

ZAKA'

(zee cot ta'), is Ojibwe for feed/set the fire (*PONA* in Cree).

SELF-REFLECTION, SELF-AWARENESS, GROWTH: This workshop isn't just about how to draw, how to hold a pencil, it is about how to use art as a safe tool for reflection, self-awareness, healing and growth.

Here art is a tool for folks to continue to express and explore their inner and outer world. After this workshop, the learners will be able to visually express ideas that cannot be voiced in a spoken or written language, especially the language of a non-Indigenous dominant culture. Art can also take pain and transform it, so as it is not transmitted out into our communities using anti-social or unhealthy words, actions and decisions.

Feedback from Communities . . .

- "The art has been up on the hallway for a month, and not one was removed or graffiti on it. The art is respected."
- "Hey, I learnt how to do a cartoon . . . Cool."
- "Long lasting effect and change in behaviour of the youth."

Zaka', 'feeding the fire' - is the philosophy behind this art workshop, tailored with diverse learning blocks for Indigenous groups and communities, grounded upon culturally responsive teaching to feed the *visual language fire* inherited by all Indigenous people. Those who attend share an engaging process of teaching and demonstration; it is mostly 'hands-on' work by the participants, providing them a positive creative experience in an affirmative inspiring fashion. We begin creating art immediately, and focus on enjoyable familiar subjects augmented with specific history of Indigenous Art and Artist in Canada.



WHAT IS THE PROCESS? The workshop is structured in various blocks, to allow any community to have the benefit of the workshop structured and tailored to maximum benefit to their participants.

WORK:



More recently my work appeared on this poster for the film 'Indian Horse' and on the cover of the re-release of the book.

'SAUL' – INDIAN HORSE POSTER: The Indian Horse image ("Saul") is a medicine painting depicting a young Indigenous male born with an inheritance of rooted spiritual lineage. His face inscribed with symbols found on Ojibwe birch bark scrolls — making his face itself, a vessel of ancestral insight. The colour choices made include broad blue and red colour spectrum hues used in medicine lodge ceremonies. Reaching out from the face, one sees fingers, like the beckoning light pushed out into the shadows and darkness by a thousand campfires. From these inner gifts comes power and understanding,



healing, guiding this imperfect man, leading an imperfect but noble life, allowing Saul to eventually come home to his community, and break free from the tyranny of colonialism.

BRIEF BIO: I am Anishinaabe, a member of the Sandy Bay First Nation in Ojibwe territory (Manitoba), Canada. My work is collected in Canada, and increasingly internationally in Japan, Italy, Germany, Israel and the USA. The focus of my creative work deals with individual and collective narratives of Indigenous peoples as decolonizational art, the drive to obtain self governance on a personal and collective basis of not only Indigenous people but all peoples and animals.

ADDITIONAL BIOGRAPHIC INFO: Other lives I live in addition to visual artist — parent, published writer, Emergency Medical Paramedic (worked full time while attending university), academic, community activist, filmmaker and screenwriter, graduate of the University of Alberta and the University of Windsor Law School. I am currently working on a book of short stories entitled ‘The Rez Diaries’.

I have also had some success and small town glory with fruitful involvement in film as a Writer/Producer and Director, and have also dipped my toes in acting on stage and film. I am a principle with Achimok Film & TV Inc., located on the Kehewin First Nation in Alberta. Film and TV skills were all so briefly studied in Los Angeles, CA, with my first studio film worked on being Prom Night II, shot in 1987 in Edmonton, Alberta. Using what is a purposeful diverse skill set from this background in law, emergency medical care and military experience, I have filmed in remote areas across Canada and also in the United States, South America (Arica, Chile), Cuba (Havana, Moa and Holguin), Peoples Republic of China, and Japan.



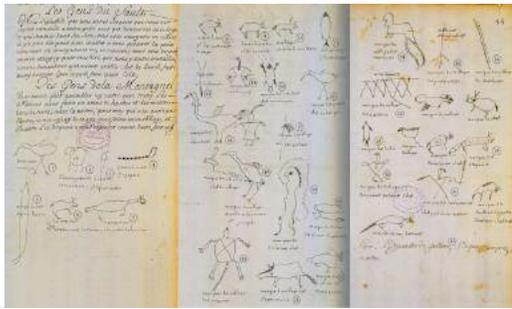
www.brucebarryart.com

MAKING ART ACCESSIBLE: Material making from local or easily obtained materials is a ‘connecting’ aspect of the philosophy of Zaka’, for example how to make paper out of local plant fibre, how to make drawing charcoal with an outdoor fire, a canvas stretcher to create a substrate of canvas to paint on.

