



## Teacher's Guide: Primary Art & Writing Activities

Historica Canada's Indigenous Arts & Stories contest provides an opportunity for Indigenous youth to explore their heritage and culture and aims to encourage them to create their very own work of art or piece of writing.

This learning tool has been created for students ages 6 to 12. This tool gives step-by-step directions on how to create different art and writing projects to submit to the contest. Teachers can use the guide to help choose activities for their students and to assist youth in the creative process of developing their art and writing.

Entries into the Indigenous Arts & Stories competition must include a 100 to 200 word writer's or artist's statement where students can talk about their work and why they made it, and tell us a little about themselves.

The prompts in the writer's and artist's statement section are guidelines; students may choose to express themselves differently. We love to hear diverse voices!

Students can submit to the contest with the help of a guardian or teacher online at [our-story.ca](https://our-story.ca), or by mail.



**Note to teachers:** This learning tool is written for students, but some words and concepts may be challenging. Teachers of younger students may want to give directions verbally or help their students through the activities.

Historica Canada offers programs that you can use to explore, learn and reflect on our history, and what it means to be Canadian. This guide was produced with the generous support of the Government of Canada.

# ART ACTIVITY 01

## HONOURING MOTHER EARTH

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Many people call the world Mother Earth because she provides us with everything we need to survive, like food, water, and shelter. Think about a time you connected with Mother Earth by remembering a time you did something outside! Have you ever been on a hike or on a nature walk? Have you ever been to a park or to the beach? Have you ever been fishing or camping? In this project you will create artwork that shows you having fun in nature, and spending time with Mother Earth.

### B. BRAINSTORMING

First, let's consider what we love about Mother Earth. What are you thankful for?

- Do you love the food Mother Earth provides? You could draw a picture of yourself doing something with food, like planting seeds, harvesting (picking berries), hunting, or fishing.
- Do you love the water Mother Earth provides? You could draw a picture of yourself doing something in the water, like swimming, canoeing, boating, or fishing.
- Do you love the wood and rocks Mother Earth provides? You could draw a picture of yourself doing something in the forest (harvesting birchbark, gathering firewood, climbing trees), or near rocks (jumping on rocks, skipping stones), or in the mountains (hiking), or in the snow (playing winter games or building shelters).



▲ *Two Sockeye*, by Jaelie Young. Calgary, Alberta. Indigenous Arts & Stories Winner, 2018.

- Can you think of something else you like to do in nature? Draw a picture of yourself doing something you enjoy outside, something you are thankful that the Earth provides, or something you can do to help keep the Earth clean.

### C. CREATING YOUR ART

Next, let's decide how you will create a drawing of yourself doing the activity you thought about. Talk about your art plan with your teacher before you begin. What are you thinking of creating and why?

1. Gather the materials you would like to use. You can use things like paper, markers, crayons, paints, or pastels. You can also use materials found in nature such as twigs, birchbark, leaves, rocks, or shells.
2. Sketch your idea on paper, or place your materials on paper before you start, in case you want to change your mind. Next, create the actual art piece.
3. When you think you are finished, ask yourself, "Is something missing?" and decide if you need to add or change anything.
4. Finally, don't forget to put your name on the bottom-right or bottom-left corner of your artwork. Now you can share your artwork with your teacher, family, or friends!



▲ *Two Sisters Canoeing*, by Grace Burke. Prince George, British Columbia. Indigenous Arts & Stories Submission, 2018.

### D. ARTIST'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Use your artist's statement to explain your art. What did you decide to create? Why?

**You can use one of these prompts to write your artist's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

This is me... I am...

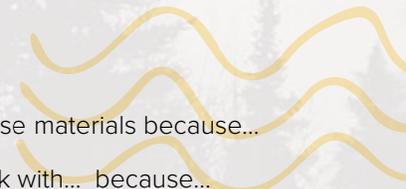
I love Mother Earth because...

I chose to create my art with these materials because...

I am excited to share this artwork with... because...

I decided to use these kinds of images in my artwork because...

