



Witness Witness

Edited by
Bonnie Devine

Selected Proceedings of
Witness
A Symposium on the
Woodland School
of Painters

Sudbury Ontario,
October 12, 13, 14, 2007

Edited by Bonnie Devine

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For Tom Peltier, Jomin

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Cover:
Red Road
Rebecca Belmore
October 12 2007

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Many artists contributed to the spectacle and celebration that was Witness. To Rebecca Belmore, De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group, Gloria May Eshkibok, Jacques and the Shakey Boys, Darla Fisher Odjig, Georgina Toulouse and the artists who presented their work in the open forum, Ahmoo Angeconeb, Jason Baerg, Christi Belcourt, Rvn Chartrand-Hunter, Darla Fisher Odjig and Dolly Peltier, Chi Miigwech, thank you.

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Finally, I'd like to thank the artists and scholars who travelled from across the continent to present their ideas and research at Witness. They are beginning the work of writing an indigenous art history in an indigenous voice. The opportunity to meet them and hear them speak was an honour and privilege for all who attended. Their insight, diligence and generosity is the spirit of Witness.

Chi-miigwech,
Thank you.

Bonnie Devine

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Introduction

The gathering in Sudbury called Witness brought together some of the most influential and renowned artists and scholars in the world of contemporary Canadian Aboriginal art. Hosted by the Art Gallery of Sudbury and Laurentian University from October 11 to 14, 2007, Witness coincided with the opening of The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig, a Retrospective Exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Sudbury. Aboriginal artists, activists, curators and art historians came together for a weekend of talk and celebration to honour Daphne Odjig, and reflect on the history, current state and future of contemporary Aboriginal art, especially the Anishnaabe style that emerged in the 1960s in Ontario and came to be known as the Woodland School.

Among the noted guests, performers and speakers at the symposium were Daphne Odjig, performance artists Rebecca Belmore and Deba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group; painters Leland Bell, Blake Debassige, Robert Houle, Alex Janvier and Joseph Sanchez; curators Barry Ace, Greg Hill and Ryan Rice; scholars and educators Tom Peltier, Sherry Farrell Racette, and Sandra Wabegijig and historians Alan Corbiere and Margo Little.

Witness was particularly honoured to welcome Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier, and Joseph Sanchez, who are the surviving members of Professional Native Artists Inc., popularly known as the Indian Group of Seven. This seminal group formed in the early 1970s in Winnipeg and also included Norval Morriseau, Jackson Beardy, Carl Ray, and Eddie Cobiness.

In his paper, Joseph Sanchez describes the origins and enduring influence of this collective of artists of Native ancestry. Presentations by Barry Ace, Ryan Rice, and Greg Hill provide contemporary and

historical curatorial perspectives. Leland Bell, Sandra Wabegijig, the late Tom Peltier, all of Wikwemikong, and artist and art historian Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette of Timiskaming, offer illuminating context and historical background toward an understanding and appreciation of Woodland pictorial traditions, while Robert Houle's paper offers a rare glimpse into an artist's imaginative and investigative process. Finally, impromptu closing remarks by Alex Janvier remind us of the inspiration and fortitude that sustains and drives all creative endeavour.

Two memorable performance pieces premiered at Witness. The first, *Red Road*, by Rebecca Belmore, took place on a winding rain-soaked path outside the Fraser Auditorium on the grounds of Laurentian University. Lit by a parked car's headlights and the light of lampposts, the audience watched Belmore enact the passionate commitment of an artist at her work.

Dear Daphne, created and performed by De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group, was a beautifully staged series of vignettes, which were punctuated by statements read by the young actors to Odjig, who was seated in the audience.

Witness was a celebration and an education. Old friendships were renewed, new ones begun. Young artists met their idols, elders saw the promise of the future. The Aboriginal Curatorial Collective in collaboration with Witness is pleased and honoured to present this collection of selected proceedings of the historic event.

Bonnie Devine
Witness Artistic Director and Editor
2009

Witness: A Symposium on the Woodland School Agenda

October 11 – 14, 2007

A collaborative production by Bonnie Devine and the Art Gallery of Sudbury

Venues:

Art Gallery of Sudbury
The Fraser Auditorium,
Laurentian University
1500 Pub and Grill
Sudbury Ontario

Thursday October 11, 2007

Art Gallery of Sudbury
6 pm to 9 pm
Opening Reception
The Drawings and Paintings of Daphne Odjig;
A Retrospective Exhibition

Friday October 12, 2007

Fraser Auditorium, Laurentian University
9 am to 5:30 pm
Honour Song: Debbie Robertson
Welcome: Celeste Scopelites, Art Gallery of Sudbury,
Angela Recollet, Laurentian University
Address to Daphne Odjig: Darla Fisher Odjig

Symposium presentations:

Margo Little, *Manitoulin: Crucible of Creativity*

Alan Corbiere: *Origins of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation*

Joseph Sanchez, *The Formation of Professional Native Artists Inc.,
The Indian Group of Seven*

Sherry Farrell Racette, *Algonkian Pictographic Imagery*

Thomas Peltier, *Critical Issues in Art Education*

Open Forum, Artists' presentations of their current work:
Ahmoo Angeconebe, Jason Baerg, Christi Belcourt,
Rvn Chartrand-Hunter, Darla Fisher Odjig, Dolly Peltier

8 pm to 10 pm Two performances
Rebecca Belmore, *Red Road*
De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group, *Dear Daphne*

Saturday October 13, 2007

Fraser Auditorium, Laurentian University
9 am to 5:30 pm

Sandra Wabegijig, *In the Spirit of our Ancestors:*
Who We Are and Where We Come From

Robert Houle, *An Ojibwa in Paris*

Barry Ace, *The Modernists: the Art of Daphne Odjig and Oscar Howe*

Blake Debassige, *Untitled Presentation*

Leland Bell, *An Anishnaabe Tale*

Ryan Rice, *Glenna Matoush, Requickening*

Greg Hill, *A Curator Reflects, Towards a Haudenosaunee Perspective*

Alex Janvier, *Closing Remarks, Carrying the Vision*

The 1500 Pub and Grill
Blues Night, 8 pm to 1 am
Jacques and the Shakey Boys with Gloria May Eshkibok

Sunday October 14, 2007

Art Gallery of Sudbury, 10 am to 12 noon

Closing ceremony

Welcome Statements

Celeste Scopelites

Director/Curator Art Gallery of Sudbury

Our literature has described this as an event, exhibition and symposium. These words seem so inadequate in proportion to the historical importance of this gathering. Both Bonnie Devine and I, who have worked closely for the past two years, know that the impact of what we are considering, discussing and writing is deep and reaches into our hearts. This is a magnificent home coming for the works of Daphne Odjig but it's also a home coming of our mind and spirit. We gather here to celebrate Daphne and as we share ideas and discourse, we witness the change that is in the air. There is significant change unfolding, exciting yet sometimes daunting. The future holds its challenges but looks bright. Our symposium presenters will no doubt give shape to the potential of this future in relation to the past. I, like all of you present, look forward to these days of discussion.

I want to let you know that your presence here and last night at the magnificent celebration and opening of the Daphne Odjig retrospective exhibition, means much to the Art Gallery of Sudbury. We are a young gallery, only in our tenth year of incorporation. However, we have a long previous history as Laurentian University Museum and Arts Centre established in 1967. We are now at a very important moment in our history as a public gallery in Northern Ontario and your presence here at this symposium is a very positive indication of our future potential.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Laurentian University, which has generously donated the use of Fraser Auditorium. We usually describe Laurentian University as our parent

organization but this has evolved to us describing them as a partner. Their partnership in this symposium marks a significant change in our relationship and we look forward to working with Laurentian University in new ways that will bring great benefit to students, the City of Greater Sudbury and the region of Northern Ontario. As Director/Curator of what is described as a regional gallery, I can say that what has been and is accomplished by galleries such as ours is remarkable. We are important bridges into our communities and collectors of history. We wouldn't be here today if not for the original foresight and investment made by Laurentian University. I welcome you here to Sudbury and our symposium. I am honoured that you have journeyed here from near and far and I hope you will enjoy the next two days.

Angela Recollet

Laurentian University

I'd like to welcome everybody here to Laurentian University. I'd like to forward Dr. Woodsworth's regrets for not being here today. She has asked me to come and speak on her behalf.

It is an absolute honour to have so much talent in the room and to have Daphne Odjig, one of our first ladies of Aboriginal art, who put not only Aboriginal art on the map but who put Canadian art history on the map. We are so very honoured to have you here in our home and back home again in your territory. Chi miiqwech for giving us this honour to greet you and to celebrate your life's achievements. Thank you so much for joining us today.

I'd like to speak just a little bit about education and what that means from two worlds. We are in a house of western education, an institution with walls of solid brick and different forms of education. Over the years here at Laurentian University we've brought a different form of education, we've brought our Native perspectives of education and that education is a holistic education. It's inclusive of all things and this is not just text book learning but it's learning through arts, through music, through teachings and through visiting. It's through our history and our experience of Aboriginal world view, of natural law and our perceptions and our perspectives of that.

Over the last decade we've really worked diligently to ensure that this perspective is being respected within these walls that are not our home but that are laid upon our home and this is our territory. So I'd like to welcome all of you to our territory. My name is Angela Recollet from Wikwemikong.

It is a great honour to have so much talent from these territories present and you are going to see a lot of that today. There are so many people that worked so hard to bring this project here, but

Bonnie Devine has worked exceptionally. This is her baby, her heart and soul has been put into this project over the last two years and I think she deserves a really big round of applause. And as Bonnie has stated earlier this is a lot of hard work and dedication and her passion and commitment to this dream has now become a reality.

She has done this with some really strong people supporting her. Celeste Scopelites at the Art Gallery of Sudbury has also worked very diligently with her team, Mary Lou Thompson and all of the other staff within the Art Gallery worked very very hard to bring this to you today. Bonnie has also recognized some of the individuals at the university and all of their hard work and perseverance to make this happen today. It really sometimes goes unnoticed because it is behind the scenes but they did put a lot of hard work and dedication and commitment into bringing this to you today. So I hope you really enjoy your visit here at Laurentian University and as a little bit of a partner, that's the role we played, but it's really the work of Bonnie and Celeste and all of the people that have come to make this a reality

When we are talking about our first ladies in Aboriginal art there are a number of first ladies that are up and coming and art takes on different forms and we should also look at the catalogue that has been published and produced for you. One of those strong, beautiful ladies in that process was Mary Ann Corbiere and she was instrumental in translating that book for you into Anishnabemwin, our language, which is an art and it is an art that is slowly slipping away so we need to really nurture those teachers, those speakers and really encourage them to continue the hard work and dedication with our languages.

So again welcome to Laurentian University. I hope you enjoy your two days here and miigwech for coming out!

Darla Fisher Odjig

Artist

Miigwech

Aanii

Darla Fisher Odjig ndishnikaaz.

Imagery is representative of our history and is understood by all ages. Though words such as honour, wisdom, love and respect are verbal messages, they are ideally experienced as the object of a word, illustrated by symbols, such as a picture of a heart meaning "I love you". The picture instills value and essence through the dynamics of pictorial imaging and visioning. Stepping into the circle and taking the voyage with Daphne Odjig through her painting and symbols reflects a mastered ability to reconnect with all four elements of mind, heart, body and spirit.

Odjig has proven to be a rainbow of hope and truth; that to be whatever it is you want to be is possible. And as she has taught me, with persistence, patience and determination, this will happen. She is a fine and honourable artist who has inspired authenticity and pride in who we are as a feeling and sensitive people. She has proved that art through symbols moves and prevails as the ultimate way of educating and as an alternate means of communication.

If a picture paints a thousand words, Daphne Odjig has written volumes.

With Great Honour, Daphne Odjig.

Carolyn Vesely

Ontario Arts Council

I'm very happy to be here today with a number of my colleagues from the Ontario Arts Council, not only Wanda Nanibush, but Sarah Roque is here as well. We're very pleased to be behind and a small part of this project which is the culmination of such hard work by so many people. I know many people have acknowledged not only Bonnie's work in supporting this and pulling this together but also Celeste Scopelites and the Art Gallery of Sudbury and all the staff there.

We are very honoured to be in the presence of Daphne Odjig and to be part of what we are going to discuss in the next two days. I am very much looking forward to that.

So thank you, and we are looking forward to very interesting days.

Louise Profeit-LeBlanc

Canada Council for the Arts

Today is a very happy day. Today is a day that I can stand here before you as only one little piece in this beautiful journey that is associated with (I loved your terminology) the first lady of the Woodland School of art, Daphne Odjig. I am so honoured to be in your presence. There are times when I am working at the Canada Council and I sometimes get to a point where I reach a wall and some beautiful artist or curator or elder will either phone me or send me an email that makes it all worth while, because I'm also from the woodland area, in a different part of Canada. I'm from the Yukon. I just want to say how grateful I was when this beautiful woman Bonnie called me and described to me what her dream was and I thought to myself what an honour, what a privilege for this funding institution called the Canada Council for the Arts. I am so pleased that we have been able to support this wonderful school of art that the world needs to know more about. It is my privilege and my honour to tell that and I really look forward to seeing the show.

I haven't seen the show yet and I am so pleased to be able to see it with my daughter who is attending Laurentian [University] and I want to at this time acknowledge all the people, the Anishnaabe people, who have befriended my daughter and made her time of study here a little less painful because of her homesickness. I want to publicly announce that and I also want to say how wonderful it is that at this point in history, at the turn of that century, that we are able to honour one of our treasures and to have her to come and open her life's work. Where else could we do that?

Daphne, I wish you so much more in your journey. What you have left behind is just such a glorious journey ahead of all of us and we hope we can honour and keep up your good works.

Thank you.

Contributing Writers

Selected proceedings of Witness: a
symposium on the Woodland School



Manitoulin: Crucible of Creativity

Margo Little

Margo Little is an editor, writer, photographer and educator with a special interest in Aboriginal social and cultural affairs. Her academic qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts (English and French) and an Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Humanities from Laurentian University. Born and raised on Manitoulin Island, Little has worked as a journalist in California, British Columbia and Northern Ontario. Her short fiction has appeared in the Toronto Star, the Sudbury Star, Northern Life and the Manitoulin Expositor. As founder of the annual Manitoulin Writer's Retreat, she has organized and led workshops in creative writing, poetry and memoir. Little's essays have been published in the Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development, Feminist Definitions of Caring Communities and numerous other journals.



The Formation of Professional Native Artists Inc., the Indian Group of Seven

Joseph Sanchez

Artist and curator Joseph Sanchez is the curator and deputy director at the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA) Museum, recently renamed the Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, in Santa Fe New Mexico. Though he was born in the United States of America, Sanchez lived and worked in Winnipeg Manitoba in the early 1970s where he was a founding member of "Professional Native Artists Inc." popularly known as the Indian Group of Seven. This seminal collective of artists included Jackson Beardy, Eddy Cobiness, Alex Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez.



Algonkian Pictographic Imagery

Sherry Farrell Racette

Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette is a member of the Timiskaming First Nation in Quebec. She is an artist, writer and educator, who has taught art history at Concordia University in Montreal and First Nations University in Regina. Dr. Racette works extensively in museum collections, examining material culture as encoded objects that carry history, story and knowledge. Her particular interest is in revitalizing traditional art forms, and increasing the recognition and appreciation of contemporary traditional artists and their practices. In addition to her scholarly work, Dr. Racette maintains an active artistic and writing practice and exhibits her work nationally.



Critical Issues in Art Education

Tom Peltier "Jomin"

Thomas Peltier was born in Wikwemikong, Ontario. An author, political activist and educator, Tom was involved in local and national politics for many years, working under and advising former Prime Ministers Lester B. Pearson, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Jean Chretien and Paul Martin. In the 1960s Tom played a critical role in the granting of federal voting rights to First Nations and the development of the Indian Pavilion at Expo '67. He was devoted to the art of his people and founded, with Duke Redbird, the Manitou Arts Foundation and the Schreiber Island Project in the 1970s. This school gave many well-known Aboriginal painters, musicians and filmmakers their start as professional artists.

Tom was working on a novel and a history of the Wikwemikong Powwow when he passed away suddenly on April 5, 2009 at the age of 73 years.



Red Road a performance

Rebecca Belmore

Born in Upsala, Ontario, Rebecca Belmore attended the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto and is internationally recognized for her performance and installation art. In 2005 Belmore became the first Aboriginal woman to represent Canada at the Venice Biennale. She lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Belmore created an original performance for Witness, which she presented on the grounds of Laurentian University on Friday October 12, 2007. Entitled Red Road, her performance was inspired by Daphne Odjig's painting From Mother Earth Flows the River of Life.



Dear Daphne

De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group

De-ba-je-muh-jig is the longest running Native theatre-company in North America. Based in the town of Manitowaning on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, DeBaj has performed throughout Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

The company performed an original production entitled Dear Daphne in the Fraser Auditorium at Laurentian University.

In the Spirit of our Ancestors: Who We Are and Where We Come From
Sandra Wabegijig



Sandy Wabegijig, originally from Wikwemikong, lives and works in Ottawa. Her background is in history and political science, with a particular focus on the cultural history and origins of her ancestors, the great Odawa. Wabegijig's paper combines memory, narrative and recorded accounts to create a unique picture of life in the region of Manitoulin Island and the North Shores of Lakes Huron and Michigan.

An Ojibwa in Paris
Robert Houle



Robert Houle is an artist, educator, curator and critic. Born in St Boniface Manitoba, he has exhibited nationally and internationally since the late 1970s. His educational credentials include a Bachelor of Art in Art History from the University of Manitoba and a Bachelor of Education in Art Education from McGill University. Houle's scholarly and critical essays have been published widely. His paintings and installations are included in many major Canadian and international museums and galleries.

The Modernists: the Art of Daphne Odjig and Oscar Howe
Barry Ace



Barry Ace is a practicing visual artist. A noted teacher, curator and lecturer, Mr. Ace has taught Native Studies at the University of Sudbury and Canadian Studies at both Laurentian University (Sudbury) and Carleton University (Ottawa). He has also created teaching materials for Native studies and has presented workshops and papers on Native issues and art at numerous venues throughout Canada and the United States. A member of M'Chigeeng First Nation and a founding member of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, Barry Ace lives and works in Ottawa, Canada.

An Anishnaabe Tale

Leland Bell "Bebaminojmat"



Leland Bell is a prominent Anishinaabe artist, teacher and lecturer from the Wikwemikong Unceded First Nation on Manitoulin Island. As a young man in the 1970s he attended the Manitou Arts Foundation on Schreiber Island, first as a helper, later as a student. Leland Bell's paintings are exhibited and collected nationally and internationally.

Glenna Matoush, Requickening

Ryan Rice "Aronienes"



Ryan Rice is an artist, curator, writer and educator from Kahnawake, Quebec. He holds Bachelor of Fine Art degrees from both Concordia University and the Institute of American Indian Arts and a Master's degree in Curatorial Studies from Bard College. Rice has exhibited extensively in North America and Europe and maintains an active practice as an independent curator. A founding member of the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, Rice has recently been named curator at the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA) Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

A Curator Reflects , Towards a Haudenosaunee Perspective

Greg Hill



Greg Hill, curator and head of the department of Indigenous Art at the National Gallery of Canada, is a member of the Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation. Mr. Hill has over eleven years experience in national museum institutions in Canada, including his role as Curatorial Researcher for the First Peoples Hall project at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. He holds a Master of Arts Degree from the School of Canadian Studies – Northern and Native Studies, Carleton University and a Bachelor of Fine Art (Honours) Degree from the University of Windsor.

Closing Remarks

Alex Janvier



As a member of Professional Native Artists Inc. or the Indian Group of Seven, Janvier is a pioneer of contemporary Canadian aboriginal art. He obtained his art education at the Alberta Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary (now the Alberta College of Art and Design) where he graduated with honours. A celebrated painter, educator and activist, his work is in the collections of many private and public institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada and the Museum of Civilization. Mr. Janvier was born in Cold Lake Alberta, where he continues to live and work.

Mistress of Ceremonies

Denise Bolduc



Denise Bolduc works extensively in the arts and culture sector as an artistic director, producer, coordinator and presenter of international multi-disciplinary arts events & festivals. Her background is in audio production & engineering, theatre production, event management, arts management and community project development. Denise is well respected for her work as a former Aboriginal Arts Officer at the Ontario Arts Council and as a Music & Dance Officer at the Canada Council for the Arts.



Essays and Presentations

Selected proceedings of Witness:
A Symposium on the Woodland School

Manitoulin: Crucible of Creativity

Margo Little

A long time ago the people retreated to Manitoulin Island seeking a safe refuge from suffering and deprivation. They were battle-scarred and weary of combat. For them the island symbolized a reprieve from the on-going struggle for survival. But the peace and serenity they sought was elusive. Seasons of drought and famine continued to plague them. The Elders and the children were hungry; many fell ill with mysterious maladies. Game was scarce and prayers seemed to go unheard. Desperate to put an end to the misfortune, the people resorted to a time-tested way of dispelling evil spirits. One drought-stricken day they set the woodlands aflame in an effort to purify the land. In the aftermath, only a charred and desolate landscape remained. The people were forced to abandon their would-be sanctuary and to seek solace elsewhere. But Nature was resilient and the blackened earth eventually recovered from the conflagration. After many years of wandering, Spirit Island beckoned the people home.

Today it is hard to imagine that Manitoulin Island was once the barren and deserted wasteland described in this oft-told legend. Centuries later the formerly inhospitable land mass nourishes hardy plant life and diverse wildlife. And above all, despite siege and adversity, it has spawned a flourishing arts community. This seemingly harsh and remote environment has proven to be fertile soil for the human imagination.

After enduring intermittent bleak interludes, Manitoulin Island evolved into a remarkable crucible of creativity. The image of a crucible is apt because it suggests that something valuable and lasting can often be salvaged from experiences of prolonged anguish and privation. In essence, a crucible signifies that a struggle has been very difficult, but the results are a refining or reinforcement of a particular outlook or design. Out of the scorched earth and smouldering embers emerged a group of artists who would make their mark on the world. It is clear that the island, a vessel forged by its own volatile and molten history, gave birth to a contingent of talented individuals as resourceful and stalwart as the land itself. The presence of Ojibwa, Odawa and Potawatomi people no doubt

contributed to the richness of this eruption of colour and motif. Here artists fuelled by their own inner passion, and guided by a few influential role models, have learned to overcome tangible and intangible obstacles and to formulate their own hallmark styles.

Each of the artists in the group that has come to be known as the Manitoulin School has endured his or her own symbolic trial by fire. The way of the artist is never easy even in the most prosperous and propitious of circumstances. Yet these individuals demonstrate a strength of character that can be attributed in part to their roots on Manitoulin.

On the occasion of Daphne Odjig's retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Sudbury, September 15 to November 11, 2007, it is an appropriate time to revisit her formative years on Manitoulin and to reiterate her role in the birth of this movement. When Tom Peltier established the Manitou Arts Foundation in 1966 and invited Ms. Odjig to share her knowledge with novice artists from across Ontario in the early 70s, he provided the catalyst that would launch many prestigious careers. Instinctively, he perceived that the chemistry ignited at the secluded venue would set in motion an enduring fire of creative energy. Many of the students tutored by Ms. Odjig and others are household names today.

