portray perceptible reality and emphasize its function to create a new reality for the viewer's perception. As described by Roald Nasgaard in his work Abstract Painting in Canada:

*The first message of an abstract work is the immediate reality of our perception of it as an actual object in and of themselves, like other things in the world, except that they are uniquely made for concentrated aesthetic experience.* (pg. 11)

# The History of Abstraction: A Survey

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Bison Painting, 18,000 - 13,000 years B.P.  
Altamira Cave, Spain



Clay Jaguar  
200 BC - 600 AD  
Monte Alban, Mesoamerica

**It is generally stated that abstraction in western art was developed in the early decades of the 20th century. The practice of abstracting from reality, however, is virtually as old as mankind itself. Early hunters and gatherers, as seen in the cave painting image above, created marvelous simplified or stylized images of the animals they depended on, both spiritually and in terms of sustenance, in caves throughout the world.**

**The artworks produced by non-European cultures, as seen in the two examples above and whether pre-historic or contemporary in nature, also provide examples of various degrees of abstraction in both two and three dimensional forms. The development of abstraction in European art in the early 20th century was, in fact, fostered by the study of such artworks by European artists such as Pablo Picasso.**

# The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

## Abstraction in European Art History

**Wassily Kandinsky** (1866-1944) is usually credited with making the first entirely non-representational painting in 1910. **The history of abstraction in European art, however, begins before Kandinsky in the later decades of the 19th century with the work of the French Impressionist artists** such as Claude Monet, Paul Cézanne and Georges Seurat. While the work of these artists was grounded in visible reality, their methods of working and artistic concerns began the process of breaking down the academic restrictions concerning what was acceptable subject matter in art, how artworks were produced and, most importantly, challenged the perception of what a painting actually was.



Wassily Kandinsky  
*Composition VII*, 1913  
The Tretyalov Gallery, Moscow



Paul Cézanne  
*Maison Arbies*, 1890-1894  
The Tretyalov Gallery, Moscow



Claude Monet  
*Haystacks (sunset)*, 1890-1891  
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



George Seurat  
*A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, 1884-1886

Radicals in their time, early Impressionists broke the rules of academic painting. They began by giving colours, freely brushed, primacy over line. They also took the act of painting out of the studio and into the modern world. Painting realistic scenes of modern life, they portrayed overall visual effects instead of details. They used short “broken” brush strokes of mixed and pure unmixed colour, not smoothly blended or shades as was customary, in order to achieve the effect of intense colour vibration.

**The vibrant colour used by the Impressionist artists was adopted by their successors, the Fauve artists.** The Fauves were modern artists whose works emphasized painterly qualities and strong colour over the representational or realistic values retained by the Impressionists. This group, which basically operated from 1905 to 1907, was led by Henri Matisse and André Derain.

# The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

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Henri Matisse  
*Harmony in Red*, 1908



André Derain  
*Charing Cross Bridge, London* 1906  
National Gallery of Art, Washington

The paintings of the Fauve artists were characterized by seemingly wild brush work and strident colours and, in their focus on colour over line and drawing, the subjects of their paintings came to be characterized by a high degree of simplification and abstraction.



Pablo Picasso  
*Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, 1911-12  
Museum of Modern Art  
New York, New York



Pablo Picasso  
*Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*,  
1910

**While the Impressionists and Fauve artists are the direct ancestors of the abstract movement in 20th century art, the real creator of abstraction was Pablo Picasso.** Picasso used primitive art from Africa and Oceania as a 'battering ram' against the classical conception of beauty. Picasso made his first cubist paintings, such as *Les Femmes d'Alger*, based on Cézanne's idea that all depiction of nature can be reduced to three solids: cube, sphere and cone. Together with Georges Braque, Picasso continued his experiments and invented **facet** or **analytical cubism**. As expressed in the *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*, Picasso created works which can no longer be read as images of the external world but as worlds of their own.

## The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

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Fragmented and redefined, the images preserved remnants of Renaissance principles of perspective as **space lies behind the picture plane** and has no visible limits. By 1911 Picasso and Georges Braque developed what is known as **Synthetic Cubism** which introduced collage into art making. Through this process these artists introduced a whole new concept of space into art making.

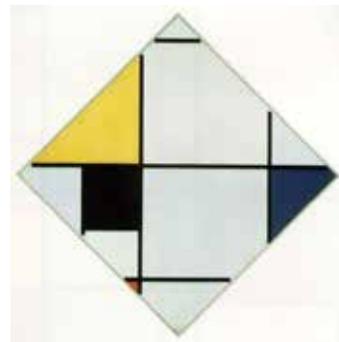


Pablo Picasso  
*Still Life with a Bottle of Rum*, 1911

In synthetic cubism, **the picture plane lies in front of the picture plane and the picture is recognized as essentially a flat object**. This re-definition of space, so different from the Renaissance principle of three-dimensional illusion that had dominated academic teaching for centuries, would have a profound effect on the development of abstraction in art and was a true landmark in the history of painting.



Wassily Kandinsky  
*Composition X*, 1939



Piet Mondrian  
*Lozenge Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red and Gray*, 1921

**Influenced by the practices of Impressionism, Fauvism and Cubism, artists gradually developed the idea that colour, line, form and texture could be the actual subjects of a painting and formed the essential characteristics of art. Adhering to this, Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian developed the first pure abstract works in 20th century art.**

# The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

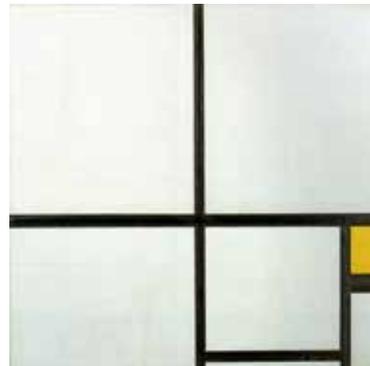
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**For both Kandinsky and Mondrian, abstraction was a search for truths behind appearances, expressed in a pure visual vocabulary stripped of representational references.**

**Wassily Kandinsky** (1866-1944) was born in Moscow. Originally trained in law and economics, Kandinsky started painting at the age of 30 and, in 1896, moved to Germany to study art full-time. After a brief return to Russia (1914-1921) Kandinsky returned to Germany where he taught at the Bauhaus school of art and architecture until it was closed by the Nazis in 1933. He then moved to France where he remained for the rest of his life.

Kandinsky's creation of purely abstract work followed a long period of development and maturation of theoretical thought based on his personal artistic experience. At first influenced by both pointillism and the Fauve artists, by 1922 geometrical elements had taken on increasing importance in his paintings. Kandinsky was also extremely influenced by music as he considered music abstract by nature as it does not try to represent the exterior world but rather to express in an immediate way the inner feelings of the human soul. He was also influenced by the theories of Theosophy expressed by H.P. Blavatsky. These theories, which had a tremendous influence on many artists during the 1920s, postulated that creation was a geometrical progression beginning with a single point. Kandinsky's mature paintings focus on geometric forms and the use of colour as something autonomous and apart from a visual description of an object or other form and through relinquishing outer appearances he hoped to more directly communicate feelings to the viewer.

**The most radical abstractionist of the early 20th century was Piet Mondrian** (1872-1944). Born in Amersfoort, the Netherlands, Mondrian began his career as a primary teacher. While teaching he also practiced painting and these early works, while definitely representational in nature, show the influence various artistic movements such as pointillism and fauvism had on him. Mondrian's art, like Kandinsky's, was also strongly influenced by the theosophical movement and his work from 1908 to the end of his life involved a search for the spiritual knowledge expressed by theosophist theory.



Piet Mondrian  
*Composition with Yellow Patch*, 1930  
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-  
Westfalen, Dusseldorf

In 1911 Mondrian moved to Paris and came under the influence of Picasso's cubism. While cubist influences can be seen in his works from 1911 to 1914, however, unlike the Cubists Mondrian attempted to reconcile his painting with his spiritual pursuits. In this pursuit he began to simplify elements in his paintings further than the cubists had done until he had developed a completely non-representational, geometric style. In this work Mondrian did not strive for pure lyrical emotion as Kandinsky did. Rather, his goal was pure reality defined as equilibrium achieved through the balance of unequal but equivalent oppositions. By 1919 Mondrian began producing the grid-based paintings for which he became renowned and this subject motivated his art practice for the rest of his life.

