



MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN

ART IS GOOD MEDICINE

Welcome to the "Art is Good Medicine" workshop. This PDF provides an in depth look at who Emma is, what inspires her art, how art works as good medicine in our lives, and how art can be used to make change.

To accompany this PDF we have created a video workshop that youth can follow to re-create one of Emma's drawings, made especially for Moose Hide Campaign Day! The recreation will take approximately 15 minutes. It may work best for students to follow this video independently, due to the need to pause at differing points to follow along. It can also work to follow together as a class, or you can simply print off the colouring page included here and have students add their own personal touches to make it their own while still watching the video to better understand Emma's technique, her story, and the meaning behind the art.

This PDF includes a lesson plan that can be used independently or alongside the video workshop. This lesson focuses on advocacy and how art can be a tool to help people understand, question, and care about social justice issues.





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**Art is
Good
Medicine**

***Meet
Emma
Hassencahl-
Perley***

***An artist for
change***



Advocacy through Art



Red dress photos done by photographer, Logan Perley

Emma Hassencahl-Perley is a Wolastoqiyik artist from Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick. Emma is a multi-disciplinary artist who creates beautiful murals, beadwork, paintings, and some truly innovative art that helps bring awareness to Indigenous social justice issues. One of Emma's creations was a stunning jingle dress inspired by her grandmother. At first glance it appears to be a beautiful piece of regalia but with a closer look you can see the words of the Indian Act embedded within the dress.



This was a piece Emma created to raise awareness about the infringement of treaty rights to the Mi'kmaq Nation through the lobster fisheries.

Although Emma works across many artistic disciplines her style is inspired by her Wolastoqey roots. Much of her work is done using graphing paper to ensure symmetry and flow through. If you look closely at her artwork on the right you can see the grid within it that helps her with the designs.

Emma's art is full of the vibrancy of Indigenous cultures, showcasing the beauty and heart of Indigenous Peoples through medicinal plants, regalia, bead work, dance, and clan animals. Her works are expressions of herself as a Wolastoqey woman.

Art itself is a form of good medicine; it allows us to express our emotions in a healthy way. It allows us to show the world that we are angry, or that we are resilient, or that we are full of joy and happiness. The act of creating or even looking at art also helps our body release serotonin, a chemical that helps us feel happy and increases our brain function.

Emma created a piece for you to follow that celebrates Indigenous cultures, spreads good medicine, and builds awareness for the Moose Hide Campaign and our aim to end violence against women and children. Please watch the video and/or print, colour, and personalize Emma's artwork found below.

Be sure to enter any art work into the annual Moose Hide Campaign Art and Video Challenge - details can be found at <https://moosehidecampaign.ca/get-involved/k-12-education-platform>



Join us for a Q & A with Emma!

Q: What effect can art have on social justice issues?

A: "Artwork sometimes sits at an intersection of political activism and social justice issues and is used as a visual tool to communicate a specific message or cause. Art, in any form (drawing, music, photography), can become a visual marker of a movement in an attempt to raise awareness, motivate individuals to act or promote social change and build a community of support. If a visual art piece is striking, it might register with the viewer's senses in a different way than words. Political art can act as a starting point for further dialogue that allows people to contribute their thoughts, ideas, and interpretations.

I think I'm drawn to art with political messages because a number of Indigenous artists I had studied while I was in art school were (and are) making this kind of art. Though much of Indigenous art is inherently politicized because our identities have been politicized. I love the nuances of political art because it can be really bold, assertive, and contain obvious messages or slogans; but it can also be soft and quiet with subtle hints at a message."



As a class, discuss what the artwork means to you? What do you think it is trying to represent? What does it make you think about?

Q: Can you tell me a little bit more about your art projects for MMIWG2S?

A: "I did this piece titled "Brianna Jonnie" in 2016 after I saw an article in the news about a 14 year-old girl from Winnipeg who wrote a letter to the chief of police giving them instructions on what to do if her body was ever found. It bothered her how Indigenous women are dehumanized during investigations and depicted in media. The heart-wrenching letter was two pages in length but the passage that stuck out to me was, "And if I do go missing and my body is found, please tell my mom you are sorry. Tell her I asked to be buried in my red dress, for I will have become just another Native statistic." I printed each letter on individual pieces of paper and strung them together in a grid using red thread - her words literally hang in the air. I thought it was a courageous thing for a 14 year-old to do and a telling one of how Indigenous women and girls have to factor in the high rates of violence against them.

I am sensitive to making art around MMIWG because it deals with real people's trauma and I find some of the imagery out there associated to MMWIG is traumatizing or victimizing. I'm working on a MMIWG commemoration art piece with 3 other Wolastoqey artists for the Indigenous Women of the Wabanaki Territories organization (a branch of NWAC in my homelands). We are focused on depicting the strength and healing nature of women and 2Spirit folks in this upcoming work."



*Brianna Jonnie. Ink on paper. Red thread. 2016.
Solo Show: A Red Girl's Rage*

Inspired by Brianna Jonnie's letter written to the Winnipeg police force, "A Red Girl's Rage" was created. Each letter held together with thin red thread. Both of these powerful pieces incorporate advocacy. Art with a purpose; to get people thinking. To learn more about Brianna Jonnie's letter click or scan the QR code.



Q: In a time where many youth feel they can't make a difference - how can art empower them?

A: "Our art forms part of our history and being an artist means you get to contribute to the art history of your nation/community through a visual language. The artist's role is often to be someone who is able to communicate beyond written languages, because art offers us a different way to understand - it is a visual language. Art is important for this reason because it plays an important role in Indigenous societies, because it upholds our community's stories, languages, laws, and traditions. It also serves as a record of the artist's experiences, their families, their relationships, their connection to land or their territory.

I see art making as my communal role, to a degree I guess that's one way that I'm empowering myself. I'm using my gifts and abilities to express myself in a positive way. Art, for me, has offered me balance and healing throughout my life at times when my emotions or circumstances felt out of control. We often say that art is healing but I think that's also an inherent part of the practice and similar to any therapeutic activity.

Part of empowering yourself is giving yourself the permission to succeed. I did not know if I would succeed in this realm at first, all I knew is that I enjoyed making art and communicating with people through art. I'm lucky and grateful that people respond to it."





Discussion Questions:

Look closely at Emma's artwork of the moose. What do you see, feel, and enjoy about the piece?

If you were to create your own work of art titled "Good Medicine," what would it be about and why?

Think about your own culture and family background
- what are some artistic practices from your culture(s)?

Think about an issue you are passionate about. How has or how can art help people to understand this issue and want to make change? Try creating your own piece of art that centers around advocacy and aims to bring about change.