In 2007 many of Manitoulin's practising artists still speak fondly of those summer days and nights on Schreiber Island. In retrospect, they appreciate Ms. Odjig's patience and generosity in encouraging their first tentative brush strokes or lyrical writing. From her example, they were inspired to experiment, explore and take risks in order to discover their own personal styles and techniques. Although they were introduced to the conventions of Woodland painting in vogue at the time, the apprentices went on to develop their own original and distinctive modes of self-expression.

Visitors to galleries and studios on the island today are able to witness a stunning diversity among practitioners of the Manitoulin School. Fortunately, many of these artists are willing to share their stories and their philosophies. The impressionable youngsters of the

1970s are now the teachers and spiritual advisors for a whole new generation.

Bebaminojmat Art Gallery

Leland Bell welcomes old friends and newcomers alike to his summer workspace and gallery on Eshkibok Road in Wikwemikong. As you enter, step softly as the studio cat snoozes lazily in a pool of sunlight. During a lull in traffic, he pauses to remember a footloose summer long ago before he became a student at the Schreiber Island art camps. The call to the historic gathering came at a crucial time in his life. In those restless days he was open to an encounter that would crystallize his life's purpose.

He remembers the dynamic atmosphere of the camp as he was exposed to a wide range of artistic expression. Looking back, he understands how stimulating and fortuitous it was to interact with youth from many different First Nations, to associate with young people all expressing their Anishinaabe identity. Although he was playing guitar and writing poetry and prose at the time, he hadn't clarified his vocation. A meeting with mentor Daphne Odjig when he was eighteen had a positive influence on his future direction and left a lasting impression on him. "I showed a poem to Daphne and she was sincerely interested in my work," he recalls. "She really paid attention to my poetry; that's why I admire her."

Immersion in the Manitou art camps with instructors such as Ms. Odjig, Carl Ray, Duke Redbird and Saul Williams sparked a life-long quest for Mr. Bell. Later he would continue his exploration in other art classes under the auspices of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation. It was at a Dreamer's Rock session that he experienced the kind of Eureka moment that would guide his future steps and style.

And as he has matured in his vision, he has devoted himself to delving deeper into his Anishinaabe heritage. He has been a prime mover behind the formation of the Wikwemikong Heritage Organization and the Three Fires Music Festival. For him, the culture is an ever-present source of fresh ideas and new layers of meaning.

“There’s no end to what you could learn; you could never run out of ideas because of the concentric nature of Anishinaabe knowledge” he says. “You are continually discovering and learning. Everything is there; you just have to tap into it.”

Mr. Bell’s works have universal appeal and are represented in prominent art collections in North America and Europe. Several of his paintings are included in the Manitou Collection, an exhibition of works by nine Anishinaabe artists assembled to mark the 20th anniversary of the United Church of Canada’s official apology to First Nations people.

Kasheese Gallery

Blake Debassige of Kasheese Gallery in M’Chigeeng also benefited from the camaraderie of the summer art camps. He describes himself as somewhat naive when he was a student at Manitoulin Secondary involved in early studies of the so-called European masters. But a sojourn at the Schreiber Island gatherings led him to immerse himself in the indigenous knowledge of his homeland.

Over the intervening years, Mr. Debassige has continued to discover all he can about cultural teachings and has developed his own methods of expressing legends and themes. Like his contemporaries, he has gone through intense periods of discouragement. Many gatekeepers in the arts establishment have shunned Native artists or burdened them with derogatory labels. However, Mr. Debassige has never accepted the status quo. He has always remained a shrewd observer of social trends and politics, much to the discomfort of art critics and bureaucrats.

He speaks out against those who would dismiss Aboriginal art as suitable only for ethnographic institutions. And he works to dispel damaging prejudice and stereotypes.

“Many famous curators had contempt for the Woodland style,” he says. “They labelled it touristy and commercial. Some Ivory Tower elitists saw it as the last gasp of a dying race so they kept it out of the mainstream.”

It became his mission to combat bias in the media and in public exhibition spaces.

“I always stood up for our art as relevant as any other art form in the world,” he says. “Our art is more spiritual than any other art form in the world except perhaps Africa and Australia.”

Although First Nations artists still face many closed doors, Mr. Debassige has not forsaken his core beliefs. Being an activist and outspoken advocate for cultural integrity has always been part of his individualistic approach to art and life.

His work is included in many public and private collections internationally. Recently he worked as artist in residence at the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg and participated in an American touring exhibition highlighting the global energy crisis.

His wife and Kasheese co-owner Shirley Cheechoo is also a well-known graduate of the Schreiber Island music and art classes. In the past three decades she has expressed her creativity in a wide variety of art forms including modelling, writing, acting and directing. Among her many accomplishments are the founding of De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Company and the production of award-winning films. Presently a documentary she directed is airing on Vision TV. “Medicine Woman” explores traditional healing practices around the globe.

Neon Raven Gallery

The Neon Raven Gallery on Corbiere Road in M’Chigeeng is another favourite stop on Manitoulin’s Great Spirit Circle Trail. Here the legacy of the late Carl Beam is preserved by his wife Ann and daughter Anong. During his lifetime, Mr. Beam stirred up controversy and did his best to shake up the Canadian art establishment. He vocally resisted the arbitrary standards set by mainstream gallery owners who tried to dictate what Native art should look like. In his view, certain styles and techniques could limit or pigeonhole an

artist. He felt compelled to use any media or style at his disposal to push against the artificial boundaries. Whether it be photocopy transfers, photo emulsions, graphite, watercolour, acrylics, hand-made paper or natural objects such as feathers, he rejected nothing in his bid to destroy misconceptions. In a speech to a symposium at the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation in 2004, he said that “a lot of Native art is still undiscovered” because of preconceived notions about what constitutes Indian art. National recognition came in March 2005 when he accepted the Governor General’s Award for visual and media arts.

His widow Ann has kept his stereotype-bashing spirit alive as she tries to gain recognition as an artist on her own terms. After painting and writing in the shadow of a famous husband for twenty-five years, she is spreading her wings and mounting her own solo exhibitions.

Nimkee Gallery

Now in his mid-40s, M’Chigeeng artist Blair Debassige has been painting ever since he received a set of oil paints as a Christmas present at age nine. As the proprietor of Nimkee Gallery, he is proud to be a legend painter and to carry on the traditions of the Woodland School. Inspired by conversations with Norval Morrisseau in the late 1990s Blair found a renewed sense of purpose and confidence.

Like his mentor, Blair admits to weathering many turbulent times of doubt and loss of direction, but Morrisseau’s advice has sustained him over the past decade. “Be bold and daring in your work and in your life,” the shaman artist told him. “Paint, paint, paint and take chances. Even when you are going through troubles, keep on painting.”

Morrisseau’s ability to transcend tragedy has been modelled through many traumas including illness, incarceration and addiction. As a youth he was hospitalized with tuberculosis and later in 1972, he was severely burned in a Vancouver hotel fire.

Blair says he learned some powerful life lessons from watching his spiritual advisor go through such agony.

“We have to suffer,” Blair says. “I was supposed to suffer because I didn’t understand myself. Sometimes compulsion and craving got in the way.”

Despite the dark nights of the soul, Blair believes he has reached a better place through his art. He has embarked on a journey to educate himself about his own personal emotions as well as his culture. He has studied ancient rock paintings and forged a link with the past. Every day he is learning more about what he refers to as the collective memory of his Native ancestry.

“When I ask myself why I am painting legends, I know it’s because I carry fragments of that in my DNA,” he says.

Simultaneously, he continues to study and refine what he calls the science of colour.

“I have learned that colour comes first,” he says. “Certain colours can evoke happiness or sadness. Images can pull you in or call to you. We do it in our own way to touch people. I paint it as I see it, as I feel it.”

David Migwans Gallery

M’Chigeeng painter and ceramic artist David Migwans has also virtually walked on coals to reconcile the past and the present. As an adult he has struggled to understand his parents’ experiences in residential schools and to gain insight into his own upbringing. Stories his father shared made him seethe with outrage at the injustices perpetrated in the church run institutions. It was as if the people who ran the schools were intent on snuffing out and crushing all the aspirations of the children in their charge.

“I read a book about the residential school impacts and it made me

really, really angry," he says. "The more I read, the angrier I got. My sisters and I suffered because of the residential school impacts. I have every reason to be angry."

And when he heard reports about fires being deliberately set in the state sanctioned schools, he empathized with the desperation of the children. He was moved to paint his vision of the purification ritual. In a powerful piece, recently on exhibit at the Gore Bay Heritage Centre, he depicts a raging fire sweeping through the rooms of the institution. The flames destroy the abusers and the residual pain housed in the walls of the building.

Although the school is reduced to rubble, he envisions the affected families rising above the ashes of the destructive system to be reborn, to reclaim their heritage and their culture. In keeping with the crucible concept, we see a catharsis followed by images of resilience and rebirth.

Conclusion to Manitoulin Island Tour

Many members of the Manitoulin School have travelled to distant places in Canada and the United States to study and hone their skills, yet the overwhelming majority return to Spirit Island when their wanderlust is satisfied. Manitoulin remains the heartland for these artists as well as for many who gravitate here out of a deep longing to be connected to this special place.

This personal survey of the Manitoulin School is by no means exhaustive. It offers merely a glimpse of this unique cluster of creativity. Visitors to the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation and the Wikwemikong Heritage Organization can discover many more artists working in relative obscurity.

Although Daphne Odjig has travelled light years from her roots in Wikwemikong, the impact of her international success has had a significant ripple effect in her birthplace. Like other Native artists, she has grappled with privation and prejudice, and yet she has persevered and triumphed. The young artists who enjoyed the

warmth of her attention in the 1970s are now mentors and role models themselves. Each artist was shaped by the terrain and the traditions, the stories and the symbols of his or her homeland. But there's nothing parochial or insular about their work. The artwork may reflect intimate life experiences but it also responds to universal concerns and reaches out to an international audience. Clearly, the Manitou arts will continue to flourish for another forty years and beyond.

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Plates

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*image 1
Leland Bell*

*image 2
Blake Debassige*

*image 3
Carl Beam*

*image 4
Anne Beam*

*image 5
Blair Debassige*

*image 6
David Migwans*















The Formation of Professional Native Artists Inc., The Indian Group of Seven

Joseph Sanchez

Good morning everyone, they say it's still morning. Good morning Daphne, and Alex, where ever you are. I want to thank Bonnie and every one here at the Art Gallery of Sudbury and Laurentian University for having me. It's not really a paper. I'm just going to ramble on.

I was 20 years old when this group [Professional Native Artists Inc.] was formed and it was such an unusual experience for me. An article in the

Winnipeg Tribune said "Neglect of Indian Art Spurs Group. They're artists and there are seven of them but their names bear no resemblance to A.Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris or Frank Johnson. Members of the Indian Group of Seven, Daphne Odjig, Joseph Sanchez and Edward Cobiness are three of the founding members of Professional Native Artists Inc., the association just formed as a result of three years of deliberation and discussion among the seven. Its purpose is the promotion of Indian art and artists." So that's how they welcomed us into the Winnipeg area.

For several years Indian artists would bring work to Daphne [Odjig] to buy or sell. There was not a lot of money in Winnipeg at the time but there was a Native-owned gallery and business called Odjig Indian Prints of Canada Limited on Donald Street in Winnipeg. This storefront gallery is where I began my journey as an artist and as an art professional. Daphne Odjig would buy work from all of us and give us space to show our work to each other and talk about art and artists. I would see Jackson Beardy and Carl Ray and Eddie Cobiness at the Odjig Gallery of Native Art. Daphne always had new work to share with us, or news of other Native artists or she had just purchased work by some of them. It was always about the art. This creative impulse fired by the desire to do something of our own, something that would speak to what western society calls Art. We wanted acceptance as artists in our own right and spoke to the fact that Native arts were relegated to craft stores and tourist shops but not museum exhibitions.

In Winnipeg Daphne's stature was the beacon of these beginnings. The exhibition "*Treaty Numbers 23, 287 and 1171*", with Daphne

Odjig being 1171, Jackson Beardy number 23 and Alex Janvier 287, showed three Indian painters from the prairies at the Winnipeg Art Gallery from August 12 to October 10, 1972. I believe it was a seminal exhibition in the formation of Professional Native Art Inc. Alex states in the catalogue, "I am Dene, alias Chipewewyan of the Athabaskan stock. I speak my language and I can say that to be proud like my ancestors I can never be, because to be as proud I must be free to live in harmony with nature and with the Great Spirit. Therefore my pride would never measure that of my grandfathers. However I have done my best. Since finding out the difference I feel very true to my work and it is really my thing and not carrying off a traditional Caucasian version of Indian perception"

That's from the catalogue and I think that was the beginning of how we started talking about coming together. The gallery on Donald Street was the place where we met and where Daphne's energy guided us and of course her financial support too, certainly for me as a young artist just barely starting out. We had no intention of creating a corporation, it just happened over a period of years of showing in Daphne's house and gallery.

So the call went out to artists all across Canada, but there were only seven responses. And for whatever reason, Bill Reid was a part of it, though he did not join the group officially or sign the incorporation papers. The group started meeting at the North Star Inn and planning the formation of the corporation that would create acceptance of Native art in the context of contemporary art in Canada. We created a support group for all Native artists and a trust fund to establish scholarships for promising talent. The original plan was that twenty five percent of our gross income would go to scholarships. It was a very novel idea especially for someone like me whose income was probably less than a thousand dollars a year at the time. Our idea was to use our work to inspire and educate the larger society with the quality and the originality and the cultural beauty of this contemporary art that just so happened to be done by Aboriginal peoples.

I believe it was the power of Daphne, Norval and Alex's work that forced galleries and museums to accept the work of the other

members. This was the strategy. The strength of the group allowed me to exhibit in places I could only dream of being included. At the Dominion Gallery exhibition Max Stuart could have easily done without my work because the gallery did not exhibit works on paper, but he did support the group. And his support allowed us to have other galleries take on the group. The all-or-nothing demands of the group assured my inclusion in those exhibitions.

Our exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum, in the basement, continued the policy of treating contemporary Native art as a cultural artifact. But they did buy the pieces, except for mine, which I unfortunately, or fortunately, did not own at the time. The piece I did for them was not included and now as a curator I can better understand the reasoning. It wasn't as good as the other pieces. Our exhibition in Ottawa at the Wallack Gallery created the opportunity for me to go to the Juno Awards and create an award, a painting for multiculturalism in music and for ten years it was awarded. The unusual thing about it was the winning artist got to take it home with him for the whole year and then he would return it at the end of the year and it would be re-awarded. So it had a big stack of plaques underneath it with everybody's name. I don't know where that painting is today but I'm going to stop in Toronto and see if it still exists. This also led to me being measured and photographed and they flew me back to Toronto to put me in the Toronto Wax Museum, with that painting and a cane and the Salvador Dali image at the time. I'm pretty sure that wax figure never was built but it was fun to go to Toronto and get measured.

I just want to speak about Daphne's generosity, especially to me, her time, her resources and by that I mean she supported me as an artist, gave me a gallery and also her studio. I painted in Daphne's studio in the winter of 1974 to create the work for the Dominion Gallery. That cold winter had me move in from the country to Winnipeg and take an apartment with my wife of that time who worked at Odjig Indian Prints on Donald Street. That winter created for me what would be referred to as my style. The late night conversations and the submersion in Daphne's work was my education as an artist. Daphne is my friend, my mentor and I was a

willing apprentice to an incredible talent who saw potential in me and encouraged it. Later, I was able to paint with Daphne again in her studio on Shuswap Lake during a really magical summer. So I thank you for that Daphne.

I did get to paint with Norval [Morrisseau] at my farm in Giroux Manitoba for a couple of weeks in 1974, where I watched him paint with his whole body, diving into the canvas, while he was working on his de Kooning pieces, as he called them. This kind of performance certainly influenced me in the late eighties as I was prone to paint live whenever I could and especially on live television where I would have myself miked and filmed from above as I was interviewed for whatever exhibition or event I was a part of. While Norval was at my farm he was working on a series of political works detailing the dam and the flooding of the Mohawk reserve. Some thirty pieces, in various stages of completion, were taken from my house when people kicked down my door and took those pieces along with a painting he had given me of his children watching a dragon fly. It took about three months to get that painting back and I was really happy to include it in the exhibition in Santa Fe of Morrisseau's work.

I never did get to paint with Jackson [Beardy], Carl [Ray] or Alex [Janvier], but I had great conversations with them and with Alex especially, who was our most articulate member. During those exhibitions and in all those places and especially around Odjig's Gallery or Daphne's house we would talk about art, talk about whatever, politics, but mostly art, about what we were doing and how we were doing it. Eddie [Cobiness] on the other hand, lived close to Winnipeg and I saw him more often. And I got to spend time doing watercolours with him at Buffalo Point. A lesson I often refer to because he was a great technician. Eddie was extremely talented (in the traditional sense, he could paint anything real - almost a photograph) and is certainly one of Canada's best-known wildlife painters. His wildlife paintings are incredible. His style evolved into a more abstract form than we see now in the Woodland School.

His early passing was a great loss to us, as was the passing of Jackson [Beardy] whose role in the group was what would be called in today's lingo a "Player". He would meet with the press club, he would go to the social things with the little old ladies, the necessary things that the rest of us really did not want to do. The death of Carl Ray, is the classic story in the Native world. Left alone, found dead, frozen. It is a legacy that Native people face all too often. We lost a good one in Carl and we never got to see his work mature, or all the wisdom he carried. I miss Carl. I miss his quiet way and his presence and I painted a tribute to him called "Long Tall Poplar", in my Ghost Dance series.

At the Wallack Gallery we had the parliament [government] people there and it was a very exciting time for me, being that young, arriving, having people think of you as being famous or a hero, which I'll speak to as I move along. It was a really good lesson for me, to look now at the lists of names on the catalogues. And Daphne would buy work from every single one of us.

We had a show down in Minneapolis, all kinds of places: in the mall in Winnipeg, in the Eatons in Winnipeg. Yeah, we'd go up the escalator and they had us on easels in Eatons. And at the Art Emporium in Vancouver, which was quite a nice show. That was a nice venue. And most of the press always went to Norval.

The winter of 1974. This is the winter I was talking about painting with Daphne. She gave me a painting that's been with me the whole time, it sits over my desk right now. She said it's her watching over me. And, indeed she has. She guided me, as I didn't go to college, I barely made it out of high school, and yet I find myself the director of a museum, and I ask myself where did all this come from? And it came from those early conversations with Daphne and Alex, spending time in Daphne's studio, working at Store Front Gallery and at Odjig Indian Prints. These are things that stayed with me forever. And I translated them into this, not only an artist's career, but a career as an art professional. The piece she gave me has peanut shells in it and it marked the transition from Daphne's work where she was no longer working with collage, using peanut shells or other

things on the canvas. So, I'm really happy to have the piece. It's my treasure.

Several of my pieces in the Wallack Gallery show were collected by [the Department of Indian and] Northern Affairs. One was called Business Man's Lunch. It was highly unusual to be exhibiting this kind of work with Norval and Alex. The loaded sexual content – the painting is actually about the bar scene in Winnipeg, at the time where if you wanted to have a beer you had to see total nude dancing. So that's why I called it "Business Man's Lunch". Another piece was called "Invitation to the French Maiden", about my life in French Manitoba. Another piece from Northern Affairs was called "The One Armed Virgin" and they used it to illustrate their little booklet. There was also a piece on Benjamin Franklin, from that same time period, the early 1970's.

We did a show at a gallery called Gallery Apropos in London. They came and visited us and bought paintings from the entire group, including two of mine, "Anne the Golden Griffin", a four by four foot acrylic. I was just barely learning how to paint! I was amazed that I was a part of this group.

I showed a painting called "Anne's Family Portrait" at the Royal Ontario [Museum] show. Anne has thirteen brothers and sisters. The mother is the little figure standing at the bottom. And my wife was the one in white, the kind of ghost figure.

The University of Manitoba featured me and Daphne in the centerfold of one of their newspapers called "Native Consciousness Graphics" and they had one of Daphne's early drawings and one of my pieces opposed to it, and this was the piece that Daphne had made a print of for me and I find it amazing at the time that people would walk into the gallery and look at it and say "Ah, the buffalo hunter." Really the work is more about Apocalypse, my reaction to reading Revelation and basic Catholicism, into the beast ... and the work is called "The Unconsumated Rape of Mondo" in honour of a friend of mine.

In that same vein of Christianity I painted a work called "Agnus Dei". Having grown up as an alter boy, and even going to seminary, I had lots to say about the Catholic Church. I believe this work is also at [Department of Indian and] Northern Affairs, but they don't know where it is. They were both pencil drawings probably about forty inches tall.

I did a painting for the award on multiculturalism that was created by CHIN Radio International called "The Virgin Of Light" bringing light to all people, an expression of those lofty ideals the group had brought to us. It's about bringing culture back to our own people, helping our own people, not just doing works just for ourselves or for self-gratification or just for our own pleasure and money, but to do work that would benefit our own people and take it back to our own people.

I've continued this theme at recent shows I've done at the museum in Santa Fe. We did a show called "Indian Art for Indian People". And some were offended by that, at the beginning, because they said, "Well, aren't non-Indian people going to be offended?" And I said, "We already are offended. It's been Indian art for other people for a long time. I think it's time for Indian art to be for Indian people. You know, we have our own people. If other people don't want to see it, that's fine."

So it wasn't very popular in the beginning but in the end the show was very successful.

Another painting I made at the time has the little clown dancers. I grew up on an Apache reservation in Arizona, so a lot of my work is about that. It has a little bit of Christianity and also seven, seven, seven, the mystical numbers. I was very much interested in all that stuff in those early days. These were very exciting times for me, as I was young, inexperienced, and embraced by Canada's greatest artists.

During the summer of 1972 I was struck by lightning and I made a drawing about that time. I was sitting on a hill in Manitoba in an

old pickup and we got struck by lightning for about eight hours. So I could light you up for about two weeks afterwards, make your hair stand on end. At one point there were seven bolts of lightning surrounding us. They looked like tongues of flame. I've done a lot of painting about that. For years I tried to paint the experience: the darkness of the night of lightning, because it was very unusual.

On more than one occasion my work caused controversy. One painting was almost destroyed by born-again Christians in Winnipeg when they pulled it down off the wall. They stormed in, there were about twenty people, asking me to remove this piece. This was in a mall show in Winnipeg and it happened again in Scottsdale, Arizona. For my first Scottsdale show I had painted a woman as a crucified Christ and they didn't take kindly to that and in fact they were a little more violent than even the Winnipeg group. In Scottsdale they actually spit on my paintings.

Untamed Fine Arts, a gallery in Vancouver, made prints of Eddie [Cobiness] and my work and took my paintings to shows across Canada. They advertised Daphne's work and Eddie's. Eddie continued to make prints of his work and also he had a group show at Northern Supply Corporation in Winnipeg. They bought work from all of us, which came at a very nice time for me. I think they bought twenty pieces. I don't know if the corporation still exists or if that collection is still intact. My work was all done on black, I think they were mostly portraits, which was again a departure from my normal style.

