

A Note from Barbara Filion, Author of *Pattern Quest*

This book reveals the diversity of Indigenous Nations through art. Although the book showcases pieces from artists representing several different Nations, it is important to realize that this is a small slice of the enormous cultural diversity among Indigenous groups in Canada and throughout North America. For example, in Canada alone, there are 630 First Nations communities that are home to more than 50 Nations, all with their own languages. One way to highlight this diversity is to use the name of a specific Nation whenever possible. It is important to avoid any sense that all Indigenous peoples across Canada share one culture. Drawing attention to the following ideas will help students grasp important Indigenous cultural teachings related to the book and will provide background knowledge.

Key Idea: *The importance of art as a medium for recording events and cultural traditions*

The examples of artwork in this book all incorporate and document cultural traditions and values through the use of symbolism, imagery, and choice of materials. They also speak to relations that Indigenous people have with each other and/or with Mother Earth and its inhabitants, including animals and plants.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- How many works of art in this book can you find that include animals or are made from animals? Why do you think so many items refer to animals or are made from animals?
- Look for a work of art that refers to or describes an event or story. Describe the event or tell the story in your own words.
- Think of something you know that was made by someone—a picture, a piece of furniture, a carving, a sewn or knitted article of clothing, etc. What is its purpose? What is it made of? Why do you think the person made it? What does it mean to you?

Key Idea: *Indigenous cultures and people adapt and evolve over time*

The artwork in the book illustrates how Indigenous cultures are adaptive, while maintaining cultural continuity. Some of these works of art are historical, and others are contemporary. They reveal how Indigenous cultures have adapted some art forms in terms of materials used and types of items made, while preserving important cultural aspects of the art. For example, when glass beads were introduced with the arrival of Europeans, Indigenous peoples used them to make many of the same designs and symbols that have always been culturally important—incorporating events, stories, and traditions. Some artists now make items that weren't made in the past, such as cell phone cases, using the same materials that have been used for centuries and incorporating significant cultural elements to the work.

Guiding Questions to use with students:

- Look at all of the works of art shown in the book. Which ones do you think were made in the past and which do you think were done more recently? What makes you think so?
- Compare the items that were made in the past and the items that were made more recently. How are they the same? How are they different?
- Which of the materials that were used to make items in the past are still used today?
- Think about artwork that you create. What materials do you use? Which ones are the same as materials used by the artists in the book?