

AFRICAN ARTS INSTITUTE



africanartsinstitute.com



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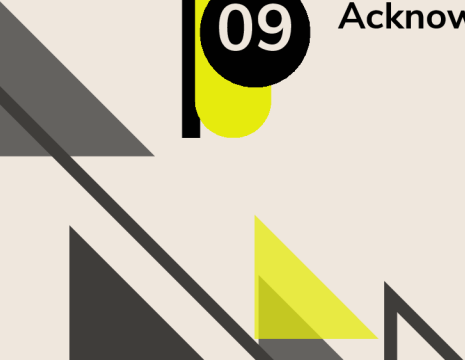
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Welcome Message

The African Arts Institute (AAI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting African heritage through arts and culture.

African Arts Institute, in Belleville, is located on the territory of the Wendat, the Anishinaabe, and the Haudenosaunee people. Belleville shares the shorelines of the Bay of Quinte with Kenhtè:ke (Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory). We recognize all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who call Belleville their home, and support the need for cultivating a strong relationship together.

Contact Us

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Vision and Mission

Vision

African Arts Institute inspires, educates, and entertains the public about African arts and culture. We create greater public understanding of the richness and diversity of Africa. We support unity among all peoples

Mission

We achieve our vision through presenting educational opportunities both live and virtual; by presenting artists in concerts, festivals, artist talks, and arts education; conducting and presenting academic and artistic research; and through recreational activities.

About this Resource

The African Arts Institute is committed to developing an Afrocentric educational resource designed for classroom use at the Junior/Intermediate level (5-8) and paired with interactive presentations. This resource introduces key concepts in African art and culture through African-centred philosophies, drawing from both continental and diasporic perspectives. Through engagement with artistic disciplines such as storytelling, music, dance, theatre, and visual arts, learners are supported in developing a holistic appreciation for the richness, diversity, and cultural significance of African traditions.

Contributors

Isaac Akrong, President • • • •



Isaac holds a master's degree in dance and a PhD in ethnomusicology from York University. He has taught African music and dance at York University, Wesleyan University, Swarthmore College, and many other schools and institutions. As a choreographer, master drummer, and artistic director, Isaac creates new works as well as maintains traditional music and dance through the African Dance Ensemble. Isaac founded Humanity in Harmony festival, bringing together multi-disciplinary artists, academics, and community in a celebration of common humanity through the arts. Isaac has a strong commitment to sharing his knowledge of traditional dance and drumming with the world. As a researcher, he is determined to see Ghanaian music and dance documented for future generations.

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Christina Akrong, Administrative Coordinator



Christina Akrong (she/her) is an educator, arts administrator, and programmer. Christina's career path has travelled in the areas of education, arts, and youth. Over the years this has materialized in work for organizations such as City of Brampton, Cultural Services (Education & Outreach Coordinator); Ontario Arts Council (Arts Education Associate Officer and Northern Arts Program Officer); Canada Council for the Arts (Program Officer); and York University (Office of University Events & Community Relations; York Youth Connection). Christina studied in the Theatre department at York University, and holds a Bachelor and a Masters in Education.

Allison Parsons, Writer • • • •



Allison Parsons (she/her) is an Ontario Secondary School Educator with over two decades of teaching experience. At the secondary level, she teaches English, Social Science, Equity and Social Justice, and is a Student Success Teacher for Black and Indigenous Students (9-12). Allison is currently a graduate student in the Social Justice in Education program at OISE and is deeply committed to Afrocentric, anti-racist, and culturally responsive education. Her work centres Black histories, voices, and creative expression while supporting students in developing critical consciousness, community responsibility, and pride in their cultural identities.

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Curriculum Connections (Grades 5-8)

This Afrocentric educational resource aligns with the Ontario Curriculum for Grades 5–8 by integrating expectations from **Ontario The Arts, Language, and Social Studies Curriculum**. Through engagement with African and African Diasporic art form like oral storytelling, music, dance, drama, and visual arts, students will develop skills in communication, creative expression, critical thinking, and collaboration. This resource and interactive participation with African Arts Institution programming aims to support curriculum goals related to cultural understanding, heritage and identity, and active participation, while encouraging students to explore diverse worldviews and ways of knowing that is grounded in African-centred philosophies such as **Ubuntu, Adinkra, and Ngozi**, the lessons foster **empathy, community responsibility, and reflective learning across subject areas**.



