

Study Guide:

“Resurgence of the People”, 2019, Kent Monkman

About the artwork: *Resurgence of the People* shows dozens of characters of various ethnicities aboard a boat paddled by Indigenous people and captained by Miss Chief. It is a historical narrative artwork in the style of older Classical



works, but the subject matter offers a counter narrative to the history of Canada traditionally depicted. It seeks to provoke the audience to question historical narratives and re-story the erasure of Indigenous people. In this work, Indigenous people take on an active role which is a counternarrative to the often passive way history has represented first contact and colonization. It was commissioned and acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, where it debuted in the museum’s Great Hall. It is a large-scale narrative painting measuring 11x22 feet. *Resurgence of the People* is actually part of a diptych. Its companion painting is called *Welcoming the Newcomers*.

About the artist: Kent Monkman (1965) is a member of Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba. Today, the interdisciplinary artist lives and works in Toronto. He is best known for his large-scale narrative paintings, inspired by the tradition of Western historical painting. Before turning exclusively to fine art, Monkman worked in theatre as a set and costume designer. Monkman often depicts himself in his artwork through the character he created, *Miss Chief* - a time-traveling, shape-shifting Two-Spirit alter ego. The character embodies the mythological “trickster” persona; her antics often undermine and subvert colonial authority. Monkman created her as a means to make interventions in history and to represent Indigenous — specifically Cree — perspectives.

Please preview the short film and then share it with your students. Select one or two guiding questions that reflect your curriculum and can guide student research and inquiry connected to the artwork, artists, and the socio-cultural context in which it was created.

Guiding Questions:

- How has Monkman centred Indigenous perspectives and challenged colonization, systemic racism, climate change, and immigration?
- What power does storytelling have on shaping individual, collective and cultural identities?
- How can counter-narratives serve to interrupt history, erase, and re-vision the future?
- How does Monkman explore concepts of intersectionality in his artwork?
- How does Monkman challenge our shared notions of history and identity through his artwork?
- What has been reclaimed? What has been dismantled?
- How art making and art works can promote renewal and healing in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities as well as reconciliation and dialogue with non-Indigenous communities?
- How is this work connected to the TRC and to UNDRIP?

- Is it significant that Monkman uses Western artmaking techniques? Or that it is in a traditional art gallery?
- Consider a personal, cultural or national story that has been erased or misrepresented. Retell it from an alternate point of view through visual arts, media arts, dance, drama, music or creative writing.
- What traditional dramatic or theater practices are employed by Monkman in creating his artwork?
- How does tension exist in the artwork?
- What story does this artwork tell about Indigenous relationships with settlers and non-Natives?
- In what ways is Canadian identity tied to our relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities?
- How does Kent Monkman uphold or push the role of artist?
- This is a narrative artwork. What is the story?

Supporting Links:

- Article on [Reversing History's Colonial Gaze](#)
- [Interview with Kent Monkman](#)
- [Article and video on the diptych](#)
- [A Talk with Kent Monkman](#)

Ontario Secondary Curriculum Connections - Overall Expectations

The Arts - Visual Arts

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by examining, interpreting, evaluating, and reflecting on various art works;

B2. Art, Society, and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how art works reflect the society in which they were created, and of how they can affect personal values;

C1. Terminology: demonstrate an understanding of, and use correct terminology when referring to, elements, principles, and other components related to visual arts;

C2. Conventions and Techniques: demonstrate an understanding of conventions and techniques used in the creation of visual art works;

C3. Responsible Practices: demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices related to visual arts.

The Arts - Media Arts

B1. The Critical Analysis Process: demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by using it to monitor the creative process, and by examining, interpreting, assessing, and reflecting on media artworks;

B2. Identity and Values: demonstrate an understanding of how media art works reflect personal and cultural identity, and affect personal, cultural, and community values and their awareness of those values;

C2. Contexts and Influences: demonstrate an understanding of the sociocultural and historical contexts of media arts;

C3. Responsible Practices: demonstrate an understanding of responsible practices associated with producing, presenting, and experiencing media art works.

The Arts - Dance

A2. Choreography and Composition: combine the elements of dance in a variety of ways in composing individual and ensemble dance creations;

The Arts - Drama

A1. The Creative Process: use the creative process and a variety of sources and forms, both individually and collaboratively, to design and develop drama works;

B2. Drama and Society: demonstrate an understanding of how societies present and past use or have used drama, and of how creating and viewing drama can benefit individuals, groups, and communities;

The Arts - Music

A1. The Creative Process: apply the stages of the creative process when performing notated and/or improvised music and composing and/or arranging music;

History:

A1. Historical Inquiry: use the historical inquiry process and the concepts of historical thinking when investigating aspects of Canadian history, with a focus on the development of identity and culture (CHI4U)

B2. Significant Interactions: analyse the impact of significant interactions, including interactions with the environment, on the selected ethnic group's country or region of origin

B3. Culture and Identity: analyse ways in which various factors contributed to the development of culture and identity in the selected ethnic group in its country or region of origin

English:

Writing: use a variety of organizational structures and patterns to produce coherent and effective written work;

Writer's Craft:

B: Practising Writing: 1. Exploring Ideas, Forms, and Styles: generate and experiment with ideas about writing content, forms, and styles;

Communications Technology:

A1. demonstrate an understanding of the core concepts, techniques, and skills required to produce a range of communications media products and services;

C2. demonstrate an understanding of the social effects of current communications media technologies and the importance of respecting cultural and societal diversity in the production of media projects.

Communications Technology: Broadcast and Print Production

A1. demonstrate an understanding of the core concepts, techniques, and skills required to produce a range of audio, video, broadcast journalism, graphic arts, and printing and publishing products or services;

C2. demonstrate an understanding of social effects and issues arising from the use of communications media technologies and the importance of respecting cultural and societal diversity in the production of media projects.