# The History of Abstraction: A Survey con't

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## **Conclusion:**

**Abstraction in the visual arts has taken many forms over the 20th and into the 21st century. Among these modes are Colour Field Painting, Lyrical Abstraction, Abstract Expressionism/Action Painting, Op Art, and Post-painterly Abstraction. Whatever the tendency in abstraction, it is characteristic of most modes of abstraction that they abandon or subordinate the traditional function of art to portray perceptible reality and emphasize its function to create a new reality for the viewer's perception.**

## Portraiture - a brief survey

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**A genre expressed in the exhibition is the art of portraiture. A portrait** is a painting, photograph, sculpture or other artistic representation of a person. In a portrait the artist's main concern is to characterize the sitter as an individual. While some portraits restrict themselves to physical descriptions, most attempt more than this, conveying the sitter's status in the world, their personality, or their state of mind at the time of the portrait. It is important to understand that not every portrait is an accurate likeness of a person and not every portrayal of a person is a portrait, no matter how accurate the likeness of the person shown is. To be a true portrait, the sitter or sitters have the central role in the composition.

The art of portraiture is an ancient one. Egyptian portrait statues and reliefs survive from before 3000 B.C. and there are many individualized portrait heads from ancient Greece and Rome. Most early representations that are clearly intended to show an individual are of rulers and generally follow idealized artistic conventions. Some of the earliest surviving painted portraits of more common people are the greco-Roman funeral portraits that survived in Egypt's dry climate. During the 4th century A.D. the portrait began to retreat in importance, being replaced by idealized symbolic representations. It was not until the late middle ages that true portraits of individuals began to re-emerge in the art of western Europe.



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiiiksinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #2, 2019*  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist

In creating a portrait the artist usually attempts more than merely representing the sitter's outward appearance. Rather, artists also usually try to depict the sitter's 'soul' or character in some way. There are generally three ways of doing this.

### **1/Pose**

To create a psychological connection between the subject and the viewer, the sitter is often placed turned towards the viewer. This is seen, for example, in Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Mona Lisa. It is through this positioning that a connection is formed between the sitter and the viewer and through this character and status of the sitter are often conveyed.

The viewer's actual viewing position of the sitter is also very important and can suggest the subject's attitude towards the viewer and, by extension, to the world in which he or she lives. Depending on the pose of the sitter, the viewer can draw different conclusions as to the sitters character. This is seen, for example, in John Singer Sargent's portrait of Madame X where the distance between the viewer and subject and the subject's pose gives the impression of a very aloof, distant woman.

# Portraiture continued

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Leonardo da Vinci  
*Mona Lisa*, 1503  
The Louve, Paris, France



John Singer Sargent  
*Madame X*, 1884



Anthony Van Dyke  
*Charles I at the Hunt*, 1635

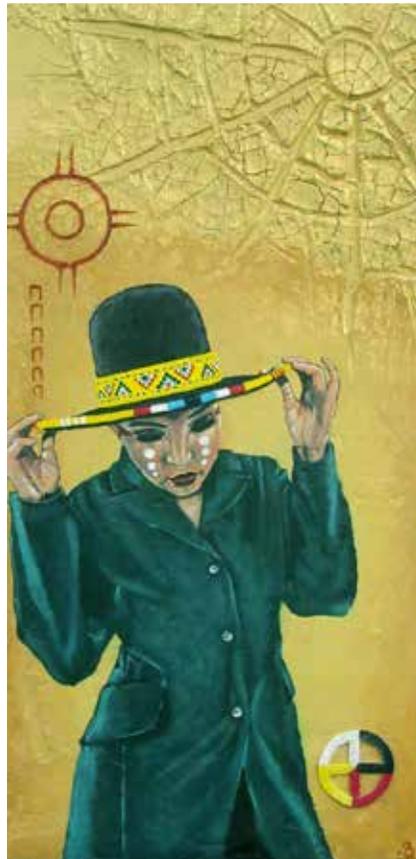
## 2/ Expression

### 3/ Setting

A subject's dress/attire, the setting in which they are placed and the objects and possessions which surround them can provide as much information on the subject's social position, character and profession as does the actual face portrayed. Objects and the setting can indicate a subject's status and profession and can also be symbolic in nature, reflecting the sitter's beliefs and interests. These hints to character are evidenced in Anthony Van Dyke's portrait of Charles I, shown above.

Portraits have many aims and uses but their main function is commemorative - to preserve a likeness long after the sitter is gone.

# Visual Learning and Hands-On Art Activities



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #6,*  
2019  
Beadwork, crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist

# What is Visual Learning?

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All art has many sides to it. The artist makes the works for people to experience. They in turn can make discoveries about both the work and the artist that help them learn and give them pleasure for a long time.

How we look at an object determines what we come to know about it. We remember information about an object far better when we are able to see (and handle) objects rather than by only reading about them. This investigation through observation (looking) is very important to understanding how objects fit into our world in the past and in the present and will help viewers reach a **considered response** to what they see. The following is a six-step method to looking at, and understanding, a work of art.

**STEP 1: INITIAL, INTUITIVE RESPONSE** The first 'gut level' response to a visual presentation. What do you see and what do you think of it?

**STEP 2: DESCRIPTION** Naming facts - a visual inventory of the elements of design.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What colours do you see? What shapes are most noticeable?

What objects are most apparent? Describe the lines in the work.

**STEP 3: ANALYSIS** Exploring how the parts relate to each other.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What proportions can you see? eg. What percentage of the work is background? Foreground?

Land? Sky? Why are there these differences? What effect do these differences create?

What parts seem closest to you? Farthest away? How does the artist give this impression?

**STEP 4: INTERPRETATION** Exploring what the work might mean or be about

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

How does this work make you feel? Why?

What word would best describe the mood of this work?

What is this painting/photograph/sculpture about?

Is the artist trying to tell a story? What might be the story in this work?

**STEP 5: INFORMATION** Looking beyond the work for information that may further understanding.

Questions to Guide Inquiry:

What is the artist's name? When did he/she live?

What art style and medium does the artist use?

What artist's work is this artist interested in?

What art was being made at the same time as this artist was working?

What was happening in history at the time this artist was working?

What social/political/economic/cultural issues is this artist interested in?

**STEP 6: PERSONALIZATION** What do I think about this work? (Reaching a considered response).

© Virginia Stephen

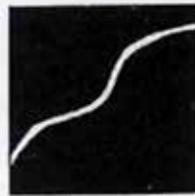
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Elements of Design Tour

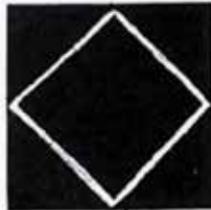
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The following pages provide definitions and examples of the elements and principles of art that are used by artists in the images found in the exhibition. Teacher/facilitator questions for inquiry are in **bold** while possible answers are in *italics*.

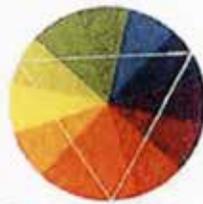
The elements of art are components of a work of art that can be isolated and defined. They are the building blocks used to create a work of art.



***LINE !***



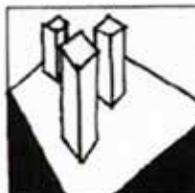
***SHAPE!***



***COLOUR!***



***TEXTURE!***



***SPACE!***

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# Elements of Design Tour

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**LINE:** An element of art that is used to define shape, contours and outlines. It is also used to suggest mass and volume and can be used to indicate direction and movement.

See: *Upload* by Kristy North Peigan

**What types of lines are there? How can you describe a line? What are some of the characteristics of a line?**

*Width: thick, thin, tapering, uneven*

*Length: long, short, continuous, broken*

*Feeling: sharp, jagged, graceful, smooth*

*Focus: sharp, blurry, fuzzy, choppy*

*Direction: horizontal, vertical, diagonal, curving, perpendicular, oblique, parallel, radial, zigzag*



Kristy North Peigan  
*Upload*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

**Describe the lines you see in this image. Follow the lines in the air with your finger. What quality do the lines have? How do the lines operate in the image?**

*In this image we see curving lines, diagonal lines and more geometric irregular lines. These lines create shapes, provide focus and also direct the eye around the composition. Diagonal lines are seen in the quills on the feather head dress. Curving lines are seen on other aspects of the head dress. Focus in the image is on the head of the figure which is framed by the neon geometric circle.*

*Most of the lines in this image are thick in nature, being used to outline/create shapes. The lines in this image have a strong directional nature to them, leading the eye from the bottom of the image to the top and then back to the bottom.*

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# Elements of Design Tour

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**SHAPE:** When a line crosses itself or intersects with another line to enclose a space it creates a shape. Shape is two-dimensional. It has height and width but no depth.