Sankofa

Return and Get it.

Rooted in African Philosophy and Traditional teaching

Through the integration of interactive activities rooted in African culture and the African philosophies and traditional teachings of **Ubuntu, Adinkra, and Ngozi**, this resource brings African Arts into the classroom through the exploration of oral tradition, creative artistic expression, and the strength of collective community. Honouring the interconnectedness of storytelling, symbolism, and gratitude, students engage with African ways of knowing that emphasize creativity, relationship, and shared responsibility.

The **four main themes** explored in this resource are:

- Connected through Stories (Oral Tradition and Storytelling)
- The Beat of the Heart (Drumming and other musical instruments)
- Expression through Artistic Expression (Dance, Theatre, and Visual Arts)
- Governance and Community Leadership (Heritage, Governance, Civics and Charters)

African Philosophy and Traditional Teaching



Ubuntu teaches that learning and identity are shaped through relationships and community, emphasizing empathy, cooperation, and collective responsibility. In the classroom, Ubuntu encourages students to learn with and from one another, fostering inclusive learning environments where everyone belongs.

Adinkra represents a system of visual symbols and proverbs that communicate wisdom, values, and life lessons. Through Adinkra-inspired learning, students engage with symbolism as a form of storytelling, using images and art to explore ideas such as courage, unity, respect, and perseverance.



Ngozi, meaning “blessing” or “gift,” reflects a philosophy of gratitude and purpose. It encourages learners to view knowledge as something valuable and meaningful, reinforcing reflection, appreciation, and respect for learning as a shared and sacred experience.



UBUNTU

Learning Together

“I AM, BECAUSE WE ARE”



What Is Ubuntu?

Ubuntu is an African philosophy that teaches us that we are all connected. It reminds us that who we are depends on how we treat others.

Ubuntu means:

- We learn together
- We care about one another
- Everyone belongs

What Ubuntu Teaches Us

Ubuntu teaches us to:

- Be kind and respectful
- Help others when they need support
- Listen to different ideas and experiences
- Understand that our actions affect our community
- When we practice Ubuntu, we make our classroom a better place for everyone.

Ubuntu in Our Classroom

In an Ubuntu classroom, students:

- Work together instead of competing
- Share ideas and listen respectfully
- Celebrate differences
- Support one another's learning

Ubuntu helps us remember that no one learns alone.

UBUNTU

Learning Together

"I AM, BECAUSE WE ARE"



Ubuntu and the Arts

African arts often reflect Ubuntu by bringing people together through:

- Stories that teach lessons and values
- Music and drumming that create unity and rhythm
- Dance that expresses joy and connection
- Art that shares messages and meaning

The arts show us that creativity is often something we do together.

Think About It

- How does Ubuntu help people get along?
- What does it mean to learn as a community?
- How can you show Ubuntu at school or at home?



Ubuntu in Action

Try This:

When working in a group, ask yourself:

- Am I listening to others?
- Am I helping my group succeed?
- Am I treating everyone with respect?



Remember

Ubuntu teaches us that when we care for others, we all grow stronger.



Adinkra Symbols

Adinkra (ah-DEEN-krah) symbols from the Akan people of Ghana and the Gyaman of Côte d'Ivoire) are visual representations of African wisdom, values, and proverbs.

Each symbol carries a message about life, morality, and human behaviour. Adinkra symbols are often used in textiles, art, and to represent valuable moral teachings.



Gye Nyam

'Supremacy of God'



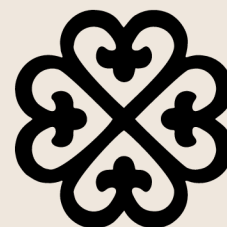
Aya

'Endurance'



Osram ne Nsoromma

'Love, Harmony and Faithfulness'



Nyame Dua

'A symbol of God's protection and presence'

Adinkra (ah-DEEN-krah) cloth is a hand-printed fabric made in Ghana. Developed by the Ashanti people, Adinkra cloths were traditionally made for royalty to wear at religious ceremonies. Through the years, people have also decorated the cloths to tell a story or to express their thoughts or feelings.

