



ROOTED HERE

WOVEN FROM THE LAND

TEACHER STUDY GUIDE
WINTER 2024

Vancouver
Artgallery

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“You should think about blankets as merged objects. They are alive because they exist in the spirit world. They are the animal. They are part of the hunter; they are part of the weaver; they are part of the wearer.”

- Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Rooted Here: Woven from the Land celebrates the work of four prominent local Salish weavers: **qʷənat, Angela George (səlilwətaɫ/Tsleil-Waututh); Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George (Sḵwxwú7mesh/Squamish); Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph (Sḵwxwú7mesh/Squamish); and Qwasen, Debra Sparrow (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm/Musqueam)**. The exhibition establishes important contexts for understanding each artist's career, including the long history of Salish weaving, the rootedness of these traditions in the land and its resources, the interruption of Salish weaving by colonialism, and the artists' significant roles in its contemporary revival and renewal. It also creates an opportunity to better understand the crucial role these artists have played in designing the exterior of the Vancouver Art Gallery's new building and the rich significance of its woven surface.

DEAR TEACHER,

This teaching guide will assist you in preparing for your class tour of the exhibition *Rooted Here: Woven from the Land*. It provides activities to facilitate discussion before and after your school tour. Engaging in the suggested activities will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Glossary section.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Rooted Here: Woven from the Land takes place on the unceded, ancestral and current territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətaɫ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

ROOTED HERE: WOVEN FROM THE LAND HAS 3 MAIN GOALS:

1

TO INTRODUCE

STUDENTS TO THE WORKS OF FOUR SALISH WEAVERS

2

TO CONSIDER

KEY CULTURAL ELEMENTS WITHIN THE EXHIBITION SUCH AS THE INTERCONNECTION TO ALL LIVING THINGS AND ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE

3

TO EXPLORE

INDIVIDUAL ARTWORKS IN THE CONTEXT OF IDEAS, TECHNIQUES AND PROCESS



GLOSSARY

ANCESTRAL Used as an adjective to describe things that someone inherited from an ancestor. Ancestral things have been around so long that they once belonged to your ancestors, the family members who lived before your grandparents were born.

ANCESTORS Usually refers to a person related to you who lived a long time ago, rather than parents or grandparents.

ANCESTRY

1. One's family or ethnic descent.
2. The origin or background of something.

COLONIAL(ISM) | COLONIZATION A process that occurs when settlers arrive at a place in order to establish political control over it. "This is done by creating new governing systems and ways of living, being and doing that make the ways of those who were there before, inferior. This creates unequal relationships between the colonizer and the Indigenous people."

KNOWLEDGE KEEPER Someone who is responsible for preserving and passing down information, traditions and cultural practices from one generation to the next. It is their job to protect and promote knowledge related to their culture and society.

POTLATCH A ceremony integral to the governing structure, culture and spiritual traditions of various First Nations living on the Northwest Coast and in parts of the interior western subarctic. It primarily functions to redistribute wealth, confer status and rank upon individuals, kin groups and clans, and to establish claims to names, powers and rights to hunting and fishing territories.

POTLATCH BAN The ban made Indigenous ceremonies illegal and punishable by law. It lasted for sixty-seven years from 1884 to 1951. During that time, it was illegal for more than three people to congregate outside of the church, or make speeches, dance, give names away and gifts. Families who potlatched in secret not only risked having their masks and regalia seized but also could be sent to jail for two to six months. Yet the resiliency of Indigenous Peoples remained strong, and they have now reclaimed and revitalized the Potlatch.

RECONCILIATION In Canada, a multifaceted process that restores lands, economic self-sufficiency and political jurisdiction to Indigenous Peoples, and nurtures respectful and just relationships between Indigenous Peoples, the government of Canada and non-Indigenous Canadians. It is an effort to renew the relationship between settlers and Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership.

REPATRIATE The act or process of restoring or returning someone or something to their country of origin, allegiance or citizenship. In this case, returning human remains or artifacts to Indigenous Peoples who can show a cultural link to the item.

GLOSSARY

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL Canadian, government-sponsored religious schools established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture. An estimated 150,000 children were forced from their homes and forbidden to speak their languages or to practice any of their own cultural ways of life. In total, over 130 residential schools operated in Canada between 1831 and 1996.

TEXTILE ART(IST) An artform that uses materials such as yarn, string and fabric. Textile artists use a wide range of techniques to produce their works, including knitting, crochet, weaving, embroidery, knotting or braiding fabric or natural fibres.

