Canadian Art History At a Glance

In the Beginning
- Before the Europeans came, Canadian (native) art was made using
  - Rocks
  - Antlers and bones
  - Wood
  - Animal skins
  - It was drawn on faces too

The Transition
After the Europeans arrived, Canadian art grew to include art made by the Native Canadians and the European settlers

Art in Canada Pre 1900’s
- Different types of art produced
  - Native Art
  - Religious Art
  - Topographical Drawings
  - Portraits (of Natives and Prosperous Families)
  - Landscape Paintings
  - Figurative/Genre Paintings

Native Art (Inuit)
Inuit Art
- The Inuit were nomadic people (meaning they were people who always moved around according to the seasons). It wasn’t until the 1940’s that there was a demand for their art throughout Canada and the rest of the world.

Native Art (Inuit)
- Inuit Subject matter
  - Arctic Animals
  - Inuit daily life
  - Mythological creatures

Not Inuit image – just example of animals found in the Arctic
Native Art (Inuit)
- Types of art created (traditional and modern)
  - Sculptures
  - Relief carvings
  - Printmaking
  - Drawings
  - Tapestry weavings
  - Wall hangings

Inuit Art
- Traditional Media
  - Whale bone
  - Soapstone
  - Antlers

Native Art (Plains)
- The Plains natives were nomadic because they followed the buffalo
- They built shelters that could easily be moved and adapted into a lifestyle of frequent moves (teepees)

Native Art (Plains)
- Art they created
  - They decorated themselves
  - Teepees
  - Objects they carried such as rawhide carrying bags
  - Materials they used
All of the materials they used were found in nature (e.g. fur, feathers, claws, animal skins)

Native Art (West Coast)
- West Coast Natives built more permanent lodgings and villages near fishing areas
Native Art (West Coast)
- Type of art they created (traditional and modern)
  - Masks
  - Totem poles
  - Metal bracelets
  - Blankets
  - Sweaters

Native Art (West Coast)
- Materials they used
  - Shells
  - Strips of cedar bark (to make inlaid boxes)
  - Wood
  - Copper
  - Wood and other fibres (modern media)
- Notice the art is larger – they did not have to carry it around because they did not move.

Religious Art
- The first Europeans to settle in Canada were the French and the English. They came into contact with the Native people around the 16th century (1500’s)
- Among these first settlers were priests whose job was to decorate the churches for two main purposes:
  - For teaching
  - For prayer and thanks on behalf of the Europeans

Religious Art
For teaching:
- Early religious art (paintings and sculpture) were produced to help teach Christianity to the Natives and to help settlers feel at home in their new land
Religious Art

For Teaching
- A native dressed in French attire is receiving religious instruction from a woman on the right who symbolizes France
- The woman points to the heavens
- The painting is merely a means of teaching about the Holy Trinity to the natives
- Colours are rich and deep, figures are a little unsophisticated

La France Apportant La Foi Aux Indiens De La Nouvelle France, Frere Luc, 1670

Religious

For Prayer and Thanks
- Votive paintings (Ex-voto) were made by individuals to show gratitude to a patron saint for surviving an accident or an illness
- St. Anne appears in the sky to give the young protection during a shipwreck

Ex-Voto de Trois Naufrages de Lévis, 1754

The word votive comes from the term ex-voto. We use votive candles in churches today to honour the dead, as a petition to a saint or as a thank you for a petition fulfilled. Modern day ex-votos!

Topographical

- Europeans were very curious about the environment Canada offered, so many artists and writers visited to examine and study Canada's nature, geography and climate. Many of these artists were topographical artists – they recorded geographical features in detailed drawings and watercolour

Topographical

- Topographical artists made drawings and paintings that provided information about the countryside for military officers
- Served in the British Army
- Not realistic, has a certain charm
- Influenced by Romantic Landscapes of England

Portraits

- Eventually people realized the need to build a life that was less dependent on Europe and focused more on preserving themselves so portraits and scenes began to depict Canadian life. Two types:
  - Images of prosperous families
  - Natives
Portraits

Prosperous families

- Quebec merchant's daughter ( Nun)
- Classical in form, in that it is very detailed and realistic
- Gradation of light, smooth surface
- At the time the artist was one of few who was able to go beyond recording simple physical details but also captured the spirit of warm vibrant presence
- Traditional pose - triangular

Portrait of Sister Alphonse, Antoine Plamondon, 1841

Figurative/Genre paintings

- Figurative paintings used the environment as a background for figurative studies of ordinary people

Figurative/Genre paintings (Kriehoff)