Adinkra cloth is stamped and patterned with traditional **Ashanti symbols**. Each symbol has its own meaning. People in Ghana decorate the cloth by using a black dye made of bark. This dye is called **Adinkera aduru**, and it is what gives the cloth its name. Using the dye, they draw lines on the cloth to divide it into squares. Next, they carve symbols into calabash gourds, press the gourds into the dye, and stamp the symbols onto the fabric.



Create Your Own Adinkra-Inspired Symbol

Try This:

Choose a value that matters to you (kindness, courage, respect, honesty).

Draw a symbol that represents that value.

Give your symbol a name and explain its meaning.

ADINKRA SYMBOL CHART

Adapted from http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm

SYMBOL	NAME	MEANING
	ADINKRAHENE	Greatness, leadership
	AKOBEN	Hardworking
	AKOFENA	Adventure
	AKOKONAN	Family
	AKOMA	patience & tolerance

	AKOMA NTOSO	understanding, agreement
	ANANSE NTONTAN	Creativity
	ASASE YE DURU	Mother Earth, nature
	AYA	Determination, Integrity
	BESE SAKA	Success, wealth
	BI NKA BI	peace, harmony
	BOA ME NA ME MMOA WO	Respect, Trust

	<u>DAME-DAME</u>	Intelligence, Wittiness
	<u>DENKYEM</u>	Generosity, Courtesy
	<u>DUAFEE</u>	Beauty, handsomeness
	<u>DWENNIMMEN</u>	humility and strength
	<u>EBAN</u>	love, support, security
	<u>EPA</u>	law, justice
	<u>ESE NE TEKREMA</u>	friendship,

	<u>FAWOHODIE</u>	Independence, freedom,
	<u>FIHANKRA</u>	Thankfulness, Honesty,
	<u>GYE NYAME</u>	Faith
	<u>HWEMUDUA</u>	Ambition, Accomplishment, career
	<u>KWATAKYE ATIKO</u>	bravery, valor
	<u>MATE MASIE</u>	Maturity, Logic
	<u>ME WARE WO</u>	Knowledge,

Adapted from:

http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm

Ngozi (Igbo Origins) Igbo is spoken in southeaster Nigeria

What Is Ngozi?

Ngozi is a word from the **Igbo** language of Nigeria that means “blessing” or “gift.” Ngozi teaches us to see learning, community, and life itself as blessings. It reminds us to be thankful, respectful, and purposeful in how we learn and how we treat others.

What Ngozi Teaches Us

Ngozi encourages us to:

- Be grateful for opportunities to learn
- Respect knowledge as something valuable
- Appreciate the people who help us grow
- Use what we learn in positive and meaningful ways

Ngozi helps us understand that learning is not just about facts, it is about purpose and appreciation.

Ngozi in Our Classroom

In a classroom guided by Ngozi, students:

- Show appreciation for teachers, classmates, and shared learning
- Take responsibility for their learning
- Treat knowledge with care and respect
- Recognize learning as a gift that can be shared



**Ngozi (Igbo Origins)
Igbo is spoken in southeaster Nigeria**

Ngozi and the Arts

In African cultures, the arts are often expressions of gratitude and celebration, through:

- Music and drumming, people give thanks and celebrate life
- Dance, people express joy and appreciation
- Stories, wisdom is shared as a gift from one generation to the next
- Art, values and blessings are remembered and honoured

Think About It

- What are you grateful for?
- Who has helped you grow or learn something new?
- How can you show gratitude in your classroom or community?

Reflection Questions

- How does seeing learning as a gift change how we treat it?
- How does gratitude help build a strong community?
- How can we show Ngozi every day at school?