UNCEDDED A term for a relationship between the government of Canada and Indigenous People when no treaties have been established. In general, 'unceded' means the lands and waters of Indigenous people were never surrendered and were taken without permission.

WEAVE | WEAVING The textile art in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads—called the warp and weft—are interlaced with each other. The warp threads run vertically, or up and down, and the weft threads run horizontally, or from side to side. To weave, you move the weft threads over and under the warp threads to form a fabric or cloth.

WORLDVIEW A collection of attitudes, values, stories and expectations about the world around us, which inform our every thought and action.

THE EXHIBITION

ROOTED HERE: WOVEN FROM THE LAND

Rooted Here: Woven from the Land celebrates the work of four prominent local Salish weavers: qʷənat, Angela George (səlilwətał/Tsleil-Waututh); Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George (Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh/Squamish); Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph (Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh/Squamish); and Qwasen, Debra Sparrow (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm/Musqueam).

Recognized as masters of their craft, these artists have been instrumental in the revival and perpetuation of weaving in their communities. The rich selection of works on display demonstrate both their connections to tradition and their aptitude for innovation. Through their art—and the artist's own voices—this exhibition makes clear the vital integration of weaving throughout traditional and contemporary Salish cultures. It also establishes important contexts for understanding each artist's career. These contexts include the long history of Salish weaving; the rootedness of these traditions in the land and its resources; the interruption of Salish weaving by colonialism; and the artists' significant roles in its contemporary revival and renewal.

The exhibition also offers a rare glimpse into the significant roles these artists have played as collaborators in the design of the Vancouver Art Gallery's new building. Their creative input extends to the woven facade of the new Gallery's design, contributing to a rich and meaningful narrative that connects the architecture with the cultural heritage of the land.

Rooted Here: Woven from the Land is organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and curated by Richard Hill, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art.



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

- The Coast Salish region extends from the northern Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland areas to western Washington state.
- There are dozens of Coast Salish First Nations groups in BC and Washington State.
- Archaeological evidence shows that Indigenous Peoples have inhabited the region since at least 9000 BC.
- The term “Coast Salish” was coined by linguists to refer to one branch of the vast Salishan language family.
- There are many distinct Coast Salish languages. Considerable efforts have been made within Indigenous communities to keep these languages alive.
- In the Salish [worldview](#), Elders are amongst the most precious of gifts.
- The connection between Coast Salish people and the land and water of the Pacific Northwest is at the centre of cultural beliefs and practices.
- For the Coast Salish peoples, the earth is the ultimate source of nourishment and knowledge. Earth provides gifts of food, shelter, clothing and medicine.
- First Foods ceremonies are one way the Coast Salish celebrate respect for the earth. These ceremonies honour traditional foods such as water, clams, duck, elk, salmon, sprouts and berries.
- Coast Salish people refer to the Western Red Cedar as “the tree of life” because it provides materials for canoes, longhouses, clothing, tools and basketry.
- Despite the changes to traditional ways of life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, contemporary Coast Salish artists have nurtured a vital sense of identity through renewed art forms.

EXPLORE THESE VIDEOS

Coast Salish Weaving - The Fabric of Canada
Weaving the path | Explore Canada



PRE-TOUR ACTIVITIES

ALL AGES



1. GRADES 4-12
WHO ARE THE ARTISTS?
Pre-Tour Activity



2. ALL AGES
WEAVING NATURE
Pre-Tour Activity



3. ALL AGES GEOMETRIC DESIGN COLLAGE

Pre-Tour Activity



4. ALL AGES UNDERSTANDING

Post-Tour Activity

GRADES 4-12 | WHO ARE THE ARTISTS?

PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE

To connect with the life, artistic processes and works of the four artists featured in the exhibition.

MATERIALS

- Writing materials
- Access to the internet
- Artist Information Sheet (p. 17) and the Student Worksheet (p. 18)

PROCESS

- Divide your class into four groups.
- Assign one of the artists from the Artist Information Sheet (p. 17) to each group.
- Provide each student with a copy of the Student Worksheet (p. 18). Consider what they will need to complete their section.
- Instruct students to conduct research using the internet, either at home or at school.

- Find and describe a piece of work by the artist, then add it into the space provided on the Student Worksheet. (p. 18)
- Once your students have completed their worksheets, have each group present their information while the rest of the class fills in their Student Worksheets (p. 18).

CONCLUSION

Discuss the following questions with your class:

- What were some of the most interesting things that you learned or discovered?
- Which Salish weavings are you curious about seeing in the exhibition?
- Do the Salish weavings connect or resonate with your life? Why or why not?
- What else are you interested in finding out about the artists?

