



Niitsitapi Pi'kssii (Blackfoot Fancy Beings)

A TREX SW Travelling Exhibition Featuring Artworks by
Kalum Teke Dan & Ryan Jason Allen Willert



Niitsitapi Pi'kssii (Blackfoot Fancy Beings)

Curated by Ashley Slemming and Diana Frost

Featuring artwork by Kalum Teke Dan & Ryan Jason Allen Willert

Blackfoot animal teachings courtesy of
Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Travelling Exhibition program acknowledges that the artistic activity we support takes place on the territories of Treaties 6, 7, and 8. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who have lived on and cared for these lands for generations, and we are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our relationships with Indigenous communities and growing our shared knowledge and understanding.





RYAN JASON ALLEN WILLERT...

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Three Feathers
Kalum Teke Dan
2011
Acrylic painting
60.96 x 81.28 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Skunk
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Left image:

Pronghorn
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Black-Billed Magpie
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Bones of Our Past
Kalum Teke Dan
2016
Acrylic painting
50.8 x 76.2 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

About

The Travelling Exhibition Program (Trex)

Since 1980, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) has supported a provincial travelling exhibition program. The Trex program strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy fully developed exhibitions in schools, libraries, healthcare centres, and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province.

The Trex program assists in making both the AFA's extensive art collection and the artwork of contemporary Alberta artists available to Albertans. Four regional organizations coordinate the program for the AFA:

REGION ONE — Northwest: The Art Gallery of Grande Prairie

REGION TWO — Northeast / North Central: The Art Gallery of Alberta

REGION THREE — Southwest: The Alberta Society of Artists

REGION FOUR — Southeast: The Esplanade Arts & Heritage Centre

The Alberta Society of Artists (ASA)

The Alberta Society of Artists is a large part of Alberta's visual arts history, through its members, its exhibitions, and other initiatives. The ASA was founded in 1931, making it the oldest society of juried professional artists in the province.

The ASA is an active membership of professional visual artists who strive for excellence. Through exhibitions, education, and communication the society increases public awareness of the visual arts.

The ASA is contracted by the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to develop and circulate the Trex exhibitions to communities throughout southwest Alberta.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA)

Beginning in 1972, the Alberta Art Collection was proposed as an opportunity to support and encourage Alberta artists by purchasing original works, as well as creating a legacy collection for the people of Alberta.

As a crown agency of the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act was later established in 1991 with a mandate to support the arts in Alberta. This mandate is accomplished by providing persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta; fostering and promoting the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists; collecting, preserving, and displaying works of art by Alberta artists; and encouraging artists resident in Alberta to continue their work.

Colouring It Forward

This exhibition was co-curated by Colouring It Forward founder Diana Frost (see Biographies), and as part of this exhibition, TREX is partnering with Colouring It Forward to share the important work the organization is doing.

Colouring It Forward is a social enterprise that includes a not-for-profit organization called CIF Reconciliation Society and a business called Colouring It Forward Inc. The purpose of the social enterprise is to advance education on Indigenous issues, art, language, and culture through a grassroots approach.

CIF Reconciliation Society works in collaboration with organizations such as IndigeSTEAM, Stardale Women's Group, and more to deliver art-based workshops and events that provide education on Indigenous ways of knowing and promote healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It organizes an annual Orange Shirt Day walk and event called Pokaiks – the Children.





Spirit Guide
Kalum Teke Dan
2016
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Exhibition Statement

Niitsitapi Pi'kssii (Blackfoot Fancy Beings) is an exhibition featuring artworks that depict animals, or fancy beings, significant to Blackfoot culture by two contemporary Blackfoot artists, Ryan Jason Allen Willert and Kalum Teke Dan. Blackfoot teachings about these animals are a large part of the exhibition, which would not have been possible if not for the generous support of Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell.

To develop an understanding of balance and harmony in nature and the cycles of renewal that affect seasons of life, it is essential to observe the natural world and its animal cohabitants. This fact is well known in Blackfoot culture. According to Blackfoot author Betty Bastien, the knowledge of the Siksikaitsitapi (or, the Blackfoot Nation) is organized according to thousands of years of observation and participatory relationship with the natural world.¹ This knowledge highlights a reciprocal relationship with the land and the creatures that occupy it; four-legged fur-bearing beings, birds, fish, and humans alike share a kinship with the land, the sky, and all the environments we inhabit. It is with this in mind that this exhibition features a small selection of animals, each with its own significance, story, and teachings.

Through a number of consultations with the artists and Camille (Pablo) Russell, this exhibition and its educational content have been developed to include accounts from Blackfoot knowledge as well as basic information about each of the animals, including physical descriptions, habitats, diets, and more. *Niitsitapi Pi'kssii (Blackfoot Fancy Beings)* emphasizes how Blackfoot language, storytelling, and knowledge-sharing has intrinsic value when it comes to understanding the natural world.

Bastien explains in her book *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi* that what is understood as “research, knowledge, and truth” in Blackfoot culture is profoundly different from Eurocentric thought. It goes beyond trying to come up with rational explanations as an attempt to reduce the mysteries of nature to a finite set of rules and laws that grant order to the cosmos. Instead, Bastien says, “Niitsitapi epistemologies [the branches of philosophy concerned with knowledge] are founded upon generating and creating knowledge premised on the goal of existing in harmony with the natural world.”² When viewing the exhibition, audiences are invited to reflect on this approach to understanding nature, and to consider the value of building more harmonious relationships with our animal kin.

¹ Betty Bastien, “I: Context,” in *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 39.

² Ibid.

Biographies

Blackfoot First Nation Elder

Camille (Pablo) Russell, also called “Shooting in the Air”

Born in 1966, native to the Southern Alberta Blackfoot Blood Tribe, Pablo grew up in the old ways with his grandparents who lived true to the traditional life, where oral traditions of knowledge and wisdom were a vital part of belonging, learning to walk a good road, and cultural preservation. Pablo has pledged his life in service to these ways, spreading deep and simple truths that cut through the modern haze for people all over the world. Pablo possesses very broad historical and practical knowledge concerning the Prairie Indians’ original way of life, and like his grandparents he is an excellent storyteller.

As a young man, Pablo Sun-Danced for eleven years on *The Poor Man’s Sundance*, led by Morris Crow, Last Tail Feathers. He continued his apprenticeship in the Sun Dance ways with his teacher Morris Crow, and later got the rights to run his own Sun Dance.

In 2007, Pablo established the *Path of the Buffalo Sun Dance* – a piercing Sun Dance which is still held every summer in Southern Alberta.

It was the buffalo who came to Pablo in a powerful vision quest in Writing-on-Stone who asked him to go and teach Europeans about the buffalo and its qualities.

He went on his first trip to Germany in 1994 and since then he has travelled across Europe as an international speaker and facilitator keynoting at conferences and holding workshops and traditional Native ceremonies for both small and very large audiences.

Based on the buffalo and the Native traditions, Pablo teaches people about leadership and wholistic wellness, specializing in mental health and personal and spiritual development through storytelling and oral tradition.

“When I was granted the role of leader in the Sun Dance, I continued to learn from the Sun Dance leaders about the ‘warrior ways,’ as well as the ‘way of the holy pipe.’ These teachings are the foundation for understanding the four parts of a human being and ways of centring. My leader followed our oral tradition in teaching the medicine wheel, but he put this knowledge onto a diagram, to support teaching the principles to modern-thinking people. After learning for thirteen years, I was granted the right to teach on my own. My workshops are based on this, and other tools, which have helped many people to see things that they have to correct and take new directions, not only in their lives, but in their work, and to take the steps necessary to improve their quality of life.”

Following the guidance from his vision quests, Pablo spent eighteen years in Europe before he came back home to help his people in a variety of roles, including as a support worker for the Indian Residential School, an IRS Elder with Treaty 7 Management Corp., a spiritual counsellor at the Elbow River Healing Lodge, a unique AHS health-care facility dedicated to Indigenous people, and as a Native Coordinator at the Calgary Remand Centre. “All healing, all thanks go to the Creator. He doctors.”