Ngozi in Action
Gratitude and Purpose Activity

Learning Focus

Students explore Ngozi by reflecting on gratitude, recognizing learning as a gift, and identifying meaningful ways to use their knowledge to support others.

Activity 1: Reflection Writing

Ask students to quietly reflect and respond in writing:

- One thing I am grateful for in my learning is...
- One person who has helped me learn is...
- One skill or idea I am proud of learning is...

Activity 2: Gratitude Circle

Students sit in a circle. One at a time, students may share:

- Something they are grateful for in the classroom
- A learning experience that felt meaningful

(Students may pass if they choose. Emphasize listening with respect and appreciation.)

Activity 3: Purpose Connection

Ask students to think about how learning can be used for good.

Have students complete the sentence:

“Because I learned _____, I can help my community by _____.”

Students may respond through:

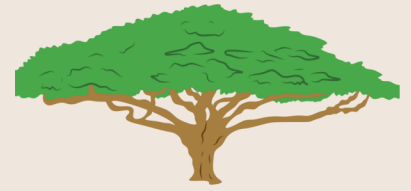
- Writing
- Drawing
- A short spoken word poem

Step 4: Creative Expression

Students create an Ngozi Gratitude Page that includes:

- A word, phrase, or image that represents gratitude
- One way they will use their learning purposefully
- A title such as My Learning Is a Gift or Ngozi in My Life

This can be displayed in the classroom as a reminder that learning matters



Connected through Stories (Oral Tradition and Storytelling)

Long before social media and influencers, African people shared knowledge through stories. Many of these stories were shared orally and made its way throughout the world. This way of teaching and learning is called oral tradition. **Oral tradition means passing information from one generation to the next by speaking, singing, chanting, and performing stories, instead of writing them down.**

In many African cultures, stories were like living libraries. They taught people about history, family, community values, right and wrong, and how to live together. Stories helped people remember where they came from and who they were. They included myths, folktales, proverbs, songs, poems, and epic stories.

Special storytellers, often called **griots**, were respected community members. **Their role was to remember and share important stories about the past, including family histories and community events.** Storytelling usually happened in groups, where everyone listened, responded, and learned together. This made storytelling a way to connect people and build community.

When African people moved to different parts of the world through exploration, were taken into enslavement, or travelled through immigration, they carried their stories with them. Those who belonged to the African Diaspora found ways to document these oral traditional stories even when writing was not allowed or possible. Oral tradition helped African people survive, thrive, resist, and stay connected to each other and their culture. These traditions continued in the African diaspora and can be seen today in spoken word, music, storytelling, sermons, songs, and family stories.

Oral tradition is still important today. It reminds us that our voices matter, our stories are powerful, and learning can happen through listening and sharing. Through storytelling, we stay connected to our ancestors, our communities, and each other.



Suggested Interactives

Connected Through Stories: Oral Tradition and Storytelling (Grades 5–8)

Storytelling as a tool for teaching history, values, and community lessons. Griots and elders are seen as knowledge keepers.

Students explore African oral traditions through storytelling, folktales, and story circles, incorporating retelling and the use of sound, rhythm, gesture and cultural significances