GRADES 4-12 | WHO ARE THE ARTISTS?

PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY



Chepximiya Siyam' CHIEF JANICE GEORGE

S̓k̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh | Squamish

"I am a weaver. I teach weaving and the history of weaving because it brings pride to Salish people to see the genius of our ancestors."

—Chief Janice George

Chief Janice George of the Squamish Nation is a master weaver and textile artist. Her ancestral name is Chepximiya Siyam, and she comes from a prominent Squamish family. As a hereditary chief, she participates in numerous ceremonial and cultural responsibilities in her community.

Chief George learned to weave from Coast Salish weaver Susan Pavel and Subiyay-t Bruce Miller of Skokomish in 2003. She integrates Squamish teachings passed down from her late grandmother Kwitelut-t Lena Jacobs and other Squamish ancestors into her work.

Chief George co-founded the L'hen Awtxw Weaving House with her husband and fellow weaver, Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph, to share the teachings and practice of traditional Coast Salish wool weaving. She has visited many museums that house Salish blankets in their collections and has spent countless hours analyzing them and developing resources that have helped to revive Salish weaving. Chief George views her contributions to the perpetuation of weaving as a responsibility and is passionate about reclaiming the art.

Chief George graduated from Capilano University in North Vancouver, BC, and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She has also interned at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. She co-authored the book, *Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth*.



Skwetsimeltxw WILLARD "BUDDY" JOSEPH

S̓k̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh | Squamish

"Weaving is about educating." "As soon as we learned the basic techniques, we came home and started teaching right away."

—Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph

An artist, master weaver and educator, Willard "Buddy" Joseph grew up on Squamish Nation lands. His traditional ancestral name is Skwetsimeltxw. He is the former Director of Housing and Capital Projects for the Squamish Nation. Joseph co-authored the book *Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth* and co-founded the L'hen Awtxw Weaving House to share the teachings and practice of traditional Coast Salish wool weaving. He also co-founded the M̓i tel'nexw Leadership Transformation, an online seminar to share teachings of Indigenous resilience. Joseph has played an important role in the revival of Coast Salish weaving, learning Coast Salish weaving techniques from Susan Pavel and Elder Subiyay-t Bruce Miller of the Skokomish Nation in Washington State in 2003. He is also the first Elder in Residence at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

GRADES 4-12 | WHO ARE THE ARTISTS?

PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY



q^wənat, ANGELA GEORGE
səlilwətaʔ | Tsleil-Waututh

“We are artists who weave together a story that is held in these weavings- these holders of knowledge. They reflect not only the laws of the land and place, but they bring together the community.”

—q^wənat, Angela George

q^wənat, Angela George lives and works in the səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nation in North Vancouver. She has a passion for traditional canoe racing, weaving and cultural singing and dancing. George has dedicated her career to the betterment of First Nations people and communities. Well versed in traditional teachings, George has a strong understanding of her culture, spiritual teachings and the impacts of colonization and barriers that plague First Nations communities. She believes that practicing traditions, having a strong sense of identity and connection to ancestry is vital to community wellness, development and sustainability. George completed the Master of Business Administration program at Simon Fraser University, with a final capstone project called “Weaving Governance,” highlighting Tsleil-Waututh traditional law and governance. She is humbled by the gift of traditional weaving, holding this connection to her late mother, Cookie Thomas, from Swxwú7mesh, and Squamish ancestry dearly. She loves to learn and teach weaving and strives to carry this sacred practice with the utmost integrity.



Qwasen DEBRA SPARROW
x^wməθk^wəyəm | Musqueam

“And when I stand in front of my loom, and I’m working and creating, I’m with them. I’m not here anymore. I’m back in time, and I’m thinking of the women, and they’re whispering to me and guiding me.”