See: *Mothers are the Foundation of our families*, by Lori Scalplock

**What kind of shapes can you think of?**

*Geometric: circles, squares, rectangles and triangles. We see them in architecture and manufactured items.*

*Organic shapes: a leaf, seashell, flower. We see them in nature with characteristics that are free flowing, informal and irregular.*

*Static shapes: shapes that appear stable and resting.*

*Dynamic shapes: Shapes that appear moving and active.*



Lori Scalplock  
*Mothers are the Foundation of our families*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

**What shapes do you see in this image?**

*The composition is composed of geometric shapes - rectangles/triangles/circular shapes .*

**How do the shapes operate in this image?**

*The geometric shapes enclose images and also combine to form new shapes. Small rectangles, for example, are combined to form 4 larger triangles on the corners of the image. Crossing lines in the circle, meanwhile, form 4 smaller triangles. The repetition of geometric shapes creates harmony in the work while the arrangement creates a sense of formal balance to the image.*

**What quality do the shapes have? Does the quality of the shapes contribute to the meaning or story suggested in the work?**

*Geometric shapes are those that are man-made in nature. The use of geometric shapes provides a sense of stability, order and balance to the work.*

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# Elements of Design Tour

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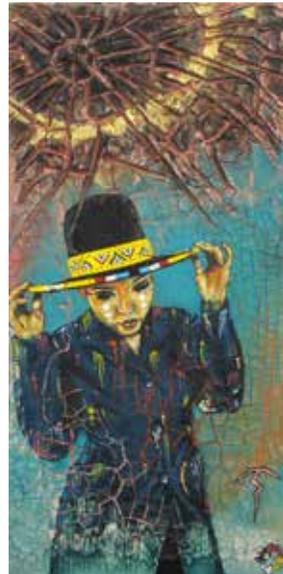
**COLOUR:** Colour comes from light that is reflected off objects. Colour has three main characteristics: Hue, or its name (red, blue, etc.) Value: (how light or dark the colour is) and Intensity (how bright or dull the colour is)

See: *Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #1* by Smith Wright

**What are primary colours? Do you see any? Point to them in the drawing. What secondary colours do you see?**

*Colour is made of primary colours, red, blue and yellow. Secondary colours are created from primary colours and include green, orange and purple.*

*This image is made up of both primary colours, or tints and tones of primary colours, and secondary colours. Primary colours seen are blue, red and yellow while the secondary colours of orange and green are also found in the work.*



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #1*,  
2019  
Crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist

**Where is your eye directed to first? Why? Are there any colours that stand out more than others?**

*The viewer's eye may first be directed to the yellow of the woman's hat band and brim as well as the gold in the sun shape at the top. Yellow is the brightest colour used in the work and this plus the fact that the woman is almost in the center of the composition directs attention to the figure. From this figure the eye takes in the rest of the composition, moving around the blueish-green background to explore other elements in the work..*

**What are complementary colours? How have they been used to draw attention?**

*Complementary colours are those across from each other on the colour wheel and are placed next to each other to create the most contrast and to create focus in a work. The orange area on the right side plays a very important role in this work as there is a danger for the viewer's eye to drift out of the composition because of the overall blue-green background. Orange is the complement of blue, however, and stops the eye from 'escaping' the work and forces attention back towards the figure. Irregular orange lines on the figure's coat also aid in this focus.*

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Elements of Design Tour

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**SPACE:** The area between and around objects. It can also refer to the feeling of depth in a two-dimensional artwork.

See: *Vaporwave-Signals* by Kristy North Peigan

**What is space? What dimensions does it have?**

*Space includes the background, middle ground and foreground. It can refer to the distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece. It may have two dimensions (length and width) or three dimensions including height or depth.*



Kristy North Peigan  
*Vaporwave-Signals*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

**What do you see in this work? What is closest to you? Farthest away? How do you know this?**

*In this work we see perpendicular lines, teepee forms and a 'sun'. The teepee forms are placed in the middle of the composition and overlap parts of the 'sun'. The lines, which create rectangular shapes, appear to recede into the distance as they converge and the rectangular shapes become smaller the further 'back' one goes. The teepee forms appear closer than the 'sun' as they block parts of the sun.*

**In what other way has the artist created a sense of space?**

*The artist also uses line to create a sense of space in this work. With linear perspective, lines appear closer together as they move back in space and this is clearly seen in this work.*

*Detail and colour are also important tools used to create space. The pink of the 'sun' pulls the viewer's eye back into far space.*

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Elements of Design Tour

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**TEXTURE:** Texture is the surface quality of an object that can be seen or felt. Texture can also be implied on a two-dimensional surface through mark making and paint handling.

See: *Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #6* by Smith Wright

**What is texture? How do you describe how something feels? What are the two kinds of texture you can think of in artwork?**

*Texture can be real, like the actual texture of an object. Texture can be rough, smooth, hard, soft, glossy etc. Texture can also be implied. This happens when a two-dimensional piece of art is made to look like a certain texture.*



Smith Wright  
*Mootwistsiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #6*  
2019  
Beadwork, crackle paste and acrylic on board  
Collection of the artist

**Allow your eyes to 'feel' the different area within the work and explain the textures. What kind of texture do you think the artist uses in this work - real or implied? What about the work gives you this idea?**

*This work uses real textures. Through the use of crackle paste and thick paint, the artist has created a very textured surface which would be very uneven to the touch. The application of real beads also creates a real textural quality to the surface which paint alone could not do.*

*The artist uses collage techniques to create the work. The beads, collaged in a relief manner, create an uneven surface which, even though the beads are smooth and soft, may give the appearance of a 'rougher' texture.*

**Why do you think the artist chose this manner of presentation or chose to make the work look this way?**

*Answers will vary.*

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Reading Pictures Program

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Grades 4-12/adults

### Objectives:

The purposes of this program are to:

- 1/ Introduce participants to Art and what artists do – this includes examinations of art styles; art elements; the possible aims and meaning(s) in an art work and how to deduce those meanings and aims.
- 2/ Introduce visitors to the current exhibition – the aim of the exhibition and the kind of exhibition/artwork found.
  - the artist(s) - his/her background(s)
  - his/her place in art history
- 3/ Engage participants in a deeper investigation of artworks.

### Teacher/Facilitator Introduction to Program:

This program is called **Reading Pictures**. What do you think this might involve?

*-generate as many ideas as possible concerning what viewers might think 'Reading Pictures' might involve or what this phrase might mean.*

Before we can 'read' art, however, we should have some understanding what we're talking about.

What is Art? If you had to define this term, how would you define it?

Art can be defined as creative expression - and artistic practice is an aspect and expression of a peoples' culture or the artist's identity.

The discipline of Art, or the creation of a piece of art, however, is much more than simple 'creative expression' by an 'artist' or an isolated component of culture.

How many of you would describe yourselves as artists?

You may not believe it, but everyday you engage in some sort of artistic endeavor.

How many of you got up this morning and thought about what you were going to wear today? Why did you choose the clothes you did? Why do you wear your hair that way? How many of you have tattoos or plan to get a tattoo some day? What kind of tattoo would you choose? Why.....? How many of you own digital cameras or have cameras on cell phones? How many of you take pictures and e-mail them to other people?

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Reading Pictures Program continued

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Art is all around us and we are all involved in artistic endeavors to some degree. The photographs we take, the colour and styles of the clothes we wear, the ways we build and decorate our homes, gardens and public buildings, the style of our cell phones or the vehicles we drive, the images we see and are attracted to in advertising or the text or symbols on our bumper stickers – all of these things (and 9 billion others) utilize artistic principles. They say something about our personal selves and reflect upon and influence the economic, political, cultural, historical and geographic concerns of our society.

Art, therefore, is not just something some people in a society do – it is something that affects and informs everyone within a society.

Today we're going to look at art - paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures – and see what art can tell us about the world we live in – both the past, the present and possibly the future – and what art can tell us about ourselves.

