

Teaching Materials for Michael Blackstock and Sydney Andres Chauvin Exhibit

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

*What does it mean to interweave Indigenous and Western science? What can this look like?
How do artists capture animals in motion?*

ARTIST INFORMATION:

Sydney Andres Chauvin: Acrylic Paintings

Instagram: @sydandres.art

Exhibit explanation: “this is a show of the animals I have seen in my dreams, in my journeys between my hometown, school, and daily travels, documentaries, and working from memory. From these glimpses and quick observations, I am able to take down notes, sketches and memories of the movements of the animals that are unique in the point in time. I am focusing on the animal itself and the connection I have had with it in the moment in time.”

Intention: Growing up in a rural environment I have become close to both domestic and wild animals. Because of my familiarity, I am able to depict the forms as I remember them, through observation; though I also use my own reference photographs and recordings. I focus on the natural environments in a blurred fashion in relation to the animals, attempting to capture their unique personalities and to focus on the animal in the moment.

Process: “I have been experimenting with implementing Indigenous form line into my works. My art allows me to show my Indigenous heritage that is not noticed through my physical appearance. In my paintings I explore my lived experience with domestic and wild animals through mark making, texture, and experimental palettes of local and non-local colours. The animals are often painted in ordinary yet unique movements as I see them in their environments.”

Michael D. Blackstock: Acrylics on Wood

Instagram: @blueecology

Exhibit explanation: “I am the founder of the Blue Ecology theory (www.blueecology.org) which interweaves Indigenous and Western sciences. My show will focus on this space, as I am of Gitksan and European descent.”

Intention: “I make art because I see things others may not?”

Process: “I work in many mediums, including wood sculpture, copper, acrylic paintings and photography.”

PRE-VISIT CONNECTION ACTIVITIES

Outcome of activities: practice sketches of simple animals.

Materials needed: paper, pencil.

- Read the essay “Asters and Goldenrods” aloud to students from “Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults” by Robin Wall Kimmerer, adapted by Monique Gray Smith. (Scans attached to the bottom of this page?). This is an essay about interweaving Indigenous and Western Sciences and will prepare students to connect with this message (primarily in Michael Blackstock’s, but) in both artist’s work. Have students make a sketch(es) as you read, capturing images that stand out to them from the text. After reading, ask students to share their sketches (to the whole class or in pairs), and explain why this moment was impactful.
- View the following videos on how to draw animals:
 - (For younger grades) how to draw stick animals: <https://youtu.be/fX-xQ85YztM?si=I2yfTmWAhSISMAJr>. Have students pick their favourite one of the examples and attempt to draw it.
 - (For older grades) how to draw animals using a “line of action” (watch until 3:30): <https://youtu.be/STsEQpLZDH4?si=SfHfTGY4SX8Pvxc1>. Option for students to follow along with paper and pencil.
- Teacher’s note: the purpose of this exercise is to get students thinking about how artists approach drawing animals, and for students to appreciate how logical this process can be! *This will prepare students to interact with (primarily Sydney Andres’, but) the animals and motion in both artist’s work.*

POST-VISIT REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

Outcome of activities: a flipbook of an animal in motion.

Materials needed per student: stack of 5-10 notecards, stapled or clipped together; pencil.

Reflection on new learning:

- Sharing circle: make a circle and ensure that no one is in front or behind anyone else. Explain that a sharing circle is an Indigenous method of learning, and it’s just as important of a job to be a listener as a speaker. Teachers can pre-read about circle pedagogy and protocol here: <https://passthefeather.ca/sharing-circles/>.
- Have students go in a circle to respond (or pass) to the following questions (adjust complexity for grade levels):
 - Which of Michael’s pieces stood out to you, and why?
 - Which of Sydney’s pieces stood out to you, and why?
 - In Sydney’s work, especially -- did she capture animals in motion effectively? Do you have an example of your favourite?
 - In Michael’s work, especially -- how do these pieces reflect his goal to interweave Indigenous and Western science/art?

Art activity:

1. Reflect + Brainstorm:
 - "Think about one animal you saw at the exhibit. What was it doing? How was it moving?"
 - Students jot down notes or sketch the movement (e.g., "the wolf was running," "the eagle was diving").

2. Plan the Motion:
 - Explain: “In a flip book, each page is like a frame in a movie. You’ll draw the animal doing one small part of the motion on each page.”
 - Students sketch out 4–5 key positions of the movement first on a blank planning sheet.
 - Encourage simplicity — stick figures or simple outlines work well. Students can use techniques they’ve been
3. Draw the Flip Book:
 - Starting at the bottom of the stack, students draw their first image.
 - On each page above, they slightly change the image to show motion — wing raised, leg stretched, head turning, etc.
 - Once finished, they flip through to test it!
4. OPTIONAL: Add Colour
5. Students can add a title to the cover of their flipbook.

Final closing piece:

Students think-pair-share, or group discuss: *what was the hardest part of showing motion? How did this activity help you look more closely at how animals move?*