Subject	Strand	Curriculum Expectation	Activity
Language	Oral and Non-Verbal Communication	- B1.2 – Select and use a variety of listening strategies before, during, and after listening to comprehend information and messages communicated orally and non-verbally. - B1.3 – Use oral and non-verbal communication strategies to communicate ideas and information clearly and appropriately. - C2 – Locate and obtain information using oral texts. - C3 – Identify cultural elements of texts and explain how they contribute to meaning.	Students listen to an African folktale told orally by the teacher or guest storyteller. Before listening, students discuss what they already know about storytelling. During the story, students practice active listening (eye contact, body language, call-and-response). After listening, students discuss the story’s message and identify cultural elements such as repetition, rhythm, proverbs, and audience participation. Students share one key message orally with a partner or small group.
The Arts (Drama)	Creating and Presenting	- B1.1 – Engage actively in drama exploration and role play, with a focus on examining multiple perspectives and possible outcomes related to issues, themes, and situations. - B1.2 – Demonstrate an understanding of the element of role by selecting and using appropriate voices, gestures, movements, and language to explore characters and ideas. - B1.3 – Plan and shape drama works by using the elements of drama and conventions to communicate ideas, feelings, and stories.	Students work in small groups to retell an African folktale or proverb using voice, movement, facial expression, and role play . Students explore character roles, storytelling techniques (repetition, rhythm, call-and-response), and audience engagement. Groups present their stories orally, emphasizing storytelling as performance and community sharing.
Social Studies	Heritage and Identity	- A1.1 – Describe some of the ways in which stories, traditions, and cultural practices help communities understand their past and shape identity. - A2.2 – Use information gathered from oral sources to describe aspects of identity and community traditions. - A3.1 – Identify ways in which heritage and cultural traditions are passed down over time and explain why they are important.	Students explore African oral tradition as a way communities shared knowledge, history, and values before widespread written language. Through discussion and comparison, students examine differences between oral storytelling and written texts , reflecting on why oral traditions were essential for preserving culture in Africa and the African diaspora. Students share examples of storytelling traditions from their own families or communities.



The Heartbeat of the Drum: Drumming and Musical Instruments

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In many African cultures, music is more than sound, it is communication, memory, and life itself. Music and the different instruments used are very important to Africa and to those who are part of the African Diaspora. The drum is very significant. The drum is often called the heartbeat of the community because its rhythms connect people to one another, to their ancestors, and to the land.

Before written language was widely used, African communities shared knowledge through rhythm, drumming, song, and other musical instruments. Drums were used to tell stories, celebrate important events, welcome babies, honour ancestors, and send messages across villages. Different rhythms carried different meanings, and skilled drummers knew how to “speak” through the drum.

Drumming was often played alongside other instruments such as **shakers, bells, xylophones, and string instruments**, each with its own purpose and sound.

Music is communal. It brings people together through singing, dancing, and shared enjoyment. One of the ways this is done is through a technique called **call-and-response**. The call-and-response style indicates that everyone has a role in the music and the community.

Music has travelled with African people all around the world and shared with many people. African people used body percussion, clapping, singing, and rhythm to keep their culture alive. These traditions continue today and can be heard in **gospel, jazz, blues, hip hop, Caribbean music, Afrobeat, and spoken word**.

The drum, along with other African traditional instruments, reminds us that music is not just something we listen to, it is something we feel, something that brings people together. Through rhythm and sound, African music teaches us about unity, resistance, celebration, and belonging.



Suggested Interactives

Connected Through Stories: Oral Tradition and Storytelling (Grades 5–8)

Music as storytelling, celebration, and communication. Focus on drumming, call-and-response, and rhythm patterns connected to community.

Students learn how the drum is the beat and its connection to the heartbeat.

Subject	Strand	Curriculum Expectation	Activity
The Arts(Music)	The Arts (Music) Creating and Performing	• B1.1 – Sing and play rhythmic patterns and melodies, using a variety of sound sources, including body percussion and found or traditional instruments. * B1.2 – Apply the elements of music (e.g., rhythm, tempo, dynamics) when creating and performing music. • B1.3 – Demonstrate an understanding of musical forms and conventions, including call-and-response, repetition, and layering of sound.	Students explore African drumming traditions using hand drums, shakers, body percussion, and clapping. Students learn and perform call-and-response rhythms inspired by African and African diasporic music. In small groups, students create short rhythmic compositions using repetition and layering, then perform for the class.
Social Studies	People and Environments	• B1.1 – Sing and play rhythmic patterns and melodies, using a variety of sound sources, including body percussion and found or traditional instruments. * B1.2 – Apply the elements of music (e.g., rhythm, tempo, dynamics) when creating and performing music. • B1.3 – Demonstrate an understanding of musical forms and conventions, including call-and-response, repetition, and layering of sound	Students learn about the role of drumming and music in African communities as tools for communication, celebration, and storytelling. Through discussion and visual examples, students examine how music expresses identity and community values.