Art is a language like any other and it can be read.

Art can be read in two ways. It can be looked at **intuitively** – what do you see? What do you like or not like? How does it make you feel and why? – or it can be read **formally** by looking at what are called the Elements of Design – the tools artists use or consider when creating a piece of work.

What do you think is meant by the elements of design? What does an artist use to create a work of art?

Today we're going to examine how to read art – we're going to see how art can affect us emotionally... and how an artist can inform us about our world, and ourselves, through what he or she creates.

### **Tour Program:**

–Proceed to one of the works in the exhibition and discuss the following:

- a) The nature of the work - what kind of work is it and what exhibition is it a part of?
- b) Examine the work itself
  - What do visitors see?
  - How do you initially feel about what you see? Why do you feel this way? What do you like? What don't you like? Why?
  - What is the work made of?
  - How would you describe the style? What does this mean?

# The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

## Reading Pictures Program continued

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–What is the compositional structure? How are the shapes and colours etc. arranged? Why are they arranged this way?

–How does the work make them feel? What is the mood of the work? What gives them this idea? Discuss the element(s) of design which are emphasized in the work in question.

–What might the artist be trying to do in the work? What might the artist be saying or what might the work 'mean'?

c) Summarize the information.

• **At each work chosen, go through the same or similar process, linking the work to the type of exhibition it is a part of. Also, with each stop, discuss a different Element of Design and develop participants visual learning skills.**

**At the 1st stop, determine with the participants the most important Element of Design used and focus the discussion on how this element works within the art work. Do the same with each subsequent art work and make sure to cover all the elements of design on the tour.**

**Stop #1: LINE**

**Stop #2: SHAPE**

**Stop #3: COLOUR**

**Stop #4: TEXTURE**

**Stop #5: SPACE**

**Stop #6: ALL TOGETHER – How do the elements work together to create a certain mood or story? What would you say is the mood of this work? Why? What is the story or meaning or meaning of this work? Why?**

### ***Work sheet activity – 30 minutes***

•Divide participants into groups of two or three to each do this activity. Give them 30 minutes to complete the questions then bring them all together and have each group present one of their pieces to the entire group.

### ***Presentations – 30 minutes***

•Each group to present on one of their chosen works.

**Visual Learning Activity Worksheet \* Photocopy the following worksheet so each participant has their own copy.**

# Reading Pictures Program continued

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## Visual Learning Worksheet

**Instructions:** Choose two very different pieces of artwork in the exhibition and answer the following questions in as much detail as you can.

1. What is the title of the work and who created it?

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2. What do you see and what do you think of it? (What is your **initial reaction** to the work?) Why do you feel this way?

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3. What colours do you see and how does the use of colour affect the way you 'read' the work? Why do you think the artist chose these colours – or lack of colour – for this presentation?

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4. What shapes and objects do you notice most? Why?

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## Reading Pictures Program continued

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5. How are the shapes/objects arranged or composed? How does this affect your feelings towards or about the work? What feeling does this composition give to the work?

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6. How would you describe the mood of this work? (How does it make you feel?) What do you see that makes you describe the mood in this way?

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7. What do you think the artist's purpose was in creating this work? What 'story' might he or she be telling? What aspects of the artwork give you this idea?

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8. What do you think about this work after answering the above questions? Has your opinion of the work changed in any way? Why do you feel this way?

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9. How might this work relate to your own life experiences? Have you ever been in a similar situation/place and how did being there make you feel?

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# Perusing Paintings: An Art-full Scavenger Hunt

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In teaching art, game-playing can enhance learning. If students are engaged in learning, through a variety of methods, then it goes beyond game-playing. Through game-playing we are trying to get students to use higher-order thinking skills by getting them to be active participants in learning. *Blooms's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, which follows, is as applicable to teaching art as any other discipline.

1. *knowledge*: recall of facts
2. *comprehension*: participation in a discussion
3. *application*: applying abstract information in practical situations
4. *analysis*: separating an entity into its parts
5. *synthesis*: creating a new whole from many parts, as in developing a complex work of art
6. *evaluation*: making judgements on criteria

A scavenger hunt based on art works is a fun and engaging way to get students of any age to really look at the art works and begin to discern what the artist(s) is/are doing in the works. **The simple template provided, however, would be most suitable for grade 1-3 students.**

### Instruction:

Using the exhibition works provided, give students a list of things they should search for that are in the particular works of art. The students could work with a partner or in teams. Include a blank for the name of the artwork, the name of the artist, and the year the work was created. Following the hunt, gather students together in the exhibition area and check the answers and discuss the particular works in more detail.

### Sample List:

Scavenger Hunt Item	Title of Artwork	Name of Artist	Year Work Created
someone wearing a hat			
a specific animal			
landscape			
a bright red object			
a night scene			
a house			

\*This activity was adapted from *A Survival Kit for the Elementary/Middle School Art Teacher* by Helen D. Hume.



# 28 *From Realism to Abstraction*

## Observing and Thinking Creatively

**Abstract** art usually uses bright colors, sharp edges, geometric shapes, and interesting contrasts to create a mood. Sometimes abstract art simply shows an artist's emotional response to an object or idea. Details may be minimized, proportions **distorted**, and unusual color schemes used. **Nonobjective** art occurs when abstraction departs completely from realism.

Henri Matisse was a French artist who enjoyed changing the usual form of an object. His versions emphasized the pure idea of the object, and are a type of abstract

art. To create the cutouts for the snail shown here, he first picked up a real snail and examined it closely. Then he drew it from every angle possible, noting its texture, color, and construction.

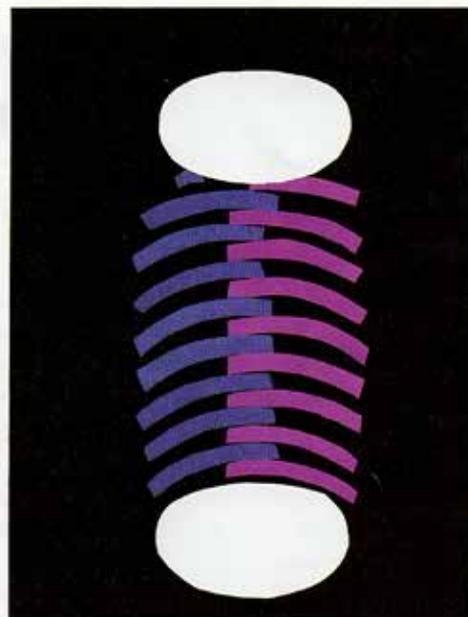
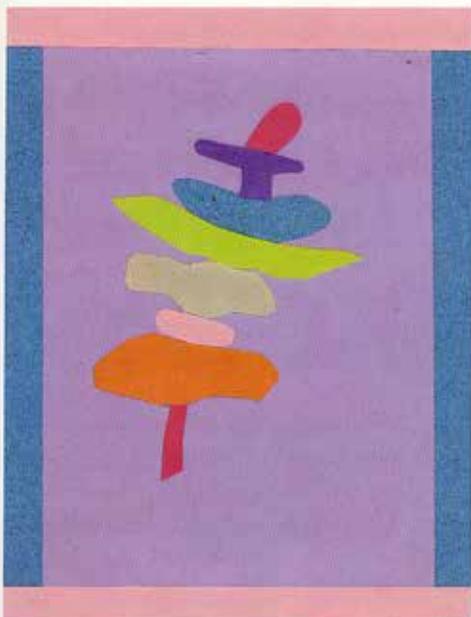
Observe the cut out paper shapes Matisse used in his snail of many colors. Can you see how the simple blue rectangle represents the foot of the snail? Notice which parts of a snail Matisse omitted, and which parts he thought were essential.

In this lesson, you will create an abstract cutout design of an object.



*Henri Matisse, The Snail, 1952, Tate Gallery, London.*

# Abstracting from the Real continued



## Instructions for Creating Art

1. Choose an object with an interesting shape and study it. Sketch it from several angles. Examine how it is built. Does it have a center? What basic shapes compose it? Observe the texture and colors of your object.
2. Now draw the general outer shape of your object. What idea does it give you? Next, draw only the inside parts of your object, without any outside lines. Think about what color reminds you of the feeling or idea of the object. Notice curved and straight lines, light and dark values, and small and large shapes.
3. When you find a shape that seems to capture the idea of your object, practice distorting or changing it to make a more pure, simple shape.
4. Choose one or more colors for your shape, and cut it out of colored paper. Mount the shapes on a sheet of a different

color, and display your abstract cutout design. Can your classmates guess what the real object was?