I like spending time in nature because...



# WRITING ACTIVITY 01

## RESPECTING MOTHER EARTH

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Many people call the world Mother Earth because she is like a mother or grandmother, giving us the things we need to survive, like food, water, and shelter. We need to respect her and help keep the Earth clean for the next seven generations of people. Think of ways you can help take care of the Earth. Let's write a story about someone taking care of Mother Earth. Maybe it is you, or maybe it is someone else. Maybe it is a true story or maybe it is a make-believe story.



▲ *Bear at the Lake*, by Tyson Moxam-Gosselin & Tristan Medwid. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Indigenous Arts & Stories Winner, 2018.

### B. BRAINSTORMING

- First, let's think of ways we can take care of the Earth. How can you take care of the water, the land, or the animals?
- Write all your ideas down, and decide which one you like best.

- Once you have chosen an idea, decide how you will make it into a story. Who will be in your story? Think about them. What is their name? How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do in the story to take care of the Earth? What challenges do they face? How will they overcome these challenges?
- Create a story outline using [this template](#).

### C. CREATING YOUR STORY

1. Show your story outline to your teacher.
2. Write your story by expanding your story outline: add actions, descriptions, and important details. Remember to use punctuation (periods and capitals), and quotation marks if your characters are speaking.
3. When you have finished writing your story, read it out loud. Does it make sense? Are you missing any words? What can you add to make your story better?
4. Read your story to a friend and see if they have any ideas to add to your story.
5. Check in with your teacher to receive their feedback too.

### D. WRITER'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Imagine you are reading your story for the first time to someone. Tell them what your story is about and why this is important to you.

**You can use one of these prompts to create your writer's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

Taking care of the Earth is important to me because...

This story is very important because...

My character...



# ART ACTIVITY 02

## HONOURING MY COMMUNITY

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

When people say that their family or community is their "rock," they mean they have a special and loving family or community that helps them through life. Everyone needs support, and it's okay to ask for help! You can find a community to be part of, no matter where you live.

What kind of community do you live in? Do you have a big family or a little family with lots of friends that are part of your community? Do you have a school community? Do you have a church community? Maybe you are part of a dancing, musical, arts, or sports community?

Being part of a community can be a special thing. One rock isn't very heavy, but a whole bunch of rocks together are very strong. We can paint rocks to remind us how special our communities are. Lots of rocks make a strong pile! In this activity you will paint rocks to represent your favourite people in your community and to honour them.

### B. BRAINSTORMING

Think about all the people in your community that make it a great place. Who are they?

- On a piece of paper, make a list of people who are special to you in your family or community. For example, you might want to include people like librarians, general store owners, the postmaster, teachers, doctors, Elders, friends, family members, or pets.
- Imagine you are going to paint a rock for each of them, and count how many stones you will need.
- Next, go outside (with an adult) and collect a rock for each person you counted. Write one person's (or group's) name on the back of each rock.

### C. CREATING YOUR ART

1. Decorate each rock to represent the person or group it is for. You might want to paint a picture, or you could do something like make dots, create circles, or draw images on your rocks.
2. Once all your rocks are dry, pile them nicely together and take a picture, if you can! If you want, give the photo to the people in your community that you painted the rocks for, and tell them why you think they make the community a special place!

### D. ARTIST'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Use your artist's statement to talk about what your artwork represents. Talk about who and what you decided to paint, and why.

**You can use these prompts to write your artist's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

My rocks represent...

The people in my community make it special because...



◀ *Inukshuk*, by Cie Taqiasaq. Cape Dorset, Nunavut. Indigenous Arts & Stories Submission, 2016.

## WRITING ACTIVITY 02

### CELEBRATING MY COMMUNITY

#### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Communities can be wonderful places. What makes your community special? Do amazing people connect with each other? Are there beautiful places in nature to visit? Are there Elders you can learn from in your community? Are there cultural traditions or celebrations you could share? In this activity, you will write a postcard or a letter to someone, telling them about your community.

