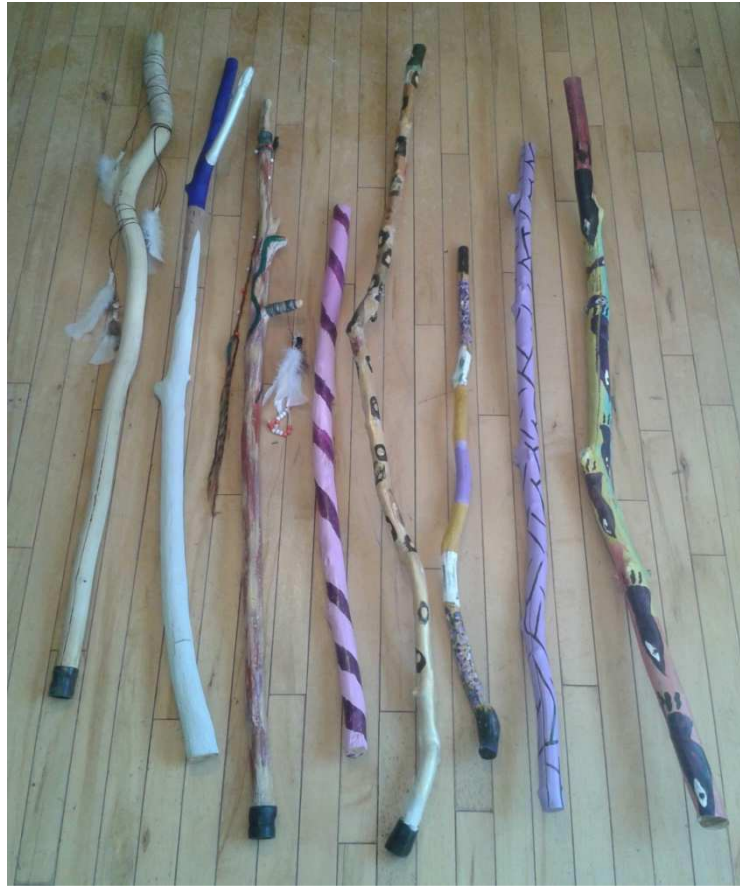


WORKSHOP: "WALKING STICK COMPANIONS"



Summary: Participants create walking stick companions from found solid sticks pre-treated, painted and embellished to create a character/narrative of their own. Sticks were embellished with feathers, cord, leather, paint, found objects and a protective rubber stopper foot on the bottom. Optional: the ends of the sticks can also be sawed and carved into animal forms.

Materials and Equipment:

sludge primer	plastic lids for palettes & to stand stick on to dry
acrylic paints various colours	plastic container for water
solid stick in an interesting shape	paint brushes assorted sizes
pencil, eraser, sharpener	masking tape or painters tape
sketch paper	t-shirt scraps for blotting paint brush
rubber foot	scissors
decorative ribbons and yarns	large sewing needle
wood glue	pliers/cutters
varnish exterior grade (previous kit)	safety glasses
optional: feathers	sandpaper
optional: found objects (participant provided)	coated gloves
optional: leather scraps (previous kit)	optional: smock
optional: clear paverpol fabric hardener	optional: hair dryer with a cool setting (not provided)
optional: carving tools (not provided)	instructions/ideas sheet

Class Plan:

1. Select a stick for your walking stick companion.

2. Sand the length of your stick as needed to remove rough areas and sharp bits.



3. Optional: Create a theme for your walking stick companion. You could make a creature, a narrative along the length of your stick or something else.
 - a. Indents here and there can be enhanced with darker paint, and lighter paint on higher areas to create the impression of creature body forms, wings, ridges, arms, etc.
 - b. You could create a story of adventures or outings along the length of your stick. You could continue to build on this story over months, and do not have to finish it in class.
4. Option: Draw your designs for painting and embellishing onto your stick with a pencil.



5. Option: Shaping your stick by sawing, carving and cutting:
 - a. Work on a stable sturdy surface, wear safety glasses and work gloves, and clamp your work to the table.
 - b. Use a hand held hacksaw to cut lengthwise into the top of your stick. Two cuts tapering together into the stick will remove a section of wood, making the shape of a mouth.



- c. Use the hack saw to remove unwanted branches, or cut only parts off to create creature shapes, limbs, etc.
- d. For carving, work the carving tools with the sharp end directed away from your body onto your work surface, and never put your hand in the path of the sharp end of the carving tool.
- e. Optional: Carving can be used to make the bottom point of your stick thinner/tapered so it fits in a rubber stopper. Do this before painting to avoid losing some of your work.



- 6. If you would like to paint your stick:
 - a. Optional: apply sludge primer to the sections of your stick you plan to paint. This helps the paint adhere to the wood surface, but isn't essential.



- b. Paint your stick with acrylic paints as you like. Below are some ideas.

- c. Painting an area a solid colour and then going over lightly when dry with another colour (without water) will catch and enhance the surface irregularities. If there are tracks on the surface carved out by long departed insects, this produces a particularly nice effect enhancing the marks.



- d. Optional: Use painters tape or masking tape to cover some areas, paint over and create patterns when the tape is removed.
- e. Apply your own painted design. This could build on your creature theme if you have one, with things like circles, scales, ridges, etc.



- f. Painting the depressions dark and the higher areas lighter will enhance the sense of depth, creating 'arms', 'wings' and other forms.
- g. Use the hair dryer on the cold setting to speed up primer and paint drying where they have not been applied in thick coats. Do not use this method to speed the drying of fabric hardener or varnish because it will film and not dry underneath properly.