I made a piece honouring Carl Ray, which I called "Long Tall Poplar" and which was part of a series I did called "Ghost Dance Religion" in the 1980's. It was mostly about how the spirit of the people is not lost. Like the sky, it's forever and embedded within the landscape are all our memories.

When I did a series called "The Three Surviving Members of Wounded Knee, her Name was Blue Whirl Wind" in 1980 it was not well received in the gallery world. But it toured the academic world and got to a lot of museums and different colleges all around. And

I had one commercial show in New Port Beach with that series, me and a cowboy artist, which is quite funny. And also Early Fantasies [self-portraits] of myself circa 1977, with all my regalia, my statue of St John and things I had collected...my mother on the bottom. My canes. I always had a cane for a lot of years.

I did many works about the Ghost Dance. The silhouettes were from actual photos of the ghost dance; they were real people. And in each exhibition I would include a self-portrait.

I had a studio in downtown Phoenix as well as one in Scottsdale Arizona, which I kept for a long time because it only cost twenty-five bucks a month. It was an old horse barn, but in downtown Phoenix we got a hold of an old church. I worked with a guy who called himself Kid Picasso and I called myself Indio Dali. We did performances and we had a cartoon series where we commented on the art scene and art funding. We were able to say things in the form of editorial cartoons that we couldn't normally say publicly. The Life and Times of Kid Picasso the Fastest Drawer in the West and Indio Dali. We had a studio, which had all this graffiti in the back. We had a lot of fun during those days. A lot of artists came through from Los Angeles. Performance artists would come into Phoenix. It was at a time when I was founding art groups. One group was called Moviento Artistico the Real Solado, or MARS. We called ourselves MARS and it started in a Chinese grocery. We made fun of ourselves all the time.

Then my work moved to a larger scale. I started painting on raw linen, sometimes as big as eleven feet tall, as I had that big studio in the church. I had a really big space. I used raw linen, acrylic on raw linen, using the linen as the middle tone. Many of the works from that era are quite large.

I made another series at that time called "Angels of Desire". And they were not too large but were all done on paper mounted on linen, all black, just with the ink. It was a good time. I worked in ink for quite a few years. I even did one piece, which I still have, which is forty feet long, a continuous drawing. I got to do a show with

my brother and my wife at the time. One work was called "Shaman Landscapes" and it's a lot about the power of place. The image at the bottom was the power of women and they were talking with 24 carat gold tongues.

My recent work is mostly conte and acrylic on canvas. Realizing that I couldn't save all the work that I did on paper, as it got destroyed very often, I started working straight on canvas. Many are large, about eight feet tall. "Entry to the Underworld" and "Santa Fe Angel" show what my work looks like now.

You saw me with my medal last night. They gave me the Alan Houser Memorial Award. I won the Governor's Award for art in New Mexico last year and they had the exhibition in the Governor's Gallery.

I think my work today looks more like it did when I started than ever. I can see how my style was certainly influenced by Daphne's style: the lines, the energy, the movement, even the directness. I'd say I'm prone to paint live. My younger brother has a band called Clandestine and for Indian Market one year I painted while they played, on an eight by twelve foot canvas up there on the stage. We were supposed to have two and a half hours but we had twenty minutes. It was quite a challenge for me. It was in a place called the Paulo Saleri Amphitheatre that was built at the Indian school by architect Paulo Saleri. It's a real narrow little thing right above the stage and I only had about three feet so I had to be really conscious of not falling off. But it was fun.

My life down south and my studio, the twenty-five dollar one, was across the street from Fritz Scholder's studio so I got to spend time dealing with him, talking with him and participating with him along with several other artists on an artists' advisory board. The grounds of my studio were really beautiful, all grassy, the last unpaved part of Scottsdale. But now it's no longer there. It's all gone. It's a big building now, a gallery.

Over time Philip Curtis, who founded the Phoenix Art Museum became a mentor to me in the same way that Daphne had been.

He talked to me about my work, advising me. And he was what you might call a Victorian Surrealist. He painted these odd guys with Victorian bowlers in desert landscapes.

As I was coming here, you know, going to the airport, an exhibition kind of caught my eye. As I walked closer to it, it was the statement that really made sense to me. It was a statement that said, "I acknowledge my Aboriginal ancestry but my work is informed by a larger world."

At the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. our cause was simple: to be able to exhibit and receive acceptance as artists. We were informed by our culture and of course by this colonial society that had the desire and the wherewithal to control how we made art and how we described ourselves and also selected what we made as art and who we chose to promote as heroes. Yet to me, this was, and still is, just another manifestation of the divide and conquer strategy that has served the colonial mindset for a really long time, for centuries indeed. We as artists must be careful not to fall prey to another form of colonization, for we are one of the most powerful voices of our people.

Are we "Western artists" in their terms? Yes! We know the parameters and criteria to choose one artist over another, the descriptions and the language necessary to validate work, to create heroes. Comparisons to European artists like, "His work is like so and so's work", or, for instance, saying to someone like Alex [Janvier] "Your work is like Paul Klee." I don't feel that's valid.

You know we, today, we work in a place where we can do that. We can validate ourselves, and our work, and demand our space in our own country. And this is something that we must do. We must make our own work on our own terms.

Contemporary artists for the most part are searching for what is described as "new" art, "cutting edge" work, and so on. What these artists do not have is a cultural well to draw from. And that well, that is what Aboriginal artists and Indigenous people have.

I was recently at a symposium in Venice and the talk was how stagnant the Venice Biennale had become and they wanted to know how to fix it. Well, there are a hundred and twenty five artists and about fifty curators, that they recycle, which is the description of a snake biting its own tail. It doesn't grow. It doesn't have any life. At the symposium on Indigenous art they were looking to Indigenous artists to breathe new life into the biennale, not only the Venice Biennale, but other biennales. You know, as Indigenous artists we are informed by Western art aesthetics. We can talk Renaissance with the best of them. We know about abstract expressionism, performance and installation. And I think those things came heavily from Indigenous people. I've seen where European artists will come to Arizona and literally mine Indigenous people for ideas and then create performances.

Professional Native Artists Inc. was ground breaking in its efforts to bring Indigenous art to the forefront. From those early moments I went on to form my own gallery at Scottsdale, because no one would show the work that I made. They said it was too sexual. I also continued to create art groups of painters and this was certainly inspired by my conversations and by being a part of the group, because they had not organized down there [in the U.S.] and we had already organized up here [in Canada]. We understood the value of meeting together as artists, discussing our needs and how to help each other, the way that Daphne, Alex and Norval kind of muscled galleries into showing work by artists like myself.

One of these groups I mentioned earlier was called MARS, the other was called ARIZTLAN, a permutation of the word Aztlan, the legendary Indigenous homeland in present day Arizona. It included dancers, musicians, poets, screenwriters and filmmakers. We'd meet all around the state, in different regions and take our work to the people. Which was something we had talked about doing in Professional Native Artists Inc.; taking the work to the people, because they won't come into the gallery in downtown Phoenix, and they won't come to the main cities. So we took it to them. And that was truly inspired and I was right at the beginning of all that and

was instrumental in bringing these ideas that came from here, down to the south.

I also joined a group called the National Association of Artists' Organizations. I went to a conference, mostly by accident, in Los Angeles. There were no people of colour there and they were calling themselves a national organization. I joined and brought these ideas again. While they would tell me things like, "There is no art west of the Mississippi." I'd say, "Well okay, why do you have pictures of Chaco Canyon on your wall. You know, you mine that Indigenous culture, yet don't accept it as art."

With this organization I was able to open the door to a lot of not only Native organizations but also Hispanic and Asian organizations. By being on their board I was able to create a conference in 1987, I believe, where we did a "performance rodeo". I brought in everybody from Huichol Shaman, to the street performers in Los Angeles, Glugio Nicandro, aka "Gronk", who was part of ASCO, a performance collective with Harry Gamboa Jr, Patssi Valdez and Willy Heron, to guys like Gorham Kinnear, who are now in major museums. At that time they were just outsiders because the gallery wouldn't let them in. They were troublemakers.

So, that was a good thing and that's the legacy that I took down south from my experience up here, the generosity of the people up here, when they welcomed me here. Because when the group [Professional Native Artists Inc.] was first formed they could have said, "Well, he's an American. He can't be a part of this group." But that didn't seem to matter to Daphne or Alex or Carl or any of the group. And it gave me strength. It gave me courage to speak out. So when you say "artist activists" you know a lot of my life has been spent taking work back to the reservations, to small children. I had to create my own artist in the school program because of the content of my work. It's too sexual.

Those ideas all came out of this early group and I was really pleased looking back over some of this material and going through it to come and speak here today, when I saw that my life was formed up

here. That it taught me that glory and success are not important but that helping our people, our Indigenous people where ever they are, is what we need to do as we bring our work to them.

I encourage artists to keep the creative level up. Don't be tempted by success, because success is a temptation. I live in the Indian capital of the world, with the Indian Market in Santa Fe. And a lot of artists quit creating. They start making work that speaks to the next sale. Certainly we have to support ourselves and I would never take that away from anybody, but don't do that at the expense of your creativity, because then you'll be locked into what Western society ... that's what they do to artists, they choose a style and they say, "This is where you belong, this is where you have to stay." That's not true! We can choose our own path and especially now. This is a great time for Native arts. Everybody's interested. As the saying goes, we have the stuff, we have the ideas, we have the energy. Not only that, we have a culture that supports us, that gives us that spiritual grounding, our connection to the earth. These kinds of things they don't have. And the world is lost. We're in a hard time. I agree with Comrade Tom Blake. We have to be social and political, we have to speak out against the cutting down of the forests. You know I'm only sixty, but in this lifetime I've witnessed the cutting of the last trees on the reservation where I grew up. There is no old growth forest left. Ah. That's sad.

You know, we're silly. As human beings, we're really silly and I think that artists and especially Native artists have a great opportunity to speak out against that. To really educate a world that needs education, that needs connection to the place where we live. Because it's just a floating ball in the sky. This is where we are. You know we're not going to Mars tomorrow. You know, we're not flying to the moon. We can't live there. This is where we live.

So, I love it that a lot of young artists are really talking about those issues and talking about the situation on the reservations. The theme of the show I have up right now is about abuse and the young artists have come forward with paintings about abuse that occurred because of the military. The military complex in the United States

recruited Native people and many also volunteered to go to war yet weren't treated as citizens. Native veterans couldn't even vote when they came back from World War Two. And that's only sixty years ago. And it's even less time up here. Our history is recent. We weren't even in the history books when I went to school.

So, we are in a great time. We have resources that we've never had before. We have control of our own museums. Certainly at the IAIA [Institute of American Indian Arts] we choose what we show and we speak about it the way we would like to speak about it. The show I did a few years ago, which was called Relations, Indigenous Dialogue my director called a biennale. I don't call it a biennale, I call it an opportunity for Native artists to continue speaking with one another about how we want to present ourselves. How we can encourage creativity. Instead of what could be called creative apartheid, where the dominant society says, "If you paint this way you can be successful". You know, they limit your ability to create. We must not fall prey to that. And certainly at places like the IAIA. I encourage all artists to contact me, please. The next biennale is in about eight months and we are not worried because it's not a biennale. To me these aren't art shows but conversations, dialogues with each other. And we'll figure out how to present the work when the dialogue is finished. You know, it might just be words. We have a history of oral tradition. So the last show there were no labels, there were no heroes, you had to experience it. What you got out of it was what you experienced. And the next one maybe it will be only what you hear. And if you're listening then it's good, you'll come away with something. In that first show a lot of people did. It was well received. Some of the press looked at it and found it more interesting than a traditional biennale because there was the interaction. Alex [Janvier] was there. He even got our mayor to come to the exhibition. He had never been in our museum and now comes every day. He painted on the wall, put his hand prints on the wall, he became a part of us and this is the kind of interaction that I think can mean what a curator or director should be. I don't consider myself to be either of these, but more of a facilitator. I know artists and I know how to present their work.

I thank you very much for listening to me.

Algonkian Pictographic Imagery

Sherry Farrell Racette

Virtually all art historical writing on contemporary Woodlands painting and drawing has discussed the ancestral traditions these

artists draw from. The discussions have tended to highlight Norval Morrisseau's use of sacred imagery and his construction of himself as a shaman-artist. Morrisseau's powerful work and presence combined with the late twentieth century fascination with both real and imagined shamanistic practices, caused the sacred to dominate and secular practices to be ignored and overshadowed.

As Barry Ace has pointed out, Morrisseau's work was profoundly influenced by his fifteen-year relationship with Selwyn Dewdney and Dewdney's work on rock sites and Midewiwin scrolls. Scholars such as Dewdney emphasized the sacred works, neglecting a narrative tradition that was also used to leave messages, tell stories and document everyday experiences. In fact, most early European observers who documented pictorial traditions only had the opportunity to see, as subsequently described, the secular uses of a complex visual system of communication that was used on personal possessions, homes, grave site markers and left as messages.

This summary of how pictographic text was used will show that secular uses were actually in the majority. Though sacred text was used on Mide scrolls and on vision quest sites, pictographic text was also used for messages, signatures and other written texts. Dots often referred to stars and constellations and through these representations, referenced stories and laws. Pictographic text was used to sign territory, to record historic and unusual events and as narrative text on robes and tipis. It visually represented dreams, visions and stories. Often, the content and placement and sometimes the location, not the form of the messages determined whether the text rested in secular or sacred domains, although the Algonkian line between the secular and the sacred can be indistinct. Grave posts, for example, were pictorial inscriptions that represented the name and clan affiliations of the deceased.

Some of the images I'll be speaking about may be familiar to you, as they were drawn by Seth Eastman in the mid nineteenth century

and reproduced in Henry Schoolcraft's publications. They were taken from the Lake Superior and the Carp River region, published in 1851.

Now one that would ride that indistinct boundary between the secular and the sacred would be this image of a person riding a horse [shows slide]. It describes an actual event, a journey, and there are certain markers that depict who was on the journey, who was in the canoe, how long the journey took, and then the subsequent riding of a horse across the surface of Lake Superior. It is a narrative that combines historic events and mystical occurrences in the same text.

This is an example of how Morrisseau's work was closely informed by imagery from Mide scrolls and rock paintings [shows slide]. The image on the left is from a Mide scroll, the one on the right a rock painting, and then this little image from Morrisseau's work.

Here is an example of one of the gravesite markers that Schoolcraft observed in the mid-19th century [shows slide]. These were apparently, at one time, common sites. This drawing is based on his description. It's the grave post of White Fisher, who was an Ojibwe chief of the Caribou Clan. On the top is his clan totem, on the bottom the white fisher, and there are other signs that represent war parties he led, wounds he received, a fight with a bull moose and other achievements in war and peace.

Schoolcraft observed that these notations could be found on the arms, lodge and trophies of the chiefs and warriors. He described this system as a pictorial alphabet in which, by juxtaposition of symbols representing acts as well as objects of action, and by the introduction of simple adjunct signs, a series of generally connected ideas were denoted so that the most prominent incidents of life and death could be recorded, so as to be transmitted from one generation to another. Anishnaabe missionary George Copway, described a form of pictorial writing with over two hundred figures in general use. According to him, an Indian well-versed in them could send a communication to another Indian, and by them make himself "as well understood as a pale face can by letter".

The system, like sign language, was also understood by different nations. According to Copway, writing in the mid 1800s, European contact had eroded the use of the pictographic system and caused them to, in his words, neglect their correspondence with other nations, except by special messenger. Europeans were sometimes the recipients of symbolic and diplomatic communications related to war and peace.

Frontenac reportedly received a message, on entering Onondaga territory in 1696, with pictorial representations of the French army executed in red paint on a tree trunk, with two bundles of 1,434 pieces of cut bulrush tied into two bundles, left on the ground beneath. This was, apparently, a warning of the number of warriors who were awaiting them.

Pictorial imagery, executed both in wampum and drawing on paper, were key symbolic actions in the negotiation and signing of the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701. This treaty was negotiated and signed between Louis-Hector de Callières, the governor of New France, and delegates from thirty-nine First Nations. The signatories on the document used pictographic images that represented both nations and the *dodems* of individual chiefs. Thirteen hundred delegates representing thirty-nine nations arrived in Montreal for the signing and they met on a field specially prepared for the event, on the site of the Pointe à Callières Museum in old Montreal. At that time, the population in Montreal was only twelve hundred or so. During this event, the First Nations delegation actually outnumbered the French population of Montreal. The thirty-nine nations represented a diverse range of nations: the Cree and Wyandotte, Shoshone nations, Temiskaming, and Great Lakes nations such as the Potawatomi.

For the three hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Great Peace of Montreal, Denys Delage, [associate professor at Laval University], did a great deal of work to decode the pictographic images used to sign the treaty, talking to different people in different communities and identifying which nations were represented and

which chiefs were there. We can recognize some of the devices that were utilized and we see them occurring over and over again, right until the present use by contemporary painters. [Shows slides]

Petitions using pictographic imagery on birchbark were submitted to President Fillmore in 1849 by a group of Anishnaabe and a small group of Métis. The bark petitions were drawn by Seth Eastman and reproduced by Schoolcraft. These petitions present a series of symbols and what Schoolcraft has called adjunct symbols, a kind of gestural line, organized to create a complex narrative. According to the Courte Oreilles oral tradition, the primary document, currently entitled Chief Buffalo's Petition to the President, reflects the plea of the bands of the Lake Superior Anishnaabe, today called the Courte Oreilles, St. Croix, Fond du Lac, Red Cliff and Bad River, and all are currently in the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

In addition to Schoolcraft's interpretation, the Wisconsin Historical Society has been working with these communities to interpret these documents. This collaboration has led to the following interpretation of this particular petition:

The four lakes on the lower left, the small blue circles, represent the path to Sandy Lake [Wisconsin]; the double set of lines to the right of the lake means that they travelled overland to the first body of water, which is the St. Louis River [Wisconsin/Minnesota]. On the way back, the head men of the band/clan met at Fond du Lac [Wisconsin] and there this petition was conceived. The line from this point to the crane's eye reflects that this is what Chief Buffalo saw. The lines of the hearts and the eyes of the catfish, man-fish, bear and the three martins to the heart and eye of the crane mean that all the head men see and feel the same way. They all stand along a wide blue line that represents Lake Superior. The last line going out from the crane's eye indicates that the entire group has authorized Chief Buffalo of the Crane Clan to speak to President Fillmore and plead their case. Today it is thought that the catfish represents Lake Chetac, in present day Sawyer County, [Wisconsin] the man-fish represents Rice Lake in present day Barron County [Wisconsin]; the bear represents Little Lac Courte Oreilles [Wisconsin], the rightmost

martin represents Fond du Lac, Minnesota, the central martin, the big bend of the Chippewa River [Wisconsin]; and the leftmost martin the St. Croix River [Wisconsin/Minnesota].

Another Pictograph, B, is the symbolic representation of the concurrence of the people of Trout Lake [Minnesota] with the petition, as identified by their dodems: represented are Chief Ganesdano, or the Cree, whose dodem is the brant goose, his son, with warriors of the mythological long-tailed bear dodem, some from the catfish dodem, others from the sturgeon, the duck, the bear, and the loon are also represented.

In pictograph C, the chief of the eagle dodem from the Ontonagon River on Lake Superior, are represented as united in the object of the petition. The chief is depicted by the figure of an eagle. Two small lines ascending from the head of the bird denote his authority or his power generally. The human arm extending from the breast of the bird with the open hand, is symbolic of friendship. Lines connecting the eyes of each person with the chief and the eyes of the chief with the President, signify unity of view or commonality of purpose. The men supporting the petition are represented by their respective dodems. The president is shown in his official residence. A chief, represented but unidentified, is shown by the rays on his head as possessing a higher power than the Eagle chief, but still concurring, by the eye-line, with the petition.

Pictograph D similarly represents a group of petitioners from the Wisconsin River. As Schoolcraft understood, the pictographs identified with considerable specificity the individuals who were supportive of the petition. Each family and its location are accurately depicted by symbols: unity is shown by eye-lines and by heart-lines, friendship by an open hand, "civilization", (that's Schoolcraft's word) by a dwelling house. Each person bears his peculiar dodemic mark. The devices are drawn or cut on the smooth inner surface of sheets of bark. It will thus have been observed that the Indian pictorial system is susceptible of considerable certainty of information. By a mixture of the pure representative and symbolic mode, these scrolls are made to denote accurately the number of villages united in the

object of the petition, together with the number of persons of each dodemic class who gave their assent to the plan. They also designate by geographical delineation, the position of each village and the territory in question.

A more recent pictographic document relating to treaty negotiations was recently repatriated to Saskatchewan and, I might add, some other secular pictographic documents have resurfaced in fairly recent years. It used to be thought, let's say in a place like Saskatchewan, that they didn't exist, but several years ago a ledger book, made by Hongeeyesa of Carry the Kettle Band, surfaced and is now in the Glenbow Museum. The book, which was collected in the late 19th century and had remained in England for many years, resurfaced a few years ago. We don't really know how many more are out there. But in the last couple of years they have been surfacing. One particular document [The Chief Pasqua Pictograph] was repatriated with some struggle as it came up for sale. It is now owned by the Pasqua (Saulteaux) First Nation and is being housed in a Saskatchewan museum. The effort to repatriate the document was led by Lorne Carrier who spearheaded the fund-raising and repatriation initiative, and Dilbert Pasqua, who is a descendent of Chief Pasqua. A commemorative photograph of them and Chief Pasqua himself is now in the collection of the Glenbow Museum.

Pasqua was the chief of a mixed Cree and Saulteaux band and a signatory of Treaty Four in the Qu'Appelle Valley. He created the document between 1874 and 1877. Consisting of two paper panels covered with a complex pictographic narrative, drawn in graphite, the left panel depicts negotiations between figures in European and First Nations clothing and is organized into what is possibly a sequence of six visual events, intended to be read, I think, from top to bottom. The left panel has the pictographic tally of the gifts First Nations people were promised in treaty and which they were to receive.

Pasqua's father was Cree and his kin relationship to the Saulteaux is unknown, however many of his band members were Saulteaux with strong connections to Leech Lake in present-day Minnesota.

His pictographic style appears to merge Eastern pictographic traditions with the ledger drawings of the Northern Plains. However, pictographic communication wasn't limited to the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence region. Some of the elements similar to the earlier Wisconsin pictographs include the extended hand. In the list of items, the bag is interesting and the pin and pipe. But the list does not include only items or objects, because there are the two figures in the first row on the upper left, having rays coming from their eyes as if they are looking at something. Scholars are just beginning to try to decipher this document.

The most ordinary application of pictographs was to create messages and document stories. These were most often carved into bark or slabs of wood and occasionally paper, but bark and wood obviously were the more durable choices. Messages were left in notches of trees, tied on poles or left in cracks in rock surfaces. In 1817, White Thunder, a Winnebago chief, who accompanied Major Stephen Long on an expedition, created one such message. Drawing on a paper which he left beside a creek, White Thunder represented his party by drawing a boat with a sail and flag, manned by men wearing hats, indicating that they were Americans. He represented himself as a bear and communicated that he traveled with his wife by placing a small drawing of a woman in a canoe beside his own dodemic image. The lightning drawn over her head indicated that she was White Thunder's wife. Another canoe with a bear indicated that White Thunder was leading the party. The presence of a woman stated that the group had peaceful intentions.