Expression through Artistic Expression (Dance, Theatre, and Visual Arts)



Art is a powerful way to express thoughts, emotions, identities, and experiences. Across cultures and throughout history, people have used artistic expression to tell stories, resist injustice, connect with others and celebrate joy. Dance, theatre, and visual arts allow individuals and communities to communicate messages about who they are and what they believe.

Art is not just about creativity, it is also about communication, identity, and justice.

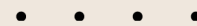
Across generations, African peoples have used dance, theatre, and visual arts to transmit wisdom, honour their ancestors, respond to oppression, and affirm their identity. Artistic expression is a living archive of African ways of knowing and being.



African philosophies such as Ubuntu, Ngozi, and Adinkra shape why and how art is created. These philosophies connect artistic expression to values, ethics, memory, and deep relationships with community, spirit, and ancestors.



How They Work Together in Artistic Expression



Ubuntu, Ngozi, and Adinkra often appear together in African and diasporic art:

- **Ubuntu** shapes who art is for (the community)
- **Ngozi** shapes why art is created (truth, justice, courage)
- **Adinkra** shapes how meaning is communicated (symbols and wisdom)

Together, they show that artistic expression is:

- Communal (Ubuntu)
- Purposeful and courageous (Ngozi)
- Symbolic and educational (Adinkra)

African Dance

African dance is a sacred and communal practice where movement carries meaning. The body becomes a storyteller, connecting dancers to ancestors, land, rhythm, and spirit.

African dance is;

- Communicates history, ceremony, and emotion
- Reflects community values and collective identity
- Responds to life events such as birth, harvest, mourning, and celebration
- Serves as resistance, remembrance, and reclamation



“Every movement holds intention. Every rhythm carries memory”.

African Theatre and Performance

African theatre is deeply rooted in oral tradition, call-and-response, music, movement, and storytelling. Performances are communal and often interactive, inviting the audience into reflection and dialogue.

African Theatre:

- Shares stories of survival, resilience, and resistance.
- Examines identity, power, and social responsibility
- Uses storytelling to educate and transform communities
- Preserves language, humour, wisdom, and ancestral knowledge



“Theatre is a space for truth-telling, collective healing and embracing joy”

Suggested Interactives

Expression through Movement g (Grades 5–8)

Dance and theatre as expressions of engagement, storytelling, and community participation, represent natural elements of communal engagement.

Students can learn how vital the movement of the body is to express joy and cultivate connection within community. Students can also learn and/or create dance moves connected to African Diasporic dance expression.

These created group dance moves can be inspired by animal movements, current dance trends or community celebration, connecting movement to meaning

Subject	Strand	Curriculum Expectations	Activity
The Arts (Dance)	Creating and Presenting	· D1.1 – Create dance pieces that use a variety of movement elements to communicate ideas and feelings inspired by a theme or issue. · D1.4 – Demonstrate an understanding of how dance reflects the social and cultural contexts in which it is created and performed.	· Students work in small groups to create a short movement sequence inspired by Ubuntu (community, interdependence) and Ngozi (strength, courage, responsibility). The sequence must include: • At least three different body shapes or levels • A moment of unison to show unity • A gesture that represents gratitude or protection of the community - Students perform their sequence and explain how
Health & Physical Education	Active Living	• A1.1 – Actively participate in a wide variety of physical activities, including creative and culturally relevant movement activities. • A1.2 – Demonstrate an understanding of factors that contribute to participation in physical activity, including enjoyment, social connection, and cultural relevance. • A1.3 – Identify ways of being physically active that contribute to physical, emotional, and social well-being.	Students participate in an African or African diasporic cultural dance focusing on rhythm, coordination, teamwork, and shared movement. Emphasis is placed on moving together, listening to musical cues, and supporting peers. Students reflect on how cultural dance supports well-being, belonging, and community connection..

African Visual Arts

African visual arts communicate knowledge through symbols, patterns, materials, and imagery. Art is created with purpose and often carries spiritual, cultural, and historical significance.

African visual arts:

- Honour ancestors and cultural traditions
- Tell stories through symbols, colour, and form
- Preserve memory and identity across generations
- Challenge colonial representations of Africa and African peoples



“Visual art is a way of remember, reclaim, and reimagine African futures”.