7. Option: Enhance your stick with yarn wrapping yarn in sections:
- Start with the tail of the yarn lying along the length of your stick a few inches.
 - Wrap your yarn around your stick working back over the yarn tail to cover it, with yarn circles touching but not overlapping if you want a smooth yarn covered section.
 - Place a blunt point needle along the length of your stick where you are wrapping, pointing towards the end you started from.



- Wrap a dozen or so circles of yarn over top of your needle.
 - Thread your needle with your wrapping yarn and pull the end of your yarn under several rows of yarn wraps. Trim the yarn tail.
8. Fabric can be wrapped around your stick and tied in place.



9. Option: Hardening yarns and fabrics:
- If you want to seal any applied yarns and fabrics (not necessary for leather), apply a saturating coat of clear paverpol fabric hardener to your yarns and fabrics with a paint brush.
 - Fabric can also be dipped in paverpol fabric hardener before wrapping around your stick. Smooth off excess hardener before applying it to avoid drips and it drying cloudy. This option results in the fabric drying rock hard and holding its shape.
 - Yarn can be coated after application to avoid the difficulty of working with a long drippy sticky length of pre-coated yarn.
 - The fabric hardener appears white when wet but the transparent version dries clear. The hardener is available in pre-coloured pots, or you can colour your own with dry pigment from the same supplier.

e. Hardener dries in about 3 days and achieved full hardness in about 2 weeks.

10. Sealing your stick for use outside:

a. Varnish your entire stick to protect it from water. Varnish over painted and unpainted areas.



b. We used high gloss paver-varnish from paverpol.ca, one of the most environmentally friendly exterior varnishes we could find. It is low odour, soap and water clean-up and goes on with a paint brush. This was provided in a previous kit (cradle board workshop).

c. You can varnish over fabrics and yarns previously coated in fabric hardener also.

d. For highly textured large surfaces, spray varnishes work better avoiding bubbles and cloudiness during application.

11. Option: Embellishing your stick with found and repurposed objects:

a. Objects can be attached in many ways, such as with nails, hot glue, and yarn/wire through holes in the objects wrapped around or through holes in your stick.



b. A pilot hole nailed into metal objects (working over a scrap piece of wood) is recommended to avoid breaking your stick. Always wear safety glasses for this.

c. You could attach bells, feathers on leather strips, washers for eyes, pop can tabs for scales, etc.



12. Optional: Add a rubber stopper to the bottom of your stick to improve traction and make your stick last longer. Rubber stoppers come in a variety of sizes and colours and are available at most pharmacies.
 - a. If your stick is too thick at the bottom, carving it down to size is possible. Re-coat any cut areas with varnish.



13. Create a story to go with your stick, and share it with others if you wish. Take your stick for a walk yourself or with company.

Useful Information/Adaptions/Variations:

- The pre-treating of the wood and stick gathering can be included in the workshop and have it run over several weeks for participants to get the whole experience.
- This workshop could be preceded with a group hike for stick gathering.

Trouble Shooting:

- Always point carving tools away from your body and body parts (e.g. fingers) at all times. Do not place your other hand in the path of your carving tool in case it slips during use.
- Nails can be held with pliers and then hammered to keep fingers out of the way.
- Work in a room with lots of space to avoid poking each other by accident with sticks while working.

WORKSHOP: “WALKING STICK COMPANIONS” – PRE-TREATING WOOD (OPTIONAL)



Pre-Treating Wood:

- Gather locally sourced sturdy sticks from places like the river bank downstream from Hogs Back Dam in Ottawa, but DO NOT go into dangerous areas. Gather from river banks and woods that are accessible to the public, well away from fast moving water and where gathering is permitted.



- Scrape off all bark, brush the dirt off of the wood pieces with a scrub brush if needed and rinse. This step can be avoided by careful selection of sticks that are already ‘ready to go’.
- Cut sticks to appropriate lengths for the user to hold gripping them just below shoulder height.
- Avoid gathering sticks that are rotten, decaying, have difficult to remove bark or active insect holes.
- Pre-treating your sticks by boiling:
 - We prefer this more environmentally friendly option.

- Immerse the sticks in water in a large deep metal pot and boil it for 3 hours. Add water as needed. This step is ideally done outside on a portable burner to avoid excess humidity inside.
- If your sticks are long and don't fit the pot, they can be turned upside down and boiled a second time for three hours.
- If pre-treating your sticks with a diluted bleach solution (this will lighten the wood):
 - Use this method if your sticks are still too long for boiling twice.
 - Wear rubber gloves at all times.
 - Immerse the sticks in a solution of water and diluted bleach for 3 days. Using 1 part bleach to 8 parts water works well for driftwood, but we used a weaker solution of 2L of bleach to a large full garbage pail of water for walking sticks.



- Prop the garbage bin against a wall for safety and ensure you use a thick walled plastic bin to prevent collapsing under the weight of the water. Place the bin in a secure space that cannot be accessed by curious fingers for safety.
- If the sticks are too long to completely immerse the first time, turn them upside down and repeat the soak for another 3 days. Image shows half treated sticks waiting for the second soak.



- The surface of the sticks will feel slippery after 3 days of soaking. Rinse them and lay out to dry in the sun.
- This method of soaking takes out some of the natural colour of the wood and makes the sticks pale cream colour. It is an interesting effect, like old bones.
- Dispose of the diluted bleach solution responsibly after your soak is finished. Do not leave it where unsuspecting people will dip their hands in.
- Pre-treatment of driftwood is not required, but we did it to avoid the small chance of insects, mold and dirt inside with the materials we gathered. Most sticks that we gathered appeared already free of these things however.