Over the past twenty years, Pablo has lectured in Canada and Europe on mental health, coaching, traditional herbs, and leadership management. He has been invited yearly serving as an Elder to the Munich International Healers Congress and has been awarded grants to preserve and forward his work for the Creator. His workshops are based on the principle of “Follow the Buffalo.” To native people, the buffalo represents the qualities of perseverance, facing the storms of life and walking into them so they pass quicker.

Blackfoot First Nation Artist

Ryan Jason Allen Willert

Ryan Jason Allen Willert is a professional artist and muralist living in Red Deer, Alberta. Ryan was born and raised in Southern Alberta. Although he was brought up in a non-Indigenous community, he has since reconnected with his Blackfoot roots (Siksika Nation) carrying many titles. Ryan learned the art of black-ink drawing and sales from his father Richard (Dicky) Stimson, another artist from the Siksika Nation, and continues to grow as a traditional Blackfoot artist.

He was one of two artists featured in the best-selling book *Colouring It Forward – Discover Blackfoot Nation Art and Wisdom*. He has also completed a number of large murals around the province of Alberta. Ryan was labelled Artist of the Year in *New Tribe Magazine* in 2009. He was also one of the collaborative artists for *O Canada Reads* colouring book and was selected to participate in “Three Things for Canada,” where Calgary’s Mayor Nenshi challenged Canadians to perform three acts of service to the country in 2017. Later in 2017 Ryan was invited to one of the largest native arts festivals in Canada, the Adäka Cultural Festival, as one of the featured artists. He was then commissioned to complete an installation for the Canada Games in 2019. You can find numerous published articles about Ryan’s career, including the *Red Deer News Now* article pronouncing him as one of Alberta’s most prominent Blackfoot artists.

Some of Ryan’s more personal work can be found on the award-winning documentary *Sacred Transitions*, sponsored by TELUS, or in the 2019 special segment featured on APTN about Ryan’s life story and success as an artist.

Some of Ryan’s Indigenous-based murals and installations can be found throughout Alberta. He has designed three murals in three different schools for the Red Deer Catholic School Division. As well, he has completed four murals for the Calgary Board of Education. Below is a list of other murals/installations Ryan has done throughout his career:

- *Smudge Teachings*, 2006; the first five-piece Indigenous mural painted on Mount Royal University’s Main Street, in Calgary.
- *Path of the Buffalo*, 2017; mural displayed at the main entrance of the Centre for Sexuality (formerly Calgary Sexual Health Centre).
- *Blackfoot Teachings and Healings*, 2017; one of the largest murals located downtown in Red Deer.
- *The Otter*, 2018; mural can be found at the emergency room entrance of the Red Deer Regional Hospital.
- *“LGBTQIA2S” and tribal ways*, 2018; mural located on Little Gaetz in Red Deer at Turning Point.
- *The Old Sundance*, 2019; mural displayed at Morley Community School.
- *A Successful Hunt*, 2019; an installation for the City of Red Deer and Rotary Club, currently displayed on the Rotary Park walking trails.
- *Mother Earth*, 2019; a collaborative mural with the children of the community at the Forest Lawn Swimming Pool, Bob Bahan Aquatic & Fitness Centre, in Calgary.
- *Pipe Teachings*, 2020; completed with another collaborating artist, and is located at the John Howard Society in Calgary.
- *Blackfoot Medicine Wheel Teachings*, 2020; mural in Sylvan Lake.

Currently, Ryan is gaining international attention resulting in a Czech magazine publishing his work and life story in a four-page article. As well, Ryan is currently finishing up an installation for the City of Calgary, working on a mural for the City of Red Deer, and completing a project for the Calgary Zoo. This exhibition features six of his recent paintings from the last few years. During this time he has been keen to paint animals that are native to Blackfoot territory and to learn and spread knowledge about each of the animal’s meanings and teachings.

Blackfoot First Nation Artist

Kalum Teke Dan

Included in this exhibition are six paintings by Kalum Teke Dan. Each has been created over the last fifteen years of his career as an Indigenous artist based out of Calgary, Alberta. Kalum Teke Dan's ancestry is of the Blood Tribe in Southern Alberta. It is his connection to his traditional, spiritual, and cultural background that has inspired this body of work.

Dan grew up in Calgary with his mom, Joanne Dan, who has been supportive throughout his career that began in his teens. Dan is primarily self-taught, developing skills through observations, practice, and dedication to his craft. He works in oil, acrylic, and watercolour, choosing themes that reflect his unique perceptions of his spirituality and being Indigenous in modern-day society. His designs represent his own conceptualizations of the subjects he paints, whether it is an individual, a group, animals, or a compilation.

Dan has participated in large-scale events throughout the years, including showcasing at Vancouver Community College during the 2010 Winter Olympics and the Calgary Stampede at the Western Oasis Showcase in 2016 and 2017. His work is in the personal collections of several Canadian premiers, international leaders, and many of Canada's leading corporations and educational institutions. It has been displayed in art galleries across Canada and the US.

Dan has enjoyed sharing his work at Indigenous conferences, powwows, and events. In 2016, he created a body of work for a colouring book authored by Diana Frost, titled *Colouring It Forward – Discover Blackfoot Nation Art and Wisdom*, and he has been featured in Colouring It Forward calendars, journals, and clothing.

In the past five years, Dan has created many large public murals in Calgary and Edmonton. They include a mural for the Calgary Stampede Elbow River Camp, a mural on an exterior wall at 17th Avenue Framing, and a large mural in the lobby of the new City of Calgary Public Library, as well as on the new John Howard Society building, and he has recently put the final touches on one for Calgary City Hall.

Kalum Teke Dan has sent in a special thank-you to Ashley Slemming at the Alberta Society of Artists for the opportunity to showcase his work in this TREX exhibition and in this catalogue.

Curator

Ashley Slemming

Ashley Slemming is a Calgary-based curator and artist with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts). As the Program Manager and Curator for the Southwestern region of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition program (TREX), she curates four new exhibitions annually.

In the summer of 2015, Ashley worked as a Programming Assistant for Alberta Printmakers, where she planned and facilitated their annual Print It Yourself festival, including a first-time steamroller printmaking event in Calgary as part of Alberta Culture Days. In 2016, Ashley became the Director of the Marion Nicoll Gallery on campus at AUArts, where she developed a passion for amplifying the visual voices of artists and encouraging thoughtfulness and contemplation in exhibition contexts.

Her most recent curatorial projects include *Between the Cosmos* (2020), a solo exhibition of botanical artworks by visual artist Rocio Graham as part of the TREX program; *Unpacking IKG: 60 Years a Gallery* (2018), a research and archive-based exhibition at the Illingworth Kerr Gallery; and *Absence Inhabited* (2017), an online group exhibition of twenty-seven Albertan artists for Google Arts and Culture as part of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Emerging Curator Fellowship.

Co-Curator

Diana Frost

Originally from Quebec, Diana spent her teenage years in Western Africa, which was an early awakening to different cultures and the difficulties of living in a developing country. Following that experience, she obtained a Chemical Engineering degree from the University of Sherbrooke with the intention of helping people to improve their standard of living by working on water and sanitation projects.

Her first job was with Enbridge in Edmonton, where she also became the youngest Rotarian of her club, the Edmonton Avenue of Nations Rotary Club, at age twenty-six. She left Edmonton to volunteer in Peru, where she helped optimize existing water and sewer systems. At the end of her contract, she came back to Alberta to work for CAWST, with whom she pioneered the train-the-trainer programs on household water treatment projects throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Diana then worked on water distribution and treatment systems for consulting engineering firms in Calgary and joined the Rotary Club of Calgary Olympic.