- His subjects were farmers, habitants, and tavern visitors
- Vivid picture of life in 19th century rural Canada
- His paintings often tell a story. In the painting The Horse Trader, a family argues with a man (a horse trader) who has cheated them

The Horse Trader, Cornelius Kriehoff, 1871

Landscape

- In the 19th century landscape paintings replaced figure and portrait paintings. The romantic ideals of the early century were replaced by impressionism in the later part of the century. The aim was to capture visual impressions. The paintings were characterized by a unique sense of colour and light

Landscape

- Realistically captured the physical environment, being sensitive to the physical structure of the land and carefully rendered everything that he saw
- Fascinating environment - the power and scale, and beauty clearly evident
- Incorporates human elements - boats, people

Sunrise on the Saguenay, Cape Trinity, Lucas O'Brien, 1830
Art in Canada After 1900

- Canada is still a very new country – Confederation was in 1867. Even some provinces were not a part of Canada until 1949!
- Canada is developing its identity as a country
- First Nations peoples are continuing to make art, and are using modern media to create Native art

Native Art (Inuit)

- Modern media
  - Paper
  - Ink
  - Cloth
  - Thread

Native Art (Inuit)

- Style and key characteristics of Inuit printmaking
  - Simple shapes
  - Solid, flat colours
  - Repetitive patterns
  - Outlined in white

Enchanted Owl, Kenojuak, 1960 Print

Native Art (Inuit)

- Prints were completed by three people and all names were included in something called a co-operative stamp. It is a signature.
- The three people were
  - Artist
  - Stone carver
  - Printer

(Watch “Inuit Artist: Kenojuak” by John Feeney; NFB)

Native Art (West Coast)

- There are many famous Native artists alive today, continuing to tell their cultures’ stories in contemporary ways.
- Bill Reid (1920-1998) was a Haida artist whose work you may have seen before...
Art in Canada - Early 20th Century (1900's)

- The Group of Seven emerges in the 1920's
  - They were a group of young Canadian artists who began working together in 1910, but displayed their work in Toronto in the 1920's

Tom Thomson

- An influential Canadian artist of the early 20th century.
- He directly influenced a group of Canadian painters that would come to be known as the Group of Seven. He died before they formally formed under mysterious circumstances, which added to his mystique.

Tom Thomson - The West Wind

Tom Thomson - The Jack Pine

Group of Seven

- Members
  - J E H MacDonald
  - Lawren Harris
  - A Y Jackson
  - Fred Varley
  - Arthur Lismer
  - Franklin Carmichael
  - Franklin Johnston
  - A J Casson *
  - Edwin Holgate *
  - LeMoine Fitzgerald *

But wait... isn't it the group of SEVEN???

Group of Seven

- Where they painted:
  - Georgian Bay
  - Algonquin Park
  - Algoma
  - Northern Quebec

![Map of Group of Seven locations]
Group of Seven
- How they traveled:
  - Lawren Harris paid for the boxcar they used as a mobile studio and traveling quarters

Group of Seven
- Their goal
  - To portray the essence of the Canadian Spirit in a distinctive Canadian Style
  - To give Canada a national identity through art
  - Europeans used a romanticized style of painting and they felt this certain style did not suit the rugged landscape Canada possesses

Group of Seven
- Their influences
  - Impressionism
  - Art Nouveau

Group of Seven
- Impressionism
  - Painted from direct observation outdoors
  - Studied light and atmosphere
  - Used bright, bold colours
  - Landscape most important subject
  - Water Lily Pond, Monet, 1899

Group of Seven
- Art Nouveau
  - Plant forms for their main subject
  - Simplified shapes
  - Flowing line
  - Sharp contrasts
  - Alphonse Mucha, Dance, 1898

Group of Seven
- Characteristics of the Group of Seven (notice the similarities with the last two styles)
  - Landscape was subject matter
  - Painted from direct observation of outdoors
  - Bold, simplified shapes
  - Very little detail
  - Short brush strokes
  - Sweeping lines
  - Bold, strong colours
Group of Seven

- Birch Island. A. J. Casson. 1945

Group of Seven

- Stormy Weather. Georgian Bay. F. Varley 1931

Group of Seven

- Fire-Swept Algoma. Frank Johnston 1930

Emily Carr

- Another Canadian painter, she was greatly influenced by the work of the Group of Seven. She also painted the Canadian landscape, but unlike the Group of Seven, she painted in British Colombia.

Emily Carr

- Over time her work became more geometrical, with simplified objects. The shapes and rhythm of her work are very organic, even though they are geometrical.

- Much of her work depicts old West Coast Native statues, totem poles and abandoned villages found in BC.

Big Raven, Emily Carr 1931