

# Bringing Métis Children's Literature to Life—My First Métis Lobstick

Author: Leah Marie Dorion

Illustrator: Leah Marie Dorion

Translator: Norman Fleury

**Overview of Story:** Leah Marie Dorion's *My First Métis Lobstick* takes young readers back to the Canada's fur trade era by focusing on a Métis family's preparations for a lobstick celebration and feast in the boreal forest. Through the eyes of a young boy, we see how important ceremony was to the Métis community. From the Great Lakes to the present-day Northwest Territories, lobstick poles – important cultural and geographical markers, which merged Cree, Ojibway, and French-Canadian traditions – dotted the landscape of our great northern boreal forest. This little known aspect of Métis history vividly comes to life through Leah Marie Dorion's crisp prose and stunning gallery-quality artwork.



## Themes in this book:

- Fur trade
- Métis (families, identity, entertainment, roles)
- Commerce (trading posts, jobs, Forts)
- Waterways for travel (trade routes)
- Beacons for travel (Lobstick, Maypoles)
- Celebrations (competitions, honoring, entertainment)
- Carving and symbolism
- Food (fish pemmican)
- Environment (boreal forest, using all parts of plant, animal, and location)

## Possible Curriculum connections:

### Language Arts

- Comprehend and respond
- Compose and create

### Social Studies

- Interdependence of nations
- Aboriginal heritage
- Impact of environment on the lives of people
- Cultures and traditions

### Arts Education

- Arts expressions that use the environment for inspiration
- Variety of visual arts forms



**Before Reading:**

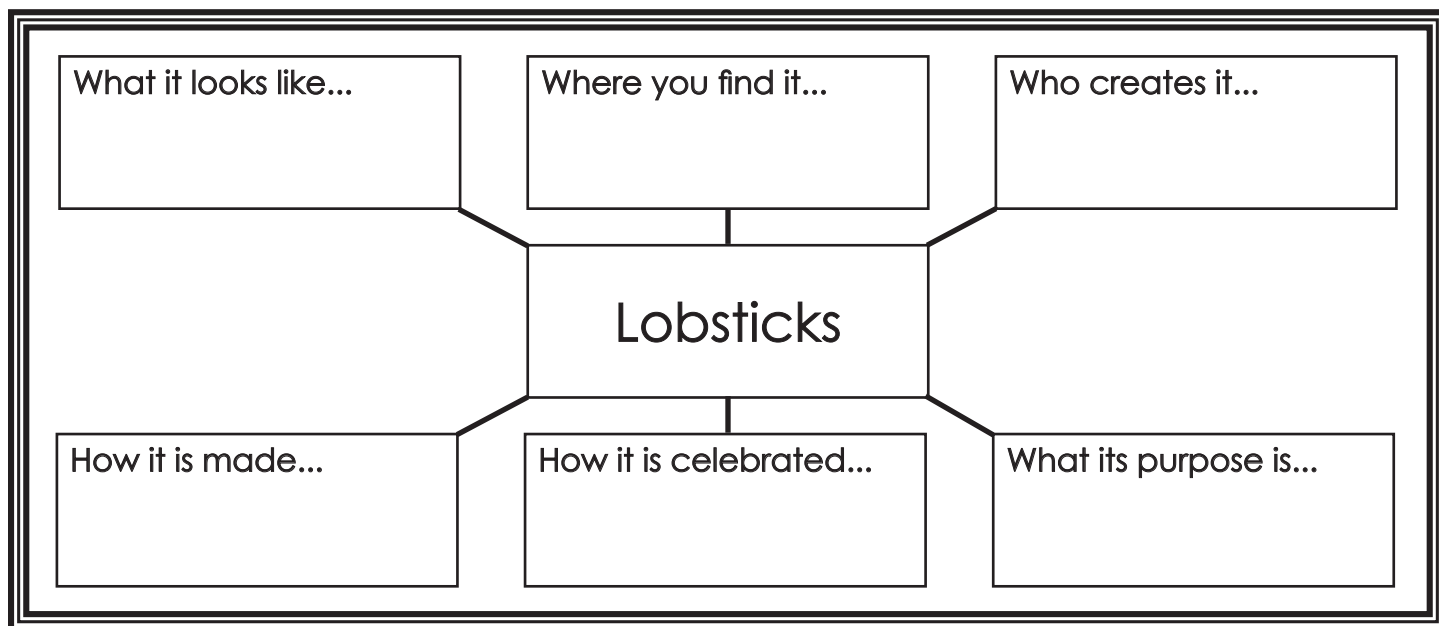
Post charts around room with the following headings:

- A) Lobsticks
- B) Fur Trade
- C) Water Transportation
- D) Métis
- E) Boreal Forest

Have the students record their background knowledge OR predictions on each topic in small groups in carousel fashion. Then read the book and have the students return to their initial groups and carousel around the room with different coloured markers. Circle predictions/background knowledge if the idea was confirmed from the text and add new content if missed. Cross out misconceptions.

Story walk. If this was done as a read-aloud, take the students outside and read the book in different places. Think about the environment and how it is similar or different from the book.

**During Reading:** Using an attribute web graphic organizer, write down the various attributes of a lobstick. <http://www.mcrc-online.ca/documents/buehl/goread.pdf> (pg. 22).



**After Reading:**

Discussion wheel: Have two groups, inner and outer, face each other. Inner stays stationary and the outer rotates. Before getting into the formation, have everyone create questions based on the book. They cannot be "yes or no" questions. When in formation, the inner circle asks the questions and the outer circle answers. Switch places so everyone has a turn asking and answering the questions.



## **Additional Post-Reading Lessons for *My First Métis Lobstick*:**

### **Design a person lobstick activity:**

Design a lobstick for a special event, either for yourself or someone you know (birthday, graduation, trip, etc.).

1. Write several words that describe oneself on a piece of scrap paper. Not in sentences, just words. (Suggestions: What animal would represent you and/or your family? What hobby do you like to do? What is your favorite food? Are there any numbers that are significant in your family? Etc.).
2. Now take those words and draw symbols that represent each word. Symbols are simplistic and have limited detail.
3. Now carve your symbols into a Styrofoam meat tray (use a blunt pencil and press down into the Styrofoam but don't break through it).
4. Making prints from the Styrofoam is next. Paint over the Styrofoam, then press it down on paper. The symbols will appear as white on the paper and the background will be painted with your choice of colour.
5. If you were to use these as Lobsticks, what would it tell others about you?