It is about making artistic expression accessible for as many people as possible no matter what their situations are, it is about equipping learners with a vocabulary and toolbox they can use in responding to changing challenges and inspirations in their lives. So learners here learn the ability to be reflective of themselves and their worldview, so that art can be part of reconciliation with self. Zaka recognizes and bridges the learners’ prior knowledge and beliefs to make sense of new artistic ideas and experiences

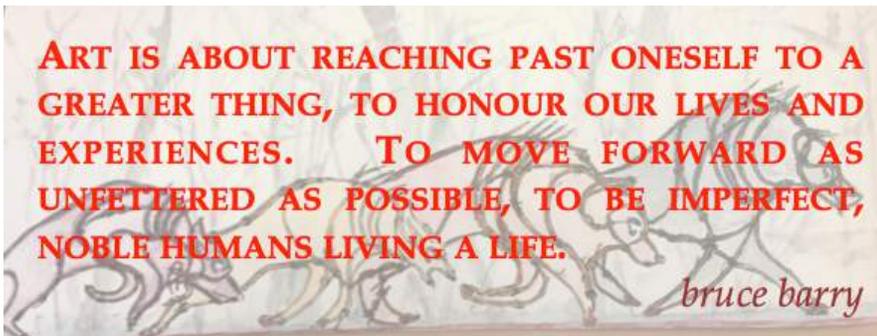


ART IS ABOUT VOICE. For all Indigenous people, learning or enhancing their ability to use visual language, empowers them to create visual work that reflects their hopes, concerns, and demons regarding themselves, their families, communities and the world. The participants in the Zaka workshops gain technical and artistic capacity to mirror the reality of their world. The technical skills can include sketching, drawing with pencil, charcoal, ink brush made from fur/hair of animals, landscape, people and self.



We are a visual people, a people of story, and we reflect our world. Pictures (pictographs¹) were used for ‘signatures’ by the Indigenous Leaders who signed the peace treaty in Montreal² in 1701, and when imprisoned Indigenous Leaders in the 1800’s were given empty accounting ledgers and pencils, they drew pictures to memorialize great battles and other events of their lives, called ‘Ledger Art’.

Traditionally pre-contact, all members of the Indigenous community created memorial and religious art at a high level of skill and variety, and decorated items, clothes, drums, horses, weapons. Traditionally art was much more holistic. Indigenous people are a visual people.



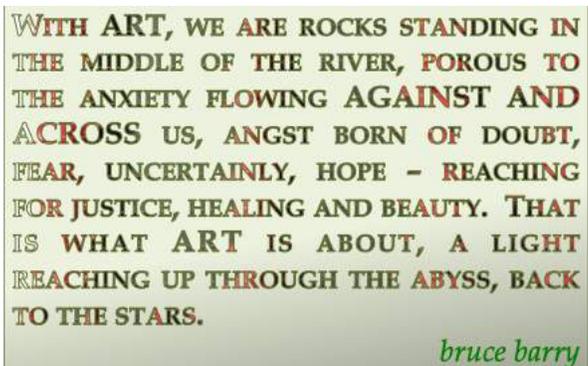
The origins of most Native American art decisions and decorative designs are lost in history. Many obviously came from inspiration of nature, which is not surprising as Indigenous people belong to the land. Some designs are seemingly simple elaborations of geometric or lineal motifs, but in fact speak of a very complex visual language. Some Indigenous art is so interwoven with

Euro-centric influence, it is impossible to completely disentangle their foundations; however, this is not overly problematic as developing one’s own voice is important for success in artistic expression.

A key goal is not only to encourage students’ creativity but actually sharing skills to create, participants go home feeling empowered with skills gained to apply them in their own work.

Feedback from Communities . . .

- “I can do this, don’t need anyone’s permission.” (youth)
- “Changed how I approach teaching youth.”



ART JOURNALING & MEMORY STICKS: We will talk about art journaling, rock art, memory sticks, and I will share some actual stories of utilization of art for healing where I have worked with parents who have lost children, children who have lost parents, dislocation, even lost of pets and grounding.

¹ On paper/parchment/bark, pictograph is the precise and appropriate term in English. If these were carved in stone, they'd be called petroglyphs/pictographic representations in stone. See also Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, the pictographs are representations of the tā moko (facial tatoos) of the signatories. See here: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43285178?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
² The Great Peace of Montreal (French: *La Grande paix de Montréal*) was a peace treaty between New France and 39 First Nations of North America. It was signed on August 4, 1701, by Louis-Hector de Callière, governor of New France, and 13 hundred representatives of 39 aboriginal nations.

WORKSHOP BLOCKS

Workshops are modified to fit the needs of the community and those attending, and always to pivot when necessary so as to maximize the benefit of the workshop.

WEARABLE ART: Continuing with a focus on making art people can create without too much expense, and one of these areas especially for youth is making wearable art – Tee Shirts. I work with the students in making a visual statement and then show them how to create art they can wear as an aspect of their voice – who they are and also where they are going and what they believe in. This is one of the most popular and successful parts of any community visit.

Here are photos from a community workshop done with community youth aged 13 – 17, and wearable art completed by them in February of 2022:





DRAWING BLOCK: A base skill of all art is the ability to recreate what you want so that others can respond and interact with one's art. We begin with '*blind contour drawing*', which is essentially looking at an object and drawing it in a continuous line without looking down at the paper. This is an exercise to help the learners let go of their own expectations and many are surprised to see what creation emerges. I use a white irregular shape to challenge the learners to let go of what they think they see, and to show them that 'white is not white', but based on the 'light source' white in reality is shades of grey . . . kinda like life. Learners learn patience and nuance as successful shading is about doing it in layers.