## Art Materials

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| A variety of objects such as a shell, spoon, corn cob, flower, leaf, model, toy, piece of fruit, etc. | Pencil and eraser          |
| Sketch paper  | Colored construction paper |
|   | Scissors                   |
|   | Glue or paste              |



## Learning Outcomes

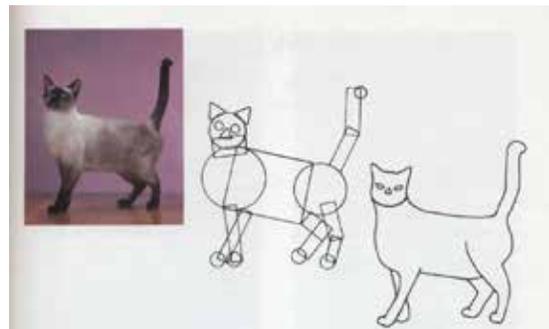
1. Name two ways of making *abstract* art.
2. Describe how you distorted the shape you made of an object.
3. What parts of your object did you leave out of your cutout design? How did you decide which parts to keep and which parts to omit?

# Basic Shapes - Grades 3-5

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Lori Scalplock  
*Payotapayaki's Tipi*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock



Art in Action, pg. 12

**Almost all things are made up of four basic shapes: circles, triangles, squares and rectangles. Shapes and variation of shapes - such as oblongs and ovals - create objects. In this lesson students will practice reducing objects to their basic shapes and then filling in the areas with colours 'natural' to the central object and complementary to the background.**

## **Materials:**

- drawing paper
- pencil and eraser
- magazines
- paints and brushes
- mixing trays

## **Instructions:**

1/ Have students look through magazines for pictures of objects made up of several shapes.

## The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

# Basic Shapes continued - Grades 3-5

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2/ Direct students to choose **one** object and determine the basic shapes which make up that object.

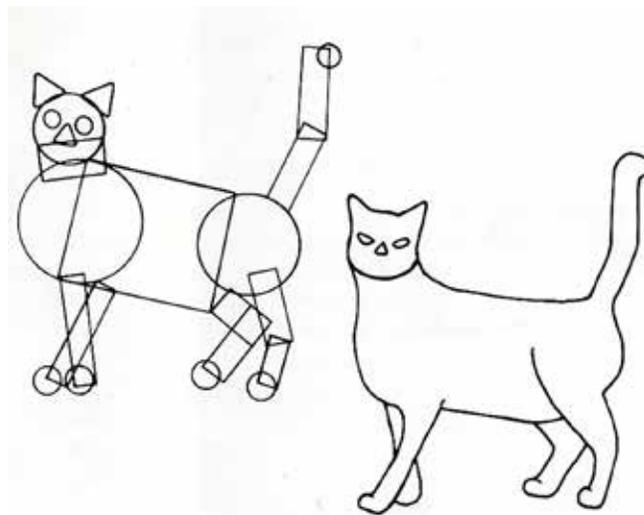
3/ Have students draw their one object using the basic shapes which make up the object.

4/ Students to simplify their drawing further - removing any overlapping/extraneous lines so that the object is broken into simplified shapes/forms. \*see works by Jason Carter for clarification

5/ Students to decide on colour scheme for work. Review the colour wheel and the concept of complementary colours.

- what is the dominant colour of your object? - use tints/tones of that colour to paint the object, keeping shapes separate through the use of heavy black lines.

- what is the complementary colour of your main object's colouring? - paint the background area the complement of the objects colour.



Art in Action, pg. 12

### **Extension (for older students)**

- when students have completed their first painting have them re-draw the basic shapes of their object again, but this time have them soften the edges, change shapes and add connecting lines where necessary so their drawing resembles the original magazine image.

- have students paint this second work using 'natural' colours for both their object and for the background.

- display both of students' drawings and then discuss.

### **Discussion/Evaluation:**

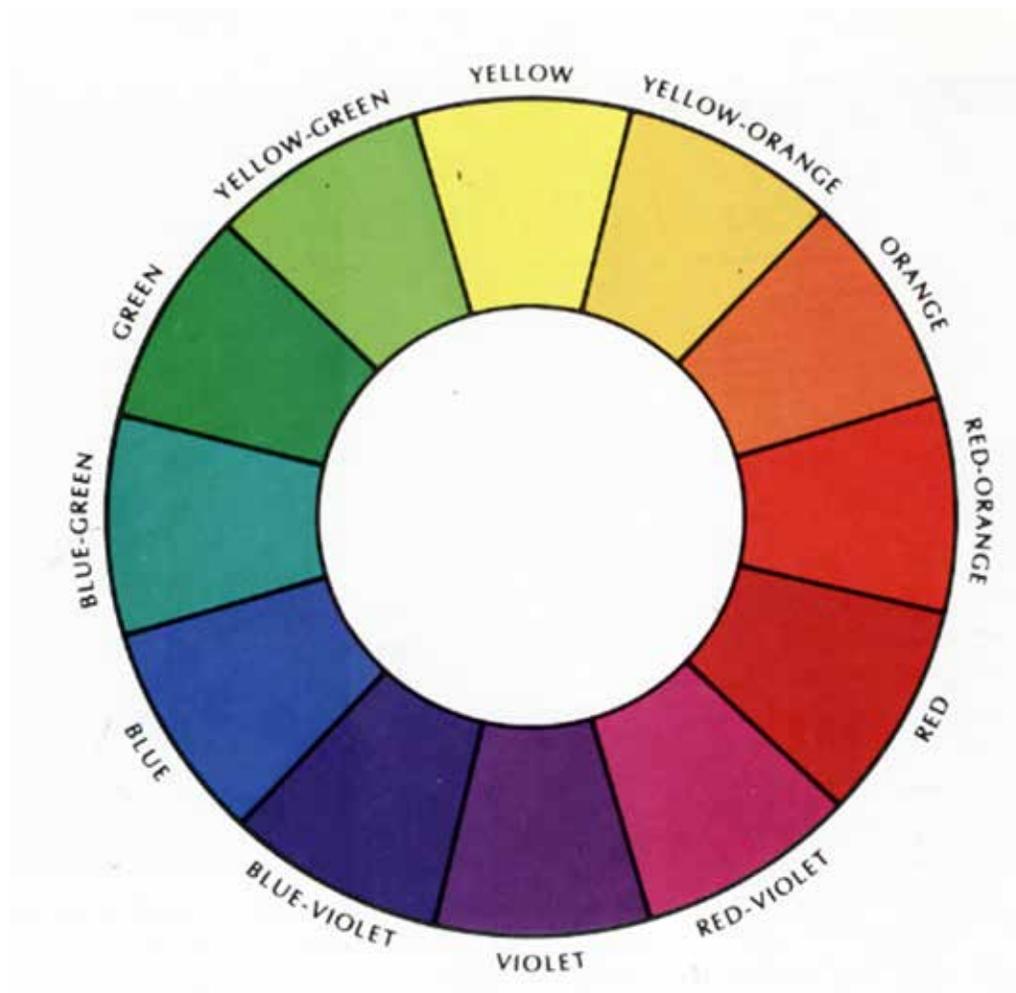
1/ Which shapes did you use most often in your drawing(s)?

2/ Explain how identifying the basic shapes in your object helped you make the second drawing.

3/ Which of your paintings appeals to you most? Why?

## Experiments in Colour - Grades 3-9

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When artists create a composition, they plan their colour combinations very carefully. Colour can serve many functions in a work of art. It can be used to create the illusion of space; it can be used to provide focus and emphasis; it can be used to create movement; and it can be used to create a certain mood. In the works in the exhibition the artists use colour to serve all of these functions. In the following project students will examine the use of colour relationships to create the illusion of space and mood within a painting.

### Materials:

Colour Wheel Chart  
Paper  
Paints and brushes  
Mixing trays  
Water container

Paper towels  
Pencils/erasers  
Still life items or landscape drawings  
Magazines/ photographic references

## Experiments in Colour continued

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Kristy North Peigan  
*Red Carpet*, 2019  
Digital print and oil on canvas  
Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

### Methodology:

1/ Through an examination of the colour wheel provided, discuss with students the concepts of **complementary colours** and **split-complements**.

