

NAC10 - Natural Ink Project

Part 1 - Introduction

Prep:

Get familiar with the process of making ink from plants. There is an ink recipe at the end of this document, but the following guides can be very helpful:

<https://www.tanyaval.com/natural-ink-blog/inkrecipes>

https://www.leavesof.ca/blog/natural-ink-making-process-sumac-ink?srsId=AfmBOorOjXYNI-gUcb2K_bQrLUVXJ1KalZNg6DEMjRWPXqY4dO0fq_RC

Make a few colours of ink ahead of time, both to practice the process and to have some examples students can try out.

Cut watercolour paper into small pieces and gather some nib pens, regular pens, watercolour paints, brushes, and water containers.

Hook (5-10 mins):

Introduce the unit using a powerpoint, ask about food staining clothes to get students thinking about what kinds of plants/materials produce **pigment**, and how that pigment transfers onto another material or surface.

Ask students to list some foods that would stain your clothes. Someone might mention a fruit/vegetable we will use for our inks, so jump on that when mentioned. If not, prompt it by asking about berries, someone will inevitably say blueberries, and you can use that opportunity to bring out some blueberry ink you've made ahead of time.

Development (15-20 mins):

Explain to students that they will be making their own ink from **plants rich in pigment**. Bring out example inks (made ahead of time). Allow students to smell the ink and guess what other ingredients are in it (vinegar, salt, cloves). Explain how those additional ingredients help the ink. Present powerpoint to show the techniques (pen and watercolour) they will be using with the inks they make. Demonstrate the techniques so students can see them in action.

Hands-on (30-40 mins):

Hand out small pieces of watercolour paper for students to try out using the ink with brushes and nib pens to see how each ink looks and feels when applied to the paper. If students don't know what to paint/draw, encourage them to try drawing some plants, and get inspired by the colours they are using. This is also a great time for students to start trying out the pen and watercolour techniques. Practicing these techniques can continue into the next days, and you may want to dedicate a day to demonstrating and practicing pen and a day of the same for watercolour.

Part 2 - Collaborative Ink Making and Individual Sketching**Prep:**

Gather the plant materials to be used in the ink, and a few large glass jars. Create an artwork of a plant that has some personal significance to you, using the materials and techniques being introduced in this project.

Hook (10-15 mins):

Show students the plant materials, introducing each one and explaining what colour it produces. Bring out the jars, and explain that students will be one-by-one adding ingredients to the jars to collaboratively create colours. If they want to attempt to make specific colours, they can, but everyone will have a chance to individually add some ingredients to the jars, so they'll have to convince each other to get on board with a plan to try for a certain colour in a certain jar.

Show students your artwork, explaining that they will each be creating a similar artwork, centred around a plant or plants that are important to them personally or culturally. Get them to brainstorm some plants that have some significance to them, and start sketching ideas for artworks.

Development/Hands-on (50-60 mins):

As students brainstorm and sketch, call them up to the station with the jars and ingredients one at a time. Allow them to take three scoops of ingredients, all the same or all different, and add them to whichever jars they choose. Students might see a particular jar looking like it will probably end up making ink of a certain colour, and they can choose to reinforce that, or add different materials to change up the colour. Encourage them to plan together to try for a specific colour, and explain that mixing all the ingredients will most likely produce brown, which is also a direction they can decide to go if they'd like. You can later follow the process of the ink recipe included in this document to turn those jars of ingredients into ink. Bring them back the next class for students to see the results and try out the ink they made.

Part 3 - Individual Ink Making and Sketching

Prep:

Bring in the plant materials once again, and this time a jar for each student. Also bring labels so that students can put their names on their jar.

Hook (5-10 mins):

Start a discussion about reciprocity, especially in how it relates to the land we live on and the plants and animals we use and consume. Include discussion of Indigenous perspectives and examples of Indigenous voices here. Ask students about examples of give and take from their own lives, maybe ways in which they give back. Explain that they will be taking plant materials from the ones you've brought in to make their ink, but that you'd like them to give something back too. They can create art, write poetry, sing a song, tell a story, anything really, as long as they are putting some intention into something they are giving back to give thanks for the use of the plants.

Development/Hands-on (50-60 mins):

As students create and present their reciprocal artworks/creations/gestures, you can supervise them adding ingredients to their jars. Ask them to think about what colour they'd like to make, how it might go into their art, and how they think they can achieve that colour. Also get them to design a label for their jar so that they will be able to easily identify which is theirs later. After this class, you can add water to the jars, boil them, strain the ingredients out, and add the binders and preservative. Once done, the inks can be given back to students to use for their projects. Encourage them to share inks to try out different colours.