In 1820, Schoolcraft himself travelled with a military party, accompanied by two Ojibwe guides. Pouncing Hawk, their principle guide, left a similar birchbark message. Carving into the surface, Pouncing Hawk organized images to represent their party and the direction in which they were travelling. According to Schoolcraft, the main figure represents the officer in charge of the detachment; his drawn sword denotes his official rank. Another figure is the secretary of the party represented holding a book. A geologist is drawn with a hammer; attachés and an interpreter are also represented. A group of figures represents eight soldiers, each

shown armed with a musket. There are indications that they had separate fires; guides, soldiers and administrative parties are shown eating and sleeping in different areas of the camp. Also pictured are the guides, both drawn without hats. The principle guide and author's name, Pouncing Hawk, are indicated in the upper left corner. Other figures reportedly represent a prairie hen and turtle, eaten at the campsite. The inclination of the pole drawn indicates the direction the party was traveling and the three marks below the pole indicate the estimated length of the journey. This message was left at the campsite after their departure. Thus, any party arriving at the same camping place would be informed that a small expedition accompanied by American soldiers was traveling through the region. Later, Schoolcraft's group came across a similar bark message suspended on a pole near the territorial boundary of the Dakota. It symbolically represented the large Dakota community at St. Peter's River and made visual references to the ongoing negotiations for peace between the Dakota and Ojibwe. The document indicated both their leader and their peaceful intentions. The Ojibwe in the party read the message as an indication that they would be welcomed in the territory.

This system of messages left on the trail were documented across a wide territory. In 1823, the Cree guide who agreed to accompany Reverend John West on a trip between Churchill and York Factory in northern Manitoba, left a message at his camp for his sons. Schoolcraft writes that, "He had two sons, he said, who were gone in pursuit of a deer and on quitting the encampment to travel with us, he would leave some signs for them to follow us on their return."

The message was drawn upon a broad piece of wood which he prepared with an axe. The images on the wooden slab described the party, noted the direction they traveled, and requested that they [the sons] follow. It is a good example of what Schoolcraft and Copway describe as having identifiable pictographic images. Europeans are always represented with hats. Little poles indicate that the party had gone forward. The chief of the party is accompanied by a European servant and the curving line at the end indicates that the sons should follow the party in the direction indicated.

One of the more unusual uses of pictographs can be found in the fur trade account books of Louis Provençal. Provençal operated a trading post in the Traverse des Sioux area of present day Minnesota in the mid-19th century. His origins are vague and he has been variously identified as Ojibwe, Ojibwe-Métis, or French. I had quite a time tracking down the account book and eventually found it in the Minnesota Historical Society library. But here are some examples of how he kept his accounts.

He was married to Wan'ska, the widow of a Dakota chief and was the stepfather of Sleepy Eye, principle chief of the Lower Sisseton Dakota. Provençal was illiterate and kept his fur trade accounts using pictographic symbols. His system was easily understood by his First Nations customers who were able to read and examine their own accounts, thus earning for Provençal the reputation for honest and transparent business practices. His accounts have been generally described as his own invented system, but they appear to have been adaptations of pictographic conventions used throughout the region. Copway noted that material things were depicted by straightforward pictorial representations. Provençal followed standard pictographic conventions when identifying individuals who had accounts with him, but probably developed more specific or varied representations of trade goods in his store such as three-point blankets, silver ear bobs, knives, shawls and checked fabric. Some of the notations in his surviving account book have evaded interpretation and were no doubt unique adjunct symbols that connected the various pictographs into narratives that described transactions and agreements.

Now, I'd like to suggest that the narrative legend paintings of Carl Ray, Jackson Beardy, Daphne Odjig and other Woodland artists are not appropriations of sacred imagery. Rather they are a powerful reclaiming of an ancient form of visual storytelling. Many of the shapes and visual devices can be recognized as elements from the pictographic repertoire. Even those who did not emulate the art of their ancestors in their own work, such as Carl Gawboy and the artists described as Ojibwe Moderns, George Morrison and Patrick

Desjarlais, took tremendous interest in these ancient traditions.

Algonkian artists drew from the memory of landscape, community, traditional beliefs and stories. While Daphne Odjig may not have seen the sacred rock sites that influenced Norval Morrisseau, she had her traditional stories since childhood, and she, like Beardy and Ray, translated these narrative structures into visual compositions that echoed those created by previous generations. They marked a radical departure, an Algonkian painting tradition that was adamantly non-Western.

Although I have used the term 'legend painting' myself, we need to really critique [the term]. It's a gloss, a somewhat dismissive term that diminishes a much more complex bundle of images that, particularly during the innovative years, exploded with graphic energy. We can look at the larger bodies of paintings and drawings that drew from the storied worlds and see that the artists are engaged in several distinct projects. First, they are giving visual form to a complex system of beliefs, a way of experiencing the world. It has been called a 'world view', more recently an 'indigenous epistemology' – an entire knowledge system that each individual being, whether spirit, human, animal or plant, inhabited. These artists initiated a reclaiming or revaluing of this knowledge that we are still engaged in today, whether through education, history, law or science. In many of these paintings the artist is engaged with a single idea, a visual meditation on one concept or belief.

Other works give visual form to characters who had only existed in the oral tradition and the collective imagination of generations of listeners. Pictographic representations of Nanabush, Nanabozho or Wesakejack are extremely rare and those in existence have had their authenticity questioned. Although physical evidence, such as footsteps in rock and landforms, give witness to his presence, exploring and representing characters who embody and evoke power took considerable artistic courage. Many images provide a visual window into a critical moment in a story, capturing a pivotal or dramatic scene. These are often iconic, world-altering moments, as these are the characters and stories that shaped our world. Relatively

few paintings actually tell a story or represent a complete narrative, but when they do, they utilize many of the same artistic strategies used by the historic visual storytellers: the careful placement of individual characters on the paper or canvas and the gestural lines that connect and sequence. As in earlier pictographic narratives, the narrative lines often work in multiple directions and can be read left to right, right to left, circular, or all of these. There is both text and subtext. Daphne Odjig's visual explorations of Nanabozho or Nanabush began in the mid to late 1960s. As she said in a 1981 interview, "When they are talking to you about Nanabush they don't say 'he's a big man' or 'he's a little guy', they leave it up to your imagination, and my Nanabush was just a little spirit, a little being. I don't think of him in terms of being a she or a he." Nanabush was powerful in a spiritual sense, not a physical sense. Her early works gave her Nanabush visual form and captured moments or characters from stories.

I would like to talk just a little bit about one aspect of Daphne's remarkable career that has been neglected, and I suppose in this case I'm putting my educator's hat on. During the late 1960s, Odjig expanded her visual storytelling to retell and illustrate a series of ten traditional stories. These little books are historically significant to First Nations education, particularly in the field of curriculum development. The Department of Indian affairs had begun purchasing Odjig's work at that time and I believe that her work impacted and stimulated the development of initiatives and policies that would radically change the direction of First Nations education. The books probably had earlier forms and I vaguely remember little books in brown and black. They were published by Ginn as a reading series in 1971. The early date is really quite remarkable. There have been other major curriculum projects undertaken, but this predates, for example, the Montana Indian Education Committee's Indian Culture Series, which was published in 1972, and the Indian Reading Series, which was published by the Northwest Committee of Crow from the Montana-Oregon area that wasn't published until 1977. Odjig's books, which were, I think, originally published in the late 60s, and then published as a series in 1971, are considerably earlier. There are ten of them: Nanabush and the Wild Geese, Nanabush

and the Dancing Ducks, Nanabush and the Chipmunks, Nanabush and the Rabbits, Nanabush and the Rose Bushes, Nanabush and the Spirit of Thunder, Nanabush and the Spirit of Winter, Nanabush Loses his Eyeballs, Nanabush and Mandomin, and Nanabush Punishes the Raccoon. From an Aboriginal literature perspective, this is a significant contribution indeed; not a single individual book but a series of ten. The Nanabush books can still be found in First Nations schools and public libraries across Canada and I'd like to add that I wanted to see if I could get a hold of one to bring here and they are now going for fifty bucks apiece on eBay and in rare bookstores.

The hilarious adventures of Odjig's little spirit has captured generations of readers and set a standard for those who quickly followed her example. Her Nanabush was faithful to the story protocols of the elders she listened to, leaving children with a visual space to engage their imagination and complete his image in their own minds. The 1989 image of Nanabush in *The Spirit of Winter*, was dedicated to her sister [in-law], Rosemary Peltier-Fisher, who had first challenged Odjig to use her talents to document her grandfather's stories, and to Jean Rivers who, as Odjig wrote, "refreshed my memory".

Odjig's work with the oral tradition stands apart in its courage and its steadfast position against romanticism. Her traditional stories are not benign or sanitized. She explores the erotic, the raunchy, the humorous and sometimes violent side of the human spirit sagas; the way stories are often taught by non-example, with graphic and dramatic descriptions of the consequences of vanity, negligence, greed, lust and evil. By the early 1970s, the artist began to expand her narrative work by telling complete stories in complex and increasingly larger format. She also began the artistic process of developing what would become iconic images that would recur throughout her artistic career: Medicine Man, Thunderbird Man, Thunderbird Woman, First Mother. The story elements are layered, but narrative lines create not only the story itself, but also a sense of movement. The narratives are created by the sequence or progression of forms, by connecting and interconnecting lines.

In *Massacre* [1972], Odjig shifts from the mythological to the historic. *Massacre* tells the story of the Fort Dearborn massacre that took place during the war of 1812. Odjig is a descendent of Black Partridge, the Potawatomi chief who rescued several families. *Massacre* is unflinching in its critique of the horrors of war. It is also interesting in its use of line. It's here that we see the emergence of Odjig's use of line as a narrative device. Her lines sweep across the page, moving through, in, and among the other visual elements like wind. They push characters and incidents together, not freezing them into one illustrative moment, but in a dynamic moving narrative.

We see it in her large-scale works, such as *The Great Flood*, a mural created for Peguis High School [Winnipeg, Manitoba] and I'd like to know if it's been recently restored. The artist's narrative can be read in multiple directions, but the sense of movement and unfolding and continuous action is remarkable. This, like the *Creation of the World* designed for the Manitoba Museum in 1972, is a complex narrative with central stories surrounded by smaller peripheral stories, but all are interconnected. *The Great Flood* and the *Creation of the World* mark the end of Odjig's engagement with traditional stories. Her narratives increasingly began to address contemporary realities; her own role as witness to the devastating relocation at Easterville, Manitoba, her lived experiences and reflections as woman and mother, and the cultural revitalization in which she played a critical role. In these later works, story characters still appear, serving as iconic anchors around which events unfold: *Thunderbird*, *Medicine Man*, *Thunderbird Woman*. These also echo historic pictographic works, in that they document and present current events for the viewer's contemplation and remembrance.

Daphne Odjig has stated frequently that she had no direct exposure to rock painting sites and that she had not met Norval Morrisseau when she began her artistic work as a visual storyteller. Perhaps we need to believe her. Maybe we need to investigate late-night conversations at the first Wiki pow wows with her sister-in-law, where she also met Jackson Beardy, to understand these beginnings. But regardless of the peculiar causal events, Odjig's work, along

with that of Jackson Beardy, Carl Ray and others, raises a perplexing question. How is it that this unique body of Algonkian painting and drawing draws so heavily from a historic tradition that most of the artists never saw – had no direct contact with? Is it mere coincidence? Or are we looking for visual connections and evidence of direct transmission when there are other ways?

Despite the disruptive experiences of residential school or mid-20th-century apartheid racism, these artists' experiences as children emerged in a world of language and story within family circles, surrounded by a storied landscape, that imprinted a kind of thinking and seeing and perceiving the world that was simultaneously minimal and richly layered. A gesture, a glance could be loaded with meaning. Signs in the landscape reveal complex worlds beyond our own. Somehow the continuity of aesthetic sensibility and artistic strategies is linked inexplicably to that experience and that loved territory. From the fine lines of quillwork and moose hair embroidery, the incised lines on clay bark and rock, translated to the sinuous lines of floral beadwork and re-emerging in the narrative shapes and lines of painting and drawing, this, to borrow a phrase from Gerald McMaster, is an artistic lineage that is both tenuous and continuous.

Of her paintings that draw from the oral tradition, Odjig once said, "If you destroy our legends you also destroy our soul". These artists were engaged in a healing project that caused them to reach deeply inside themselves, seeking to reconnect, revitalize and explore painful history. Many of us who seek to reclaim and reconstruct, whether through history, literature or artistic expression, can relate to the uncanny coincidences that draw us closer to our ancestors. A few years ago, I was sharing experiences with another First Nations historian who was reconstructing a history that others had said was impossible to trace. Something he said about those inexplicable coincidences has come back to me many times. He said, "Spirit will find a way". Perhaps that is what happened here.

Thanks.

Does anyone have any questions or comments?

Question/Comment (inaudible)

Farrell Racette: I actually just started this for the purpose of this gathering. I had been coming across things, because it's something that people are interested in, particularly my First Nations students, and as I said they keep popping up. Last year I was on my way home from the Ethno-History Conference and I picked up an American Indian art magazine, opened the cover, and there was the Pasqua pictograph advertised for sale. That was the first that I had heard of it. I was in Montreal at the time, and the first thing I did was e-mail Blair Stonechild at First Nations University and he got in touch with Pasqua and Lorne Carrier. People from Pasqua were aware of the existence of the pictograph, but they had been assured that it wouldn't come up for sale.

In doing a close reading of Schoolcraft I began to think that some of the birchbark scrolls that have been assumed to be Midé scrolls might actually be other kinds of documents; they might be petitions or historical records. So, I think a lot of that material could use a closer read. I'm going to publish it with the proceedings of this conference and I've been talking just last week to the Minnesota Historical Society. They are going to scan the entire Provençal account book for me, and send it to me. But I think it would be interesting just to get the images out there because I think there are lots of people who've thought, 'oh I've seen this over here', or 'that reminds me of something there', because I think it's an area that needs more exploration and I think a lot of people have a little something that they've seen. So I would like to put this out there just to see what other people have to say about it.

Question: Could you tell us a bit more about Seth Eastman?

Farrell Racette: Seth Eastman was a European artist who lived in Minnesota for a number of years and did a lot of painting and drawing of the Dakota and Ojibwe people in that region. He's one of the colonial artists who in some respects has escaped the kind

of critique that we generally make of colonial artists who came to America, like Paul Kane, Catlin and some of the others.

Carl Gawboy is an Ojibwe artist who is also a Native Studies professor. I think he has recently retired from one of the universities in Minnesota, and he's done a lot of work on Eastman's work and Eastman's relationships with people – because he did a whole series of portraits as well.

Now the thing about looking at them through Eastman's filter, because Eastman was obviously filtering these things and representing them, because the documents themselves, the actual bark scrolls, don't exist anymore (or if they do nobody knows where they are). One of the questions that's raised is the use of colour. The fact that Eastman represented them in colour. Does this mean there was colour on the bark scrolls, or was this is an act of imagination on the part of Eastman? The answer to that is I don't know, but I do know that these are in the Wisconsin Historical Society and that they are working closely with those Anishnaabe communities to interpret the documents. I'm looking forward to finding out more about them. I don't know if he had a Dakota wife but I think maybe he did, it seems to me they all did. There are people whose last name turns up as Eastman. He is mid-19th century. He did these beautiful detailed drawings in which the people are so relaxed, and that's what Carl Gawboy was looking at. He's just done some kind of a project where he's exploring Eastman's work, so I'm pretty sure he's published it in Minnesota.

Question (inaudible)

Farrell Racette: Mostly it seems that they were incised lines on bark, so it would have been done with knives and sharp tools. Now the paint is another thing altogether and I think that's an area that people are really interested in. I've just got a SSHRC grant to do something not related to this but to a different visual tradition, Northern Algonkian painted coats, because I think there is something about the pigments that were used in painting that we really need to look at. I know some elders in northern Manitoba

were interviewed in the 40s and they were doing things out of fish glue and natural pigments out of the ochres. It's really remarkable to see some of the painted material in museum collections from Algonkian territory. I've looked at coats, one example of a coat that was made in 1786 collected from York Factory, and the painting is still... I mean it may have discoloured but it's still there, it's still really adhered to the surface of the hide. So one of the things I'm hoping to do is to convince a museum to do a little chemical testing. I know there are a couple of contemporary artists who are using pigments. There was Helen Hardin's mother, whose name I forget, who was a Pueblo artist, and she used natural pigments. There's an artist who was working in Denver whose work I've come across, and he'd done some personal exploration on traditional pigments and mediums. But, the people who do that tend to keep those secrets pretty close to themselves. I'm hoping to find out more about those pigments. I think there's a real resurgence right now and interest in the Indigenous knowledge that's embedded in these things for a whole range of reasons, not just artistic reasons, but for scientists. I mean people are really interested in engaging with objects in museum collections for all kinds of reasons, because they really provide us with a window to the knowledge of our ancestors.

Notes

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft

The American Indians, Their History, Condition and Prospects

Buffalo, George H. Derby and Company. 1851

George Copway (Kahgegahbowh)

Denys Delage

Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in North Eastern North America, 1600-64

Vancouver, UBC Press. 1995

Valerie Robertson

Reclaiming History: Ledger Drawings by the Assiniboine Artist Hongoeyesa

Calgary, Glenbow Museum

Critical Issues in Art Education

Tom Peltier, "Jomin"

I'll take you back a little while to the early sixties when I went to Toronto and attended Norval Morrisseau's first exhibition. From there I

went back to the reserve, Wikwemikong, on Manitoulin, and my sister, Rosemary [Peltier-Fisher], who we've talked about here, told me that there was a young artist in the community. She said, "You should take a look at his work." So I went down to his house. He was a very shy boy, living in the attic, a very dark place. And his name was Francis Kagige. When I looked at his art I thought, "My God, he paints the same as Morrisseau. How could that be? This boy had never been out of town. And Morrisseau came from western Ontario." And then Daphne Odjig came down to Wikwemikong and I saw some of her work and I said, "My God, They all paint the same." I said, "We have a school of art here."

While this was all taking place I joined Indian Affairs in a new cultural program. And in the process we were going to do the Indian Pavilion at Expo '67. The money was there to support artists and the first thing they wanted to do was send all of these artists, Morrisseau and Kagige and Daphne, they wanted to send them all to school. I said, "You can't send these people to school. Are you crazy?" I said, "They're artists. They're natural artists, they're self-taught artists. Let's just help them in any way we can."

The Indian Pavilion, Expo '67

So I joined that Cultural Affairs Department and about twenty minutes after I was there I read in a newspaper where the Minister of Indian Affairs, I think his name was Lane, had said, "The Indians ought to pull themselves up by their boot straps." So I shot off a memo and I agreed. I said, "Yes. I think you're absolutely right." I said, "But we've got a problem. We are so stereotyped by Hollywood, you know, the cowboy and Indian thing, that we can't get jobs. We're bad people I guess. Dirty, and everything else, all the things they've said about us." And so I said, "You know, this is what's happening Sir," I said, "There's an Expo coming up, and

Canada is going to be in front of the whole world. And it would be a darn good thing if we could maybe do an Indian Pavilion there.”

About an hour later the Director of Indian Affairs came running down and he says, “How did you do this? You just got the money. The Minister said yes.” And he didn’t even write me a note, he just said, “How much?” And I said, “I don’t know. Give us a million dollars to start.”

And so we went ahead. We didn’t have any property at Expo and we were the last ones to get started. They were already building the pavilions. But we got in there and we got a piece of property and we got started. Joe Francis, who was an architect from the department, because we didn’t have all that much money... he designed it. We brought in a whole group of people to help us out. To help us try to design the pavilion. Alex Janvier, we brought him in. Duke Redbird, and a whole host of artists to consult with. What were we going to do and how were we going to do this? And so they helped us out, and we started into the project.

We were the last to get started but the first ones to finish. And it was built basically by Native people. There were no Indian Affairs - we took the whole project out of Indian Affairs into a separate corporation. So we didn’t have the big bosses at Indian Affairs looking over our shoulders asking us what the hell were we doing. So we were able to get through the whole thing, I don’t think you could do that today, but we were able to do it at that point.

So we got the pavilion up. And there were a number of artists like Alex Janvier and quite a number of other people who did a lot of murals. I think we did five or eight on the outside. And we finally got the place open. We had the Queen there and of course the Prime Minister and everybody else and they walked in and the first thing they saw was this statue kind of thing from the West Coast, complete with penis. And you’ll know if you’re doing any history that the priests used to cut these things off when they saw them years ago. So, the fellow called me from out west and he said, “Do you want it on or off?” And I said, “On or off? What do you mean?”

And so he told me the story. He said, "They chopped them off." And I said, "Oh no, this is art. Let's leave it on." So they left it on and anyway, everybody walked in and took a look and said, "Oooh yeah!" Okay. That's fine and that's what happened in the pavilion.

Now the interesting thing is, after this was completed, about a year, maybe a year and a half later, Hollywood changed. They came out with a film called "A Man Called Horse". That was the first time we ever looked like heroes instead of the villains. The year after that, "Little Big Man", if anyone has seen that movie. So it did change that attitude. And we took a kind of a survey across Canada later on and we went from about thirty percent to about seventy percent in recognition. So that took place there.

That was my first encounter with the arts. I wasn't an artist myself.

Manitou Arts Foundation

After I left the department, after Expo, I decided, because I enjoyed it, and I enjoyed all the artists, and that's the only people I knew, I thought maybe I should try to put together a little program or a school of some kind. And I knew there were a lot of people around and I thought maybe we could help some of these younger artists along in their lives. And so, Duke Redbird was around at the time and we were discussing the kinds of things that were holding us back. Indian Affairs told me at the time there were only twenty-six hundred Native students in post-secondary education and they said, "Do you think you could do something about this? Can we change that?" And I said, "Well..."

So Duke and I sat down along with a number of other people, like Daphne and Rosemary Fisher, and we discussed this thing for a while and it was ... the problem was, we looked at our community of Wikwemikong and we said, "Who is going to make it here?" So we picked out maybe a dozen people who we thought would be just fine. They'd get along just because of their families or parents or circumstances. A lot of these people were in residential school, and we knew the problem was there.

So I recall Duke coming up and saying, "You know what the problem is. You know it's a lack of self esteem."
And I said. "Yeah, that's just about it."

So, we went and asked Indian Affairs for some money to do - Oh, here's what happened...

OISE, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, was doing a project in Wikwemikong on the same basis. They were looking for reasons why these students weren't going on to post-secondary school. So I went to see them and they were doing this little project, a three-year demonstration project. And I went to Indian Affairs and I said, "Hey! How are you going to measure that? They're doing a project? Why don't you give me the money and I'll do the project. And we'll see who comes out." I said, "They know everything and they've got a point of view, and I don't. And I'm a high school drop out." But, "I said, "Give us the opportunity and we'll see what we can do."