—Qwasen, Debra Sparrow

Debra Sparrow is a Musqueam weaver, artist and knowledge keeper. Her ancestral name is Qwasen. She is self-taught in Salish design, weaving and jewellery making. Her contemporary work combines textile and Salish design, and she creates geometric, hand-spun blankets and wall hangings. Sparrow was born and raised on the Musqueam Indian Reserve, and she credits her grandfather, Ed Sparrow—who lived to be 100 years old and remembered the forcible removal of the Musqueam people from Stanley Park—with giving her 300 years of stories that have grounded her in her heritage and enabled her to hear the voices of her ancestors. When Sparrow was a child, the techniques of Salish weaving were lost to the Musqueam Nation. There were no living weavers to teach a new generation; the last known weaver before the revival was her great-grandmother. Sparrow attended a weaving course at the Vancouver Indian Centre (now the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre) in 1986, and then co-founded a group of women weavers in the 1980s, who rejuvenated the Salish weaving tradition. They were able to reconstruct the lost weaving techniques through books by examining blankets handed down in their families and by doing research in museums. Sparrow’s work can be found in the collections of the Burke Museum, the Canadian Museum of History, the Heard Museum and the Royal British Columbia Museum. In 2017, Sparrow participated in the exhibition *The Fabric of Our Land: Salish Weaving* at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, which brought together some of the oldest Salish weavings in existence from collections around the world. Sparrow’s weaving highlights the knowledge, skills and aesthetic forms of her ancestors and returns them to her community.

placeholder for image credit where needed.

GRADES 4-12 | WHO ARE THE ARTISTS?

PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

ARTIST INFORMATION SHEET

Chepximiya Siyan' CHIEF JANICE GEORGE

- Hereditary Chief of the Squamish Nation
- An artist, master weaver and educator
- Passionate about reclaiming the art of Salish weaving
- Integrates Squamish teachings into her work from her late grandmother, Kwitelut-t Lena
- Co-founded the L'hen Awtwx Weaving House and co-authored the book *Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth*
- Views her contributions to the revival of weaving as a responsibility

Skwetsimeltxw WILLARD "BUDDY" JOSEPH

- An artist, master weaver and educator
- Former Director of Housing and Capital Projects for the Squamish Nation.
- Has played an important role in the revival of Coast Salish wool weaving
- The first Elder in Residence at the Vancouver Art Gallery
- Co-founded the L'hen Awtwx Weaving House and co-authored the book *Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth*
- Co-founded the Mī tel'nexw Leadership Transformation, an online seminar to share teachings of Indigenous resilience

q^wənət, ANGELA GEORGE

- Lives and works in the səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nation in North Vancouver
- Has a passion for traditional canoe racing, weaving and cultural singing and dancing
- Dedicated her career to the betterment of First Nations people and communities
- Believes that practicing traditions, having a strong sense of identity and connection to ancestry is vital to community wellness
- Weaving holds a connection to her late mother, Cookie Thomas, and to her Squamish ancestry
- Completed the Master of Business Administration program at Simon Fraser University, with a final capstone project called "Weaving Governance," highlighting Tseil-Waututh traditional law and governance

Qwasen, DEBRA SPARROW

- Self-taught in Salish design, weaving and jewellery making
- Credits grandfather, Ed Sparrow, for stories that grounded her in her heritage
- Reconstructed lost weaving techniques by studying books and travelling to museums
- Co-founded a group of women weavers who rejuvenated Salish wool weaving
- Her weaving highlights the knowledge, skills and aesthetic forms of her ancestors

GRADES 4-12 | WHO ARE THE ARTISTS?

PRE-TOUR ACTIVITY

STUDENT WORKSHEET (FILL IN THE CHART WITH THE FOLLOWING)

	PERSONAL INFORMATION	INFLUENCE	INTERESTING FACT	AN ARTWORK
Chepximiya Siyam' CHIEF JANICE GEORGE				
Skwetsimeltxw WILLARD "BUDDY" JOSEPH				
q^wənat, ANGELA GEORGE				
Qwasen, DEBRA SPARROW				

ALL AGES | WEAVING NATURE

INSPIRED BY q^wənət, ANGELA GEORGE



“Our responsibility here in the present is to maintain the integrity and the knowledge and the wisdom of seven generations back so that it will sustain itself for seven generations to come.”

—q^wənət, ANGELA GEORGE

OBJECTIVE

To create a weaving with materials found from nature

DISCUSSION

“Rivers have flowed over this land since time out of mind, giving life to the people and all living things. Rivers hold ancient knowledge and wisdom and they will speak these to us, if we listen.

The River teaches us about strength and resilience in the face of adversity and change. Despite erosion, environmental impacts and barriers in its way, the River is resilient- flowing continuously, persevering, manoeuvring and carving a new path when necessary. Despite the erosion and degradation of our languages and traditional customs, The First People of these lands continue to restore traditional laws, ceremonies and languages of the lands and waters.

The River’s currents and ripples create influence, reminding us to be intentional with our words and actions to create positive ripples in our communities. Our relationship with the River can connect us to the rich knowledge, ancient wisdom and laws of our land and waters. The River has an important role and set of responsibilities to cleanse and sustain life.

