Grenfell Art Gallery on Grenfell Campus, Memorial University is the public gallery for Corner Brook and the Western Newfoundland region. The gallery engages in collaborative partnerships with like-minded local, regional, national and international artists, organizations and institutions. Part of the Grenfell Art Gallery’s mandate is to respond to the specific context of Western Newfoundland, by critically engaging local, national and international interests that are resonant with our current moment socially, culturally and politically.

Grenfell Art Gallery celebrates and shares the unique nature of Newfoundland and Labrador by hosting public programs, residencies, visiting artists and curator programs, and other outreach activities that amplify the specificity of our place. The gallery focuses on serving the public while remaining aware of and responsive to the needs of our cross-cultural community.

My name is Lorna and I’m a graduate research assistant with the Grenfell Art Gallery. Before I began pursuing my Masters of Fine Art at Memorial University of Newfoundland I taught ArtsEd with the Saskatoon Public School Division in Saskatchewan. I have developed the following “lesson” for students (and adults too) that can be used to provide an educational opportunity that aligns with Grenfell Art Gallery’s mission to support community. Included at the end are some learning outcomes, from the NLESD curriculum guide, that the following activity meets.

PORTRAITS

Nelson White is an artist & illustrator who is a member of the Flat Bay First Nation Band (No’kmaq Village) in Flat Bay, Ughtaqamug. He is a representational painter who is interested in documenting the changing cultural landscape of his people. He is interested in displaying natives in a modern setting, telling stories of who they are now. (This information was taken from Nelson White’s website on the “about” page) https://www.nelsonwhiteart.com/about.

Photograph by Rich Blenkinsopp

As a representational painter, my work is about identity and community. It is a representation of Indigenous peoples from an Indigenous perspective. Sometimes that representation includes specific, identifiable symbols and sometimes it does not — because the figures within the paintings define their culture on their own terms and what
it means to be native today in a contemporary setting. They are fiercely proud of their identity and refuse to be defined by stereotypes.”

-Nelson White

https://easternedge.ca/nelson-white-eymutiek-we-are-here/#:~:text=Nelson%20White%20is%20an%20artist,rights%20of%20Mi'kmaq%20people.

Here are two examples of Nelson White’s portraits. The faces of his subjects are imbued with emotion. He says of Pow Wow Contemplation, 2018, “there’s some elements of his native heritage there: his watch, his choker. But he’s just comfortable in who he is and that's what the piece is trying to reflect.”


Why are people drawn to Portraits?

Before the invention of the camera, a painted portrait was one of the only ways to capture a person’s likeness. “A good portrait is not just a visual representation of a person; it will also reveal something about the essence of the person. What the portrait reveals may not be completely obvious - sometimes it can be cleverly implied through a certain expression or pose, an included object, or the artist's use of colour.”

https://www.art-is-fun.com/portrait-painting. In spite of smart phones and everyone’s ability to take hundreds of selfies (a day!) the painted portrait has not become obsolete. Portraits can be very realistic, abstracted, and/or conceptual.
Painted Portrait Activity

Materials:

Support (pre-stretch canvas, masonite, raw canvas)

Gesso

A few different sized paint brushes

Paint (oil or acrylic)

Painting Medium

Palette knives

Palette to mix paint on
(palettes can be an enamel tray, a piece of window/glass, styrofoam tray)

A live model or print out of photograph of your reference

(If you don’t have anyone who’s willing to sit for a few hours while you paint, you can use a mirror and paint a self portrait, or you can print out a large version of a photograph. Having a print out is beneficial, rather than just painting off your computer screen or phone).
**Reference Books** - while books are optional, I like to use them and leave the books open to the pages I’m using. The two shown here are a very simple drawing reference and a colour theory book. There are lots of references online, but I like to lay the books out on the table while I work.

![Reference Books Image]

**PROCEDURE**

1) Choose your support. A support is what you are painting on, what “supports” your work. Canvas (pre-stretched or raw) or masonite board are good options. If you use raw canvas or masonite board, the support will need to be prepared. I use white gesso on masonite board for this project. I spread the gesso on with a palette knife, but a brush can be used as well.

![PROCEDURE Image]

2) (Make sure you wash your tools immediately as once gesso dries it tends to ruin brushes).
*** Use 2 or more coats of gesso.
*** Sand in between coats and after the last coat for a smoother working surface.

3) UNDERPAINTING….I like to use underpaintings or “grounds” before I start a painting. This is optional and up to an individual artist. Some grounds will make your portrait “pop”, like yellow. Using a blue or paynes grey underpainting can create a sombre mood in the final piece. Watered down Alizarin (cool red) is also fun.
4) Rough guidelines. I like to put simple marks for the top of the head, end of the nose, mouth, chin, ears if they are visible. I'm not always wanting a perfectly proportioned face and I don’t fuss about it for long. I don’t use a lot of paint in this step and usually choose a colour I’m planning to use in the painting. In this case, I use a bit of Rose Madder. Make sure to look at your reference (model or printed photo) and don’t just rough out what your brain tells you a face should look like.


5) Mix your paint. I’m using oils so I can mix all the tones at once. If you are using Golden’s Open Acrylics you can also mix ahead of time. Regular acrylics dry pretty fast so you can add acrylic retarder to slow the drying time and mix your colours as needed.