During this class, students should also continue their brainstorming and sketching for their plant-related art piece. The following classes can be work periods as they complete their art. During a work period, or as you first introduce the project, you may want to show this film, as it directly relates to the process and could provide students with some inspiration:

<https://www.nfb.ca/film/the-colour-of-ink/>

NAC10 - Natural Ink Project



We will be making our own natural ink, and using it to create artworks reflecting on the importance of our personal connections to plant life and to the land.

Stage 1:

We will use a simple process to turn pigment from plants into ink. Everyone will make their own unique colour of ink, and we can share inks with each other.



Stage 2:

Choose a plant that is important to you or your family. It could be a tree, a fruit, vegetable, flower, or any other kind of plant.



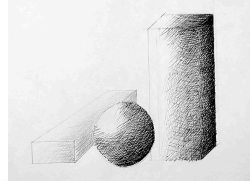
Stage 3:

Use the ink we made to draw your chosen plant.

You can use nib pens, sharpies or other pens, brushes, and watercolours.

Use at least one of the following techniques in your artwork:

Hatching / Cross Hatching >



Scribbled Lines >



Pointillism >



Wet-in-wet >



Graded Wash >



^ Refer to the *Ink Techniques* and *Watercolour Techniques* handouts ^

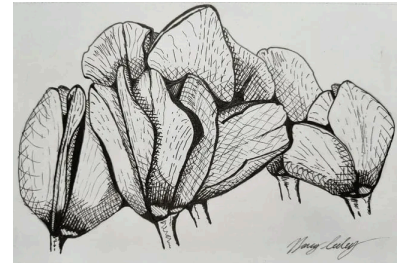
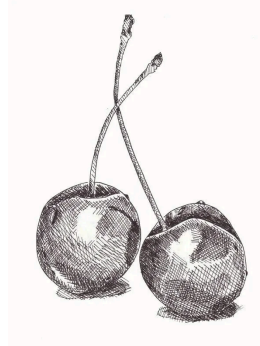
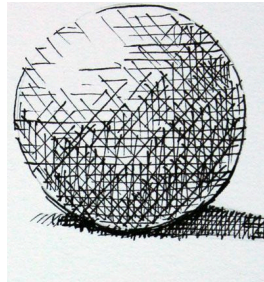
Stage 4:

Show off your work!

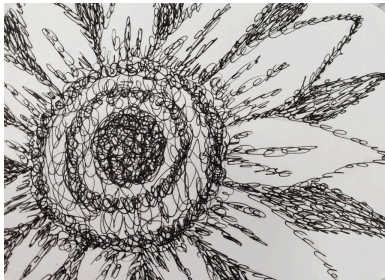
Ink Techniques Worksheet

Practice doing a **rough** ink drawing in each of the following techniques (3 drawings total):

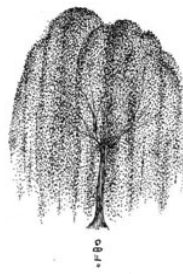
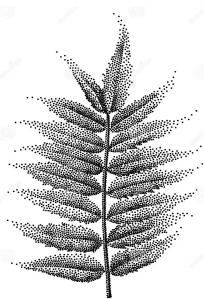
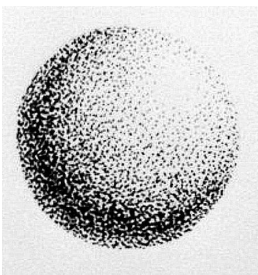
Hatching / Cross Hatching: Lines in one or more directions to create shading.



Scribbled Lines: Curving and twisting lines, less controlled than hatching.



Pointilism: Many small dots, layered on top of each other



These are just for practice, they do not need to be amazing

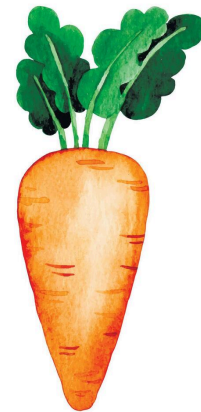
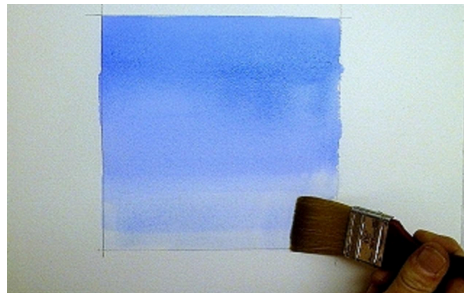
Watercolour Techniques Worksheet

Practice doing a **rough** watercolour in each of the following techniques (2 paintings total):

Wet-In-Wet: You wet the paper first, then do watercolour on top (the colours will bleed/feather)



Graded wash (gradual wash): You can experiment with wetting the paper first, or not, but gradually add MORE COLOUR/LESS WATER to create a dark-to-light effect (this one takes practice!)