ALL AGES | WEAVING NATURE

INSPIRED BY q^wənat, ANGELA GEORGE

The River reminds us to listen with our hearts and minds, to strengthen ourselves so that we too can uphold our roles and responsibilities, to fulfill our vital role in sustaining knowledge from one generation to the next. We learn from the River to uphold the ancient wisdom going back seven generations in order to sustain the vital knowledge for seven generations to come. The rock, sediment, the salmon and all the life within the River represent wealth and interdependence, reminding us of a time when our survival depended on sharing and living in harmony. The tree design in the weaving features roots and branches, living in harmony. The tree design in the weaving features roots and branches, demonstrating that all life is interconnected and highlighting the importance of reciprocity.

Like the River, we must persevere, cleanse and go deep within to heal and restore balance and harmony within ourselves and with all living things. This weaving and its intricate designs and patterns weave our paths together with the journey and ancient knowledge of the River. Rivers have mouths, and they will speak to us, if we listen."

—q^wənat, ANGELA GEORGE

MATERIALS

- 3–4 fallen twigs (about 6" to 10" long), or find a twig that already has a "V" shape.
- Yarn or twine
- Scissors
- Found natural materials (such as pine needles, grass, flowers and/or leaves)

PROCESS

- As a class, read and discuss the story Angela George has shared about her weaving, *Rivers Have Mouths* (2021).

Questions to consider: What is she asking us to think about? What lessons can we learn if we listen to the river? Where can you find examples of how we are interconnected with nature?

- Discuss the artwork (p. 19). Angela George has said many times that what you will see in the design of her weavings is reflections of the land and water.

Questions to consider: Where do you see representations of nature? What shapes do you see that make you say that? What other shapes and patterns can you find representing nature? Does colour play an important role? Why or why not? How do the design elements convey the story, knowledge and lessons George has shared with us about the river?

- In Coast Salish culture, a special link exists between the past, present and future. One example is connecting seven generations past with those seven generations in the future. The connection between the past and future rests with those of us living today, in the present. Why do you think this is important in Coast Salish culture and to the artist? Can Salish wool weavings play an important role in connecting the past and the future? Why or why not?
- Go on a walk to collect leaves, twigs, flowers, feathers, grass and other natural materials that you want to use for this project. Think about your own stories, experiences or lessons. How can you share what's important to you with the materials you find in nature? What materials from nature can represent these things to you?
- Make a simple shape with the twigs that you found. For example, a triangle. This shape will be your base on which you will wrap the yarn for your weaving.
- Tie the twigs together at the points where they meet using a 4-inch piece of yarn. You can do this by winding the yarn or twine around the two twigs and knotting once it is securely fastened.
- Cut a piece of yarn or twine about 2 feet in length.
- Tie one end of the yarn onto one of the twig connection points.
- Wrap the yarn horizontally around the twig base from the top to bottom, looping the yarn around twice before **going back** to the other side each time. Do this until the yarn is about 4' from its end. Tie this short tail in place onto one of the twigs.

ALL AGES | WEAVING NATURE

INSPIRED BY q^wənət, ANGELA GEORGE

- Weave or tuck the grass, pine needles, flowers and/or leaves through the yarn or twine that's horizontally wrapped around the base. Think of the pattern and shape designs you can create weaving your natural materials.
- Title your work. If you want, share the story you were thinking about while weaving.
- Display your works in your classroom.

OPTION FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS: Educators can hot glue the twigs together to create the frame.

CONCLUSION

- What elements did you consider from Angela George's work?
- What similarities and differences do you notice in the finished class projects?
- Discuss the process. How easy or hard was it to create the work?
- What are some of the techniques you discovered?
- What patterns or other unique characteristics do you see in each other's work?
- Were you able to make connections to nature to tell a story or share a lesson? Why or why not?
- If you were to do this project again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?



ALL AGES | GEOMETRIC DESIGN COLLAGE

INSPIRED BY Qwasen, DEBRA SPARROW



“Our responsibility here in the present is to maintain the integrity and the knowledge and the wisdom of seven generations back so that it will sustain itself for seven generations to come.”

—QʷƏNAT, ANGELA GEORGE

OBJECTIVE

Using collage techniques, geometric shapes and repeated patterns and colours, create a design for a weaving which has personal connections to the land.

MATERIALS

- Construction paper in a variety of colours
- Scissors
- Glue
- Large sheet of white or black paper

DISCUSSION

“I understand that people recognize the status and success of the weaving, but it is more than just the success of the weaving. What is truly important is the knowledge and the integrity of the people from which the weavings come.”