CARTOONING BLOCK: Cartooning is a very popular block in the workshops, and involves many of the same visual and technical techniques as in all art. I have taken cartooning workshops with Gary Delainey and Gerry Rasmussen (creators of cartoon 'Betty' which appears daily in newspapers and magazines in 7 countries.), and Yardley Jones and Spider Jones (political cartoonist). Whether the participants want to make political cartoons or illustrate a story about their world, this block gives them the capacity and improves their artistic eye and toolbox to do so. In following up on workshops, this block is keenly remembered and the skills used for long after by the participants. If you can draw a donut, you can draw a cartoon.



CHARCOAL BLOCK: Zaka makes creating art as 'nature inclusive' as possible, including use, where appropriate and possible, of local materials and skills and knowledge to create one's own art materials. The charcoal created is for use in the workshop to teach



drawing and equips the learners with art materials and tools, created by themselves, and which they can replicate as required. During this block a group exercise is done that helps develop the learners artist eye and set out the goals of the group.



MURAL BLOCK: Murals are a way of telling the collective narrative of local people and animals or a group, and also builds community. Some communities are inspired and interested in creating murals which are created collectively, using the skills acquired, using the charcoal they made to draw the image and then using each of the participants handprints as the base layer of the painting.







KEY MESSAGES & RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

KEY MESSAGES

1. we are all learners, learning something that gives voice, may not change the world, but it can change the world for you.
2. we treat learners as able to learn and teach, i.e., we expect each other to come prepared to engage and integrate **shared knowledge**.
3. aboriginal youth have an community obligation to (a) stay healthy, (b) become leaders in their community, and (c) serve their community, each other, in some fashion.
4. we will be mindful of the power relationships between each other.
5. we all must lead by the example we want to set for others to follow.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

1. no one has to prove they have a right to be here – once here, everyone must contribute.
 2. no one must convince anyone else of their opinions -- open and fair discussion advantage the group.
 3. everyone has the right to be treated with respect, we all must speak from that position.
 4. we will obtain justice by treating ourselves and each other justly.
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These are the ‘art rules’ I teach as part of the workshop.

21 Art Rules

‘blue and yellow do not make green’

1. you are living a life, time always wins and minute by minute marches on, so you ought be creating the picture that is and will be your life. it will not be perfect, it will be best if you decide to hold the brush, take charge, seek joy, draw and paint your own life.
2. everyone has a right to create art, no one has to prove they have a right to be here, no one has to convince anyone of their voice.
3. the language of art allows you to express visually what you can't express in words, especially the words of a non-indigenous dominant culture.
4. don't set limits on what you think "art" can be, seek to create in your voice (*not what people think you ought draw, paint and create*), and seek only to be better than your former self.
5. the bad times don't last, neither do the good times. pay attention, and be sure to pay yourself.
6. stop, breath and think, like most things in life, don't use art to ‘react’ to the world, use it to ‘respond’ to the world.
7. life and creating ‘art’ is about choice, each individual eventually can find his or her own path, but the more information you have, the more informed and more healthy and better for your community and yourself are the choices you make.
8. be honest with yourself, like most things in life, it is not ‘**the best possible outcome**’, it is ‘**the best outcome possible**’, so be authentic to what you want to express and say visually.
9. stay.
10. there are stupid people in the world who lack the capacity to be non-stupid. ignore them.
11. have a plan, have a backup plan. expect the unexpected. stuff happens, don't get greedy, remember stuff happens.

12. work, take workshops to broaden your skill set, adding more strings to your bow, as it sharpens your artistic eye, and gives your vision a more authentic expression. you are doing it for you.
13. get rid of toxic art critics and wrap yourself with supportive honest people. not just people who think all you do is great art, but have supportive and encouraging comments.
14. art will feed and develop one's mind and soul, because if we don't take care of our body and soul, where else are we going to live? so make healthy choices and do not self-sabotage
15. the ability to create is a gift, we honour the uniqueness of each individual as we all work to find our own voices.
16. it's easy to teach somebody to be like **me**– it takes courage to help someone to be **themselves**.
17. be kind to others and yourself. this is important to balance your world and self view, you obtain justice by treating yourself justly. be it living a life or creating art and critiquing art.
18. don't panic when your inner voice seems silent. you are living a life, every experience, contact, relationship, journey is developing your skills and vision and is being stored and processed by your sub-conscious inner voice.
19. some paintings, drawings and life experiences are **not successful**, they are NOT FAILURES, they are lessons. pay attention, don't let it defeat you, carry on.
20. be brave, don't be too self-conscious or afraid, be vulnerable, everyone is unique in that everyone is different, all have strengths and weaknesses, everyone has good times and bad times. so calm the f down, live a life.
21. art learning never ends, never, like never . . . them's the rules.