### Questions to guide discussion:

- What is the lightest colour on the colour wheel?
  - yellow
- What is the darkest colour on the colour wheel?
  - violet
- What is the relationship of these two colours? - the colours are **opposite** each other.

Colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel are called **complementary colours**.

- What are the colours next to violet?
  - red-violet and blue-violet

These colours are called **split complements** because they are split, or separated, by the true complement of yellow. Complements can be split one step further to become a **triad**, three colours **equally spaced** on the colour wheel.

**Complementary colours can be used to create focus, emphasis, and the illusion of space. Brighter (warm) colours in the colour wheel tend to appear in front of - or come forward on the picture plane - compared to darker (cool) colours.**

### Instructions for Creating Art

- 1/ Distribute paper, pencils and erasers to students
- 2/ Instruct students to make several sketches of ideas for their painting - they may base their work on a still-life arrangement or create a landscape based on magazine or photographic sources
- 3/ Have students choose a sketch they like and then plan their colours by first examining the colour wheel. Students to first choose their **dominant or main colour** and then pick the **split complements or triad** to that colour.
- 4/ Students to use their colour scheme to paint their painting.

# Experiments in Colour continued

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## Questions for discussion

- 1/ What are the split complements and triad colour schemes used in your work?
- 2/ What is the colour relationship of the colours used in your painting?
- 3/ Why have you used these particular colours?

## Mi'kmaq Quill Work Designs

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\* The following activity is inspired by the artwork of Lori Scalplock in the exhibition *Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control*. While the following project is based on Mi'kmaq quill work designs, it can be adapted where students create their own abstract design.

**Quillwork** is a traditional art in which porcupine quills were used to embellish clothing, accessories and containers of birch bark. Porcupine quills are naturally white with black tips. Once removed from a hunted porcupine, the quills are cleaned, sorted by sized and then are used either naturally or dyed in various colors. Sometimes the quills need to be flattened and most often moistened prior to use. The artisans continuing this traditional handicraft have been making birch bark quill boxes. To insert the quills into decorative patterns, the bark is first perforated with an awl. The quills are threaded through the holes, and the moistened quills stiffen into place as they dry. The ends of the quills on the underside of the work are either folded over or snipped off, depending on how small the holes are and how tightly the quills are held.

A common decorative pattern on birch bark boxes is the Mi'kmaq Eight Pointed Star. This star has been used for centuries as a symbol of the sun and has several meanings. Seven of the points represent the seven districts of the Mi'kmaq nation, while the eight was included in the 18th century to represent an alliance then established with Great Britain. The star also represents the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, West) and all those in between. The four colors, Red, Black, Yellow and White, represent the "four races of people". When the star is made with the four colors, it represents togetherness and unity with all nations. It was a common symbol in 19th century quillwork, and continues to be popular in contemporary Mi'kmaq artwork and design.

### Make a Mi'kmaq Quill Box Inspired Craft

This craft is one way to explore the Mi'kmaq culture with kids. After looking at various examples and a close up of porcupine quills, have them make their own quillwork box to hold their treasures.



## Quill Work Designs continued

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This craft is one way to explore the Mi'kmaq culture with kids. After looking at various examples and a close up of porcupine quills, have them make their own quillwork box to hold their treasures.

### What you need:

- One box. The one we used is 6" x 6"
- Toothpicks. To create the 8 pointed star pattern, you will need at least 16. Then it depends on what patterns you want to create. I recommend having extras just in case.
- Acrylic paint and paintbrush. Any color you'd like, but we used the 4 colors to represent the 4 nations: black, red, yellow and white.
- Clear drying white glue.

### Directions:

1. You can start off by painting a bunch of toothpicks (what we did) and determine your pattern from there, or design first so you know how many toothpicks you'll need. Be sure to paint a couple of extra toothpicks for each color, just in case. The wood absorbs the paint fairly quickly so they don't take too long to dry. By the time we got to our fourth color, the first was dry. Do make sure they are dry before using them. This is a great task to share – with each person choosing one color to paint. It's also a great time to talk about the symbolism of the four colors (as above).



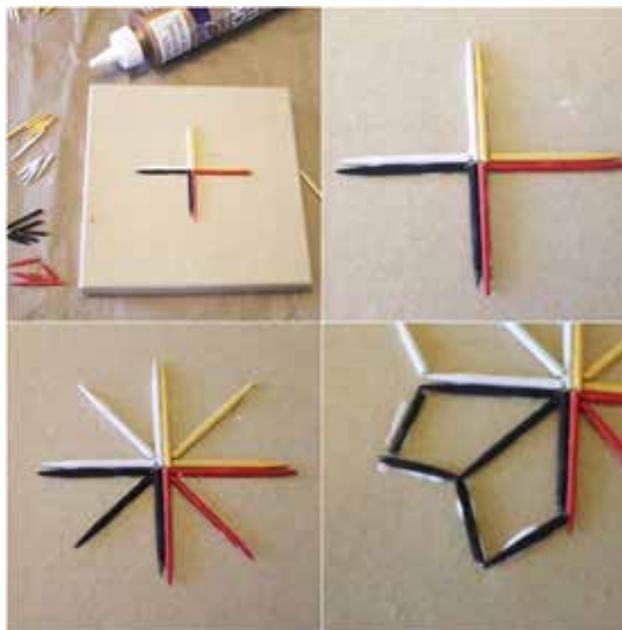
2. Prepare the toothpicks for the eight pointed star design. For each color (2 points of the star), you need 4 painted toothpicks. To "cut" them to size, we simply used our hands to bend and break them. They break rather easily, and you don't need to be precise. With the four toothpicks of each color, break two in half and save the three best pieces. For the other two, break them in approximately three equal pieces. Save the four smaller pieces that turned out the nicest. Once "cut" to size, for each color you will want 3 longer pieces and 4 smaller pieces, as pictured below.

## Quill Work Designs continued

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3. To make the eight pointed star design, start by creating a cross with four right angles using the longer pieces, as pictured below in the top images. To glue the toothpicks, run a bead of glue along the length of the stick. It's very likely glue will pool around the edges, and you can clean that up by gently scraping it away with a regular toothpick. Or leave it to dry clear. Then take the third longer piece and glue it diagonally in the center of each right angle, as pictured bottom left. Finish the points with the smaller pieces. I recommend placing two at a time first to align them, then glue them in place in order to get the angle right. And there you have it. Feel free to embellish the lid any way you like.



## Quill Work Designs continued

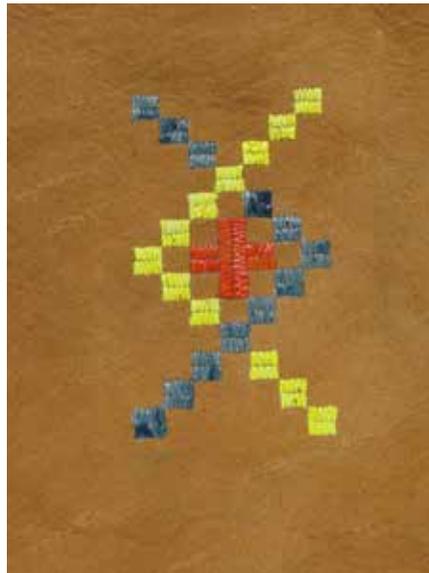
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4. Create a design on the sides of the box. Be sure the toothpicks do not get in the way of the closed lid. With the striped pattern we did, rather than bead the glue along each toothpick, we only did it for the bottom stick and then dabbed glue on the box. The toothpicks were then placed on over the other in the glue. It's easier than one at a time.



And you have a completed “quillwork” box, to hold your treasures.

From: <https://multiculturalkidblogs.com/2014/11/06/exploring-the-mikmaq-culture...>



Lori Scalplock  
*Renew, Recycle*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

# Bead Painting

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The following bead projects are inspired by the use of beading found in the exhibition *Nitssaakita'paispinnaan: We Are Still In Control*.