#### B. BRAINSTORMING

- Think about all the people in your community that make it special. Who are they?
- Think about any celebrations that your community has (e.g., treaty days, powwows, ceremonies, events, fairs, literacy days). Can you write about the event and provide details? What makes the event so special? Who goes to the celebration?
- Write your ideas on paper and talk to your teacher about them. Choose your favourite idea.



◀ *Shawl Dancer*, by Kiah Monague. Christian Island, Ontario. Indigenous Arts & Stories Submission, 2016.

#### C. WRITING

1. Start writing your letter or postcard!
  - a. When you write a letter, you should start with a greeting. Greet the person in whichever language you would like.
  - b. Next, tell the person about the event or the people in your community that you chose. Use names, places, and details.

##### *Here are some prompts:*

There are some great people in my community such as... because they...

You would love to visit my community because...

The best thing about my community is...

There are fun cultural things to do like...

I don't know if I have a community, but if I could have one, I would like it to be...

- c. End your letter by thanking them for what they do to make your community so great, and don't forget to sign your name!
2. When you are finished your letter, go back and read it out loud. Does it make sense? Are you missing any words? What can you add to make your letter better?
  3. Read your letter to a friend and see if they can add any ideas or if they have any questions to help you with your letter.
  4. Show your letter to your teacher to get their feedback as well.

**TEACHER TIP:** Use the photographs of the rocks from *Art Activity 2: "Honouring My Community"* and turn them into postcards for students to write on the back and give them to people in their community.

#### D. WRITER'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Imagine you are reading your letter for the first time to someone. Tell them why this topic is important to you.

*You can use one of these prompts to create your writer's statement, or you can write something on your own.*

I decided to write to... because...

They make my community better by...

My community is great because...

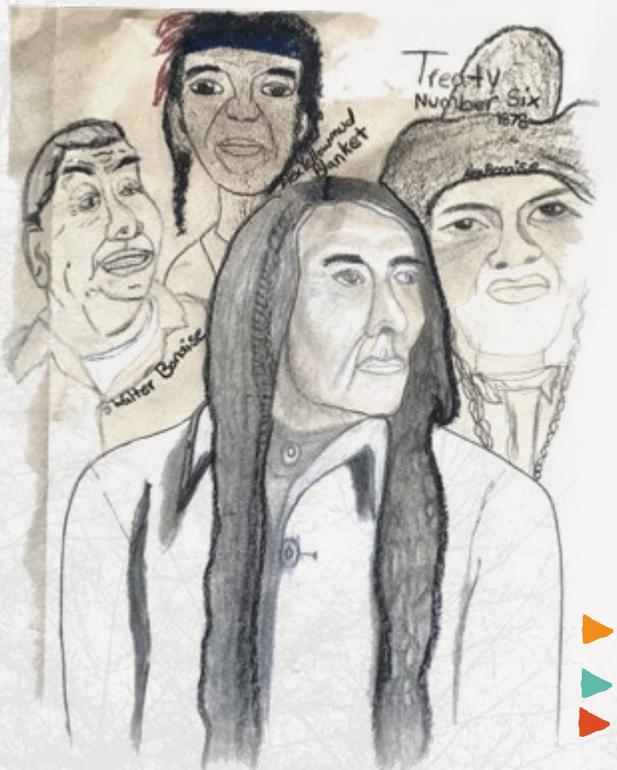
My favourite thing to do in my community is...

# ART ACTIVITY 03

## RECOGNIZING ROLE MODELS

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Role models are people who do special things that we admire. They often try to make the world better, and they are special to us for many reasons. Sometimes, it is because they show us how to be kind or honest, or how to care of others. Maybe it is someone who helped you when you needed help, or someone who takes care of others. Maybe your role model is someone who is great at music, art, sports, school, or dancing. Who is a role model to you? Today, you are going to create an art piece representing your role model. It can be a drawing, a painting, or a collage.



▲ *Ancestors*, by Shelby Bonaire. Morinville, Alberta. Indigenous Arts & Stories Submission, 2018.