—Qwasen, Debra Sparrow

Debra Sparrow is a master weaver whose work has been collected and exhibited nationally and internationally. She has said: “I understand that people recognize the status and success of the weaving, but it is more than just the success of the weaving. What is truly important is the knowledge and the integrity of the people from which the weavings come.”

Ancestral Indigenous knowledge is vital to Sparrow because the work she is doing as a weaver today wasn’t even part of her community when she was growing up. When she was young, the techniques of Salish weaving were lost to the Musqueam Nation due to the interruption caused by residential schools and colonialism. Residential schools and the potlatch ban prevented the ancestral knowledge of weaving from being passed on from one generation to the next, so it was an absent practice in the community.

In her teens, Sparrow spent five years living in Alert Bay and was inspired by the Northern people. Even though they were not allowed to practice their culture because of residential schools and colonialism, they went underground, defying the interruption residential schools and colonialism were trying to impose: “They kept dancing, singing when no one was around.” She attended feasts there in what was at the time the only big house on the coast, and when Sparrow went to her first potlatch in ‘Namgis territory, she was taken aback by the beauty and power. She was in awe of them.

ALL AGES | GEOMETRIC DESIGN COLLAGE

INSPIRED BY Qwasen, DEBRA SPARROW

When she came back to Musqueam territory, Sparrow felt a need to find her roots. She wanted to know what her place was in the world. She began to do her own research by asking questions of her grandfather, Ed Sparrow, who had witnessed the forcible removal of the Musqueam people from Stanley Park. He told her “300 years of stories,” and Sparrow remembers: “He would show me our old village sites. He would tell me what was valuable to our people.” His stories grounded her and enabled her to hear the voices of her ancestors.

With no living weavers to teach a new generation, Sparrow attended a Salish weaving course at the Vancouver Indian Centre (now the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre). She then co-founded a group of women weavers in the 1980s, who rejuvenated the Salish weaving tradition using research to reconstruct the lost weaving techniques. Sparrow studied Salish wool weavings in museums, looking closely at the form, line and techniques of her ancestors, which led her to stories about her people and past. As she learned about the materials her people used to make blankets, she learned about the animals, plants, medicines and the knowledge her people carried through time and space. It became a journey to reconnect with her roots and find purpose through the weaving of her ancestors.

Her grandfather had told her, “Know who you are, know where you came from.” While she weaves, Sparrow thinks of her ancestors. Sparrow explains: “when I stand in front of my loom, and I’m working and creating, I’m with them. I’m not here anymore. I’m back in time, and I’m thinking of the women, and they’re whispering to me and guiding me.”

Today, Sparrow is known for her pivotal role in the ongoing revival of Musqueam weaving. Her work is connected to her heritage, and her hope is to educate others about the beauty and integrity of her people’s history through her art. As for her own success, she says: “To me, success is standing on my blankets, and knowing who I am.”

EXPLORE THIS VIDEO

- poem by Qwasen, DEBRA SPARROW

PROCESS

- Discuss why Coast Salish weaving was interrupted.
- Why do you think it has been important to Debra Sparrow and other Coast Salish artists to revive their cultural weaving practices?
- Why is her grandfather’s advice (“Know who you are, know where you come from”) important?
- Look closely at Debra Sparrow’s work, *swəwqʷaʔ* (*Blanket*) (2018). Consider these questions: What do you notice? What shapes do you see? Do you see any patterns in this weaving? What colours do you see in the work? What connections can you make to the land? What shapes do you see that make you say that?
- Discuss connections you have to the land. Consider these questions: Where is a special place on the land you feel most comfortable? Maybe you like to swim in lakes, hike in the forest or climb mountains? Maybe you connect to nature through a desire to protect the environment or through an interest in the animals living on the land? Maybe your story is in the cityscapes built on the land or in the sky above looking at the clouds? Maybe you connect to the land through the activities you enjoy on it?
- Salish weavers use geometric shapes, repeated patterns and symbolic colours when thinking about their designs. How can you tell your story using geometric shapes and patterns in your own design for a weaving?
- Place a large sheet of white or black paper on your desk. This paper is the base on which you will build your composition. A composition is how you place the elements on your paper.
- Pick a few sheets of coloured construction paper that you think will help tell the story of your connection to the land.