My palette usually looks something like this:
6) Lay in warm and cool mid-tones (mid-tones are not the lightest or the darkest parts of the face). The more orange hue is the warmer colour, while the pinker tone is considered a cooler tone.

7) Add the “high key” tones, which are the lightest parts of the face. I mixed the lightest colour just by adding more white paint to one of the mid-tones.
8) Next add some “lower key” tones, which are the darkest or shadowed parts of the face. I mixed these colours by adding a bit of Rose Madder and Ultramarine blue to some the mid tone paint left on my palette.

9) Next, I mixed ultramarine and rose madder to act as the darkest tone. I use this colour to add back in some details of the face (eyes, eyebrows, etc) and low lights of the hair.
10) Now add some “purple-grey” tones in the shadowy area under the chin and ear (in my composition, yours may be different).

![Image of painted face](image)

11) Add detail to the whites of the eyes and highlights on the skin. I’ve also started blending my marks a bit, and that’s an artistic choice. The defined brush marks can be left alone, depending on the desired effect.

![Images of close-up views of painted face](image)
12) Hair and Clothing. Using combinations ultramarine and cobalt cerulean (with rose madder and white added) I roughly block in the low and high key parts of the hair. I don’t render each strand of hair. The shirt is blocked in quickly and stays very dark like it appears in the reference photo.
13) Background. I decided to keep the background similar to the reference photo and add a few pale yellow marks (while allowing the underpainting to still show up). I didn’t have to do this step. It’s aesthetic choices from here on out.

14) Final Rendition. Here’s where I stopped. I tweaked and tweaked, looking back at my reference photo, rethinking the removal of brush marks. Adding the model’s jewelry/piercings? It’s all up to you, the artist!
Ties to NLES Curriculum Guide

(There are likely more ties to the curriculum guide for this activity, but here are a few for Grades 4 and up). Smaller children are also able to do an art activity like this with some help from an adult.

**Visual Art 1202, Art & Design 2200, 3200**

GCO 1. Students will be expected to explore, challenge, develop, and express ideas, using the skills, language, techniques, and processes of the arts.

1.401 assess and apply complex image development techniques.

GSO 3. Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and the value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

3.401 analyze and make informed judgments about the role that visual creations have in our everyday modes of expression.
3.402 demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of art works.
3.403 understand the influence of the visual arts, their impact on daily life, and their power to create, alter, and reflect culture.
3.404 understand how ideas, perceptions, and feelings are embodied in art works of a culture.

GSO 4. Students will be expected to respect the contributions of individuals and cultural groups in local and global contexts, and value the arts as a record of human experiences and expression.

4.405 develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of art and design in historical and contemporary cultures.
4.406 trace influences of various cultures on contemporary art work.

GSO 7. Students will be expected to understand the role of technologies in creating and responding to expressive works.

7.402 assess the degree of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to carry out a project.

**Grades 7, 8, 9**

GCO 1. Students will be expected to explore, challenge, develop, and express ideas, using the skills, language, techniques, and processes of the arts.

1.3.2 Assess and utilize the properties of various art media and their ability to convey messages and meaning.
GSO 3. Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and the value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

3.3.4 Recognize and describe the role of the visual arts in challenging, sustaining, and reflecting society’s beliefs and traditions.

GSO 4. Students will be expected to respect the contributions of individuals and cultural groups in local and global contexts, and value the arts as a record of human experiences and expression.

4.3.2 Recognize the existence of a variety of visual languages that reflect cultural, socioeconomic, and national origins.
4.3.3 Recognize that and investigate how art as a human activity emerges from human needs, values, beliefs, ideas, and experiences.

GCO 6. Students will be expected to apply critical thinking and problem-solving strategies to reflect and respond to their own and others’ expressive work.

6.3.1 Develop independent thinking in interpreting and making judgements about subject matter.
6.3.5 Investigate and analyze how meaning is embedded in works of art.

**Elementary Art - Grades 4, 5, 6**

GCO 1. Students will be expected to explore, challenge, develop, and express ideas, using the skills, language, techniques, and processes of the arts.

1.2.2 Demonstrate and apply knowledge of basic art skills, techniques, processes, and language.

GSO 3. Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and the value for the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

3.2.1 Develop observation skills and sensitivity to the visual environment.
3.2.2 Investigate how visual communication systems are a part of everyday life.
3.2.4 Understand that past events, the way people live, and the visual arts influence one another.

GSO 4. Students will be expected to respect the contributions of individuals and cultural groups in local and global contexts, and value the arts as a record of human experiences and expression.

4.2.2 Investigate art styles from a variety of social, historical, and cultural contexts.
4.2.4 Develop awareness of the ethnic diversity, cultural uniqueness, and influence of the visual arts in our society.

GSC 5. Students will be expected to examine the relationship among the arts, societies, and environments.

5.2.3 Recognize that our response to art is strongly influenced by our experiences.

GCO 6. Students will be expected to apply critical thinking and problem-solving strategies to reflect and respond to their own and others' expressive work.

6.2.2 Analyze others' artwork to form conclusions about formal properties, cultural contexts, and intent.