



*When artists are inspired by the work of others, they will list these artists as influences and give thanks for their role in creating their art. But what about the materials themselves? Can they be a source of inspiration? Can an artist give thanks to animals, plants, and other natural elements that play a role in the creation of their art?*

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Connect to the natural world through the creation of collaborative art

### DURING THIS ACTIVITY, STUDENTS WILL:

- Explore the schoolyard, finding various natural loose parts such as pebbles, fallen leaves, small sticks
- Create collaborative ethereal art with the help of animals, plants, and natural elements found on the schoolyard
- Explore that various elements of design found in the curriculum



**GRADE LEVEL: K-6**

# Start it Up

## LOOKING AT ART THROUGH NATURE EYES

1. Select an image of artwork created by a local Indigenous artist. This may include a painting, beadwork, a birch bark canoe, cedar box, etc.
2. Invite the students to consider the materials, animal, plant, or other natural materials were used to create the piece. For example, bentwood boxes are made from cedar or spruce, beaded moccasins are made with tanned deer, elk, moose or buffalo leather and sewn with sinew.
3. Introduce the idea of the single creator versus “... a collaboration of makers - people, together with the animals, plants, and elements that contribute to their creation.” It is common in Western art to attribute artwork to a single artist without considering the animals, plants, and elements without whom the artist would not be able to create.

<sup>1</sup> Wall Text, [Uninvited: Canadian Women Artists in the Modern Moment](#), Temporary Exhibit (March 3, 2023 – August 20, 2023), National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

## Instructions

### STEP OUTSIDE

1. Bring students to meet at a designated meeting point on the schoolyard.
2. Review any safety guidelines that have been pre-established when taking the class outside (e.g., make sure you can see the teacher, come back to the meeting point when called back, etc.). This activity will require students to explore the schoolyard independently.



(Photo credit: Jacqueline Whelan)

## GATHERING NATURAL LOOSE PARTS

3. Invite students to gather natural items found on the ground: pebbles, fallen leaves, sticks. These elements will be their collaborators when they go to create their artwork.
4. Provide students with a prompt related to the elements of design, for example: "Now that you have gather your collaborators, create a piece of art that considers symmetry." These prompts can be adapted to explore other elements of design such as colour, form, value, texture, etc.

## Gallery Walk

1. Gather students to walk around the yard, stopping as a group at each students' work.
2. Invite each student to share their artwork and to thank their collaborators for their contributions:
  - *I would like to thank the pebbles for providing a stable base for my sculpture.*
  - *I would like to thank the leaves for providing bright colours.*
  - *I would like to thank the dandelions for providing contrast.*
3. Take photographs of the work to be displayed in the classroom.
4. Afterwards, ask the students to return the elements to where they belong.