We went to this little island, which everybody condemned us for. They said, "Oh you can't go to an island. You can't do this and you can't do that." You know, all kinds of things.

"Where are your classrooms? Where are your..." You know.

But I said "No, no, no, no, no, that's not how we're going to do this."

So we went off to this little island, called Schreiber, with about thirty artists each summer, twenty-five to thirty, not that many, it was just a small group. Carl Ray was there, Daphne Odjig was there, we had Duke Redbird, and a whole host of fairly good people who could work. We had some from the States, from the Institute of American Indian Arts. We had two people from there. And we went and did this little project. And it seemed to turn out very well. After the first year I was quite surprised because we didn't know what kind of a thing we were going to get into here. We didn't even have a point of view. We just felt that we needed to do something.

Now the thing at Schreiber ... if you were an academic you would never do this type of a project, I don't think, because this was hands-

on. There were no rules. Except for swimming. You had to have a partner to go swimming. Yeah, so they don't drown. But other than that, it was fine. The instructors there worked on a client relationship with their students. And we taught painting of course and sculpture, film-making, drama, for about six weeks, five and a half weeks or something like that. And each year some of the students came back. Like Blake [Debassige] and Shirley [Cheechoo] and a few others who returned each summer.

The first thing we noticed was that, when you go to a camp you know they stick you in a barracks with eight other kids. Which is terrible. These students had lived in homes on the reservations where there were so many children and so many people in the houses that nobody had any privacy. And these were young people, thirteen to eighteen or nineteen.

And I said, "Well gee, let's give them their own space."

So I shot off to Toronto and bought a bunch of tents. So they all had their own little tent. Which makes all the difference in the world because if you are trying to work with students and in the way they are teaching, or the way I understand it, although I'm not an instructor myself, I thought that won't work out, to put them in rows - you know "you sit here, you sit here, you sit here". And it's like an assembly line. And then they have a clock up on the wall. And they say, "That's when you start and that's when you finish". And well, nobody ever got up until noon there anyway. You know. Kids are not going to get up. So. When they got up, well, that's when breakfast or lunch was on. And the same with the afternoon.

They did a lot of photography. We had a darkroom where they could do their photographs. And of course they were on film from day one, because one of the problems with self-esteem is that you have to (we were using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) and so your biological needs have to be met and then your security needs and we could meet those, then we have self-esteem. Then self-actualization and then the need to know and to understand.

So if we were going to get them into university, or higher education, if that's where they wanted to go, then they had to have that self-esteem. That was the third issue. Well, we toyed over that for a long time. And of course my friend Duke, smart as he is, he said, "Well, let's put them all on camera." Ah, we're going to make them movie stars. And he said, "Yes. Their parents wouldn't do that. We will though." And so we did. We got some video-tape and from the time they got off the bus to get on the boats to go out to the island, and their heads were down and their tails were between their legs, and they were shy because they were from up north. Shirley [Cheechoo] was so shy. We took them out to the island and they were on camera all day. And at night they'd see themselves when they went up to the room just before dinner in the evening, they could watch themselves and what they were doing every day.

So then we said, "Well now, why don't you guys make a film?" And so they did. They made a film. They followed a process. They did something totally different. There was no script. They carried a beer case around (and I think I still have that film). Up and down the place with this beer case. You never saw their faces, all you saw was this beer case. They were following a process to see how the mind was thinking.

One day, I belonged to a club in Toronto, called the Club of Ganoo, and Marshall McLuhan was a member of this club. We used to meet every week, and talk about the future. So I told him one day, I said "This is very strange, these kids, when they do something they don't... the story is totally... they leave it to you to tell the story, they let you use our own imagination." And I said, "They followed this beer case around, or a bouncing ball, and that was the only thing that they were watching, you didn't see their faces. So what was the story?"

Well he laughed. He says, "That's what we have to understand," he says, "The Inuit," he had found the same thing among the Inuit, he said, "They all follow processes. It is a different way of education, it's a different way of knowledge," and I heard that come up today, that they trust their own knowledge. It seemed to function that way.

Of course we had some people from the National Film Board who worked with a group of Native people. They were there. So the whole place was just humming. And soon we had two rock bands. I brought in all kinds of equipment and in the end we've got twenty-five students and two rock bands and we've got a theatre and everybody participated in everything. And we cut a record, one of those big '78s.

I remember Carl Ray painting on the rocks. I think those things are still there, somebody was telling me. We had a fellow by the name of [Frank] Meawasige, he was a couturier who helped the students design an outfit that went on the front cover of the record. We had a fellow from Santa Fe teaching the students and Shirley was singing away there, I can still hear her.

What I'm saying here is that when you are looking at education or art education or "Native" education, I'll give you an example. We didn't teach them how to stretch a canvas, we didn't teach them about cold colours or warm colours or what kind of a brush to use. They got that from the guy next to them. We didn't waste our time. Nor did we get into saying, "This is the business of art". You hire an agent, that's his problem. You just work on the bench. Anyway, we did things that were quite, I suppose, different. And got a lot of criticism for it. Somebody called me from Ottawa I remember, and said "What are you doing taking all that gang out on a boat?" I had an old tug, carried fifty people, and we used to go out in the waves when it was really windy. They'd all get in and hang on and we'd go up and down in those waves. Well when they got back they could walk in there and they'd paint and work all night. Because you see, they were into the environment.

Daphne [Odjig] did the same thing. She took the students out into the environment and let the branches scrape their faces, pick up the rocks, do all kinds of things that would focus on nature. It was a different approach to education. When the program was over I think it was the first year, no three years, OISE came with a two thousand page book and said here's our project. And I walked in,

because we were at the same place and I said, "Well, here's my project. I've got thirty-two students. They all have agents and they're all producing."

So, when people come along and say, "No. This is how it must be done. And I know there are issues and problems happening within our own community, our own critics, and we've got to have those, well we have to look at it very carefully, because there are lots of ways of doing the same thing and some things work very well and others don't. That was that experience and I want to thank Daphne over there. She was a great help to all of us. That's why we are here today and I've spent many, many hours with her over the years. She used to call me a lot from B.C. but it was in my head. And then the phone would ring and I'd pick it up thinking, "I bet you that's Daphne." And sure enough. She'd say, "Did you get my message?" We communicated that much.

As you know, they mentioned this yesterday, we have an island here in Georgian Bay named after her and Rosemary, the two of them, and very appropriately, for they've made a great contribution to the community. Daphne has travelled the world over. She is, from what I read in the papers, that kind of person. She is putting Canadian art, Native traditional art on the map. My sister Rosemary on the other hand, was working with Daphne but she was also (this was all happening in the early sixties,) she was concerned about the women in Wikwemikong who were making all kinds of crafts and the price they were getting for their work. She wanted to get that changed because they couldn't make a living out of the stuff. They were making a dozen small two-inch canoes for twenty-five cents. They were making those quill baskets, the small ones, two-inch quill baskets for fifty cents. And the people just couldn't do it, so they were going to drop out. She went down to the local community and walked into a store dressed to the nines. They didn't know she was an Indian, she could have been from Mexico, who knows? And she asked, "How much, and is this bead work made by local Native people?" And she was told, "Oh yes." But when she looked at it she said, "I don't think so. I think this was made in Taiwan. Because the thread is all frayed. Indians would never use this. They only buy top

notch thread, good cotton thread. But Taiwan buys it off the floor and they re-spin it and it's all frayed." and she said, "Look at it, it's all frayed." And they said, "Would you please leave the store."

So she walked out and she called the press, the Canadian press, I think the Globe and Mail that afternoon and the Sudbury Star came down and she went home and put on her Native dress and took her daughter and took some beadwork down and got her picture taken, which was on the front page of the Globe and the Sudbury Star. The mayor of North Bay saw the picture the next morning and said, "I know this woman, I was in the army with her father." And he said, "I'm going to do something about this." So he called the Veterans Associations all across Canada and they put the pressure on the federal government and within twenty-one days we had a law passed. Now, it didn't have much teeth, but at least it was there. The recognition was there. And then they asked if she would come down to Ottawa because Indian Affairs at that time was the clearing house for all Native craft, or most of it, because some were selling odds and ends here and there. But she went down and she re-priced everything. The total income to Native people at that time was about two hundred and forty thousand dollars. I am talking about 1962 or '63. By 1980 it was a billion dollars. I thought, "My God, that's pretty good." So that's thirty years ago. Can you imagine if it's stayed the same, the Native people have produced a lot in gross national product.

You can see that what has to happen in our whole educational system is that there is too much reliance. I don't know what's going on in the schools, kids are dropping out. I don't feel that, whether it's bureaucracy or what's happening in the community, but things do have to change. Because you can get people out and you can get things done. And that's what you have to do. That's what we tried at Schreiber Island and obviously it worked. Blake [Debassige] and I just went over some figures the other day because I have to have them for government. We had thirty-two artists who went out and made it. And their total gross provincial product was in the millions. Our cost to them was in the thousands. They have produced that much work! The province of Ontario picked up millions of dollars in taxes

from that. So you see how the arts can work. And that's where it has to go. The government of Ontario three weeks ago just handed the University of Toronto \$50 million to set up a design institute at the university and they hired a fellow from the States by the name of Richard Florida. He has a very strong idea that design is the next big thing. And I've got a project that I am working on now which is the same thing. Design has to be there. You have to move along. You have the arts, in some cases, like Manitoulin Island, things seem to stop. All of a sudden this great number of students that came out of there in the seventies and eighties, now there are no more students. So the people who are running the galleries in Toronto are saying well where is the next group? Where are these people? And why isn't the growth there? And I am wondering the same thing myself. Why isn't this happening? We have to get back to thinking about the approach that we are taking to education and to the arts of course.

Everybody is creative. And Native people have an untapped resource and we are hoping that the government will start to see this. I was told today a couple of times that the government of Ontario is taking a greater interest in the arts. And they get my hand for that, that's very good. The bureaucracy and the government have to come up with a policy. They are beginning to see the potential for the arts and design and that they have to start to put the money in. I mean there are schools in Toronto now where there wasn't even any music. Now, we all have to have music. That really salves the soul, soothes the soul I guess.

Anyway that's my little story and I hope that there is some good support here for the arts and culture in the future.

Thank you



In the Spirit of our Ancestors: Who We Are and Where We Come From

Sandy Wabegijig

For many years I have searched for the history of my father's ancestors, the Odawa of Wikwemikong, Manitoulin Island. My grandfather,

Joseph Wabegijig, was Chief of Wikwemikong and served on Council for many years. I know there are many historians and oral history experts on the Odawa, but this is my own personal journey of discovery.

After reading many Catholic Church documents, memoirs of various Church officials, traders, and travelers during the early 1800's in Upper Canada, I found an incredible history. I eventually drove down to Cross Village, Michigan and was on my way to Harbor Springs when I happened to take a detour on an old dirt road and found a small church and cemetery in a place called Good Hart. It so happened that this was the historic Middle Village or Old L'Arbre Croche of the Waganagising Odawa. This was an amazing moment for me, as I walked through the cemetery and saw many familiar names.

Some of the Odawa migrated to the straits of Mackinac in northern Michigan in the 1650's to avoid the Iroquois wars and the ravages of smallpox, which had hit their allies the Huron and decimated them. Mackinac Island was of spiritual significance as were all the Manitoulin chain of islands. This was the home of the Great Turtle, a central figure in the history and religious rites. This was a strategic fur trade and military post and central to all major water routes in America. The map shows the permanent villages of the Michigan Odawas between 1812 1836, five northern villages and ten southern villages. However, I have concentrated on the northern villages from Cross Village to Harbor Springs which was a thriving social, economic and influential political community of the 1700's.

Andrew Blackbird who came from one of the distinguished family of Waganagising wrote his memoirs of Waganagising in 1887 at the age of sixty. The following is a narrative by him on coming back from the winter hunting grounds to Croche in the spring:

“Early in the spring we used to come down this beautiful stream of water (Muskegon River) in our long bark canoes, loaded with sugar, furs, deerskins, prepared venison (for summer use), bear’s oil, and bear meat prepared in oil, deer tallow, and sometimes a lot of honey, etc. On reaching the mouth of this river we halted for five or six days, when all the other Indians gathered, as was customary, expressly to feast for the dead. All the Indians and children used to go around among the camps and salute one another with the words,

“Ne baw baw tche baw Ne ba ba chebakwe”

that is to say, “I am or we are going around as spirits, feasting and throwing food into the fire” as they believe the spirits of the dead take the victuals and feast as they are consumed in the fire. After the feast of the dead, we would all start for Arbor Croche, our summer resort, to plant our corn and other vegetables. At the crossing of Little Traverse Bay (Harbor Springs) the point called “Kitcheossening” that is to say, “on the big rock”, all the Indians waited until all the canoes arrived, after which they would all start together in crossing the bay. When about half way across they would begin to salute Arbor Croche by shooting with guns, holding them close to the water in order that the sound might reach to each side of the bay, to be heard by those few who always made their winter quarters around Little Traverse Bay. Arriving at Arbor Croche, where our big wigwam would be waiting for us ... the very first thing my parents would do would be to go and examine their stores of corn and beans.

After all the Indians arrived and had settled down, they would again have a prolonged merriment and another feasting of the dead and peace offerings. Grand medicine dances, fire dances, and many other jubilant performances my people would have before they would go to work again to plant their corn. I distinctly remember the time, and I have seen my brothers and myself dancing around the fires in our great wigwam, which had two fireplaces inside of it.”¹

1.
Andrew Blackbird, History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan and Grammar of the Their Language. (Ypsilanti, Michigan: Ypsilanti Job Printing House, 1887), pp. 45 - 46.

(Andrew is talking about one of their long houses.) This quote from Andrew illustrates various other ways the Odawas would celebrate holidays:

“They used to observe many holidays, particularly Christmas, New Years and Corpus Christi. At the New Year’s eve, everyone of the Indians used to go around visiting the principal men of the tribe, shooting their guns close to their doors after screaming three times, “Happy New Year,” then bang, bang, altogether, blowing their tin horns and beating their drums, etc. Early on the New Year’s morning, they would go around among their neighbors expressly to shake hands one with another, with the words of salutation “Bozhoo”, children and all. This practice was kept up for a long time, or until the white people came and intermingled with the tribes. I thought my people were very happy in those days, when they were all by themselves and possessed a wide spread of land, and no one to quarrel with them as to where they should make their gardens, or take timber, or make sugar. And fishes of all kinds were so plentiful in the Harbor. A hook anywheres in the bay, and at any time of the year, would catch Mackinaw trout, many as one would want. And if a net were set anywheres in the harbor on shallow water, in the morning it would be loaded with fishes of all kinds.”²

2.

Blackbird, p. 50.

Waganagising was a thriving community with a population of about 4,000 before it suffered a devastating decline in the population in the late 1700’s: first, it was hit deliberately by the British with smallpox during the infamous Amherst policies of extermination through germ warfare.

“...the Ottawas were greatly reduced in numbers from what they were in former times, on account of the small pox which they brought from Montreal during the French war with Great Britain. This small pox was sold to them shut up in a tin box, with the strict injunction not to open the box on their way homeward, but only when they should reach their country; and that this box contained something that would do them great good, and their people! The foolish people believed really there was something in the box

3.

Blackbird, pp/ 9-10.

supernatural, that would do them great good. Accordingly, after they reached home they opened the box; but behold there was another tin box inside, smaller. They took it out and opened the second box, and behold, still there was another box inside of the second box, smaller yet. So they kept on this way till they came to a very small box, which was not more than an inch long; and when they opened the last one they found nothing but mouldy particles in this last little box! They wondered very much what it was, and a great many closely inspected to try to find out what it meant. But alas, alas! Pretty soon burst out a terrible sickness among them. The great Indian doctors themselves were taken sick and died. The tradition says it was indeed awful and terrible. Every one taken with it was sure to die. Lodge after lodge was totally vacated. Nothing but the dead bodies lying here and there in their lodges, entire families being swept off with the ravages of this terrible disease. The whole coast of Arbor Croche, or Waw gaw naw ke zee, which is said to have been a continuous village some fifteen or sixteen miles long and extending from what is now called Cross Village to Seven Mile Point (that is, seven miles from Little Traverse, now Harbor Springs), was entirely depopulated and laid waste. It is generally believed among the Indians of Arbor Croche that this wholesale murder of the Ottawas by this terrible disease sent by the British people, was actuated through hatred and expressly to kill off the Ottawas and Chippewas because they were friends of the French Government or French King, whom they called "Their Great Father." The reason that today we see no full grown trees standing along the coast of Arbor Croche, a mile or more in width along the shore, is because the trees were entirely cleared away for this famous long village, which existed before the smallpox raged among the Ottawas."³

The second great calamity was during the time of Tecumseh and his brother the Prophet, probably around 1808 during the time the Prophet started a community in Prophetstown, Illinois:

"The Shawanee prophet .. sent his emissaries to preach to the Ottawas and Chippewas in the Lower and Upper Peninsulas of

4.
Blackbird, pp. 29 - 30.

Michigan, advised the Ottawas and Chippewas to confess their sins and avow their wrongs and go west, and there to worship the Great Spirit according to the old style as their forefathers did, and to abandon everything else which the white man had introduced into the tribes of Indians, to abandon even the mode of making fire, which was by flint and steel, and to start their fires by friction between the two pieces of dry wood as their forefathers made their fires before the white people came to this country, and to eat no flesh of domestic animals, but to eat nothing but wild game, and use skins for their wearing apparel and robes as the Great Spirit designed them to be when He created them. He taught them that the Great Spirit was angry with them because they conformed to the habits of the white man, and that if they did not believe and practice the old habits, the Great Spirit would shake the earth as an evidence that he tells them the truth. A great many Ottawas believed and went far west accordingly. And it happened about this time the earth did quake in Michigan. I think, if I am not mistaken, the earth shook twice within a year, which is recorded in the annals of this country. At the earthquake many Indians were frightened, and consequently many more believed and went west; but nearly all of them died out there because the climate did not agree with them. Saw gaw kee, Growing Plant, was the head chief of the Ottawa nation of Indians at that time and was one of the believers who went with the parties out west, and he also died there.”⁴

Our people were embroiled in colonial warfare from the Indian/French wars against the British under the leadership of Pontiac to 1763 and then to the Great War of 1812 against the Americans. Many of our warriors fought for the British while some did fight for the Americans. I will not go into these wars as most of you are very familiar with it and understand the significance of it. I would, however, like to [tell you about] a carved canoe in memory of that war and the warriors that participated.

This metre long model was made in about 1820 by Jean Baptiste Assiginack, one of the ogemahs of the Nation at the time. While living on Drummond Island, sometime between 1814 and 1827,

Assiginack carved this three-foot long replica of his 1812 war canoe, complete with figures of the leaders who accompanied him. The six carved and painted wooden figures (originally seven) have distinct facial features and represent real people known to Assiginack, among them a distinguished orator, a chief and a warrior. In the style of warriors, each leader plucked the hair from the sides of his head. He dressed each figure in red and blue woolen leggings and breechcloths with leg garters, belts, and neckerchiefs, and decorated each with war paints. One figure has tiny style moccasins. The canoe itself is decorated with two powerful symbols of the universe Shibshi, the underwater lion, and Animike, the thunderbird, the balance of natural forces in the universe.⁵

5. James M. McClurken, Gah-Baeh-Jhagwah-Buk: The Way it Happened. (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1991) front copyright page.

6. McClurken, p. 7.

7. Catherine Sims, "Algonkian-British Relations in the Upper Great Lakes Region: Gathering to Give and to Receive Presents, 1815-1843" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Western Ontario 1992), p. 247.

During the War of 1812, Assiginack's war party included such important leaders as: Macketebenessy (Black Hawk – Andrew Blackbird's father; died in 1870s) Keshigobenese 'Daybird' Mokomanish (Little Knife that one does not care about" signed the 'Bondhead' treaty) Eshquagonabe (Looking Back).

These ogemuk led warriors who fought Americans along the Wabash River in Indiana and in skirmishes on the Niagara Peninsula in New York. They allied with Tecumseh at the Battle of the Thames.⁶ He gave this canoe to the British as a gift and it is now in the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau Quebec.

According to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, Assekinack, an Ottawa of some note, of the Settlement of L'Arbre Croche, led a part of the tribe to the Manitoulin chain of Islands in Canada, in 1822.⁷ Assiginack was known as a great orator who on many occasions would speak non-stop from sunrise to sunset giving the history of his people and relations with the colonial nations. Born in an Ottawa village in Michigan in 1768, Assiginack died on Manitoulin Island in Georgian Bay in 1866 at the age of ninety eight.

Not everyone relocated to Manitoulin Island during the time of the removal in the United States. To those who stayed education was

critical to the survival of the people. Their lives were rapidly changing and there was a lot resting on the treaties that were being signed, including Removal and the future of their homelands. This is a story of a young gifted child from Waganagising who went on to be educated in Rome. This was Andrew Blackbird's brother Pe-Taw-Wan-E-Ouat. This happened in the winter somewhere above Big Rapids on Muskegon River where his father hunted and trapped all winter and made sugar.

"A very mysterious event happened to my brother William while my folks were making sugar there. One beautiful morning after the snow had entirely disappeared in the woods, my brother William, then at the age of about eight or nine years, was shooting around with his little bow and arrows among the sugar trees, but that day he never came home. At sundown, our parents were beginning to feel very uneasy about their little boy, and yet they thought he must have gone to some neighbouring sugar bush as there were quite a number of families also making sugar in the vicinity. Early in the morning, my father went to all the neighbouring sugar camps, but William was nowhere to be found. So at once a search was instituted. Men and boys were out in search for the boy, calling and shooting their guns far and near, but not a trace of him anywhere could be found. Our parents were almost distracted with anxiety and fear about their boy, and they continued the search three days in vain. On the fourth day, one of our cousins, ... came to a very deep gully between two hills. He went up to the top of the highest hill in order to be heard a long distance. When he reached the top, he began to halloo as loud as he could, calling the child by name. At the end of his shouting he thought he heard some one responding to his call, ... He listened a few minutes, and again he called as before, and again heard distinctly the same response, "Wau?" It came from above, right over his head, and as he looked upwards he saw the body, almost at the top of a tree, standing on a small limb in a very dangerous situation. He said, "Hello, what are you doing up there? Can you come down?" "Yes, I can," was the answer; "I came up here to find out where I am, and which way is our sugar camp. "Come down, then; I will show you which way is your home." After he came down from the tree, our cousin offered him food, but the

8.
Blackbird, pp. 33-35.

child would not touch a morsel, saying that he was not hungry as he had eaten only a little while ago. "Ah, you have been fed then. Who fed you? We have been looking for you now over three days." The boy replied, "I had everything that I wanted to eat in the great festival of the Wa-me-te-go-zhe-wog, which is "the white people." Where are they now?" asked our cousin. "That is just what I would like to know, too," said the boy; "I had just come out of their nice house between the two hills, and as I looked back after I came out of their door I saw no more of their house, and heard no more of them nor their music." Our cousin again questioned the boy, "How did you come to find these Wa-me-te-go-zhe-wog?" And little William replied, "Those Wa-me-te-go-zhe-wog came to our sugar camp and invited me to go with them, but I thought it was very close by. I thought we walked only just a few steps to come to their door." Our cousin believed it was some supernatural event and hastened to take the boy to his anxious parents. Again and again little William told the same story when interrogated by any person, and it is firmly believed by all our family and friends that he was cherished and fed three days in succession by angelic beings."⁸

Andrew continues Williams story as he grows up and is educated: "(William and his sister) were taken down to Cincinnati, Ohio, where they were put into higher schools, and there my brother attained the highest degree of education, or graduation as it is called. From thence he was taken across the ocean to the city of Rome, Italy, to study for the priesthood, leaving his little sister in Cincinnati. It is related that he was a very eloquent and powerful orator and was considered a very promising man by the people of the city of Rome, and received great attention from the noble families, on account of his wisdom and talent and his being a native American; and yet he had a much lighter complexion than his cousin Augustin Hamlin, who was also taken over there and represented as half French. While he was at Rome, the proposition arose, in this country to buy out the Michigan Indians by the Government of the United States, and he wrote to his people at Arbor Croche and to Little Traverse on this very subject, advising them not to sell out nor make any contract with the United States Government, but to hold on until he could

return to America, when he would endeavour to aid them in making out the contract or treaty with the United States. Never to give up, not even if they should be threatened with annihilation or to be driven away at the point of the bayonet from their native soil.⁹

“He was considered by the priests that knew him to have an unusually brilliant mind (Ashley).