### B. BRAINSTORMING

Let's think about someone you admire. Why do you admire them? Can you think of some words to describe them? What do they do? How can you be like them when you grow up? Why do you want to do the kinds of things they do?

- Think about all the people you look up to and hope to be like when you grow up. Who are they?
- Maybe they are your neighbours who help you around your home or after school. Maybe it is one of your teachers, a member of your family like your grandparents or an older brother or sister, a hockey player like Carey Price, or your community librarian. Don't forget that role models can be young people too, like Autumn Pelletier, who is working hard to raise awareness of how important water is for the world!
- Make a list of your role models and narrow it down to one that you want to create an artwork about.

### C. CREATING YOUR ART

Let's get started!

1. Brainstorm and write down some words to describe your role model. What makes them a role model? Write about the things they do that you admire, and provide details. What will they be doing in the art you make?
2. Use paper, markers, paint, crayons, pencil crayons, magazine images, words, or glue to create a picture, painting, or collage of your role model. Show them doing something that you admire them for!
3. When you think you are finished, ask yourself if anything is missing, and add it to your art. Then, share with your teacher, family, and friends!

### D. ARTIST'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

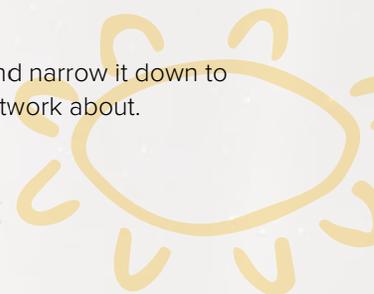
Use your artist's statement to explain your piece of art. Talk about who and what you decided to draw, paint, or make a collage about, and why.

**You can use one of these prompts to write your artist's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

I decided to draw/paint... because...

... is a role model to me because...

I really look up to ... because...



## WRITING ACTIVITY 03

### HONOURING ROLE MODELS

#### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Role models are people who do things we admire, and they can be special to us for many reasons. Sometimes, it is because they show us how to be a better person, or how to treat others with kindness and respect. Your role model may be someone you know, someone in a traditional story, or someone who is famous for things like sports or music. Today, you are going to write a story about a time when a role model did something special and made an impact in the community or in someone's life.

#### B. BRAINSTORMING

Think about someone you admire. What makes them special? Why do you think they are a role model? What is something special they have accomplished? Did they have to work hard?

- Make a list of ideas, including people you admire and the special things they do. Choose one to create a story about.
- Create a story outline by using [this template](#).

#### C. WRITING

1. Show your story outline to your teacher.
2. Once you have chosen an idea, decide how you will make it into a story. Why is this person a role model? Think about their actions. What is their name? How old are they? Where do they live? What do they do in the story to show that they are special? What challenges do they face? How do they overcome these challenges?
3. Write your story by expanding your story outline. Add actions, events, descriptions, and details. Remember to use punctuation (periods and capitals), and quotation marks if your characters are speaking.
4. When you have finished writing your story, read it out loud. Does it make sense? Are you missing any words? What can you add to make your story better?

5. Read your story to a friend and see if they have any ideas to make it even better.
6. Ask your teacher for feedback as well.

#### D. WRITER'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Imagine you are reading your story to someone for the first time. Tell them what your story is about and why this story or topic is important to you.

**You can use one of these prompts to create your writer's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

... is a role model because...

The most amazing person ever is...and let me tell you why!

They are amazing because...

I look up to them because...

My favourite thing about my role model is...



▲ *Grandma*, by Catherine Blackburn. Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Indigenous Arts & Stories Winner, 2013.

# ART ACTIVITY 04

## TELLING STORIES FROM MY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Many families have stories that have been passed down from older generations to younger generations. Sharing these stories is part of oral tradition and storytelling. Storytelling can also be done through art and words. Think about the stories that are told in your family or community. Are there traditional stories that you have heard? Are there stories about when your family or community members were small? Are there stories about when you were very little?