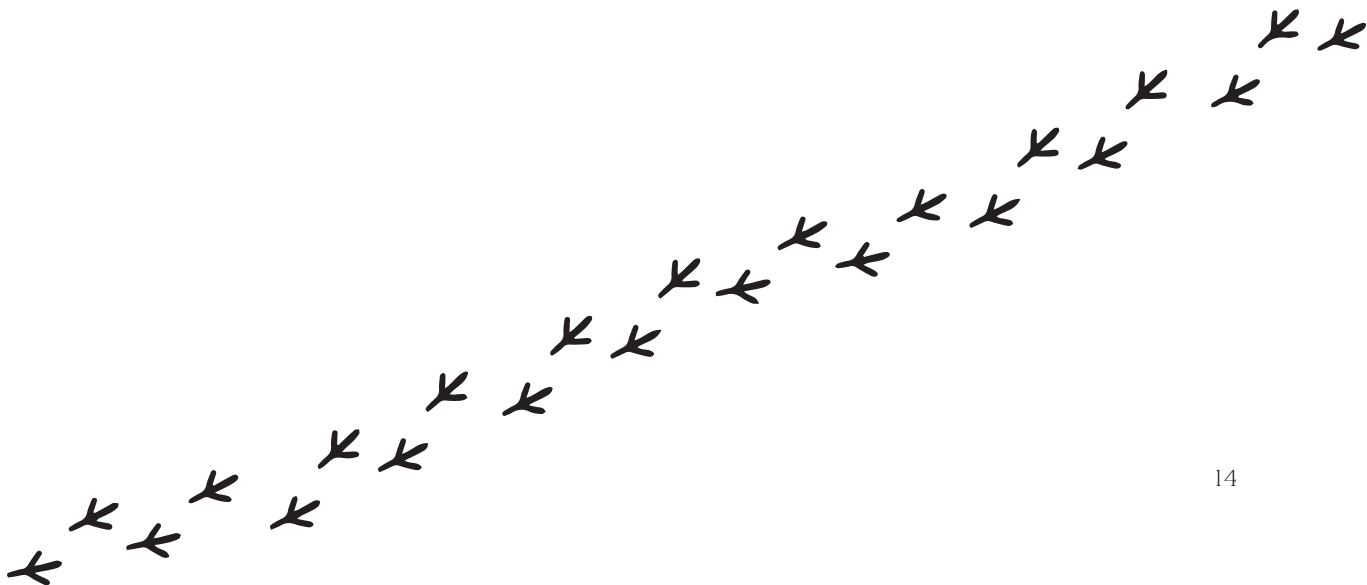
Aside from being an engineer, Diana is also an Algonquin Métis, an artist, and a musician. One morning in the spring of 2016, she woke up from a dream that had showed her the way to help Indigenous people – by founding the Colouring It Forward project.

Artworks and Animal Teachings

Over time, animal spirits have given Blackfoot people gifts and teachings on how to best govern their community. Blackfoot people who follow traditional ways accept to care for Beaver Bundles, to carry a Thunder Pipe, or join societies and in doing so, take on responsibilities for helping to manage their community and to carry forward the teachings of their ancestors. Blackfoot societies are named after animals and the activities carried out by their members are guided by their animal spirit. For example, the Brave Dogs' responsibilities are to maintain security around the camp – which requires courage. Males in the community cycle through the societies, starting this when they reach seven or eight years old. Every four years, they join an older society. Some examples of these societies are the Horns, the Brave Dogs, the Bull Society, and the Fox Society.

Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell shares why we need to be so grateful to animals for all they have given us: *“All these animals give us gifts because they pity us. We humans, we can't just walk around naked in nature and sleep in a cave. We have to have clothes, fire, shelter. Long ago the animals felt sorry for us because we couldn't live without these things. The animals felt sorry for us and gave us gifts. Today, we still practice the ceremonies that the animals gave us through Beaver Bundle, Horn Society, Buffalo Women, Piercing, the Holy Women, Thunder Pipe. All of these ceremonies are re-enactments of what happened long ago when they first gave us these gifts. We continue to give thanks to them every year and we ask them for healing, guidance, and support. It helps us to live close to nature and in a holy way.”*

– Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell





Bones of Our Past
Kalum Teke Dan
2016
Acrylic painting
50.8 x 76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Mai'stóó American Crow

Territory: Familiar over much of North America (Turtle Island); common year-round.

Habitat: Farmyards, woodland areas, and suburbia.

Food: Feeds on the ground and eats just about anything. Commonly eats earthworms, insects, and other small animals, seeds, and fruit but also garbage and other debris.

Interesting Facts: Highly social birds. Much like humans, they cooperate in family units to raise their young. They can collectively come up with solutions to problems, and they can be quite crafty in finding food.

Conservation Status: Common, not threatened.

Above information sourced from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.³

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: “The crow used to be white, a white eagle. Napi [‘old man,’ creator-trickster] was really mad at the crow so he caught him and rolled him around in ashes. That’s how the crow came to be black.”⁴

³ “American Crow: Overview,” All About Birds, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, accessed June 30, 2021, https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Crow/overview.

⁴ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Black-Billed Magpie
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Mamia'tsikimii

Black-Billed Magpie



Territory: Familiar over much of Western North America (Turtle Island); common year-round.

Habitat: Farmyards, woodland areas, and suburbia.

Food: Diet is varied but commonly eats insects – grasshoppers, caterpillars, flies, beetles, and others.

Interesting Facts: Historically followed bison herds and disappeared from the province during the time of the bison slaughters. They soon returned to the region, cleverly adapting to life in both rural and urban areas. They construct large, domed stick nests that conceal and protect their eggs and young from harsh weather and predators. They also mate for life and have been known to gather in “funerals.” When a magpie discovers one of its kin has died, it begins calling loudly to attract other magpies. Gatherings of cawing magpies (up to forty birds have been observed) may last for ten to fifteen minutes before the birds silently fly away.

Conservation Status: Common, not threatened.

Above information sourced from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.⁵

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: “Mamia'tsikimii is the magpie. They've always got something to eat. They're good luck birds. They're scavengers so they have food. Some people don't like them but they are crafty and very smart.”⁶

⁵ “Black-billed Magpie: Life History,” All About Birds, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, accessed July 1, 2021, https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-billed_Magpie/lifehistory.

⁶ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Left image

Spirit Guide
 Kalum Teke Dan
 2016
 Acrylic painting
 76.2 x 50.8 cm
 Image courtesy of the artist

Below image

Courage Within
 Kalum Teke Dan
 2014
 Acrylic painting
 60.96 x 81.28 cm
 Image courtesy of the artist





Makóyi Wolf

The grey wolf of North America (Turtle Island) includes several subspecies: the white arctic wolf, the red wolf of the southwest, the grey timber wolf of the eastern forests, and the big western wolf.

Territory: Central and northern Alberta.

Habitat: Boreal forests, tundra, and mountains.

Food: Diet consists mainly of hoofed animals, from bighorn sheep to bison, but will also eat smaller animals, such as beavers, snowshoe hares, birds, and mice. Occasionally they will expand their diet to include berries and insects, and, in the vicinity of humans, garbage and various livestock, from chickens to cattle.

Interesting Facts: As top predators, they play a valuable role in keeping wild ecosystems healthy. They can smell potential prey from over one and a half kilometres away, and they usually hunt as a pack. They capture fast mammals, such as deer and caribou, by running them down and throwing their weight against the animals to knock them off balance. Each pack member sings or howls at a slightly different pitch and is recognized by the others. Wolves can detect howls from up to ten kilometres away.

Conservation Status: Before humans spread throughout the globe, wolves were the single most widely distributed land mammal. Now in North America (Turtle Island), only the northern tier of Canada and parts of the US, including Alaska, are home to healthy populations of wolves. They are, however, not currently considered a threatened species.

Above information sourced from the Alberta Wilderness Association.⁷

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: “Makóyi is wolf. The wolf was the first one to put us into clans. There was a family that was left behind and the wolf brought them to his village. There they found the different animals and their clans and that is how we started to live in clans.”⁸

⁷ “Wolves,” Alberta Wilderness Association, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://albertawilderness.ca/issues/wildlife/wolves/#parentHorizontalTab1>.

⁸ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Not Forgotten
Kalum Teke Dan
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Piitaa

Golden Eagle



Territory: Widespread in North America (Turtle Island), Europe, and Asia.

Habitat: Open mountains, foothills, plains, and open country. Requires open terrain. In Alberta they are found over tundra, prairie, rangeland, or desert.

Food: Diet consists of mostly mammals ranging in size, from ground squirrels to prairie dogs, marmots, and jackrabbits. Sometimes preys on larger animals, such as foxes or young deer.