These are just for practice, they do not need to be amazing

Natural Ink Project, Art 9 (NAC10)

Name: _____

Testing and Planning:

	4 Amazing!	3 Right on!	2 Almost there	1 On your way	R It's a start
A2. Identities demonstrate an understanding of the role of spiritual, individual, gender, and collective identities in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit world views, analysing how identity is expressed through various art forms and arts disciplines	Your work shows complex understanding of	Your final artwork plan shows good understanding of how to connect your personal and cultural identity to art	Your work shows some understanding of	Your work shows minimal understanding of	Your work does not demonstrate understanding
B1. The Creative Process: apply the creative process individually and/or collaboratively to create art works, including integrated art works/productions, that draw on your exploration of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives to express your own personal world views, histories, or cultures.	You demonstrated excellent	You demonstrate good use of exploring materials and new techniques. Your plan for your final artwork that reflects a plant, vegetable, fruit etc that has a connection to you and the land.	You demonstrated some	You demonstrated minimal	You did not demonstrate
B2. Elements and Principles apply key elements and principles from various arts disciplines, as reflected in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art forms, when creating, modifying, and presenting art works, including integrated art works/productions	You demonstrated excellent	Your practice pieces and sketches show good understanding of how to use the elements and principles of art,	You demonstrated some	You demonstrated minimal	You did not demonstrate
B3. Materials, Tools, Techniques, and Technologies: use a variety of traditional and contemporary materials, tools, techniques, and technologies to create art works, including integrated art works/productions, that demonstrate creativity.	You demonstrated excellent	You demonstrated good effort and learning in trying out the pen and watercolour techniques You considered how to use these materials and techniques in your plan for you final artwork	You demonstrated some	You demonstrated minimal	You did not demonstrate understanding
C1. Terminology demonstrate an understanding of, and use proper terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other key concepts related to various arts disciplines, as reflected in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art forms	You demonstrated excellent	You demonstrated a good understanding of the elements and principles of art, as well as the techniques of hatching, scribbling, pointillism, wet-in-wet, and graded washes. You are able to recognize and identify examples of these.	You demonstrated some	You demonstrated minimal	You did not demonstrate understanding
C3. Conventions and Responsible Practices demonstrate an understanding of conventions and responsible practices associated with various arts disciplines, and with art making within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and apply these practices when experiencing, analysing, creating, and presenting art works/productions	You demonstrated excellent	You demonstrated good, safe, and responsible use of materials, tools, and class time.	You demonstrated some	You demonstrated minimal	You did not demonstrate understanding

Final Artwork:

	4 Amazing!	3 Right on!	2 Almost there	1 On your way	R It's a start
A1. The People and the Land demonstrate an understanding of the spiritual interconnectedness of people, the land, and the natural world in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit world views, analysing how spiritual and personal connections to the land are expressed through various art forms and arts disciplines.	Your work shows complex understanding of	Your work shows a good understanding of the importance of connections between humans, plant life, and the land. You have reflected on your personal relationship with plants and the land.	Your work shows some understanding of	Your work shows minimal understanding of	Your work does not demonstrate understanding
A2. Identities demonstrate an understanding of the role of spiritual, individual, gender, and collective identities in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit world views, analysing how identity is expressed through various art forms and arts disciplines	You demonstrated excellent	You demonstrated good use of personal connection and identity in your choice of plant and design.	You demonstrated some	You demonstrated minimal	You did not demonstrate
B2. Elements and Principles apply key elements and principles from various arts disciplines, as reflected in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art forms, when creating, modifying, and presenting art works, including integrated art works/productions	Your work shows complex understanding of	Your final artwork shows good understanding of how to use the elements and principles of art	Your work shows some understanding of	Your work shows minimal understanding of	Your work does not demonstrate understanding
B3. Materials, Tools, Techniques, and Technologies: use a variety of traditional and contemporary materials, tools, techniques, and technologies to create art works, including integrated art works/productions, that demonstrate creativity.	Your work shows complex understanding of	Your final artwork shows good understanding of how to use the materials, tools, and techniques covered in class, and apply them to a finished artwork	Your work shows some understanding of	Your work shows minimal understanding of	Your work does not demonstrate understanding
B4. Presentation and Promotion present and promote art works, including integrated art works/productions, for a variety of purposes, respecting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultural protocols and using appropriate technologies and conventions	Your work shows complex understanding of	Your final artwork shows good understanding of how to create a finished artwork that is presentable and easily understood	Your work shows some understanding of	Your work shows minimal understanding of	Your work does not demonstrate understanding
C1. Terminology demonstrate an understanding of, and use proper terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other key concepts related to various arts disciplines, as reflected in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art forms	Your work shows complex understanding of	Your work shows a good understanding of the elements and principles of art, as well as the techniques of hatching, scribbling, pointillism, wet-in-wet, and graded washes. You are able to recognize and identify examples of these.	Your work shows some understanding of	Your work shows minimal understanding of	Your work does not demonstrate understanding