He also told the tribe that they could not be compelled to go west of the Mississippi River for he had found a way to prevent it. He further said that as soon as he was ordained he would go to Washington in order to see the President of the United States about his people and their lands. The ordination was to be an especially great event at St. Peter's in Rome, for this was the first American Indian, son of a chief, ever to be ordained. The morning of the ordination, William did not appear; on investigation he was found dead, lying on the floor of his room in a pool of blood.... The Ottawas felt that he was murdered to deprive them of a wise councilor at the treaty negotiations. Vatican officials state that William died of illness. He died June 25, 1833. A statue of William, declared to be a perfect likeness, is said to be in the Vatican garden.”¹⁰

On March 28, 1836 at Washington D.C., Chippewas and Ottawas ceded Drummond Island and sixteen million acres, the northern third of the lower peninsula and the eastern half of the upper peninsula of Michigan, in all, the greater part of the Michigan territory. The price promised was two million dollars or about twelve and a half cents per acre.

One of the greatest events for the Anishinaabe people was to attend the annual distribution of presents. Presents were distributed by the British government on Drummond Island (1815-1828), on St. Joseph Island (1829), at Penetanguishene (1830-1835), and on Manitoulin Island (from 1836). Families from the Ojibwa, Ottawa, Menominee, and Potawatomi Nations of Georgian Bay, Lake Huron,

9.
Blackbird, pp. 35-36.

10.
Blackbird, pp. 41-43

Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior travelled to these locations. These annual gatherings provided an opportunity to renew relationships among themselves and with the British. Anishnaabe leaders presented the concerns of their communities at these meetings and attempted to ensure that British actions would fulfill British promises; British officers announced governmental policies and renewed relationships with the Anishnaabe peoples.¹¹

Here is an interesting story of canoe trip from Michilimackinac to Drummond Island by an English doctor who was travelling in Canada at the time. His name was Dr. John Jeremiah Bigsby and his journal is called "The Shoe And Canoe or Pictures of Travel in Canada", published in 1859.

11.

Sims, Abstract, p. iii.

"The fact was that these kinsmen had arrived overnight at Mackinac; on their way with their tribe to Drummond Island to receive their annual presents from the British government. Although actually residing at L'Arbre Croche in Lake Michigan, and in the United States, they considered themselves British subjects and some years afterward migrated to the Grand Manitouline of Lake Huron. Having been sufficiently long at Mackinac, Mrs. Macvicar, my good genius, engaged a seat for me in the canoe of an Ottawa chief going to Drummond Island with his people for presents, not with her splendid brother, but with the Blackbird, so named from the device painted on the right side of his face. The eye of the bird was represented by one of his, while the head and beak spread over his forehead and temple. The price of my conveyance, I am sorry to say was a couple of bottles of rum.

When introduced to this great warrior, as I had heard him described to be, I was surprised to find before me, a small man, with a knowing little face which would have fitted a country shoemaker. There was no melodramatic nonsense about him.

I was provided with a lump of ham, a large loaf, and a bottle of whiskey, stoppered, for want of a cork with half of one of Miss Edgeworth's novels, doubtless originally from the Garrison, and

then was told that the Indians had embarked. Running down to the beach with my knapsack and provision bag, I found the little fleet of twenty-five canoes on the point of starting. I was bidden by signs to jump into the canoe nearest me, but seeing no room, I hesitated. The craft was not large. On the prow there was a little shelf, (and) there sat an unquiet young bear, tied with a cord and two smoking Indians and three children sitting on the canoe bottom next to him. Then came four women rowers, among whom I was to squat or nowhere. The stern half of the canoe was occupied by the Blackbird and a friend, with three more young imps and a steersman. Two or three dogs kept constantly circulating among our legs in search of dropped eatables, who so approved my ham that I was vain to keep it on my knees.

But we settled down to a sort of stiff comfort.

The water as smooth as glass, the strong unclouded sun was in mid heaven. We moved away with many an uncouth antic and shriek, both on land and lake, and I was once more abandoned to the happy go lucky do nothings of the Indian race.

They certainly never intended to go further that day than a well known point fifteen miles distant, on the south west main; for seeing that there was the gentlest of all possible airs in our favor, when they gained the open lake, the ladies dipped paddle into water, but seldom and most delicately, falling into that murmuring musical gossip we hear in an aviary. And thus it was all the fleet through. We proceeded, therefore, lazily and irregularly, greeting by turns every canoe we passed or were passed.

The heat was intense, but I saw no Indian drink; sufficient for him was the pipe that brought the complacent reverie. I employed myself in a variety of ways – in watching my neighbours, and especially the bear, who knows the others but not me. I counted the two hundred and forty circular buckles of silver on the back of one of the women, fastened close together like the links of chain armour, each worth about ten pence. Her neck was hid under the blue and white beads, and she wore broad anklets and armllets of silver plate. She had also

slung over her back, by a white cord from her neck, a massive silver cross, eight or nine inches long. The other women, likewise, had on similar visiting finery.

The men were grandly dressed with chamois leather leggings, ornamented with fancy traceries in porcupine quills, and fringed on the outer seam with red moose hair. They wore broad breast plates of silver, with their names or device engraved on it, and armlets and fore armlets of the same metal three or four inches broad.

Some had European hats, with broad bands of solid silver, silver cords running here and there and an ostrich feather. Others wore a stiff, high round cap, covered with moose hair that streamed over their shoulders."¹²

12.

Kathryne Belden Ashley. [Islands of the Manitou](#). (Drummond Island: Drummond Island Historical Museum, 2002) pp. 67-69.

Anna Brownell Jameson (nee Murphy) was born in Dublin, Ireland, and came to Canada in 1836 to join her husband, the attorney general of Upper Canada (Ontario.) She wrote her journal "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada" during her travels by boat in the summer of 1836 around the Michigan area and Manitoulin Island. She was in attendance at the signing of the Bond Head Treaty of 1836 in Manitowaning. She later returned to London, England, where she died in 1860.

"I was loitering by the garden gate this evening, about sunset, looking at the beautiful effects which the storm of the morning had left in the sky and on the lake. I heard the sound of the Indian drum, mingled with the shouts and yells and shrieks of the intoxicated savages, who were drinking in front of the village whisky store; when at this moment a man came slowly up, whom I recognized as one of the Ottawa chiefs, who had often attracted my attention. His name is Kim e wun, which signifies the Rain, or rather "It rains". He now stood before me, one of the noblest figures I ever beheld, above six feet height, erect as a forest pine. A red and green handkerchief was twined round his head with much elegance, and knotted in front, with the two ends projecting; his black hair fell from beneath it, and his small black piercing eyes glittered from

among its masses, like stars glancing through the thunder clouds. His ample blanket was thrown over his left shoulder, and brought under his right arm, so as to leave it free and exposed; and a sculptor might have envied the disposition of the whole drapery – it was so felicitous, so richly graceful. He stood in a contemplative attitude, evidently undecided whether he should join his drunken companions in their night revel, or return, like a wise man, to his lodge and his mat. He advanced a few steps, then turned, then paused and listened –then turned back again. I retired a little within the gate, to watch, unseen, the issue of the conflict. Alas! It was soon decided – the fatal temptation prevailed over better thoughts. He suddenly drew his blanket round him, and strided onwards in the direction of the village, treading the earth with an air of defiance, and a step which would have become a prince.”¹³

13.

Anna Brownell Jameson, Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada, (London, England: Saunders and Otley, 1838.

Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1990) pp. 386-87.

This was a constant conflict with our people - however, here is an amusing anecdote that she relays from Henry Schoolcraft:

“A distinguished Pottawottomie warrior presented himself to the Indian agent at Chicago, and observing that he was a very good man, very good indeed – and a good friend to the Longknives (the Americans) requested a dram of whisky. The agent replied, that he never gave whisky to good men, - good men never asked for whisky; and never drank it. It was only bad Indians who asked for whisky, or liked to drink it. Replied the Indian quickly in his broken English, “rascal!” ” (p. 387)

One of the special events at the distribution of presents was a canoe race for women. This is a description of one such event at Manitowaning in 1836:

“At sunset this evening, just as the air was beginning to grow cool, Major Anderson proclaims a canoe race, the canoes to be paddled by the women only. The prize consisted of twenty-five pair of silver earring and other trinkets. I can give you no idea of the state of commotion into which the whole camp, men, women, and children, were thrown by this announcement. Thirty canoes started, each

containing twelve women and a man to steer. They were to go round the little island in the centre of the bay, and return to the starting point - the first canoe which touched the shore to be the winner. They darted off together with a sudden velocity, like that of an arrow from the bow. The Indians on the shore ran backwards and forwards on the beach, exciting them to exertion by loud cries, leaping into the air, whooping and clapping their hands; and when at length the first canoe dashed up to the landing place, it was as if all had gone at once distracted and stark mad. The men, throwing themselves into the water, carried the winners out in their arms, who were laughing and panting for breath; and then the women cried Ny-a ny-a and the men shouted Ty-a! 'til the pine woods rang again."¹⁴

14.

Jameson, p. 50

I will leave you with this last story from the Memoirs of Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, written in 1843-1844 about a Christian Indian who went to Europe " to see the grandeur of the nations, the magnificence of cities, palaces, assemblies, the luxury, fashion, wealth, and all the beauty and convenience that civilization has found."

After these sights he is taken to the courts of justice where he is told of the innumerable civil and criminal processes against the citizens; he is given an idea of the codes, the laws, and their severity toward malefactors; he visits the prisons and there, to his intense surprise, sees numbers of criminals, among them many under death sentence. Everywhere he sees iron barred doors, not only in the prisons but even in the houses. Here and there in the streets he sees groups of armed men and others who day and night guard the city with their guns. Such a spectacle mystifies him, leading him to suppose the country at war. This is not enough; the good Catholic Indian is taken to the arsenals where he sees an immense quantity of weapons and gunpowder. The sight of the cannon dismays him, and from their size and number he deduces the slaughter they can cause. A few steps farther he enters a fortress where he sees all the implements for devastating a country by fire and sword. Finally he sees, drawn

up on a broad plain, thousands of soldiers on foot and horseback, armed with guns and swords, and all adept in the art of destroying their fellow men. Then follows the frightening artillery with its vast convoy of horses and oxen. There is still more: if it happens that he is present when the troops, drawn up in their various formations, simultaneously discharge their guns, the cavalry in its sudden and thunderous charge threatens ruin and death, while the artillery makes the earth tremble, the air resound with its thunder, and darkens the sun with dense clouds of smoke so that the sky seems shaken with the reverberating tempest, and everything breathes terror, fire, and death - the poor Indian, at such an unexpected and terrible spectacle, may well cry out, "My God where am I? What kind of civilization is this?"

To comfort the shaken spectator, a friend draws near and points out that he is no longer with barbarians in the forests of America, but in Europe among cultivated people where there are so many beautiful things that one cannot even imagine them. "The tribunals, laws and prisons," he adds, "are for the good order of society; the guards that you saw in our country serve to protect the persons and goods of the citizens; the weapons, soldiers, and military maneuvers that impressed you so deeply are indispensable to a civilized nation. Woe to our society if they were not here! Above all, the perfection to which the art of war has been brought in our day is a proof of our progress in culture."

At this, the good savage, impressed by great new things he has seen, would say with all his native candor to the European: "You have shown me a great number of beautiful things which are unknown to my tribe. In spite of that, the civilization that the priest brought to us poor Indians is far superior to that of Europe, for, from the moment we became Christians, quarrels, hatred, acts of revenge, drunkenness, thefts, immortality, murder, were entirely banished. The people of our village live in peace day and night without guards, courts, and prisons. When we were pagans we loved war and the death of our enemy; but now we live on good terms with the neighbouring tribes. You, however, from what I have seen, are still studying the art of killing your fellow man. Besides, it seems to

me that the civilization of Europe must be very imperfect since it needs so many laws and such formidable armies to make the people honest and obedient. I advise you to become good Christians like us; then you will be just and happy together and will enjoy in this life the consoling hope of a blessed eternity.”

This is how one would speak who judged the intellectual progress of society, not by material aspects, but rather by the peaceful and happy condition of the persons who compose it.”¹⁵

In Daphne Odjig’s words, “We come from strong people. We had to be strong to survive.” Many of the Odawa relocated to Manitoulin Island after the War of 1812, the Removal period of 1830’s, and after the Michigan Treaty of 1836. The residents of Wikwemikong are part of a collective history of trade, alliances and wars, removal from traditional homelands and many other hardships, but we are also a part of a resurgence of our history, spirituality and culture. Our powerful story continues to develop as we travel through this great universe with Gische mnido (Gitche Manitou) and his helpers together - from birch bark canoes to air planes, time rotates, and we remain forever connected as we move forward in the wheel of life.

15.
Father Samuel Mazzuchelli,
Memoirs. (Chicago: The Priority
Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1967),
pp. 131-132



An Ojibwa in Paris

Robert Houle

I have been interested in the paintings of Eugene Delacroix, a Romantic French artist who reacted to the classical traditions of handling paint

since studying art history at McGill University in Montreal in early 1970's. That was around the time Pierre Trudeau declared the War Measures Act. Being from Manitoba, and having been raised on the Sandy Bay First Nation, Kawikwetawankak, it was an extraordinary period politically. For example, one day when going to class, I was astonished to see soldiers at the entrance to the university on either side of the building where we had our classes.

Delacroix's notion of antiquity provided me with a glimmer of hope in finding a place for myself as Anishnabe in the scheme of things. His rejection of France's Greco-Roman heritage and his fascination with North America and its peoples around the early 1800's, left me with the challenge of living with two epistemologies: Sundance and Christian, Anishnabemowin and English, Aboriginal and Western. It gave me an opportunity to explore more confidently my identity, any insecurity I had was framed by a Eurocentric Catholic residential school education provided by priests and nuns.

As told by those before us, our language and mythology, our history and heritage, our antiquity began here; and our presence to witness this symposium on the occasion of the Daphne Odjig retrospective is a testimony to our place as a people in the scheme of things as we share with other peoples this land.

Today, I want to share some of the things I discovered during my art residency in Paris last autumn. And I want to begin with this oil painting by Delacroix, entitled "Les Natchez" (*image 1*), done in 1835 and now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. My first view of it there at the Met was while I was doing a print at Cooper Union during the Oka Crisis of 1990 in Quebec. I was already familiar with the Natchez, as I had researched their extinction along with six other nations including: Beothuk, Mohican, Neutral, Timucua, Tobacco and Yamasee. The research had been part of a 1985 exhibition in Toronto where I had included their names, listed to form a commemorative site-specific column, done in

watercolour on the gallery wall. The piece was a reaction to seeing “Neutral” opposite “Ojibwa” up near the architectural cornice of the Walker Court at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1985 during the opening of the exhibition *European Iceberg*. It was a chilling experience; the protocol of naming is often violated by including the dead and excluding the living. In his piece “Monument to the Native Peoples of Ontario”, the German artist Lothar Baumgarten had included the extinct Neutral and excluded the Cree, who still live in Northern Ontario.

This painting does have a certain lament quality, the young mother unable to breastfeed her baby has let her husband try to comfort the infant by holding it, and as a viewer, we can see and know the inevitability of starvation. It is based on a novel, “Atala”, by François-René Chateaubriand. It’s a passionate and tragic love story of wandering in the wilderness and finally succumbing to the cruel fate of being the last of their people. The Natchez of the southeastern United States had ironically sought neutrality with accommodation first with the Spanish, then the French, and finally with the English and the early Americans, only to face betrayal and punitive actions each time.

My purpose in going to Paris was to study the 1845 Delacroix pen and ink drawings of Ojibwa from Upper Canada (*image 2*). The dancers who had arrived in the City of Light from England to great excitement during the early autumn of that year were to replace the tired and homesick Iowas. The Ojibwa dancers were invited to entertain King Louis Philippe and the royal family at Saint Cloud in early October.

These pen and inks of the dancers on vellum paper which I saw in the prints and drawing cabinets at the Louvre were as fresh as the day they were drawn. The considerable effort made through my connection, Nelcya Delanoë, for an appointment was worth the experience of spending three days looking at them and drawing them. The idea of having to show my passport and a letter of introduction from the director of the National Gallery of Canada was similar to entering the Vatican, a separate reality. Nonetheless,

I enjoyed the drawings; they illustrated the dancers in relaxed poses, probably resting their tired feet from dancing on cobblestone courtyards and streets or marble floors. This was truly where my journey began in looking for any clue as to what these dancers must have felt.

I spent the first two weeks walking all over the city, especially in my neighbourhood, the Marais, just by the Seine behind city hall. I would do sketching trips along the river where I would spend the early mornings until the tourists would take over at around 10:00 am; then, I'd be forced to work in the studio or visit museums (*image 3*). I got to relive the long ago life drawing experiences back when I studied drawing and painting in Salzburg, Austria in the summer of 1972. Quickly, I soon began to enjoy the notion of not having to deal with the political and polemical issues of landclaims; something I shared with a cousin this June whose grandson had won a hockey scholarship my family had put together in memory of one my sister's sons. He was quite amazed at the idea, but for me, it was so ironic that I should find myself in one of the most Eurocentric cultural capitals in the old world and still find solace in the very specificity of being Anishnabe.

After mornings at the river with its beautiful bridges, I started visiting le musée du quai Branly, the newly built ethnology museum where I found some of the most well preserved antiquities of the Art of the Americas (*image 4*). It was breathtaking and moving to see the beauty the "new world" had produced. For a few centuries and empires, our world was seen as a sensation of exoticism, a notion of difference, a paradise of glory, gold and god reflected in the writings of authors as diverse as William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Michel de Montaigne (1533-92), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), François-Rene Chateaubriand (1768-1848), Karl May (1842-1912) and James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851).

Once there, and having imagined those reclining Ojibwa by Delacroix resting their sore feet with only their rawhide moccasins, I began to feel what they might have experienced: cultural and social shock, loneliness and homesickness. This is what I felt when drawing

the traditional buffalo robes at the Branly. It was also to be the beginning of my true discovery of Delacroix's expressive techniques in drawing the human form (*image 5*). My museum and gallery visits started to be mixed with special attention to the paintings and murals of Delacroix; the critical writings of Charles Baudelaire; the conceptual works of Daniel Buren and the postmodern prose of Jean Baudrillard.

Following the mental and spiritual footsteps of those Ojibwa, specifically those who had become ill from smallpox, and later died from it in Belgium on their way to London to catch the boat back to North America, I created a suite of four, small, two-panel oil canvases in their honour (*image 6*). This was later developed to include a suite of four, large, two-panel oils which are like French wall panels depicting four dancers with the bottom pieces illustrating the smallpox as found on the Louis IV buffalo robe from the Branly. For me, metaphorically, it was like bringing these Ojibwa back home. I cried when I began sketching them. (*image 7 and 8*)

I am currently working towards a curated Paris exhibition of a larger version of them for 2010. And I hope to provide some textual and polemical background to it, i.e. contemporary powwow dancers and other Ojibwa artists and curators.

Robert Houle October 9, 2007

Plates

image 1

View of Cité internationale des arts in Paris, from across the Seine on Ile St. Louis, photo credit: Robert Houle

image 2

Eugene Delacroix, Study for "Les Natchez", no date, pen and ink wash, le musée du Louvre

image 3

Eugene Delacroix, "Les Natchez", 1835, oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art

image 4

Interior view of Houle's studio in Toronto with 2 unfinished, large, two-panel oil paintings of "Paris Ojibwa", 2007, artist's collection, photo credit: Paul Gardner

image 5

Louis XIV-style Motif buffalo robe, c. mid 18th century, le musée du quai Branly

image 6

Left: Exterior view of the musée du quai Branly, photo credit: lartnouveau.com

Centre: Detail of Abstract Thunderbird Motif from buffalo robe, c. mid 18th century, musée du quai Branly

Right: Robert Houle, graphite drawing of Abstract Thunderbird Motif, 2006, artist's collection













The Modernists: The Art of Daphne Odjig and Oscar Howe

Barry Ace

Daphne Odjig (Potawatomi) and artist Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Dakota) were both born into the early awakenings of the twentieth century,

and during a time of intense radical change in social, political, economic, cultural and artistic traditions in Europe, North America and Native American societies. It was the post World War I recovery of the second phase of the industrial revolution, bringing with it swift social, political, economic and technological advancements. Culture was not immune. In Europe the very foundation of values, morés and aesthetics had been under siege since the early awakenings of the nineteenth century, while in the colonized Americas, it would not be until early in the twentieth century that we began to see hotbeds of cultural change emerging in major centres like New York City. Yet a transcontinental movement of artists and ideas between the holy trinity of the art worlds, London, Paris and New York, would ultimately result in a cross-fertilization of ideas and theories which would ignite clusters of experimentation, challenges and rejection of the old vanguard. Ironically, it was the Parisian margins and marginalized urban sectors of the artistic bohemian communities that we can pinpoint as an influential ground zero.

In order to situate both Daphne Odjig and Oscar Howe as modernist painters, it is unequivocally necessary to provide a brief précis of the emergence of modernism and the lesser known influence and impact of Native American art and culture on nineteenth and twentieth century Parisian society.

The Paris Salons and the Birth of Modernism

A demonstrable example of change and challenge in the art world were the Paris salons or juried group exhibitions. The first Paris salon was held in 1667, and subsequent other fine art salons were held either bi-annually or later annually. The first was the Salon d' Apollon at the Louvre, followed by the Société des Artistes Français, and two hundred years later the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts in 1880. The importance of these annual exhibitions was significant, for on the one hand, they provided an opportunity for haute-société to not

only view and acquire master works, but also, and perhaps more importantly, they provided an opportunity to view and engage in the latest trends that were more often than not in direct contrast with the Masters of the day. Late nineteenth century Parisian culture was a golden age, for it represented a clear demarcation from the stasis and vanguard of Romanticism and High-Realism that dominated the status quo up to the mid-nineteenth century; in Britain with Turner, in Germany with Friedrich and in France with Delacroix and Géricault. Young, radical artists were quickly exhibiting challenging antithesis works in the salons and galleries and would later overshadow the Masters like Delacroix and Géricault.