Interesting Facts: The golden eagle is one of the biggest and fastest birds of prey in North America (Turtle Island), weighing two and a half to seven kilograms and diving at speeds of over 240 kilometres per hour.⁹ Some will mate for life. In courtship, two birds circle high in the sky making shallow swoops at each other.

Conservation Status: Numbers have declined from historical levels, but current populations are thought to be stable.

Above information sourced from the National Audubon Society unless otherwise noted.¹⁰

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: “Piita is eagle, a golden eagle, and a bald eagle would be ksikkihkinipii-ta. The eagle is really important to the First Nations people who strive to achieve the status of wearing one of the feathers from this sacred bird. Also, they mate for life so some people get married and they have eagle feathers for that reason.”¹¹

⁹ “Golden Eagle,” Nature Conservancy of Canada, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/featured-species/birds/golden-eagle.html>.

¹⁰ Kenn Kaufman, “Golden Eagle,” adapted from *Lives of North American Birds*, National Audubon Society, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/golden-eagle>.

¹¹ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Loon
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Courtesy of the artist



Matsiisai'pii Common Loon

Territory: Found throughout most of Canada. During the non-breeding season, they may be seen along North America's (Turtle Island's) Pacific and Atlantic coasts, from Alaska to Newfoundland and Mexico. ¹²

Habitat: Wooded lakes, tundra ponds, coastal waters; in summer, mainly on lakes in coniferous forest zones, and also beyond the treeline onto open tundra. Chooses large lakes with ample room for takeoff and with a good supply of small fish. In winter, mainly on oceans, usually fairly shallow waters close to shore, and also on large lakes and reservoirs that remain ice free.

Food: Diet consists of mostly small fish, such as minnows. Also eats crustaceans, mollusks, aquatic insects, leeches, frogs, and sometimes aquatic plants.

Interesting Facts: Often considered a symbol of wilderness and solitude, the common loon is known for its haunting calls.

Conservation Status: It has disappeared from some former nesting areas owing to human disturbance on lakes in summer but is not officially considered a threatened species.

Above information sourced from the National Audubon Society unless otherwise noted. ¹³

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: "The loon is a sacred bird that is part of our Blackfoot ceremonies." ¹⁴

¹² "Common Loon," Nature Conservancy of Canada, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/featured-species/birds/common-loon.html>.

¹³ Kenn Kaufman, "Common Loon," adapted from *Lives of North American Birds*, National Audubon Society, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/common-loon>.

¹⁴ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Pronghorn
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist



Saa'kii'wa'kaa'sii Pronghorn

Territory: The pronghorn is the last wide-ranging native mammal on the prairies of North America (Turtle Island) and is not found anywhere else in the world.

Habitat: Grasslands, steppes, foothills, and deserts.

Food: Diet consists of grasses, sagebrush, and other prairie plants, such as cacti.

Interesting Facts: Can reach speeds of up to one hundred kilometres an hour and is the second-fastest mammal in the world after the cheetah. It is the fastest mammal in North America (Turtle Island).

Conservation Status: It is not currently considered a threatened species but has experienced a historic decline due to habitat destruction from fences, roads, and energy development, which threaten the animal's ability to safely follow ancestral migration pathways.¹⁵

Above information sourced from the Nature Conservancy of Canada unless otherwise noted.¹⁶

*Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: "Saa'kii'wa'kaa'sii is pronghorn. They live way out in the prairies and they taste like sage when you eat them. They are quite small and they are sacred animals. People have gotten gifts from them."*¹⁷

¹⁵ Dennis Jorgensen, "Pronghorn," World Wildlife Fund, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/pronghorn>.

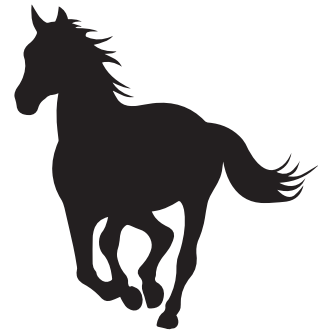
¹⁶ "Pronghorn," Nature Conservancy of Canada, accessed July 1, 2021, <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/featured-species/mammals/pronghorn.html>.

¹⁷ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Three Feathers
Kalum Teke Dan
2011
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Ponokáómitaa (Pinto) Horse



Territory: Horses now exist across the globe and are largely domesticated animals.

Habitat: As a domesticated animal, it lives primarily on farmland.

Food: Diet consists of grass and hay.

Interesting Facts: Pinto is a colour rather than a breed of horse. The only two recognized pinto coat colour patterns are tobiano and overo. Tobiano is when the horse's coat appears white with coloured spots and overo is when the horse appears coloured with white markings.¹⁸ Horses hold a place of honour in many cultures, as horses and humans have an ancient relationship. Horses are often respected for heroic feats in ancient battles or for the loyal services they have provided to humans.

Conservation Status: Not entirely applicable. Humans breed horses for domesticated purposes, so they are not considered a wild species with an attributable conservation status.

Above information sourced from the National Geographic Society unless otherwise noted.¹⁹

*From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: "Ponokaomitaa is horse. They changed our whole way of life. They are very valuable to us. The men would go on horse raids to prove themselves and count coup. Pinto horses were very desired by our people because of their different colours."*²⁰

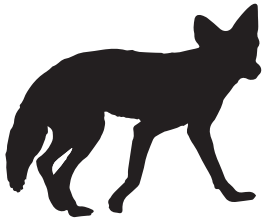
¹⁸ "Pinto Horse," International Museum of the Horse, accessed July 7, 2021, <http://imh.org/exhibits/online/breeds-of-the-world/north-america/pinto-horse>.

¹⁹ "Horse," National Geographic Society, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/facts/horse>.

²⁰ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Coyote
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist



Aapi'sii Coyote

Territory: Found from Alaska south into Central America, but especially on the Great Plains.

Habitat: Open areas, such as the prairie and desert. Sometimes they will venture into urban areas, avoiding residential, commercial, and industrial sites but locating remaining “natural” and wooded habitat fragments, such as those found in parks and golf courses. ²¹

Food: Their prey primarily consists of snowshoe hare and white-tailed deer. When prey is unobtainable, coyotes eat large quantities of wild berries and fruits.

Interesting Facts: It is an intelligent animal, with a reputation for craftiness and swiftness.

Conservation Status: Considered stable. Populations at the start of the twenty-first century were greater than ever before in North America (Turtle Island), which strongly demonstrates their ability to adapt and thrive in environments constantly altered by humans.

Above information sourced from *Encyclopaedia Britannica* unless otherwise noted. ²²

*From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: “The coyote is kind of a trickster. He fooled Napi when he bet him some food to see who could run fastest. The coyote pretended to be limping and when they started to run Napi left him behind and the coyote turned back and ate the food.”*²³

²¹ “General Information About Coyotes,” Cook County Urban Coyote Research Project, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://urbancoyotererearch.com/coyote-info/general-information-about-coyotes>.

²² Serge Lariviere, “Coyote,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/animal/coyote-mammal>.

²³ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Power Spirit
Kalum Teke Dan
2014
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Nitapikiaayo

Grizzly Bear



Territory: Found primarily in the western region of Canada.

Habitat: Ranges from dense forest to alpine meadow and arctic tundra.

Food: Their diet consists primarily of berries, plants, small mammals, and fish.

Interesting Facts: Although the grizzly bear is considered a meat eater, plants actually make up 80% to 90% of their diet.

Conservation Status: “In Canada, though historical records are lacking, the population of Grizzlies is suspected to have declined dramatically as a result of European settlement.”²⁴

Above information sourced from *Canadian Geographic* unless otherwise noted.²⁵

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: “Nitapikiaayo – that means real bear – that’s the first bear that we saw when we moved to the prairie. The grizzlies they lived all over the prairie; they hunted the buffalo. And we had to make peace with the grizzly so we could live on the prairie in peace. And because we made peace with the grizzly, we don’t kill bears and they don’t kill us – that was the agreement back then.”²⁶

²⁴ Claire Smith, “Grizzly Bear,” Nature Canada, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://naturecanada.ca/discover-nature/endangered-species/grizzly-bear>.

²⁵ “Animal Facts: Grizzly Bear,” *Canadian Geographic*, June 15, 2006, <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/animal-facts-grizzly-bear>.

