

INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
FOR GRADES 5–12

Land & Indigenous Worldviews

through the art of

Norval Morrisseau

**REFLECT ON RELATIONSHIPS
WITH THE LAND**

TEACHER INTRODUCTION

Using Norval Morrisseau's art as a starting point, this independent activity will explore Indigenous worldviews about the land. This activity has been written to complement the Art Canada Institute online art book [Norval Morrisseau: Life & Work](#) by Carmen Robertson and adapted from the Teacher Resource Guide "Learn about Land & Indigenous Worldviews through the art of Norval Morrisseau." For additional learning materials, please see the Art Canada Institute collection of [Teacher Resource Guides](#).

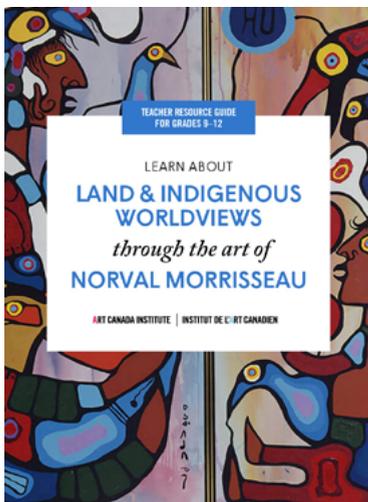
In this activity, students will analyze Morrisseau's paintings to reflect on interdependent relationships among people, animals, plants, and the Earth.

Within this activity, your students will have the opportunity to engage in critical discussion. Several platforms, such as Jamboard, Parlay, and Flipgrid, may be used to help foster rich dialogue between students throughout this activity.

Students will also be given the opportunity to share their work with their peers at the end of this activity. Applications for creating a communal gallery space include CoSpaces Edu, Google Classroom, and Seesaw.

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 5–12 Visual Arts
- Grades 9–12 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies



COMING 2021

ADAPTED FROM

Learn about Land & Indigenous Worldviews through the art of Norval Morrisseau

Grades 9 to 12

THEMES

- Contemporary First Nations art
- Indigenous activists
- Indigenous worldviews
- Land and the environment



Spirituality was very important to Morrisseau, and he brought shamanism into his art.



EDUCATION:
Residential school
and public school



Morrisseau was the oldest of five children.

GET TO KNOW THE ARTIST



BEST KNOWN FOR:
Creating a unique style of painting with bright colours and strong lines



“ We can learn how to heal people with colour... Many times people tell me that I’ve cured them of something... It was the colour of the painting that did that. ”



Morrisseau was the subject of two National Film Board of Canada documentary films.

NORVAL MORRISSEAU

(COPPER THUNDERBIRD)

Morrisseau worked to further awareness of Indigenous art by taking part in a series of educational workshops at local schools.



BORN: March 14, 1931
DIED: December 2, 2007
PLACE OF BIRTH: Fort William (Thunder Bay), Ontario
PLACE OF DEATH: Toronto



INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY

REFLECT ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE LAND

Anishinaabe artist Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007) is considered by many to be the Mishomis, or grandfather, of contemporary Indigenous art in Canada. Throughout his career, he explored ways of thinking about the land, and many of his most famous paintings emphasize the idea of land as a relation; Morrisseau believed that people live in relationship with animals, plants, the Earth, and the spiritual world, a conviction shared by many Indigenous communities. In this activity, you will analyze Morrisseau's paintings to reflect on interdependent relationships among people, animals, plants, and the Earth.

Materials Needed

- Computer, iPad, etc.
- Paper
- Pencils

Learning Goals

1. I can explain the significance of Norval Morrisseau's style.
2. I can use my critical thinking and creative skills to analyze a painting by Norval Morrisseau.
3. I can use proper terminology for the elements and principles of design in both oral and written responses.
4. I can reflect on how interdependent relationships among people, animals, plants, and the Earth are part of my own lived experience.
5. I can show respect and cultural sensitivity when discussing worldviews and lived experience and analyzing an artwork.

Success Criteria

1. My observations identify specific aspects of Norval Morrisseau's paintings.
2. My reflection presents thoughtful observations about my own connection to land and the environment.
3. My reflection incorporates precise examples and research about the land I live in.
4. My written work is thoughtful, clear, and edited.
5. I am respectful and use appropriate language in my responses on the discussion board.



Norval Morrisseau, *Water Spirit*, 1972, acrylic on brown kraft paper, 81 x 183 cm. Collection of Canadian Museum of History, Gatineau (III-G-1102).

LEARNING PLAN

Step 1: 5 min

Watch the Art Canada Institute learning video on Norval Morriseau.

<https://vimeo.com/488322959>

Think about what you found interesting about artist Norval Morriseau. Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication. Treat this space as you would a class discussion. Write clearly, structuring your thoughts carefully and paying attention to proper writing conventions.

Step 2: 10 min

Look at Morriseau's *The Storyteller: The Artist and His Grandfather*, 1978, and answer the following questions:

- What are some of the different figures that are connected by the lines?
- Why do you think Morriseau used lines to outline figures and to connect them together?

Post your observations on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication.

Step 3: 15 min

Read about Norval Morriseau's [use of lines](#) in *Norval Morriseau: Life & Work* and answer the following questions:

- What is significant about how Morriseau uses lines in *The Storyteller: The Artist and His Grandfather*? What makes you say that? Provide specific examples within your written response.

If requested, share your observations with your teacher or post to a collaborative discussion board.

Step 4: 10 min

Look at the lines in *Children with Tree of Life* and *Shaman and Apprentice*, both c.1980–85 ([page 3](#)), and identify different interdependent relationships in these works (for instance, people are connected to animals and trees because we all require air). Write down at least two observations for each painting.

If requested, share your observations with your teacher or post to a collaborative discussion board.



Still image of Norval Morriseau from *The Paradox of Norval Morriseau*, directed by Henning Jacobson and Duke Redbird, 1974. © 1974 National Film Board of Canada. All rights reserved.



Norval Morriseau, *The Storyteller: The Artist and His Grandfather*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, diptych: each panel 176.3 x 96.6 cm. Collection of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Gatineau (151805 A-B). Photograph by Lawrence Cook.

Step 5: 30 min

After reviewing your observations, select a single relationship with the land to focus on, and write a brief reflection on how you experience this relationship in your everyday life. Cite specific examples, and where possible, incorporate research on the environment in your community. Write clearly and respectfully, structuring your thoughts carefully and paying attention to proper writing conventions and proper terminology. Be sure to edit your work before you submit it to the collaborative classroom space.

Step 6: 10 min

Take time to explore the collaborative classroom space. Review at least two other statements and provide your peers with two stars (something they have captured well) and a wish (something you wish you had seen in their work) as feedback.



Norval Morriseau, *Children with Tree of Life*, c.1980–85, acrylic on canvas, 132.7 x 189.2 cm. Collection of Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Mr. Nicholas John Pustina, Mr. Robert Edward Zelinski, and Mr. Kenny Alwyn Whent, 1985. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Hamilton.



Norval Morriseau, *Shaman and Apprentice*, c.1980–85, acrylic on canvas, 135.2 x 189.2 cm. Collection of Art Gallery of Hamilton, Gift of Mr. Nicholas John Pustina, Mr. Robert Edward Zelinski, and Mr. Kenny Alwyn Whent, 1985. Courtesy of Art Gallery of Hamilton.