Suggested Activity

Expression through Artistic Expression (Grade 5-8)

Visual art expresses cultural identity, spirituality, and storytelling through symbols, patterns, and textures (e.g., Adinkra symbols, masks, and textiles).

Students design their own Adinkra-inspired print or stamp, choosing a personal value (e.g., kindness or courage) to symbolize, or create Afrofuturistic imagery that represents hope and future aspirations.

Subject	Strand	Curriculum Expectation	Activity
The Arts (Visual Arts)	Creating and Presenting	• V1.1 – Create art works that communicate ideas, messages, and understandings for a specific purpose and audience • *V2.2 – Explain how elements and principles of design are used to communicate meaning and influence interpretation. • V1.3 – Use elements of design and principles of design to communicate meaning in visual art.	Students will create an original artwork inspired by Adinkra symbols to express a personal value or community message, using elements and principles of design to communicate meaning. Students begin by learning about Adinkra symbols, which originate from the Akan peoples of West Africa. Students: • Examine examples of traditional Adinkra symbols • Discuss how symbols can communicate ideas without words • Explore how symbols are used in cloth, architecture, storytelling, and contemporary art Students choose: • One personal value (e.g., courage, kindness, resilience, gratitude) • OR • One community message (e.g., unity, protection, justice, hope for the future) Sketch 2–3 preliminary symbol ideas, using shapes, lines, and patterns to represent their chosen meaning.

Suggested Activity

Expression through Artistic Expression (Grade 5-8)

Students explore examples of African and African diasporic contributions to global arts and culture, (e.g., Adinkra symbols, masks, paintings, sculptures, textiles, and digital art).

Students will identify and explain how African peoples have contributed to global arts and culture, and how these contributions shape heritage, identity, and community values.

Subject	Strand	Curriculum Expectation	Activity
Social Studies	Heritage and Identity	- A1.1 – Describe some of the contributions of various groups to the development of Canada, including cultural and artistic contributions. - A2.5 – Describe ways in which different communities have contributed to Canada’s cultural identity. - A1.1 – Describe some key characteristics of selected communities in Canada, including their cultural traditions, arts, and belief systems. * A1.2 – Analyze how cultural expressions contribute to identity, belonging, and community.	Students choose one African artistic contribution (e.g., Adinkra symbols, drumming, textiles, dance, visual art) and examine: - Where it originates - What values or beliefs it represents - How it has influenced other cultures or communities - Why it is important to heritage and identity Students record findings using a graphic organizer or inquiry journal. Students can participate in a gallery walk or presentation where they: - Share their chosen contribution - Explain how it connects to heritage and identity - Describe what they learned about African peoples’ impact on global culture



Governance and Community Leadership

Ga Sami -Ga Sami Wisdom Symbols

(‘Sami’ is the singular Ga word for ‘symbol’ or ‘design’, while ‘samai’ is the plural form)

Ga Sami are vibrant symbols, and their meanings reflect the rich heritage, traditions, and stories of the Ga people.

Ga people" refers to an important West African ethnic group, primarily in Ghana's Greater Accra region, known for their distinct Kwa language, traditions, and connection to the capital city, Accra; they are part of the larger Ga-Dangme people and have rich histories involving migration and trade, with unique cultural practices like elaborate funeral art and festivals

The original Ga immigrants were farmers, but today fishing and trading in imported goods are the principal occupations.

Each town (Accra, Osu, Labadi, Teshi, Nungua, and Tema).had a stool, which served as the central object of Ga ritual and war magic. Accra became the most prominent Ga town and is now Ghana's capital.

Ga Samai historical period can hypothetically be traced to the era of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, the formal writing system used in ancient Egypt.

Ga Sami artistic inscriptions are featured on many of the canoes of fisherfolk. These symbols are used for both identification and communication, and might also help in tracing the history and the origins of the Ga-Samai.

<https://gasamai.com>



Gallery of Symbols

Respect Age



Kootse Egbwaa Kε Ewao Naa

The claws of the tiger remain sharp no matter how old he gets. Dangerous persons always maintain some level of danger in them and about them, even in the latter days of their lives. So you have to be mindful of this trait or fear it at all times. The innate human values of a person do not diminish with age.