²⁶ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Skunk
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2020
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist



Aapiikayii Skunk

Territory: Striped skunks can be found in every Canadian province except for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Habitat: Prefers open areas of mixed forests and grasslands. Usually dwells in the abandoned dens of other animals. They very rarely dig their own dens. They can also be found living under porches and in cellars in urban areas.

Food: Their diet consists of plants, eggs, and small mammals. A skunk's summer diet includes mainly insects, including grasshoppers, crickets, and insect larvae.

Interesting Facts: The foul-smelling spray of a skunk can reach up to six metres and is strong enough to be carried almost one kilometre by wind. Skunks use their smelly spray to ward off predators. They are not aggressive, preferring to retreat from any enemy.

Conservation Status: Not currently threatened, and they have adapted well to human-dominated landscapes and habitats.

Above information sourced from the Nature Conservancy of Canada.²⁷

*From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: "In the old days they put the scent of skunk on things they didn't want animals to climb, like burial platforms."*²⁸

²⁷ "Striped Skunks," Nature Conservancy of Canada, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/featured-species/mammals/striped-skunk.html>.

²⁸ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.



Goose
Ryan Jason Allen Willert
2021
Acrylic painting
76.2 x 50.8 cm
Image courtesy of the artist

Ómahkssa'ai Canada Goose



Territory: Can be found throughout North America (Turtle Island), from the Pacific coast to the Atlantic coast, during their breeding season. Some populations migrate south for the winter, but others will stay year-round if open water is accessible.

Habitat: They prefer to live near bodies of water where they can safely nest and raise their young. When foraging for food, they seek out grassy fields to stay alert and hidden from any threats. Commonly found in urban habitats, such as golf courses and parks.

Food: During spring and summer, they eat a variety of grasses. In the winter, they eat berries, seeds, and grains.

Interesting Facts: Female Canada geese always return to nest in the same area where their parents nested and often use the same nest site year after year. ²⁹

Conservation Status: Not currently a threatened species.

Above information sourced from the Nature Conservancy of Canada unless otherwise noted. ³⁰

From Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell: "They used to gather their eggs and also used goose feathers for arrows." ³¹

²⁹ Harold C. Hansen, "Canada Goose," Hinterland Who's Who, Environment and Climate Change Canada and Canadian Wildlife Federation, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.hww.ca/en/wildlife/birds/canada-goose.html>.

³⁰ "Canada Goose," Nature Conservancy of Canada, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/featured-species/birds/canada-goose.html>.

³¹ Blackfoot Elder Camille (Pablo) Russell, interviewed by Ryan Jason Allen Willert, March 25, 2021. Recording transcribed, not public or published.

Education Guide

This Education Guide consists of activities to move audiences through the various themes presented in *Niitsitapi Pi'kssii' (Blackfoot Fancy Beings)*. The content of the exhibition and the following lesson plans have been carefully developed and designed to enhance the curriculum set by Alberta Education. The guide includes questions for discussion, activities, and vocabulary designed for the level of ability, understanding, and complexity of the participants:

Beginner – participants who are just beginning their exploration of art.

Intermediate – participants who have some experience looking at and creating art.

Advanced – participants who have much experience looking at and creating art.

Throughout the Education Guide, you will find key concepts, words, and terms emphasized that can be found in the Vocabulary section.



Discussion Questions

Below are questions intended to prompt meaningful discussion about the content presented in *Niitsitapi Pi'kssii* (Blackfoot Fancy Beings). The questions can be selected and the vocabulary altered to suit the appropriate age level.

Look at all the artworks in this exhibition and notice the animals within them. Can you name all the animals that you see? Try to learn the Blackfoot word for each of the animals. Sound out the words if you are not sure how to pronounce them.

Have you ever heard a legend or a story about any of the animals present in these artworks? If yes, what was the story about and what did it teach you?

After reading some of the material in the Artworks and Animal Teachings section (see pages 14 - 36), can you describe some of the new things that you've learned?

In some of his artworks, Kalum Teke Dan has painted animals alongside a human – what do you think the human's relationship is to those animals? How do you personally relate to wild animals that you notice around you, either in urban habitats or when visiting natural parks and woodlands?

In some of his artworks, Ryan Jason Allen Willert has painted pawprints or hoofprints. How can we learn about the behaviour of animals by looking at their tracks?

All the animals that Kalum Teke Dan and Ryan Jason Allen Willert have painted can teach us different things. When did an animal teach you an important lesson?

Why is it important for us to maintain balance and harmony with nature and with the animal cohabitants of the lands we live on?

Why do we need restrictions on hunting and fishing? Did you know that Indigenous people had rules about hunting and fishing to preserve the animal populations and their habitats?

Do animals have an impact on one another in the wild?

What happened to the buffalo population?

Group Engagement Activity

Below is a quick, hands-on activity intended to help participants engage with the exhibition's content.

Colouring Page Trade

Both artists, Kalum Teke Dan and Ryan Jason Allen Willert, contributed to a colouring book titled *Colouring It Forward – Discover Blackfoot Nation Art and Wisdom*. This book was the first in a series of Indigenous colouring books developed by Colouring It Forward. Inspired by Kalum Teke Dan and Ryan Jason Allen Willert's involvement with the colouring book, this activity invites participants to make their own colouring pages and then trade with a friend. Participants will take a blank piece of printer paper and a marker pen, draw the outline of an animal seen in the exhibition, and then exchange drawings with a friend. This activity is about reciprocity and the sharing of ideas and perspectives.

Ask participants:

After your drawing was coloured by someone else, were you surprised by their choices of colour?

Did you discuss what colours might be used before trading? Would you have chosen the same colours or different ones to colour your drawing?

What did you find fun about this project? Was there anything you didn't enjoy?

Why did you pick that particular animal? Indigenous people believe that each of us has spirit animals guiding us. Which animals do you feel closest to or appear often to you either in real life or in your dreams?



Wolf / Makóyi



Striped Skunk / Aapiikayii



Golden Eagle / Píitaa



Pronghorn / Saa'kii'wa'kaa'sii



Coyote / Aapi'sii



Common Loon / Matsiisai'pii

Beginner Lesson: Tracks and Trails

Certain animals, such as the pronghorn, will take specific routes time and time again (just as a person might take a specific route to school or work each day), and they will sometimes leave tracks behind. An animal's footprints can hint at where they go and why, and this has helped humans to learn more about different species' activities. In this lesson, participants will create artwork with their own footprints alongside drawn animal tracks of their choosing. Be prepared – this activity is a messy one!

Materials

Large and wide sheet of craft paper (wide paper roll), large sheet of non-glossy (matte) poster paper, sheets of cardstock, black water-based paint (acrylic or tempera), wide paintbrush, large plastic water basin, soap and water, a chair, old towels or rags that can get soiled

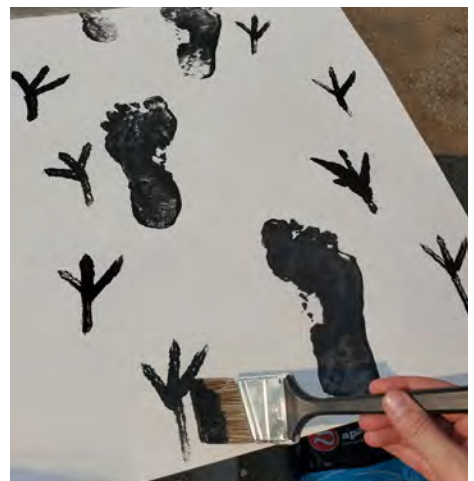
Preparation

Activity coordinators can show participants the animal tracks on page 40 or look up various animal tracks online and have each participant pick what kind of animal tracks they would like to draw alongside their own footprints.