An unlikely impetus for radical change in Parisian art came not from any painter, but instead from the chemistry and carpet-making community, and one chemist's research into the relationship between colour and perception would have a profound impact on how artists not only viewed colour but how they treated colour in relationship with other colours. French chemist Eugène Chevreul (1786-1889) worked for Gobelin, who, at the time, was a famous carpet manufacturer. Chevreul spent years concentrating his work on the properties and challenges associated with carpet dyes. Chevreul noted that the impact of colours that were visually translated in carpet dyes had nothing to do with the dyes themselves, but instead with optics. In other words, his ability to achieve the best possible results was not exclusively with the pigment itself, but more importantly with the influence of neighbouring colour tonalities. This seemingly obvious and rather understated relationship was one of the most important breakthroughs of the time. Chevreul's research became known as the law of simultaneous contrast of colours, and he designed a seventy-two part colour circle and published it in *De la loi du contrast simultanée des couleurs* in 1839. Although his entire thesis work was never completed, his work influenced important artists of his time, from Delacroix to his contemporaries. What is perhaps most profound is that this major work on how the human brain processed colour-coded information is inextricably linked to influencing the very foundations of Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism, and Orphic Cubism.

The Impressionists applied the law of simultaneous contrast through Chevreul's study of the physics of colour by attempting an exact replication of colour and tone and how the optics of colour relationships was processed optically. They applied paint in small unblended brushstrokes with a particular attention to neighbouring colours which produced incredibly rich and brilliant works that overpowered the darker Romantic and Realist paintings of Delacroix and Géricault. They preferred to paint outdoors and attempted to catch a fleeting glimpse or impression in time. The very first Impressionist exhibition was held in Paris in 1874, and included Monet, Renoir, Sisley, Pissarro, Cezanne, Degas, Guillaumin and Boudin. Another noteworthy student of Chevreul was Seurat, whose principle of pointillism paid particular homage to how colours were applied and why they affected one another through placement in the miniature.

A monumentally important salon was the Paris Salon d'Automne of 1905. This group of artists were aptly described by French art critic Louis Vauxcelles and infamously labelled as the Fauves. The term "wild beasts" referenced their fearless and exaggerated use of colour, and in Vauxcelles's own words, lacked draughtsmanship. Vauxcelles was of course referring to Matisse, the group's leader, Derain, Marquet and Vlaminck. Their exaggerated use of colour and their freestyle approach to painting owed much to the post-impressionists such as Gauguin and Van Gogh, through their assimilation of concepts and theories around color, light and perception. The year 1905 is the birth of the Modern Movement in western art history. The work of the Fauves demarcate the modernists from the art historical past, a movement that spanned more than a century of art making. With Matisse as the leader of the Fauves, they believed that the arrangement of colors was as important as a painting's subject matter to communicate meaning. By avoiding detail and using bright color and strong lines they created a sense of movement. In 1905, works by Matisse and other Fauve painters were exhibited together and their paintings shocked the Paris art world.

Modernism can certainly be described as one of the richest, layered and by far the most influential and complex periods in Western

art history. Further, it can perhaps be succinctly described as a succession and overlap of styles and genres, which at their time of creation, have been labelled as avant-garde or simply put, ahead of their time. Modernist artists and their works not only challenge the existing status quo and accepted art genres and discourse, but more importantly, alter and advance the way we see and understand our public and private perceptions of reality. Modernist artists emerge as simultaneous or oppositional; complementary or contradictory; and yet after much intellectual scrutiny and perhaps rejection, their work ultimately stands the tests of time and intense scrutiny, emerging as a new, distinct and accepted movement.

Perhaps one of the most influential and radical movements to emerge was Cubism in Paris in 1907-1910. More than any other movement, Cubism can unequivocally be credited with influencing and encouraging a plethora of movements in the twentieth century including expressionism, abstract expressionism, futurism, surrealism, dada, fluxus, colour-field, pop and numerous off-springs up to and including present day movements. Although Braque and Picasso are credited with originating the Cubist movement, its theories and origins lie in the impressionist works of Cezanne and the Impressionists.

Cubism was grounded in theory that attempted to represent and incorporate all aspects of a subject's three dimensionality on a flat plane. The approach was significant for it abstracted the subject, often to the point of the irreconcilable, telling us more about the artist and their perception of the subject, than the subject itself. This was especially true of Picasso's portraiture during this period. Objects and multiple views of subjects transformed into angular and geometric collages of representation, drawing from the masks and motifs of Oceanic and lesser-known cultures of the margins. Picasso's portraiture of the Les Demoiselles D'Avignon, painted 1907, is perhaps the best-known example and most referenced work in the emergence of Cubism. It is also not difficult to see the influence of tribal masks that Picasso had in his studio when the painting was made. The influence of tribal cultures on modernist works of this period would later culminate in much intellectual

debate when the Museum of Modern Art under the curatorship of William Ruben mounted the controversial exhibition *Primitivism in Twentieth-Century Art; Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* in 1984. Discussed later on, the overt Darwinian curatorial thesis is obvious, but what is perhaps less obvious is the influence of Native America on Parisian art and literature, with the arrival of the first Native Americans in Paris and London in the early late 1600s and early 1700s.

Native American Representation from Romanticism to Modernism

As early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the period of North American contact spawned a massive period of collection, where institutions that included the Musée de l'Homme in Paris were filled with the material cultures of the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Middle East. In fact, it is also well documented that this prolonged and intense period of ethnographic collecting had such an adverse impact on cultural change that many Native American tribal communities were left so devoid of integral examples of masks, basketry, and other cultural accoutrements that it adversely impacted the transmission of the iconography, story, song and ceremonial liturgy of numerous coastal tribal societies. Likewise, the imagery of the exoticism of the Americas was of immense interest to Europe. Europeans were fascinated by the beauty, strangeness and unfamiliarity of this foreign land and its peoples. Explorers, military, traders, missionaries, frontier painters and photographers including the likes of Lewis and Clarke, George Catlin, Carl Bodmer, Paul Kane, Edward Curtis and countless lesser known individuals all contributed to the documentation and publication of books that fed Europe's insatiable appetite for the mystique of the frontier. Among settlers along the Atlantic seaboard, in what was then the Thirteen Colonies, and back in the major European centres of London and Paris, great interest and attention was accorded to Native Americans. Yet Native Americans were not isolated as one would expect, nor were they unfamiliar with frequent trans-Atlantic voyages and lengthy visits and appearances throughout Europe, for there is ample demonstrable documentation of Native Americans in London, Paris and even as faraway as Venice.

Perhaps the best-known documentation of one of these early voyages by a Native American delegation is the presentation of the Four Mohawk Kings to Queen Ann in 1710. The rationale behind bringing a Native American delegation to England for an audience with Queen Anne was advanced by three colonial leaders: Samuel Vetch, Francis Nicholson and Peter Schuyler, who recognized the military importance of celebrating the success of their offensive against the French in Canada. As well, it was an important strategic alliance with the much-respected military strength of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In 1710, four Mohawks of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of the Mohawk River Valley were invited to travel to London. They included, Etow Oh Koam (baptized Nicholas) of the tortoise clan, Sa Ga Yeath Qua Pieth Tow (baptized Brant) of the bear clan, and two men from the wolf clan, Ho Nee Yeath Taw No Row (baptized John) and Tee Yee Neen Ho Ga Row (baptized Hendrick). In presenting the four travellers to the Royal Court as “kings”, the Haudenosaunee men encapsulated a seemingly high social status for the British, and the Four Kings are well documented in published accounts as an impetus for altering the course of history in the Americas. One can only conjecture the impact of these four Mohawk delegates, who were physically described as well over six feet tall with dark black hair and intricate geometric tattoos and scarification signifiers, foreign to Europeans. The four Mohawks toured London and held court with the elite and commoners of London, even attending a Shakespearean play, where they stopped the performance with their appearance, and were subsequently invited to sit on stage to prevent the distraction of Londoners who wanted to see both the play and the Mohawks.

The Queen was so impressed with the stature, eloquence and oratory powers of the Four Mohawk Kings that she instructed her official Court painter John Verelst to paint individual portraits, which clearly differ from other painters’ representations at the time. Verest painted them with all the decorum appropriate to royalty and heads of state of the time. He used poised and stately full-figured poses that were reserved for the royal, military and social elite. The beauty of these images is that each man is situated in a dark and

foreboding imagined landscape that encapsulates the vast land of these kings, with their spiritualized animal totem prominent in the background. The Four Kings were also documented in alternate portraits by John Faber and by Bernard Lens, though only engravings of Faber's portraits survive. Lens's vellum watercolor miniatures, on the other hand, have survived and are beautiful examples of then popular "personal" and "pocket" memorabilia now housed in the National British Museum.

Other visits to Europe included dance performances, where Native Americans from Canada and the United States were brought to Europe to perform their social and ceremonial dances in full tribal regalia, often as a component of gallery exhibitions. A fine example, and precursor to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, was the exhibition and animation by American frontier painter George Catlin, whose Indian Portrait Gallery and Dance Troupe debuted in London and Paris as early as 1845. Catlin's major exhibition was complimented by Ojibwe dance performances who were lead by Maungwadaus [alternate spelling: Maungwudaus] (a former Ojibwe Methodist Minister named George Henry).

George Henry, or Maungwudaus, ("the great hero," or "courageous)," was also an Ojibwe interpreter, Methodist mission worker and performer who was born on the Northwest Shore of Lake Ontario in 1807. Educated in Methodist mission schools, George Henry was mentored for a role in the church as an interpreter and translator. Yet, the lure of performance and travel presented itself through the offer of a royal engagement in London, England. In 1844 he organized an Indian troupe with his Canadian promoter, which toured Britain and the continent from 1845-48. After his return from Europe, Maungwudaus performed for several years in Canada and the US, and later became a well-known Indian herbalist. He wrote a pamphlet, *An Account of the Chippewa Indians, who have been travelling among the Whites, in the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, France and Belgium* (1848). On an earlier tour of Paris, Eugene Delacroix had the opportunity to sketch a dance troupe of Iowa Indians who were touring with Catlin, just prior to Catlin's adoption of Maungwudaus's Ojibwe dance troupe.

From these sketches, now housed at the Louvre in Paris, it is further evidence of Delacroix's interest in Native Americans, whom he also depicted in his famous work *The Natchez*. Delacroix believed that Native Americans were 'doomed and must perish', and that their ultimate destiny was to yield their land to white Christian settlers. Yet in his work, he mourned it. In 1835 he completed the painting (*The Natchez*, based on Chateaubriand's story) of a Native American couple fleeing from the massacre of their Natchez tribe, with their little newborn son who was born by the mighty Mississippi yet who was also doomed by Manifest Destiny to die. Delacroix's use of broad brushstrokes and his understanding of the interplay of the optical relationships of colour make this work a strong influence on the work of the Impressionists, while his fascination with the exotic cultures and subject matter would later inspire the symbolist movement artists.

Romanticism originated around the middle of the eighteenth century during the first industrial revolution, as a stance in contradiction to the norms of the aristocracy and in contrast to the scientific rationalism of the times then emerging in both artistic and literary genres. Romanticism saw human emotions as the *modus operandi* of our aesthetic experiences, and fear and passion as the means to confront the 'savagery' of nature. For Delacroix, the exotic cultures of North America and North Africa provided the emotive sensibility to portray his subjects posed in a looming figure-ground relationship and metaphoric symbolism. Delacroix's opportunity to sketch his subjects live (in North Africa and Paris) was an apparent liberating experience as seen in his drawings of North African cultures and Native American dancers.

These new and emerging genres of creativity garnered much of their innovation and change through the assimilation of a rich and vibrant art historical past, and the lesser known art of the exotic, as found in obscure foreign world cultures and represented in major public ethnographic museum collections. It is a well-documented fact that influential artists such as Picasso and American artist Jackson Pollack assimilated Oceanic and Native American form and technique into their work. Even much later, pop artists such as Andy Warhol and

Roy Lichtenstein produced a substantial body of work based on Native American portraits, motifs and iconography.

Throughout this international proliferation of modernist movements and genres, Native Americans artists were not only aware, but also continuing to work throughout the twentieth century, pushing the boundaries and creating their own modernist movement that not only incorporated their own elements of modernity, but also infused their work with innovative cultural and spiritual representations that were not only unique and distinct, but also formed the impetus of the contemporary Native American modernist movement.

The Woodland School of painting is a case in point, and included the important contributions of Ojibwe artist Norval Morrisseau. Morrisseau was an innovative and complex figure in Native American art, yet much has been written to couch Morrisseau as the “primitive”, when nothing could be further from the truth. Early correspondence between Selwyn Dewdney, a Royal Ontario Museum researcher and ethnologist in the 1960s and Morrisseau reveal much about Norval’s exposure to western art movements, but also reveal that it was his Anishnaabe cultural references, as opposed to western influences, that would mould his unique style of Anishnaabe painting.

It was during his first visit to Morrisseau that Dewdney also met Dr. Weinstein, a medical officer stationed in Cochenour, who was an avid patron and promoter of the young Morrisseau. In a letter to his wife, Dewdney remarked that he was also intrigued by Dr. Weinstein, who was a highly-educated, cultured and worldly man. Dewdney was also impressed by Weinstein’s talent as an aspiring artist and equally impressed with Weinstein’s personal collection of “primitive” art from around the world and his library of art books.

Dewdney writes in 1960 to his wife Irene:

“In the morning we broke camp, picked up our laundry, and drove over to Cochenour to view more paintings of Norval that had been bought by a Dr. Weinstein. I wanted to meet the latter, who had

become a sort of patron of Norval's. A Montreal Jew, who lived outside of the Jewish community there, he studied medicine and painting in Paris. There he met his wife, a sixth generation Sabra from Israel... What to do about Norval filled most of the hour and a half I had with Weinstein.

Weinstein, who has exhibited in Paris (whether in a well-known salon or on a street corner I don't know), paints very competent and individual abstracts - slightly reminiscent of Herb Ariss' work - and has an impressive collection of objets d'art from all over the world, is even more impressed by Norval than I am.

But what to do? Weinstein hopes to get him a surface job at Cochenour Mine (he can't work underground on account of his T.B. bout), so he can paint in his spare time, and support his family.

We agree that it would be fatal to get him down to Toronto for a few months of lionization and exposure to all sorts of pressures. Norval wants an exhibition. Bob Sheppard imagined they would hire him as an assistant at the Museum, and led him to hope this. I promised to use him next summer if he learns to handle a kicker and drive a car - but anything else would be impossible. He has a grade 4 education. That's our Norval."¹

It is from this initial description of Weinstein and his "impressive collection of "objets d'art" that questions arise as to the amount of influence Weinstein and his collection had on the young Morrisseau. Although no interviews have ever been conducted with Dr. Weinstein regarding his impact on Norval's stylistic development, an early biography prepared by Dewdney in late 1961 or early 1962, recounts his initial conversation with Weinstein and his impressions of the influence of Weinstein's art collection and library on the young artist. Included in this biography are some thoughts on the source and motivation for Norval's creativity:

"The Cochenour medical officer, Dr. Weinstein, who had had

1.

*Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development (Canada).
Indian Art Centre Collection - ADAS
#306065, July 13, 1960, SD).*

2,
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development (Canada).
Indian Art Centre Collection -
ADAS #306065, 1961-62, SD

training as an artist in Paris, and spent his holidays with his Paris-born wife travelling widely and collecting primitive art, took a keen interest in Norval, buying his paintings, and encouraging him to use his native lore as subject matter. I spent half a day with Weinstein discussing Norval's art; and we agreed that it would do him nothing but harm to go east for formal training. Though he had access to, and was fascinated by, Weinstein's library of art repros, Norval seems to reflect few influences; one of the most amazing things about him being the way he invents an Ojibway way of visualizing things, without the existence of any pictorial tradition to which he has had any access. He has a real passion for his people's past, and a sense of mission in passing it on in pictorial form. He depends largely on dreams for his ideas; and in this is firmly rooted in the dream-centred religion of his people." ²

Although the biography clearly stated that Norval was "fascinated" with Weinstein's impressive collection, it appears from the biography that Norval incorporated very few elements and had clearly formulated, rather than emulated, his distinctive style of painting that would later become regarded as the Woodland School of painting.

In an article by Dewdney in *Canadian Art* in January 1963, Selwyn further notes that:

"At the goldmine in Cochenour where he (Morrisseau) was then working, he had struck up a friendship with the mine doctor, himself an amateur artist of some ability, Joseph Weinstein. Weinstein and his Paris-born wife were world travellers, with a collection of primitive art, and an ample art library. When I visited them the next day I leafed through the volumes of reproductions that Norval had seen. With few exceptions, the doctor and his wife told me, contemporary and classical western painting had appealed little to him. Navajo and West Coast art, on the other hand, had made a strong impact, although without any visible influence on his painting. The last traces of any doubt that might have lingered vanished when they brought out their own collection of Morrisseau's

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paintings on birch-bark. These owed nothing to any other art form. This was an artist who relied solely on his inner vision.”³

Only twice in thirteen years of correspondence did Norval ask Dewdney to send him information on other Indian cultures. In fact the first request occurred in the fall of 1960 in a letter to Selwyn where he asked, “can you send me some Indian designs or pictures, the ones that could be put on art.” (DIAND, ADAS 306065, November 7, 1960, NM).

At first glance, it is quite easy to simply read Norval’s request for new ideas to copy. But Norval was already painting on birch bark, and he had already developed his unique Woodland signature of painting, so his request was most likely for ideas and motifs that he could adapt as an addition to his work. It is also important to note that Norval was not illiterate, nor was he so isolated and “primitive” that he did not have access to library books. Norval attended Residential School in Fort William (Thunder Bay) and at the age of 15, left school. Bob Sheppard also noted in his letter to Dewdney that Norval, “has done plenty of reading since leaving school, and he himself studies and collects Indian lore.”⁴ In a subsequent letter written to Dewdney in 1962, Norval clarified his intentions in a similar request made for books in lieu of payment for art work he had sent to Toronto art dealer Bob Hughes:

“Sent Bob Hughes 18 blk and Reddish drawings, if he has a hard time selling them at ten dollars each tell him to lower them to \$6.50 or \$7.00 each. With the money ask him to get me some books about Fish of North America, Animals of North America, Birds of the world or N. American Books on Indians of North America. Different titles - of beliefs- lore- B.C. Sculpturing - totem poles art- Indian art etc. I have a private collection of books. So far I have about 7 books. I never pickup no ideas from these but I appreciate books of this type and I like to read at times.”⁵

3.
Dewdney, Selwyn. Norval
Morrisseau in Canadian Art, p.
33-34. 1963.

4.
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development (Canada).
Indian Art Centre Collection -
ADAS #306065, June 7, 1960, BS).

5.
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development (Canada).
Indian Art Centre Collection -
ADAS #306065, January 12, 1962,
NM.

What is also revealed later on in this same letter is that Morrisseau had already been exposed to European art movements, more specifically, the twentieth century movement of cubism. At one point in the letter, Norval makes direct reference to the artistic merit of his most recent works and humours Selwyn by making a direct reference to Picasso, which may have originated from either his discussions with Weinstein or from his familiarity with Weinstein's library. Norval states, "I am giving you some of my work. If you don't like none put them into the stove to make heat like Picasso does, ha ha, also these are not of the best please excuse but I will give you some good ones next time I promise you my friend"⁶. It appears that Norval was not that impressed with the work of Picasso, for he did not attempt any forays into cubism.

6.
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development (Canada).
Indian Art Centre Collection - ADAS
#306065, January 12, 1962, NM

It is probably an undeniable truth that Morrisseau was unequivocally "awakened" by a number of sources and influences (a moot point for any artist), yet all sources clearly credit Norval as the innovator of a new and unique contemporary genre of Anishnaabe art, dubbed the Woodland School of painting. Morrisseau's distinct style of painting would become a staple and source of inspiration for many of his contemporaries, including Carl Ray, Daphne Odjig, Roy Thomas, Martin Panamick, Blake Debassige and Richard Bedwash. Even today, Morrisseau's influence and contributions continue to influence many contemporary Native American artists, fusing their own unique stylistic preferences and innovations into their work.

Research into the contributions and innovations of modernism in Native American art is still in its infancy, and much needs to come to fruition to provide a robust critical analysis of senior Native Americans, who despite sporadic success, continued to produce and exhibit. The negative space that has marginalized contemporary Native American art is only beginning to be filled in, and it is revealing the exciting and groundbreaking contributions Native American artists have made on modern art writ large.

Native American and Critical Writing on Modernism

A voluminous canon of art historical discourse already exists on modernism in Western art history, and substantially less by Native Americans and non-Native Americans qualifies as critical discourse pertaining to Native American modernism. This is not to infer that there is a lack of qualitative critical writings on Native American modernism, for many poignant contributions have already been made, more notably, by Robert Houle in *The Emergence of a New Aesthetic Tradition in New Work by a New Generation* (Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, 1982) and *The Spiritual Legacy of the Ancient Ones, in Land, Spirit, Power* (National Gallery of Canada, 1992); W. Jackson Rushing III, in *Native American Art and the New York Avant-garde* (University of Texas Press, 1995). More recently, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) publication *Essays on Native Modernism: Complexity and Contradiction in American Indian Art*, which includes a strong mix of contributors including Bruce Bernstein, curator in the anthropology division of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and formerly NMAI assistant director for cultural resources; J. J. Brody, professor emeritus of art and art history at the University of New Mexico and former director of the university's Maxwell Museum of Anthropology; Truman T. Lowe (Ho-Chunk), artist and NMAI curator of contemporary art; Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree and member of the Siksika Nation), curator of Canadian art at the Art Gallery of Ontario; W. Jackson Rushing III, Professor of Aesthetic Studies and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas; Joyce M. Szabo, professor in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico; and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, professor in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory at the University of British Columbia, Canada. As a result, these new academic forays are filling the negative space neglected by Western art history.

What is perhaps an interesting development in Native modernism is identification of a new cultural aesthetic that links Native cultural aesthetics to ancient tribal arts traditions, and unique tribal ways of seeing that unequivocally interrupt and fissure the art historical canon of Western modernism writ large.

It now seems that we are entering a new era in our critical discourse that has moved well beyond the mere theoretical rhetoric and reactionary posturing of the 1990s. New critical writings and contributions on contemporary Native American art by Native Americans and by non-Native American allies are revealing that the Centre is not really the Centre after all, but more simply put, just another player and contributor in the more overt global development of a new contemporary art discourse. This is increasingly evident and demonstrable in Canada. In fact, there are countless examples of cross-cultural fertilization, of shared ideas and influences, and since no culture is in a constant state of stasis or isolated authenticity, this sharing is reciprocal. Interestingly enough, there is an undeniable argument, as in the case of Native Americans, Africans and Asian-Pacific peoples that tribal influences had immense implications in the development of modernism and subsequent genres.