ALL AGES | GEOMETRIC DESIGN COLLAGE

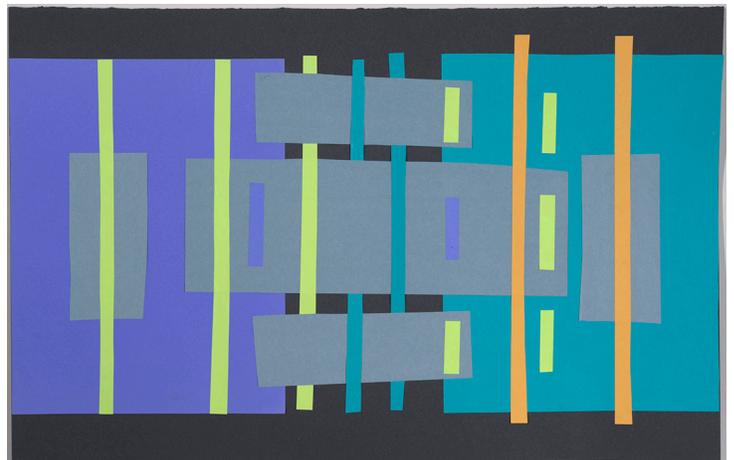
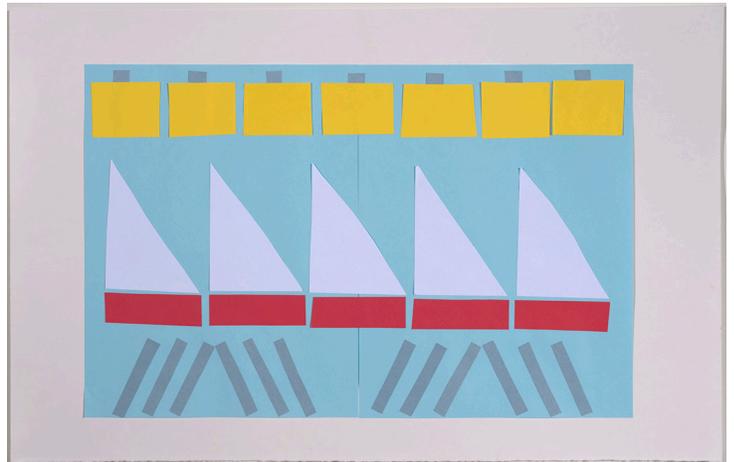
INSPIRED BY Qwasen, DEBRA SPARROW

- With your scissors, cut out geometric shapes that represent elements of your landscape and story.
- Place the shapes on your large paper, and then move them around to create a pattern. Continue to add elements until you are satisfied with the composition.
- Once you are satisfied with your design, glue the elements in place.
- Title your work.
- Optional: write a story to go with your work.
- Display your finished work in the classroom.



CONCLUSION

- What elements from Debra Sparrow's weaving did you consider in your design?
- Look at all the artworks your class has created. How are they similar and different?
- Discuss the process. How easy or hard was it to create the work?
- What are some of the techniques you discovered?
- If you were to do this project again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?



ALL AGES | UNDERSTANDING

INSPIRED BY Chepximiya Siyam' CHIEF JANICE GEORGE

AND Skwetsimeltxw WILLARD "BUDDY" JOSEPH

"My Grandmother gave me the teachings that came along with the weavings. I don't want anyone to forget this story. I worry there is not enough time to pass along this history and knowledge to my child and grandchildren. These stories are more than just stories. This is our history, our culture, and teachings. To pass them on to our children is so important."

- Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George

EXPLORE THIS VIDEO

TEDxWhistler talk by Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George

OBJECTIVE

Watch Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George's TEDxWhistler talk, "The spirit moves like a storm" (starting at the 5:59 mark), or read the story below. You will learn about George's role in the return of her ancestors, the storms that followed and how each weaving tells a story.

DISCUSSION

In 2003, Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George and her husband Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph learned the traditional weaving of the Squamish people. At that time there was only one weaver in their Squamish Nation, and they were determined to teach as many people as they could so that weaving would never slip into history. Chief George explains, "Learning to weave and the experience afterwards truly changed me."