Instructions

- Step 1 Tear a large sheet of craft paper – approximately 4 feet (1.2 metres) long and 30 inches (76.2 centimetres), wide – from a roll to serve as a work-surface protectant. Place it on a hard surface, such as the floor.
- Step 2 Place the large sheet of non-glossy (matte) poster paper on top of the craft paper (see photo instructions on page 43 for where to place the poster paper).
- Step 3 Fill a water basin with some soap and water and place it near one end of the work surface alongside a chair and some old towels or rags.
- Step 4 Quickly paint two full sheets of cardstock with water-based acrylic or tempera paint using a wide paintbrush, creating a thin coating of paint across both sheets – too much paint and the next steps will be a slippery mess! While each sheet of cardstock is still very wet, take off your shoes and socks and place one foot on each sheet, letting the sheets stick to your feet. Then align yourself with the poster paper on the craft paper, at the end of the work surface opposite the water basin and chair.
** Please be careful when stepping on the paint, as it could be quite slippery (this is the reason for painting thinly onto sheets of cardstock first, to avoid excess paint on feet). Follow these instructions carefully and responsibly. It is a great outdoor activity!*
- Step 5 After peeling the sheets of cardstock off each foot (while your feet are still wet), walk along the poster paper towards the chair, leaving your footprints behind you on the poster paper.
- Step 6 Sit down on the chair, wash the paint off your feet, and dry them with the towels or rags.
- Step 7 Once the footprints on the poster paper are dry, add your favourite animal's tracks alongside them (either by painting or drawing them).





Discussion Questions

How are your footprints different from the animal tracks? Why do some animals have webbed feet, hooved feet, or claws?

Think about the metaphor of walking alongside the path of an animal. How can we walk a path where we live in harmony with the animals that we share Earth with? What does that look like?

Where do you see examples of animal tracks in the artworks featured in this exhibition?

What other clues do animals leave behind that teach us more about their behaviours?

Which animals can you recognize from their hoofs, paws, or prints?

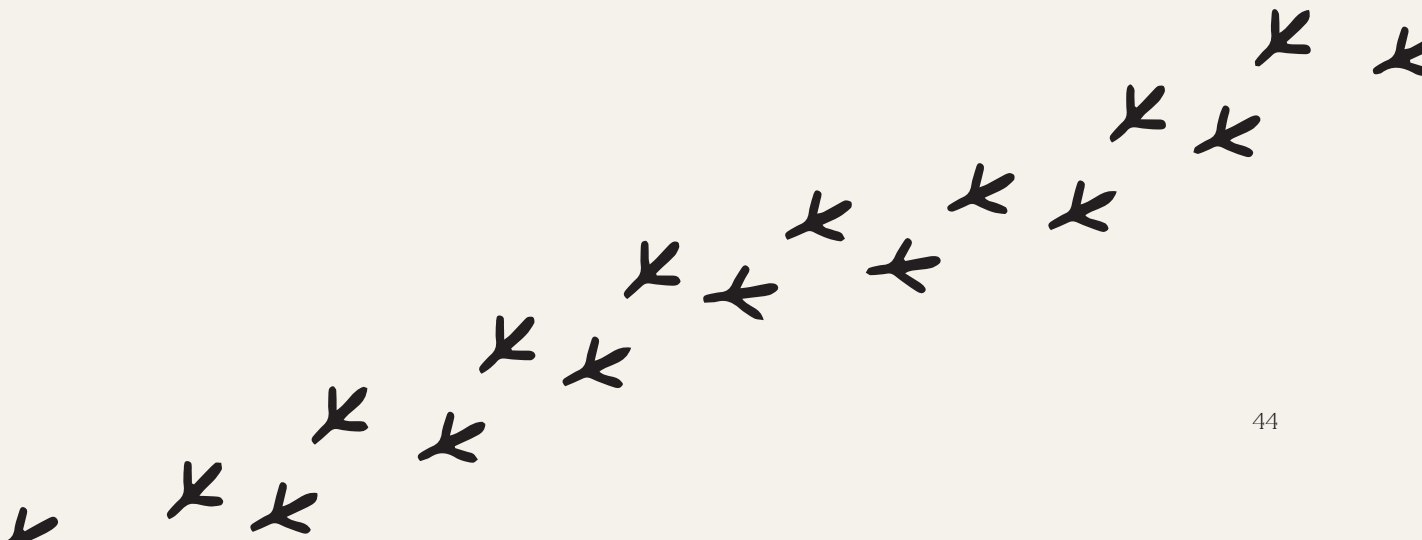
What signs other than pawprints or hoofprints can hunters look for to find animals that they are hunting?

What animals were most crucial to the survival of Indigenous people in this area prior to the arrival of Europeans in this territory during the eighteenth century?

Why did Indigenous people live in tipis and tents? Discuss why it was so hard for Indigenous peoples to lose their hunting and fishing territories.

Variations

To simplify this activity, have participants use their hands instead of their feet alongside animal tracks. Explain to them that though we may not walk on our hands, we do use them for various tasks that might be different or similar to tasks that animals complete. Prompt a discussion about how we use our hands to hold tools and how certain animals, such as the crow and the magpie, use their beaks or talons as tools for cracking open seeds or opening various types of food receptacles.



Intermediate Lesson: Animal Trading Cards

The Artworks and Animal Teachings section (pages 14 - 36) contains plenty of information about each of the animals featured in this exhibition. In this lesson, participants will use this information to create animal trading cards, which can also be used to play memory games. This lesson will allow participants to share their artworks with peers while learning more about the animals – including the animals' Blackfoot names.

Materials

Notebooks, sheets of letter-sized white cardstock (or premade blank flash cards), ruler, pencil, scissors, pencil crayons, black pens

Preparation

Review the Artworks and Animal Teachings section (pages 14 - 36) with participants and have them choose at least nine of the animals to feature in their animal trading cards. Participants can choose to complete some preliminary sketches of the animals in a sketchbook.

Instructions

- Step 1 Write down the Blackfoot and English names of the nine animals you selected. This information will be used in Step 5.
- Step 2 With a ruler and a pencil, measure out nine equal sections on a sheet of cardstock. Then cut out each section. These will be the trading cards. Alternatively, you can use premade blank flash cards.
- Step 3 Using a pencil, draw a different animal on the front of each card, either as a *silhouette*, as in the examples shown, or as a detailed sketch. Write the English name of the animal on the front of each card.
- Step 4 Using the pencil crayons, fill in the silhouettes with a solid colour or colour in the details of the animals.
- Step 5 Write the Blackfoot name of each animal on the back of the card, as well as the animal's tracks beside or below its Blackfoot name (see animal track examples on page 40).
- Step 6 When everyone's animal trading cards are complete, trade cards with others in the group and practice speaking the Blackfoot animal names.
- Step 7 Optionally, use the animal trading cards to play memory games. Place the cards on a surface with the animal pictures facing up and try to recall the animals' Blackfoot names. Or place the cards on a surface with the Blackfoot names facing up and try to recall which animal is being named.



Canada
Goose

Grizzly Bear



Pinto Horse



Golden Eagle



Coyote



Striped Skunk



Wolf

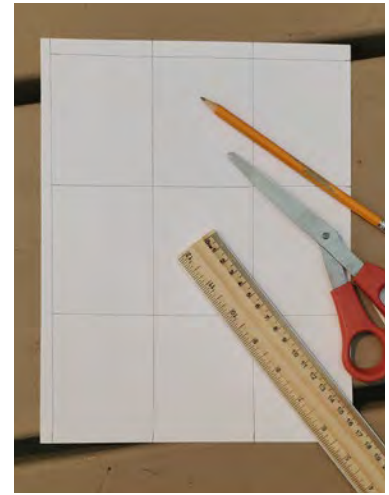


Black-billed Magpie





- (Blackfoot name)
1. Black-billed magpie - Mamia'tsiKimi
 2. Wolf - Mäkoqi
 3. Common Loon - Matsiisai'pii
 4. Horse/Pinto horse - ponosäsm'taa
 5. Coyote - Aapi'sii
 6. Grizzly Bear - N-itapiKooyo
 7. Striped Skunk - AapiKoyu
 8. Canada Goose - Omahksa'di
 9. Golden Eagle - Pitaa - golden eagle



Discussion Questions

Why did you pick the animals you picked?