Today, you are going to tell a story through your artwork from a traditional story or a family story. You can decide with your teacher if you want to create either a painting or a drawing.

### B. BRAINSTORMING

- First, think about stories you have heard in your family and community. Who told them? Who did they tell the story to, and why? Who were the special characters in this story? Maybe it is a traditional teaching, maybe it is a story about how you were born, or even a story about animals or spirits.
- Think about how you can tell a story through art. You could choose your favourite part of the story and focus on drawing or painting what happens, or you could focus on one character. Does the story have a lesson? How could you show that? An example of a story told through artwork is this drawing of an Inuit story of how the narwhal came to be:



SHE SPUN AND SPUN AROUND THE LINE AND HER HAIR GOT ENTANGLED. THE MOTHER'S HAIR SPUN SO TIGHTLY AROUND THE LINE THAT IT TURNED INTO A TUSK AND THE MOTHER TRANSFORMED INTO A NARWHAL.



Truth/Debwewin, by Destiny Lameman. Pine Falls, Manitoba. Indigenous Arts & Stories Submission, 2016.

### C. CREATING YOUR ART

1. Make a sketch of your idea before you create the final piece. Once you think your idea is ready, decide if you want to draw or paint.
2. Create your art! When you feel you are finished, ask yourself if anything is missing, and add it to your art. Then, share with your teacher, family, and friends!

### D. ARTIST'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Use your artist's statement to talk about what you decided to draw or paint and why.

**You can use one of these prompts to write your artist's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

I decided to draw/paint... because...

This artwork tells the story of...

I heard of this story from...

How the Narwhal Came to Be, by Alexander Angnaluaq. Iqaluit, Nunavut. Indigenous Arts & Stories Winner, 2017.

## WRITING ACTIVITY 04

### TELLING STORIES FROM MY FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

#### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT IDEA

Stories are often told from the eyes of one person or animal. Today, you are going to share a family story or a traditional story, but you will tell it through the perspective of a different character. This could be a person, animal, spirit, or plant that is present in the story.

#### B. BRAINSTORMING

Think about the stories which are told in your family and community. Are there traditional stories in your family? Are there community stories that you have heard? Maybe it is a traditional teaching, maybe it is a story about the creation of the Earth, the creation of an animal, or even a story about spirits. If you can't think of a traditional story, you can create a new story you want to pass down to someone in your family or to a friend.

- Choose one traditional teaching, family story, or creation story. Think about the original version of the story. How can you tell the story from another perspective? Choose how you want to share the story. For example, it could be from the point of view of a deer, a tree, or a spirit watching what is happening in the story.

Here is an example to help you think about your story. The creation of Turtle Island, told from Muskrat's perspective: "I watched the other animals try to reach the bottom of the sea for soil. Then it was my turn, I swam down and I grabbed some mud in my paws and turned to swim back to the turtle."

- Think about what story you want to retell. Think about your favourite part of the story and choose a person, creature, spirit, or plant, and to write from its perspective.
- Once you have chosen an idea, decide how you will make it into a story. Who is telling the story? What would be the most important part of the story to them? How will the story change when it is told by this character?
- Create a story outline by using [this template](#).



▲ *Turtle Island Nation*, by Amanda Angus. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Indigenous Arts & Stories Submission, 2018.

#### C. WRITING YOUR STORY

1. Show your story outline to your teacher.
2. Write your story by expanding your story outline. Retell the story through the voice of the character you chose. Add actions, events, descriptions, and details. Remember to use punctuation (periods and capitals), and quotation marks if your characters are speaking.
3. When you have finished writing your story, read it out loud. Does it make sense? Are you missing any words? What can you add to make your story better?

#### D. WRITER'S STATEMENT (100-200 WORDS)

Imagine you are reading your story for the first time to someone. Tell them what your story is about and why this story or topic is important to you.

**You can use one of these prompts to create your writer's statement, or you can write something on your own.**

The story I wrote about is...

... told me a story about...

I chose this story because...

I chose to write from the perspective of... because...

My favourite part of this story is...