Respect Age

Togetherness



Wabale Kutuu Wakpe

This is part of a special prayer said during the Out dooring and Sanctification ceremony of a Ga baby. Members from both maternal and paternal side of the child's family come together on the seventh day of the child's birth for this ceremony. We have come together as one family to form a circle with oneness of heart, thought, purpose and spiritual commitment to the new born. Whenever we meet, may the circle we form be a circle of togetherness.

Togetherness

Power and Authority



Gonti

"Wo ji gonti le" – "Ashili gonti sεε afiii kpo" – "Gonti ake fuo asara" – "Gonti ake kuo komi"

It is the thumb that is used in breaking kenkey. One must have power and authority to make things happen and to direct the Gbese Gbese people. The thumb of a

Power and Authority

Family Feud



Gbee Kε Gbee
"Gbee kε gbee ejee la"

A pack of dogs, both domestic and wild, usually live in peace and harmony and every dog in the pack has its place and responsibility to the pack just like in a regular human family (pack). Fights and disturbances do break out sometimes and to the outsider it looks violent and bloody. Things do get settled somehow with minimum or no harm done to the pack.

Family Feud

Indecision



Mitsε Biε Loo?

In a world of plenty, it is sometimes difficult to make choices. Decisions however must be made for life to go on and indecision is as bad as no decision.

Indecision

The Fool



Aflatus: Excuse my language!!!

Buulu
"Buulu pε taa edro nε shii enyo"

Only the fool painfully sits on his testicles twice.
* Only the fool makes the same mistake twice.

Buulu
"Ataa buulu dro nε shi enyo"

It is a man who sits on his testicles twice. It is a man who makes the same mistake twice.

The Fool

Suggested Interactives

Governance and Community Leadership (Grades 5–8)

In Ga communities, leadership is not separate from culture, spirituality, or daily life. Governance is expressed through symbols, shared stories, and collective responsibility.

Subject	Strand	Curriculum Expectation	Activity
Social Studies / History / Civics	Heritage and Identity / Governance	- Use visual symbols and design to communicate ideas about identity, power, and community responsibility. Identify and explain ways in which cultural traditions, symbols, and governance structures contribute to a sense of identity and belonging. - Analyze how societies used cultural practices, leadership systems, and symbolic communication to maintain social order and cohesion. - Describe how traditions and symbols communicate values across generations.	Students examine selected Ga Sami symbols (e.g., Power and Authority, Togetherness, Indecision). In small groups, they: - Identify the leadership value represented - Discuss how that value supports community governance - Compare it to a modern leadership role (principal, elder, city councillor, activist)
Civics / Social Sciences	Civic Literacy / Active Citizenship	Assess how leadership decisions impact individuals and communities. - Identify qualities of effective leaders and explain how leadership decisions affect communities. - Analyze how systems of governance reflect the values and priorities of a society. - Assess how leadership decisions can promote equity, harmony, or conflict within communities.	Respect Age Using the Indecision and The Fool symbols, students analyze a real or fictional leadership scenario (school issue, community conflict, environmental concern). Answer the following questions: - What decision needed to be made? - What happened when leadership hesitated or acted poorly? Which Ga Sami symbol offers guidance for better governance?
Civics / Language Arts	Active Citizenship/ Writing	- Develop proposals for inclusive and ethical community leadership. Demonstrate an understanding of how art reflects identity, values, and community stories. - Use elements of design and symbolism to convey complex ideas related to identity, power, and social responsibility.	Community Leadership Charter Develop proposals for inclusive and ethical community leadership , students co-create a Community Leadership Charter using Ga Sami values as guiding principles. They must: - Select 2-3 symbols - Define what each symbol means in action - Propose how these values would shape rules, leadership roles, and conflict resolution



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Resources

<https://www.pbs.org/wonders/Kids/cloth/cloth.htm>

<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/>

http://www.adinkra.org/htmls/adinkra_index.htm

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ga>