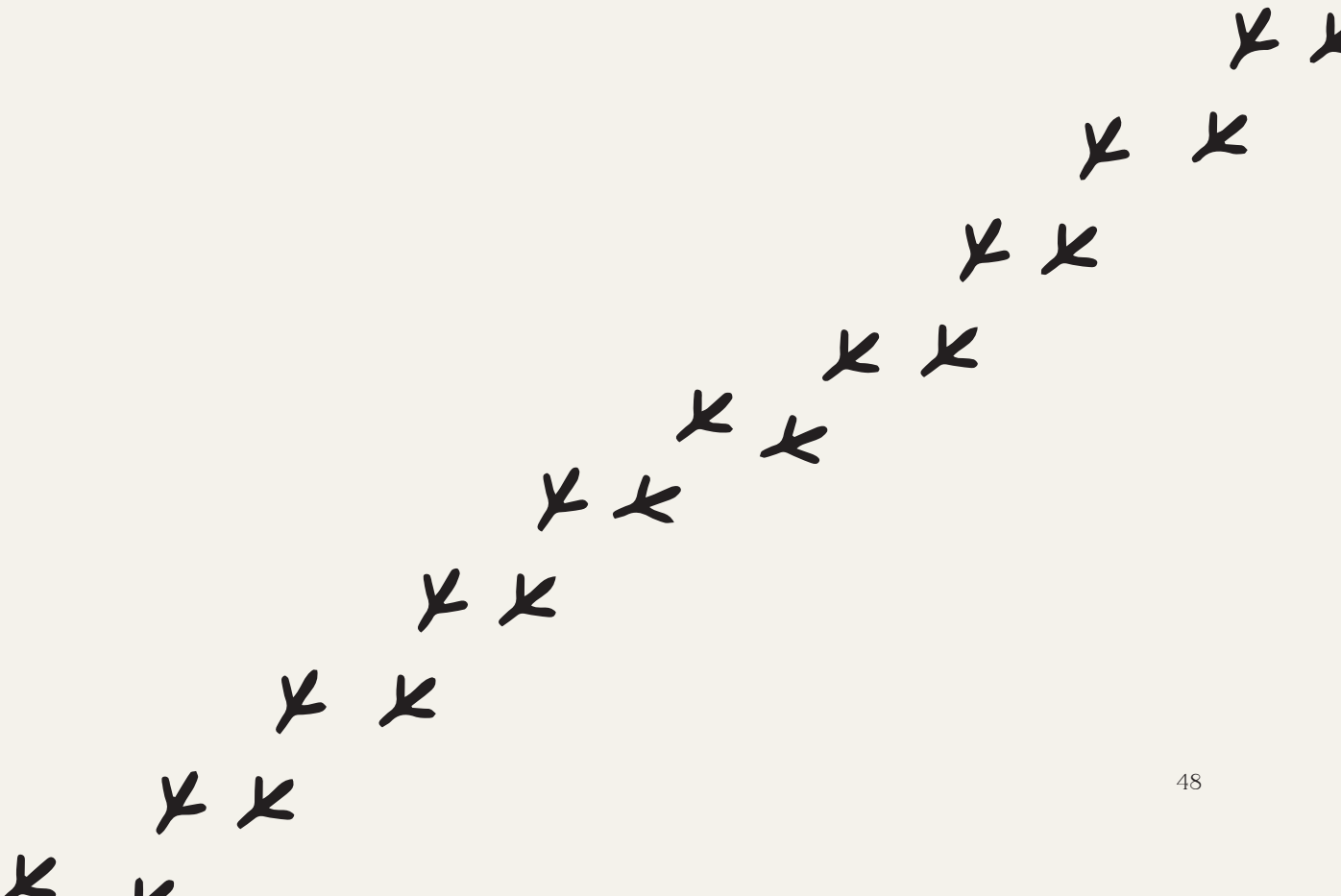
Which of the elder's teachings did you find most interesting?

Did you know that the Blackfoot language is a native language used in Treaty 7, and that it is an endangered language?³² Discuss why the language is endangered and what can be done to increase efforts to use the language.

After practicing some of the Blackfoot names of the animals with the trading cards, see if you can remember any of them without looking at the cards. Which ones can you remember? Which is your favourite to say?

Why is it important to preserve languages? Why should you learn about your heritage?

³² Donald G. Frantz, "Siksikáípowahsin: Blackfoot Language," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historica Canada, November 6, 2018, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/siksikai-powahsin-blackfoot-language>.



Advanced Lesson: Shadow Stories

In Blackfoot culture, as in many cultures, stories are very important. Blackfoot *elders* tell numerous stories about animals, the land, and the sky, and they use these stories to teach valuable lessons about the human connection to the natural world. Stories are passed down from generation to generation primarily through *oral tradition*, so this print-form educational guide does not intend to document or share all the stories that Blackfoot culture holds as sacred or important. Rather, it seeks to prompt insightful discussion and creativity around the strength of story in general.

In this lesson, participants will be asked to consider the strength of storytelling and to write their own stories about an animal featured in the exhibition.

Materials

Notebook, pencil, sheet of letter-sized (or larger) light-coloured paper, black chalk paint or acrylic paint, white pencil crayons or *opaque* white gel pens

Preparation

Study the animals included in the exhibition and read the elder's teachings about the different animals in the Artworks and Animal Teachings section (pages 14 - 36). Participants can then decide which animal will be the main character of the story they will be writing. They should spend some time writing their story in a notebook – giving it a beginning, middle, and end – and they should think of a *moral* to the story that gives it meaning. Participants can connect their stories to the teachings that Camille (Pablo) Russell shared. Once participants have written their stories, they can move on to the visual-art part of the activity.

Instructions

Step 1 Trace the outline of an animal onto a sheet of light-coloured paper. If your story is short, use a letter-sized sheet of paper. If it is long, use a poster-sized sheet of paper.

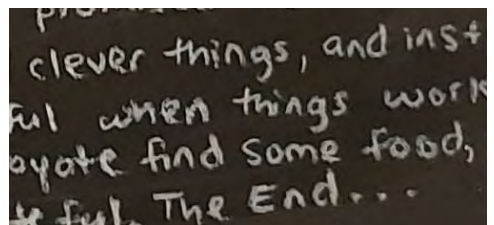
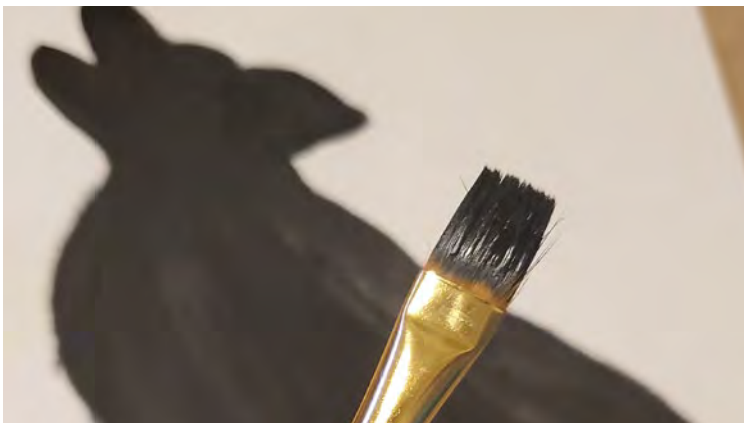
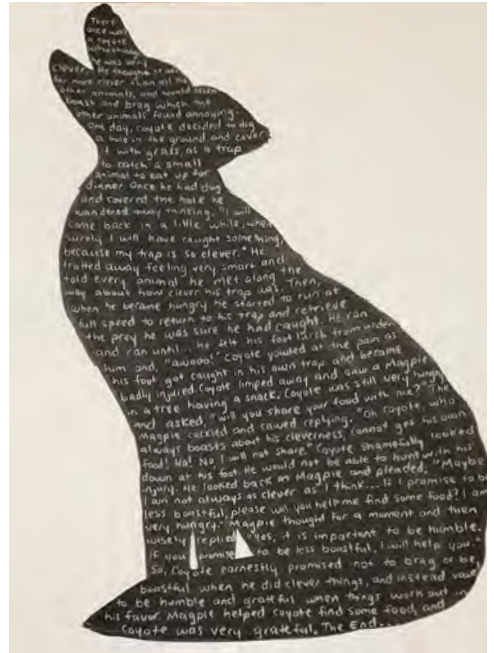
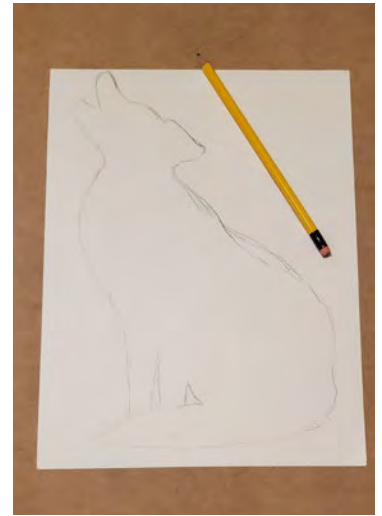
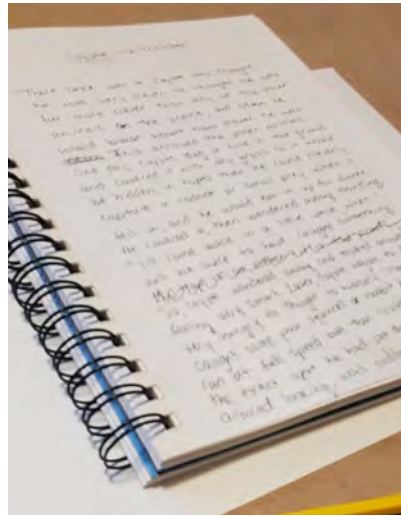
Step 2 Once the animal's shape has been traced, fill in the animal's form with black paint. Let dry.