In 2005, Chief George was chosen to do an internship at the Canadian Museum of History in Quebec. While there, she discovered the museum had the remains of two ancestors. These remains were taken from Xwáyxway, also known as Stanley Park in Vancouver. For thousands of years, Xwáyxway was the Squamish Nation's largest

village. These ancestral remains were between 4,000 to 8,000 years old. They knew this man and woman were important people because their heads were slanted by a practice of traditional head binding. Chief George notified the leaders of the Squamish Nation about these , and they said, "Bring them home." The Elders were consulted as well since this event was the first repatriation for the Squamish Nation. It was decided that they would do every ceremony that the Squamish Nation has ever practiced, including a viewing and a burial. A group of spiritual leaders, Elders and youth travelled to Quebec to bring their ancestors home to Xwáyxway. They had weavings made for the ancestors, wrapping their remains and conducting a spiritual ceremony before the flight back to Vancouver. Because the early morning flight left before the museum opened, Chief George ended up in the hotel room with her ancestors overnight. "Before I went to bed, I told them, I'm honoured to be here with you. If you have anything to say to me, please give me the message now before I go to sleep."

When remembering bringing home her ancestors, Chief George says: "It was a life-changing moment. I was taking care of my ancestors. The same ancestors who thousands of years ago, took care of the land and my people. And in doing so, took care of me. It was so powerful and beautiful, a feeling I will never, ever forget."

On the day the ancestors were to be buried, there was an unexpected snowstorm.

George remembers: "The ceremony and the snow was magical. It was so quiet. An eagle and a raven came and they circled above as we laid those ancestors to rest. They were home." George's grandmother had told her that, whenever a Chief dies, there is a major storm, so the storm was not surprising to her.

ALL AGES | UNDERSTANDING

INSPIRED BY Chepximiya Siyam' CHIEF JANICE GEORGE

AND Skwetsimeltxw WILLARD "BUDDY" JOSEPH



Another storm occurred after the ceremonies in December of 2006. An historic windstorm ripped through Stanley Park. It knocked down thousands of trees, and Xwáyxway was one of the most affected areas. While the news was presenting the storm as a tragedy, George thought back to her grandmother's words, and looked at the windstorm from another perspective: "Many of us only see a windstorm as destructive, nature's wrath, something to hunker down from and wait to blow over. But what if a windstorm also holds an important meaning? What if it teaches us something? What if from that destruction comes renewal?" She saw the windstorm as a renewal, instead of destruction. "The presence of my ancestors was reasserted. A balance restored. That experience and reviving our weaving changed me. Bringing the ancestors and the weaving back to my people was so important to me."

When describing the weaving she created with her husband, Willard "Buddy" Joseph, Chief George shares: "This weaving tells the story of my ancestors' journey

and the windstorm. The red ochre colour columns represent the ancestors. The trees on the top, they're green triangles, represent the fallen trees in Xwáyxway. The white going across represents the snowstorm that happened in Squamish. The yellow represents the storm as well, and the white [diagonals] represent the wind blowing across."

There are people who still thank Chief George for bringing their ancestors home. It is very special to her: "A Chief is someone who is a servant of the people, represents their family and people when needed." And through this experience, Chief George feels she has had the privilege and honour to do that: "That time was a time of huge growth for me. I learned how it felt to contribute to my people. It changed my life."

PROCESS

In small groups, answer the following questions about the memories that Chief Janice George shared.

1. What experiences did Chief Janice George say changed her life?
2. Why were these experiences so significant to her personally and to her Squamish community?
3. How did Chief Janice George's perspective of the Stanley Park windstorm differ from the media's?
4. What are the different parts of the storms shown in the weaving?
5. How does this story show the importance of Coast Salish weaving tradition?
6. Chief Janice George and Willard "Buddy" Joseph are determined to teach weaving to as many people as they can so that it will never slip into history. Why is this important?
7. Chief Janice George and Willard "Buddy" Joseph gave permission for students to draw from their weavings as a way to learn from them. Use coloured pencil and paper to look closely and make a sketch of this weaving, paying special attention to the details that Chief Janice George described in her talk.

FURTHER LEARNING

TEACHER AND STUDENT RESOURCES

WEBSITES

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools>

<https://skwalwen.com/blogs/news/chief-janice-george-on-what-feeds-her-spirit>

<https://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2023/06/artist-s-weaving-honours-spirit-of-indigenous-business-program.html>

<https://salishseasentinel.ca/2020/01/artist-weaves-tsleil-waututh-governance-model/>

https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/musqueam/debra_sparrow.html

<https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/2009-11-17-Coast-Salish-Fast-Facts.pdf>

VIDEO

https://www.ted.com/talks/chief_janice_george_the_spirit_moves_like_a_storm

BOOKS

Baird, Jill Rachel; Johnson, Elizabeth Lominska, Musqueam Weavers Source Book, 2002. Vancouver, BC: Museum of Anthropology at University of British Columbia.

Leslie H. Tepper, Janice George and Willard Joseph, Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth, 2017. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.L

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