<p>C3. Conventions and Responsible Practices demonstrate an understanding of conventions and responsible practices associated with various arts disciplines, and with art making within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures, and apply these practices when experiencing, analysing, creating, and presenting art works/productions</p>	<p>You demonstrated excellent</p>	<p>You demonstrated good, safe, and responsible use of materials, tools, and class time.</p>	<p>You demonstrated some</p>	<p>You demonstrated minimal</p>	<p>You did not demonstrate understanding</p>
<p>D1. Art Forms and Society demonstrate an understanding of how past and present First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art forms reflect the societies and periods in which they were created</p>	<p>Your work shows complex understanding of</p>	<p>Your final artwork shows good reflection on your relationship with plants, and is connected to your identity/culture</p>	<p>Your work shows some understanding of</p>	<p>Your work shows minimal understanding of</p>	<p>Your work does not demonstrate understanding</p>
<p>D2. Promoting Renewal, Healing, Reconciliation, and Dialogue: demonstrate an understanding of how art making and art works can promote renewal and healing in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and reconciliation and dialogue with non-Indigenous communities.</p>	<p>You demonstrated excellent</p>	<p>Your reflection demonstrated a good and meaningful understanding of artmaking and engaging with nature as a form of reconciliation and dialogue.</p>	<p>You demonstrated some</p>	<p>You demonstrated minimal</p>	<p>You did not demonstrate understanding</p>
<p>D3. Connections beyond the Classroom describe the skills developed through creating, presenting, and analysing art works that explore First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives, including integrated art works/productions, and identify various opportunities to pursue artistic endeavours beyond the classroom</p>	<p>You demonstrated excellent</p>	<p>You demonstrated good understanding of the skills, character traits, and work habits that are developed through artmaking</p>	<p>You demonstrated some</p>	<p>You demonstrated minimal</p>	<p>You did not demonstrate understanding</p>

Ink Recipe

Materials:

Pots that can get stained

Jars

Labels

Funnels

Cheesecloth or coffee filters

Vinegar

Salt

Gum Arabic

Wintergreen Oil **or** Clove oil **or** Whole Cloves

Step 1: Choose Your Plant Material

Identify your plant material and ensure it's non-toxic.

Consider foraged plants, food scraps, or garden flowers for a wide range of colours.

Step 2: Prepare & Simmer

In a stainless steel pot, add your plant material and cover with water (a good ratio is 1 part plant material to 2 parts water).

Bring to a gentle boil, then add:

2 tablespoons white vinegar (to help release pigments)

1 tablespoon salt (to help the colour stay bright)

Boil for a few minutes, then lower the heat to a gentle simmer, stirring occasionally.

Step 3: Monitor Colour Development

Test colour intensity by dipping a paper strip every 10-15 minutes.

For soft materials (berries, flowers, leaves): Simmer for 15 minutes to 2 hours.

For harder materials (pits, bark, cones, nuts): Use a multi-day extraction—boil for 1 hour, let it cool overnight, then reheat the next day for another hour. Repeat if needed.

Step 4: Cool & Strain

Once your desired colour is achieved, remove from heat and let cool.

Strain using a fine mesh strainer or cheesecloth. Repeat if plant particles remain.

Step 5: Add Binder & Preservative

Pour the ink into a sterilized jar.

Add:

2 drops of Gum Arabic (to help the ink flow smoothly)

2 drops of Wintergreen or Thyme Oil (to prevent mold)

Shake well, and your ink is ready to use!