Step 3 Write your story out within the animal's "shadow," or silhouette, with a white pencil crayon or a white gel pen.

Step 4 Optionally, you can draw elements of your story around the animal's silhouette.

Step 5 Title the story-based artwork and share it with your peers. Explain what the meaning of the story is and why it is an important story to tell.

There once was a coyote who thought he was very clever. He thought he was far more clever than all the other animals, and would often boast and brag which the other animals found annoying. One day, coyote decided to dig a hole in the ground and cover it with grass, as a trap to catch a small animal to eat up for dinner. Once he had dug and covered the hole he wandered away thinking, "I will come back in a little while, when surely I will have caught something, because my trap is so clever." He trotted away feeling very smart and told every animal he met along the way about how clever his trap was. Then, when he became hungry he started to run at full speed to return to his trap and retrieve the prey he was sure he had caught. He ran and ran until... he felt his foot lurch from under him and, "awooo!" coyote yowled at the pain as his foot got caught in his own trap and became badly injured. Coyote limped away and saw a Magpie in a tree having a snack. Coyote was still very hungry and asked, "will you share your food with me?" The Magpie cackled and cawed replying, "Oh coyote, who always boasts about his cleverness, cannot get his own food! Ha! No, I will not share." Coyote shamefully looked down at his foot. He would not be able to hunt with his injury. He looked back at Magpie and pleaded, "Maybe I am not always as clever as I think... If I promise to be less boastful, please will you help me find some food? I am very hungry." Magpie thought for a moment and then wisely replied, "Yes, it is important to be humble. If you promise to be less boastful, I will help you." So, Coyote earnestly promised not to brag or be boastful when he did clever things, and instead vowed to be humble and grateful when things work out in his favor. Magpie helped coyote find some food, and Coyote was very grateful. The End...



Discussion Questions

How did you approach writing a story? What do you want others to learn from the narrative that you wrote?

Can you think of other stories that have been important in your life, or that have taught you something new?

Did you learn anything from the stories that your peers shared with you?

Do you know any other stories from Indigenous cultures? Why is it important to be able to learn stories that relate to cultural heritage?

Vocabulary

Unless otherwise noted, the following definitions have been sourced from Lexico.com.³³

Elders – “*Aawaaahsskataiksi*, i.e. those that are approached for everything from advice to conducting ceremonies. Elders are also *Omahkitapiiks*. The distinction is *Omahkitapiiks* are ‘old people’ in general. *Aawaaahsskataiksi* are those that have rights to advise on sacred matters. The right is acquired through having gone through [knowledge] transfers themselves. They must have passed on those rights too.”³⁴

Moral – A lesson that can be derived from a story or experience.

Opaque – Not able to be seen through; not transparent.

Oral tradition – Cultural material and tradition transmitted orally (verbally) from one generation to another. The messages or testimonies are verbally transmitted in speech or song . . . In this way, it is possible for a society to transmit history, literature, law, and other knowledge across generations without a writing system.³⁵

Silhouette – A representation of someone or something showing the shape and outline only, typically coloured in solid black.

“Tsá niitáíitsitapiááanio’pa?” (How do you say it in Blackfoot?)

Below are a few Blackfoot greetings and some words that could describe the animals or elements in the artworks. Unless otherwise noted, the following Blackfoot words and phrases have been sourced from an online Blackfoot dictionary developed by the Algonquian Dictionaries and Language Resources Project.³⁶

Greetings

kyáátamáttsinno (Piikani) – I will see you again

oki – Hello

tsá kinóóhkanistá’paissp? (Kainai) – How are you?

Colours and Descriptors

áápi - white, light coloured

apoyíinaattsi – be brown or earth toned

isstsáápinaattsiwa – it has a bright appearance

kiihtsipimii – striped or spotted animal

komonóinattsiwa – be violet in colour

máóhk – red

otahko – orange, yellow

ótssko – blue, green

sik – be black or dark

waawahkáisinaaki – sketch, draw (artistically)

Please note: This Education Guide highlights a very small selection of Blackfoot words related to the exhibition, and we have not included a pronunciation key due to the limited scope of TREX educational materials. However, there are many reputable books, YouTube videos, and websites listed in the Resources section that provide further information on Blackfoot culture and language, as well as ethical standards for learning about Blackfoot culture.

³³ Lexico.com, s.vv. “moral,” “opaque,” “silhouette,” accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.lexico.com>.

³⁴ Betty Bastien, “English—Siksikaitipowahsin,” in *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitipitapi* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 220–221.

³⁵ Definitions.net, s.v. “oral tradition,” accessed July 7, 2021, <https://www.definitions.net/definition/oral+tradition>.

³⁶ Blackfoot Dictionary, Algonquian Dictionaries and Language Resources Project, s.vv. “áápi,” “apoyíinaattsi,” “isstsáápinaattsiwa,” “kaawá pomaahkaa,” “kiihtsipimii,” “komonóinattsiwa,” “Kyaátamáttsinno,” “máóhk,” “oki,” “otahko,” “ótssko,” “sik,” “tsá kinóóhkanistá’paissp,” “waawahkáisinaaki,” accessed July 7, 2021, <https://dictionary.blackfoot.atlas-ling.ca/#/results>.

Resources

Any sources regarding Blackfoot culture included in this section have been reviewed to ensure they were developed either directly through Indigenous organizations or through extensive consultation with Indigenous communities, Elders, and/or Knowledge Keepers.

“Animal Facts: Grizzly Bear.” *Canadian Geographic*. June 15, 2006. <https://www.canadiangeographic.ca/article/animal-facts-grizzly-bear>.

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Blackfoot Dictionary. Algonquian Dictionaries and Language Resources Project. Accessed July 7, 2021. <https://dictionary.blackfoot.atlas-ling.ca/#/results>.

“Blackfoot Language.” In Niitsitapiisini Teacher Toolkit. The Glenbow Museum. Accessed July 7, 2021. https://www.glenbow.org/blackfoot/teacher_toolkit/english/culture/language.htm.

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Credits

TREX Southwest would like to credit the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for their ongoing support, as well as the following individuals who contributed to the preparation of this travelling exhibition:

Artists – Kalum Teke Dan and Ryan Jason Allen Willert

Blackfoot Elder – Camille (Pablo) Russell

Curator – Ashley Slemming

Co-Curator – Diana Frost

Editor – Rachel Small

Education – Ashley Slemming with consultation from Diana Frost and Camille (Pablo) Russell

Catalogue Design – Ashley Slemming

Crating – Doug Haslam

Transcribing – Raven Van Camp, Cree Métis

Printing and Framing – Pixx Imaging

We would also like to gratefully acknowledge, in more depth, Camille (Pablo) Russell, who graciously shared traditional Blackfoot knowledge with us specifically for this exhibition. We are deeply grateful for his gifts and teachings, and for his giving us permission to share his knowledge in this publication.

– Ashley Slemming and Diana Frost