Lori Scalplock  
*Medallion*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide, Delica Beads  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

## All Grades

### Objectives:

- to familiarise students with native art/crafts
- to simulate a beaded work using paint and paper
- to become familiar with designs and imagery traditionally used by First Nations people. These are geometric patterns, flowers and animals
- review compositional elements as seen in art work (repetition, balance/symmetry, colour, line, texture)

### Materials:

- black construction paper
- paint
- pencils with eraser ends (used as stamps)
- newsprint for thumbnail sketches

### Methodology:

1. After a discussion about suitable imagery have the students work up thumbnail sketches of different compositions. Have the students (with teacher assistance) choose an image.
2. Traditionally First Nations artisans worked on hide or, later, black velvet - this can be simulated by using black construction paper for this project. Have the students lightly redraw their chosen design onto the paper.
3. Using the eraser end of the pencil dip it in the paint and stamp in the image as if sewing on beads. Do not use too many different colours and keep the choices in line with traditional bead work.

# Patterning with Beads



**Grades 2 - 4**

**Objectives:**

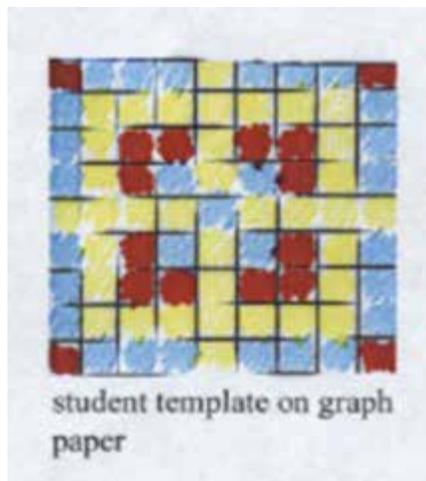
This project is intended to honor tradition, concepts, values and expressions of First Nations people. Beading traditions were passed down from generation to generation and patterns were often that of the family or the area where they lived. This project is based on mathematics, repetition and limited colour.

**Materials:**

- various colours of 'crow' beads - make sure the hole in the beads will accommodate pipe cleaners
- matching coloured pencils
- graph paper
- black or white pipe cleaners
- 4 inch x 6 inch pieces of white foam board

**Methodology:**

1. Discuss what a pattern is - repetitious, geometric, symmetrical or asymmetric. Look for examples in students' environment to illustrate
2. Give each student:
  - a pre-selected number and colours of beads
  - 9 pipe cleaners
  - corresponding coloured pencils and a sheet of graph paper (9 x 9 squares)
3. Have the students work out several different patterns from their selection of coloured beads.
  - is their pattern different from their neighbors?
  - how many different patterns can they make?
  - is there a focal point?
  - is the pattern the same on both sides (symmetrical) or not (asymmetric)?
4. Transfer the pattern to the graph paper - colour each square according to the design in the appropriate colour of bead selection.
5. Thread 9 beads onto each pipe cleaner corresponding to the template. Complete transferring all the beads to the pipe cleaners.
6. On the foam board place the finished beading to match the template. Fold under each end of the pipe cleaners to secure to the board.



# Colour Me a Story

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## Grades 3-9

Many of the artworks in the exhibition focus on stories and story-telling. In this activity students will design and create mixed media works on paper inspired by the exhibition and conversations surrounding it. Students will be challenged to tell their own stories in styles reminiscent of artists in the exhibition. They will think in terms of perspective, colour selection and enhanced narrative while working in a 2D format.

### **Supplies:**

- pencils & erasers
- rinse buckets & brushes
- watercolour paint
- thin markers/sharpies
- 2x Mayfair
- mixing trays/watercolour & ink trays

### **Objectives**

Through the studio project the students will:

1. Discuss “what is a narrative”. What does it mean “to narrate”?
2. Discuss and review what a protagonist and an antagonist are. Reminding the students to keep the protagonist (themselves – their story) in mind as the focal point of their work
3. Discuss the elements of design; line, shape, colour, texture
4. Discuss simple aerial perspective
5. Discuss the concept of “mixed media”

### **Procedure**

- 1.a. Keep in mind the protagonist or focal point (person, place or thing) in their story
  - b. There are 3 steps to this project: pencil drawing, marker drawing and watercolour painting
  - c. Have students focus on a season. Choose SEASONAL COLOURS = brighter colours for spring and summer, muted colours for autumn
  - d. Keep in mind perspective: foreground / middle ground / background =
    - Things in the foreground are large, bright and in focus
    - Things in the background tend to be smaller, duller and are overlapped or partially blocked by closer items
- 
2. In class distribute paper and pencils and erasers to students.
  - 2.a. Pencil Drawing: Have students do a light sketch on the paper. This sketch will tell their story They will also be going over their drawing in pen and then in watercolour – so draw lightly = easy to erase lines.

Introduction and drawing = 25 minutes

## Colour Me a Story continued

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3. Marker Drawing: While students are doing their pencil drawings, hand out the thin sharpies. Remind students they are not to touch or use the markers until asked to do so.

When everyone is ready, have students retrace their drawings in pen.

When their whole drawing is “re-drawn” in pen they can count to 5 – then erase all pencil marks (this waiting ensures no ink will get smeared!)

Re-draw & erase = 10 minutes

4. While students are re-drawing in ink, hand out the brushes, rinse water and watercolour paints

5. Watercolour Painting: Remind students to choose SEASONAL Colours – they are invited to dilute their paints on a mixing tray.

Again, choosing clear bright colours for the foreground and dull or diluted colours for the background

Painting = 15 minutes... then clean-up

If time allows/studio ended early have a critique – have students choose a work that is not their own and discuss 2 things they like about it:

- Talk about the colour choices. Do they make us “feel like winter”/like summer etc.?
- Talk about the colours the artist selected: dark, bright, cool, hot, dull, bright
- Talk about the mood or atmosphere of the work: dark, sad, happy, loud, quiet
- Does this artwork convey a story or narrative? Are we able to “read it” ourselves? What are our visual clues?

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# Documentary Portraits - High School

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This project is based on the various portrait works in the exhibition (see Kristy North Peigan and Smith Wright art works) and the work of Dorthea Lange for the FAS project in the 1930s.

## Objectives

Students will determine what information is unnecessary to a photograph for it to portray the most powerful image.

Students will tell how they feel when seeing works from the exhibition and Dorthea Lange's *Migrant Mother* series and talk about their own lives in relation to those images.

Students will use a computer to crop an image.

## Materials

Digital Camera(s) (one per student if possible)

Magazines with images of news going on today for look and talk sessions

Images from Dorthea Lange's *Migrant Mother* series for discussion purposes

Mat board for cropping and displaying images

## Procedure

1. Discuss with students the idea of **portraiture** and **social documentary and straight photography**. Study images by the artists in the exhibition and by Dorthea Lange to facilitate discussion.

**Focus Questions:** What is a portrait? What is social documentary? In studying these images, what factors do you think might go into a photographer's decision to crop or not to crop an original image? Does cropping an image make a difference in how we read/feel about the image?

note\* Dorthea Lange's work: Lange happened upon this family by their tent in a pea pickers' camp in California. She took six photographs of the family, starting from forty feet away, moving closer and closer to them with each photograph. Do you think seeing this family from forty feet away would be different from how you see them up close? Why or why not?

2. Students will take this issue of capturing social commentary and translate that into a contemporary photograph. They will

- choose a photograph from a magazine
- have to present their photograph with information on who/what it is, why they chose it, and what speaks to them in the piece. They will also explain how the photographer may have decided to crop the piece and what makes it a strong/weak composition.

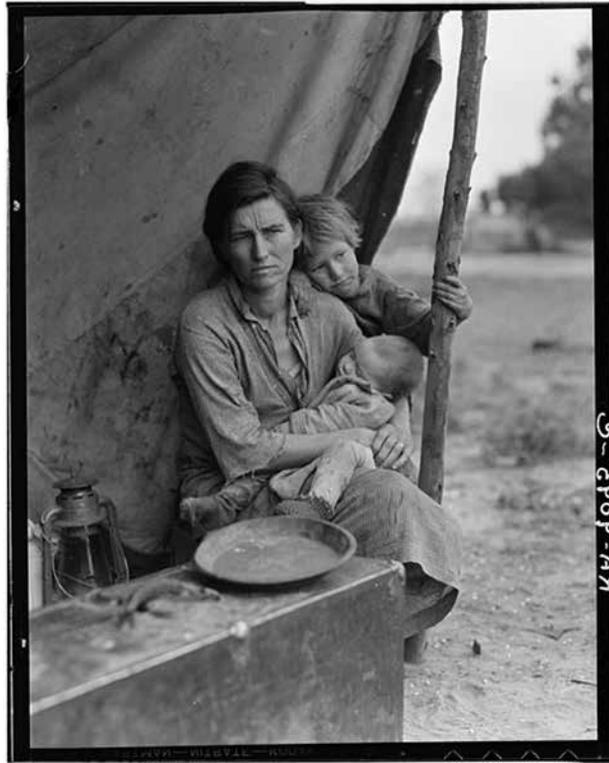
3. Students will then have one week to find and produce their own photograph that speaks to 'us' today. In their work they will explore ideas of cropping, composition, and elimination of unnecessary information as both Bromley and Dorthea Lange did in their works.

credit: <http://www.lessonplanspage.com/ArtSSCIPhotography-DortheaLangeMigrantMother912.htm>

revision of above: Shane Golby

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program  
**Documentary Portraits - continued**

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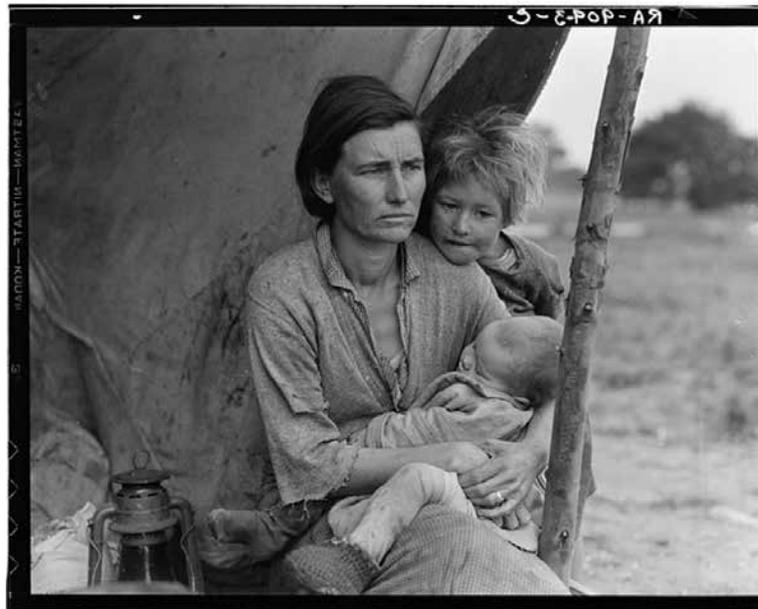
Dorthea Lange, *Migrant Mother*



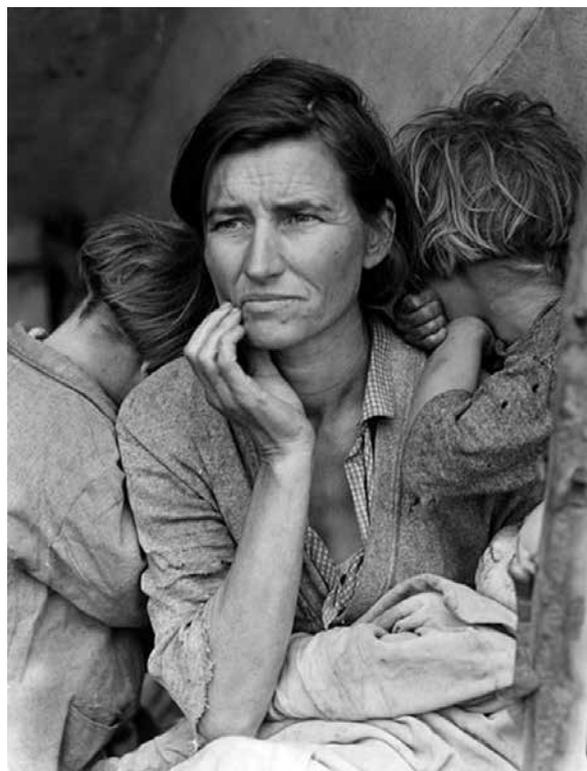
Dorthea Lange, *Migrant Mother*

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program  
**Documentary Portraits - continued**

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Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother*



Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Mother* (published image)

# GLOSSARY



Lori Scalplock  
*Mothers are the Foundation of our families*, 2019  
Quill work on smoked Moose hide  
Collection of Lori Scalplock

# Glossary

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**Aboriginal/First Nations:** The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

**Abstraction:** Is a term applied to 20th century styles in reaction against the traditional European view of art as the imitation of nature. Abstraction stresses the formal or elemental structure of a work and has been expressed in all genres or subjects of visual expression.

**Collage:** A work of art created by gluing bits of paper, fabric, scraps, photographs, or other materials to a flat surface.

**Complementary colour:** Colours that are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel, for example, blue and orange. These colours when placed next to each other produce the highest contrast.

**Composition:** The arrangement of lines, colours and forms so as to achieve a unified whole; the resulting state or product is referred to as a composition.

**Contemporary artists:** Those whose peak of activity can be situated somewhere between the 1970's (the advent of post-modernism) and the present day.

**Cool colours:** Blues, greens and purples are considered cool colours. In aerial perspective, cool colours are said to move away from you or appear more distant.

**Elements of design:** The basic components which make up any visual image: line, shape, colour, texture and space.

**Exhibition:** A public display of art objects including painting, sculpture, prints, installation, etc.

**Geometric shapes:** Any shape or form having more mathematical than organic design. Examples of geometric shapes include: spheres, cones, cubes, squares, triangles.

**Gradation:** A principle of design that refers to the use of a series of gradual/transitional changes in the use of the elements of art with a given work of art; for example, a transition from lighter to darker colours or a gradation of large shapes to smaller ones.

**Iconography:** A set of specified or traditional symbolic forms associated with the subject or theme of a stylized work of art.

**Mythology:** The body of myths (sacred stories) of a particular culture, or of humankind as a whole; the study and interpretation of such myths.

**Organic shapes:** An irregular shape; refers to shapes or forms having irregular edges or objects resembling things existing in nature

## Glossary continued

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**Pop Art:** A 20th century art style focusing on mass-produced urban culture: movies, advertising, science fiction. In the USA Pop Art was initially regarded as a reaction from Abstract Expressionism because its exponents brought back figural imagery and made use of hard-edged, quasi-photographic techniques. Pop artists employed commercial techniques in preference to the painterly manner of other artists.

**Positive shapes:** Are the objects themselves. They are surrounded in a painting by what are called the negative shapes or spaces.

**Primary colours:** The three colours from which all other colours are derived - red, yellow and blue.

**Realism/Naturalism:** A style of art in which artists try to show objects, scenes, and people as they actually appear.

**Shade:** Add black to a colour to make a shade. Mix the pure colour with increasing quantities of black making the colour darker in small increments. If you add gray to a colour, you produce a tone.

**Symbolism:** The practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationships.

**Tint:** Add white to a colour to create a tint. Mix the pure colour with increasing quantities of white so that the colour lightens.

**Warm colours:** Yellow and reds of the colour spectrum, associated with fire, heat and sun. In aerial perspective warm colours are said to come towards you.

**Woodland Style:** Is a genre of graphic design and painting among First Nations artists from the Great Lakes area - including northern Ontario and southwestern Manitoba. Developed by Norval Morrisseau, this visionary style emphasizes outlines and x-ray views of people, animals, and plant life using vivid colour.

# Credits

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Troy Patenaude  
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Kristy North Peigan  
Lori Scalplock  
Smith Wright

Syncrude Canada Ltd.  
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts  
Art Gallery of Alberta

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Shane Golby – Curator/Program Manager

AFA Travelling Exhibition Program, TREX Region 2

Sherisse Burke –TREX Technician/Assistant

### Front Cover Images:

**Left image:** Smith Wright, *Mootwistsiiksiinaki (All Around Snake Woman) #3*, 2019

Crackle paste and acrylic on board, Collection of the artist

**Middle images: Top:** Lori Scalplock, *Mothers are the Foundation of our families*, 2019,

Quillwork on smoked Moose hide, Collection of Lori Scalplock

**Bottom:** Lori Scalplock, *Fire in the night*, 2019, Quillwork on smoked

Moose hide, Collection of Lori Scalplock

**Right image:** Kristy North Peigan, *Screen Ghosting*, 2019, Digital print and oil on canvas,

Collection of Kristy North Peigan/Kristy NP