So, how does this all play out in our discussion of Native American modernism and contemporary art? Obviously, there is a very long tradition of aspects of modernism in Native American cultures, which have very ancient origins. Today, one does not have to investigate very far to find substantive and readily available aspects of modernism in the iconography, material cultural and motifs present in, for example, Anishnaabek culture. A very early 1848 drawing by Shingwauk (Anishnaabe) of the Garden River Reserve near Sault Ste. Marie and recently posted on the Smithsonian on-line collection clearly articulates the presence of early modernist elements in Anishnaabe art-making, while simultaneously, revealing unequivocal evidence of Morrisseau's later style of painting which points to a deeper and profound understanding of the ancient traditions and origins of the Woodland and Manitoulin Schools. As a result of increasing academic and critical interest in contemporary art and the movement away from the overt political defense of Native American art, including heightened availability of digital and technological access, more substantive and critical writing is emerging.

In contrast to these obvious advancements since the turn of the

century, it is important to briefly contextualize the landscape of the 1980s and 1990s. In surveying the literature of this period, it is not difficult to see that much attention by the Native American critical community focused on building a defense for the validity of Native American art, both reactionary, in its overt or subversive context, and challenging an apparent iron curtain at the major art institutions. Race-based theoretical analysis began to emerge in Native American and critical communities of colour. Two major Canadian Native American reactionary exhibitions to emerge were *Land, Spirit, Power* at the National Gallery of Canada and the sister exhibition *Indigena* at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in 1992. These two exhibitions unequivocally became synonymous and linked with the Canadian Aboriginal rights and political agendas of the 1980s and 1990s. Although both exhibitions presented some of the very best and innovative modernist works of the day, these exhibitions became known more for what they were reacting to, as opposed to any major innovations in contemporary art.

The art agenda of the 1990s became entangled in the political debate pertaining to treaties, self-government, rights and other fluctuating political agendas, often so influencing the production of work that the two became inextricably linked, as in the quincentenary celebrations surrounding Columbus's arrival in the Americas. The exhibition by Pierre-Léon Tetreault, *New Territories: 350-500 Years After* at Montréal's *Maison de la culture* and Carl Beam's *The Columbus Boat* can also be included in the suite of exhibitions of resistance. Many points of view have emerged on this volatile period, aptly described as a period of resistance and apartheid. Although the exhibitions in the 1990s were fueled by the broader political and social climate of the times, there was also some residual reactionary subtext that was linked to the Museum of Modern Art's 'Primitivism' in Twentieth-Century Art; *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* in 1984 that positioned Native American, African and Oceanic traditional art as merely validating the power of modernism. In other words, Native American art could only be viewed as modern when it is juxtaposed and compared to Western modernism. Native American artists could only be seen in the light of creating "primitive work" that is culturally-based, and therefore, are

not real players in modernism, but merely sources for appropriation.

For Native American contemporary artists, Primitivism is unequivocally a double edged sword, for it created artificial barriers whereby contemporary Native American artists were labeled derivative or criticized from within their own communities as being “non-traditionalist”. In *Mixed Blessings*, Lucy R. Lippard notes that during the late twentieth century, the West has isolated herself, synthesizing all new information through her own exclusionary set of rules.

“[t]he dominant culture prefers to make over its sources into its own image, filtering them through the sieve of recent local art history, seeing only that which is familiar or currently marketable and rejecting that which cannot be squeezed into “our” framework. Art from ethnic groups is still seen as though it were made for export to the “real” U.S.A....Modernist Indian artists are often caught between cultures, attacked by their own traditionalists for not being Indian enough and attacked by the white mainstream for being “derivative”, as though white artists hadn’t helped themselves to things Indian for centuries and as though Indians did not live (for better or worse) in the dominant culture along with the rest of us.”⁷

Lippard notes that the 1984 exhibition ‘Primitivism’ in Twentieth-Century Art; *Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, is “[a] classic example of one sided “universalism”. Lippard accuses Rubin of “hiding behind quotation marks” for declaring “that the term “primitivism” is simply part of modern art owned by those who name its components” and that it was not intended to offend or “reflect on the original cultures from which the West borrows”⁸. The “primitive” is conveniently placed “on a pedestal of history (modernism) and admired for what is missing in western culture, as long as the ‘primitive’ does not attempt to become an active subject to define or change the course of (modern) history.”⁹ What needs to be challenged here is the underlying presumption “that Native

7.

Lippard, Lucy R. *Mixed Blessings - New Art In A Multicultural America*.
Pantheon Books, New York. 1990.
pg. 27.

8. *ibid.*

9. *ibid.*

peoples who incorporate modernism into their art become, in the process, 'inauthentic'."¹⁰

African American writer Michele Wallace notes that there is "a process of imitation and critical reversal"¹¹ Wallace explains,

...my mother, Faith Ringgold, saw in Picasso a place where as a black artist produced by the West, could think about her African heritage. I mean you could sort of run it backward: black artists looking at white Europeans appropriating African artifacts for modernism and Cubism. If you came as, say, a black person in the '50s studying art, the way to translate the tradition that exists in African sculpture was to look at a painter who had already travelled that route of appropriation, and then reinterpret his appropriation.¹²

10. *ibid.*

11. *ibid* pg 26.

12. *ibid.*

13.

Rushing, Jackson W. [Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde](#). University of Texas Press, Austin. 1995.

p.194

I tend to agree with author Jackson Rushing when he states that "[i]f there is such a thing as a cultural imperative that determines to a great extent how and what a work of art can mean at any given time - and I believe that there is- it confirms the usefulness of cultural relativism in preventing a cross-cultural work from being reduced, analytically, to a 'Babel' of conflicting meanings that is ultimately meaningless"¹³

Daphne Odjig

Daphne Odjig was nick-named "Picasso's grandmother" by Norval Morrisseau. Whether Daphne viewed it as a compliment or not is not at issue, for Norval was unequivocally paying her a compliment in that he believed her prolific output of works and artistic contributions placed her as one of the innovators of the Anishnaabe modernist movement.

Daphne was born on the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve on Manitoulin Island in Northern Ontario on September 11, 1919, and early accounts of her childhood reveal that these early years

were filled with memories of sketching and painting. Drawing and copying illustrations from magazines provided Daphne with the freedom to experiment, develop and understand medium and technique, which one could argue, fed her curiosity to try new approaches to art-making, as in her forays into collage with organic materials and modernist genres of cubism and to a lesser extent surrealism.

Like Norval Morrisseau or Oscar Howe, stories, legends, dance, spirituality and ways of seeing, unequivocally made their way to the front and center. Whether it was Nanabush the mythological trickster, or memories of the longstanding Wikwemikong powwow on Manitoulin Island, Daphne expressed these themes in a way that melded the cultural and spiritual aspects with the complexity of colour, signs and semiotics of modernism.

Like Morrisseau, Daphne too had exposure and access to library collections and books on contemporary art, and after leaving Parry Sound, where she attended school, Daphne moved to Toronto in the early 1940s. There she had ample access to fine art books from the public libraries and she frequented the Art Gallery of Toronto where she viewed master works of European artists as well as contemporary works of well-known Canadian artists.

After her marriage to her first husband in 1945, Daphne moved to British Columbia, where she continued to paint and sketch. It was during this period that she developed an affinity for the art and career of Canadian painter Emily Carr (1871-1945). Influencing her more as a peer and role model, Daphne admired Carr's work depicting the cultures of the Northwest Coast as well as Carr's dedication and perseverance as a women artist. Like Carr, Daphne shared an interest in nature and Native American culture, and it can be said that both were influenced by the French Impressionists and the Cubists. Carr's primary influences were Paul Cezanne (1836-1906) and Georges Braque (1882-1963) and also Picasso's early

14.
Analytic Cubism showed different aspects of the same object simultaneously, abandoning conventional perspective and using overlapping facets (Lucie-Smith, Edward. Dictionary of Art Terms. The Thames and Hudson. London. 1993. p. 61.

technique of analytic cubism¹⁴, while Odjig was influenced primarily by Picasso's later period of synthetic cubism^{15, 16}.

In contrast to Carr's somber palette, depicting brooding forests, coastal villages and totem pole themes, Daphne emphasized the human form as the primary subject of many of her works and her palette incorporated a much brighter spectrum of colour when compared to Carr's. Throughout the 1950s, Daphne continued to experiment with Cubism, American Abstract expressionism and French Impressionism.

Another artist working at the same time as Daphne, was Montreal-based painter Rita Letendre. Rita was born in Drummondville, Quebec, in 1928. Her mother was French and her father was of Aboriginal descent. She moved with her parents to Montreal in 1941 and at the age of 19 worked as a waitress and studied at the Montreal School of Fine Arts. Beginning her career as an artist during the 1950's and early 1960's, Rita became close friends with Paul-Émile Borduas and joined the Automatiste group. "Les Automatistes, founded in the early 1940s by painter Paul-Émile Borduas, were so called because they were influenced by Surrealism and its theory of automatism. Automatism is a surrealist technique involving spontaneous writing, drawing, or the like, practiced without conscious aesthetic or moral self-censorship. Members included Marcel Barbeau, Roger Fauteux, Claude Gauvreau, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Pierre Gauvreau, Fernand Leduc, Jean-Paul Mousseau, and Marcelle Ferron and Françoise Sullivan. The movement may have begun with an exhibition Borduas gave in Montreal in 1942, and although it began as a visual arts group, it also spread to other forms of expression, such as drama, poetry and dance. Les Automatistes went on to exhibit in Paris and New York."¹⁷ The exhibition "La matière chante" in 1954, was a turning point for Letendre; it made

15,
Synthetic Cubism translated everything seen into a language of visual signs, providing every object with a coded equivalent, and turning the painting into a parallel reality rather than a reflection of the reality which the painter observed (Lucie-Smith, Edward. Dictionary of Art Terms. The Thames and Hudson. London. 1993. p. 61.

16.
Vanderburgh, R.M and M. E. Southcott. [A Paintbrush in My Hand - Daphne Odjig](#). Natural Heritage/ Natural History Inc. Toronto. 1992. p. 102.

17.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Les_Automatistes

her known in the art world and she went on to become one of Canada's most important abstract painters.

Daphne enjoyed the freedom of expression of modernist techniques and she began to paint in Picasso's style to better understand his process. Influenced by Picasso's work *Fruit Dish* (1908-09), she produced a black and white gouache work entitled *Intermezzo* (1957), which is strongly reminiscent of Picasso's synthetic cubist style. Although initially she emulated Picasso, she developed a style unto her own.

Of Picasso, Daphne once stated: "...everyone knows that my favourite is Picasso...I love the way he was able to put down his own feelings...He didn't care about anyone else, you know. He was never intimidated...I love to distort things... Picasso distorted...Ever since I was a child I elongated necks, and always did faces over the top of others. But for me that had meaning to it...one face emerging from another would be like the spirit of that person leaving that individual."¹⁸

18.

McLuhan, Elizabeth and R.M.

Vanderburgh. [Daphne Odjig - A](#)

[Retrospective](#). Thunder Bay

National Exhibition Centre and

Centre for Indian Art. 1985. p. 13.

19. Ibid pg. 85.

In 1979, when questioned again on the extent of Picasso's influence on her work, Daphne offered an alternate take on the impact of the overlay of western modernism. Daphne states, "[c]ubism and Picasso doesn't mean anything to me. I always see my own lines. No one ever asked Picasso whether he was influenced by Canadian art, and yet look at his masks: Who's to say Picasso hadn't seen any of our work?"¹⁹

In a personal conversation with Daphne that I had en route to the Ottawa Airport after her participation in an art jury in the 1990s, Daphne told me that early on in her career she was harshly criticized for her works because they were not perceived as being "authentically" Indian. Daphne went on to state that during the early 1960s, a double standard existed for Indian artists, and when a non-Indian artist experimented with other movements, it was considered a ground-breaking event, but when an Indian artist

attempted the same, they were reproached by art critics, collectors and art institutions. Daphne was inferring that Indian artists, to a large degree, are still subject to a perceived stasis and any signs of modernity in their work are rejected as incompatible or incongruent with society's ingrained stereotype of "Indians".²⁰

In 1963, Daphne relocated with her husband Chester Beavon to Easterville, Manitoba. While Chester worked as a community development officer for the government of Manitoba, Daphne began to explore her own cultural heritage and the legends told to her by her grandfather Jonas Odjig, and she began to paint the life ways and cultural change affecting the Crees of Chemahawin. Daphne also acquired a massive collection of Cree soapstone carvings that were an attempt at economic development for the Cree communities. These sculptures, unique in style and form with modernist forms, had an unequivocal impact on Daphne, for a glass cabinet in her home on Big Shuswap Lake probably contained the majority of the sculpture produced. Daphne's interest in promoting and working with Native American artists would continue to grow as a passion and allow her to develop the first collective of Native American artists in Canada.

Daphne was unaware of the work of Norval Morrisseau until a priest in Easterville introduced her to the work of the Anishinaabe artist. Daphne was surprised to discover that she shared similarities in formline, colour and theme with Morrisseau. Yet despite the similarities, she did not strictly subscribe to his X-ray style of Woodland art.²¹ Instead, Odjig gravitated to particular aspects and elements of Anishnaabe iconography and aspects of modernism that she melded into her own unique and distinct style and colour palette. It is now apparent, although it was not necessarily clear to Odjig and Morrisseau at the time, that the similarities in line and form actually are deeply rooted in ancient Anishnaabe artist traditions as found in the Midewewin two-dimensional scraffito drawings on birch-bark scrolls and sacred and tribal drawings in iron-oxide on cliff faces surrounding the Great Lakes region.

20.

Ace, Barry. Personal conversation with Daphne Odjig at the Ottawa Airport, November 1995.

21.

Vanderburgh, R.M and M. E. Southcott. [A Paintbrush in May Hand -Daphne Odjig](#). Heritage/Natural History Inc. Toronto. 1992. p. 57.

It was in Winnipeg in 1973 that Daphne co-founded the Professional Native Indian Artists Association or as it is more commonly known the "Indian Group of Seven". The group of artists included Daphne Odjig, Jackson Beardy, Carl Ray, Joseph Sanchez, Eddy Cobiness, Norval Morrisseau and Alex Janvier. Daphne was the first and only woman to be a part of this group. Later, in 1974, Daphne and her husband Chester opened the Warehouse Gallery in Winnipeg, a huge venture that provided support for emerging Native artists. There are fascinating stories about Daphne helping out young and emerging artists such as Roy Thomas, who had left home at the age of 16, and while living in a shelter, chanced into the gallery. He returned to the shelter, created some work and returned to the gallery the next day only to have Daphne select a small painting and issue the very first print edition of Roy's work.

It is during this period in Manitoba that Daphne began to emerge as an advocate for Indian culture, when she developed an affinity with the Crees who had been relocated to Easterville as a result of a hydro-electric project at Grand Rapids. Angered by the adverse social problems plaguing the Cree of Chemahawin and the wanton destruction of their traditional lifeways, Daphne fervently began to sketch the pathos of the people as they succumbed to the impact of the twentieth century. Many of the experiences and imagery from this period would resurface and culminate in her seminal work *The Indian in Transition* (1978), which documents the impact of colonization on the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Not only does it depict the cultural change as a result of colonization, it is also a very personal narrative for Daphne: a metaphor for her own personal life experiences. Divided into four panels, the work begins with a joyous, healthy community that was once rich in culture, identity and spirituality. The second panel depicts Native Americans gazing outward to sea at an approaching vessel bearing fair skinned peoples. To the left of this panel mother earth weeps ominously in sorrow for the future of the indigenous peoples. The third panel depicts images of impoverished and faceless people trapped inside a whiskey bottle whose stopper is a government official. In the fourth panel, the people break free, rediscovering their distinct cultural attributes and spirituality. This masterwork is a Native American

version of Picasso's Guernica and is of equal importance to Ojibwe art and a testament to the tenacity and perseverance of Native Americans. It is truly a masterpiece.

Throughout her prolific career, Daphne continued to challenge the presumptions about Indian art through her work. Despite the outright rejection of her work by the established western art institutions, Picasso acknowledged her contributions by referring to her as "remarkable Indian artist".²² In 1986, Daphne was selected as one of four international artists to paint a memorial work to Picasso by the curators of the Picasso Museum in Antibes, France.²³ Her work, entitled Homage to a Legend (1986) stands as a testimony to her tenacity to transcend the barriers of western art institutions and challenge the stereotypes associated with Indian art. In 2007, when Daphne Odjig was honoured with a Governor General's award, she accepted it with the graciousness and dignity of a true original, while paying homage to the Peoples of the Three Fires Confederacy: the Ojibwa, Odawa and Pottawotomi Peoples. It has taken 120 years to break the barriers preventing Native American art from being exhibited and collected by The National Gallery of Canada. It is a result of the tenacious and fearless dedication to art by our contemporaries like Daphne Odjig and the new Native American curatorial and critical communities that are now firmly establishing our place in art history.

22.

Vanderburgh, R.M and M. E. Southcott. [A Paintbrush in May Hand - Daphne Odjig](#). Heritage/Natural History Inc. Toronto. 1992. p. 102.

23. Ibid.

Daphne said in her artist statement for The Indian in Transition,

"Rather than depict spasmodic White and Indian wars, which of course did take place and were of relatively short duration, I chose to paint the greater war - the subtle and perhaps even well-meaning warfare instituted against and in opposition to an established culture - a war still in progress today.

I have shown Indian people symbolically locked and/or relocated in a large bottle. Within the bottle are faceless people, with a lost or almost forgotten identity ... Some are actually escaping, with

their drum ... Other people are visible on different levels in various walks of life, moving with determination into the future. Once again there is some security, for these people have rediscovered who and what they are, and believe they know where they are going. And they are still Indians, not brown white men! They have been able to harmonize their cultural beliefs within a changing world - they have been attempting to retain the best of two cultures and above all, they are proud to be Indians. This is not the end of the story, but for some a new beginning".²⁴

Oscar Howe

Oscar Howe, a Dakota Indian of the Yanktonnais Dakota tribe, came from a small reservation on the Crow Creek Reservation of South Dakota. Oscar Howe (Mazuha Hokshina, Trader Boy) was the son of George Tikute Howe and Ella Fearless Bear, born on May 13, 1915. Like most Native Americans born on reservations in the early 20th century, Howe's childhood years were spent in the poverty of reservation life, and the military or residential school style education of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Pierre Indian School.

As a young boy, Howe recalled that when he was at home, he spent a lot of time with his grandmother, Shell Face, who told him stories of the old days and shared with him the legends of his people. Not having access to art supplies, Howe made do with what was readily available, and spent many hours drawing with fragments of charred wood on scraps of paper or anything else he could find. His tenacity and talent was recognized early on, and from 1935 to 1938 he was enrolled in the now famous Santa Fe Indian School in New Mexico. It is here that Howe was encouraged to take pride in his cultural heritage. Howe quickly honed his talents and became extremely proficient and well known for his watercolor paintings. Howes' early works from this period of his career were primarily two-dimensional works, highly reminiscent of buffalo hide paintings, where darkly outlined, unshaded figures are situated in a flat, two-dimensional plane.

24.
Vanderburgh, R.M and M. E.
Southcott. *A Paintbrush in May*
Hand - Daphne Odjig. Heritage/
Natural History Inc. Toronto.
1992. p. 23.

When discussing Howe's early work, it is important to shed some light on the importance of Dorothy Dunn's emphasis at The Studio and how she focused on improving educational opportunities and freedom to learn. Dunn hoped that by encouraging students they would develop a strong sense of self-confidence and self-respect. Dunn was also overtly influential by insisting that her students use Native American subjects and a flat-art style, which she felt was a true and authentic representation of Indian culture, free of foreign influences that may have been introduced by traders or outside training in art. Dunn found support for her belief in this authentic style in the wall paintings and rock art that had been created for millennia and were visible everywhere in the Southwest.

This early style of narrative painting, finds its origins in what are called ledger drawings, first made by captive Native Americans at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida around 1875. Imprisoned by the United States forces for their resistance and unwillingness to accept the imposed reservation system, seventy-three Cheyene, Kiowa, Arapaho, and Comanche began sketching images of their lives prior to captivity and the ensuing battle that led to their capture. The drawings were made with inks and coloured pencils on trader's ledger paper (lined) that had been issued to them by government officials. After their release in 1887, most of the captives returned to Anadarko, Oklahoma, and many of them continued to produce drawings and paintings to meet the growing demand for their work. The introduction of art on paper marked a new tradition in Native American cultural art that would later be introduced into the curricula of boarding and residential schools for Native Americans.

By 1914, the St. Patrick's Indian School in Anadarko began encouraging Native American students to draw and paint. Under the tutelage of Susan Peters, a field matron for the Kiowa Agency, a significant group of five young artists would emerge called the Kiowa Five. The Kiowa five continued in the ledger narrative genre and would become the first group of Native American artists to exhibit their work internationally. In 1928, a group exhibition of their work travelled to Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Dunn's establishment of the first school of art for Native Americans would go on to produce over 700 Native American artists, influential for their individuality and stylistic innovations. Among the schools successes are painter Harrison Begay (Navajo), sculptor Allan Houser (Apache), and painter Oscar Howe (Yanktonai Dakota).

Dorothy Dunn was an incredibly influential figure, and her belief in her students went so far as affecting legislative change in the United States that led to the introduction of the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act that lifted the prohibition on depictions of traditional Native customs in federal schools. After Dunn's departure in 1937, the creativity of The Studio stagnated, resulting in few innovative advances.

25.

Dunn, Dorothy. *American Indian Painting of the Southwest and Plains Areas*. The University of New Mexico Press, 1968. p. 306.

In describing Howe's work, Dorothy Dunn wrote, "Of the Sioux artists, Oscar Howe was the outstanding painter. He had the quiet, persevering studiousness, which combined with high technical aptitude to make for intellectual achievement in art. His paintings were immediately recognizable as authentic; hours of patient research, of brush practice and color experiments, of thoughtful consideration for compositional effect were in every piece ... He often composed upon large papers which gave range for many riders on galloping, varicolored horses. The general effect was suggestive of the hide paintings but the detail was finer, the color more subtle, and the drawing more representational".²⁵

During the 1930s Howe worked for the Works Progress Administration in South Dakota, who hired him to paint a set of murals for the municipal auditorium in Mobridge, South Dakota and an additional mural for the dome of the Carnegie Library in Mitchell, South Dakota. Howe served in North Africa and Europe during World War II, and later went on to earn his B.A. degree at Dakota Wesleyan University in 1952, where he also taught as Artist in Residence. He received his M.F.A. at the University of Oklahoma in 1954.

Oscar Howe was one artist who broke through the creative

stagnation, and challenged the stereotype of what was then accepted by western art institutions as Indian art. Paralleling Odjig's career, Howe experienced intense resistance to his experimentations with modernism, especially for his incorporation of cubist elements in his works. In 1959, Howe submitted several of his works to the Indian Artists Annual, only to receive a letter informing him that his work was "non-Indian" and "non-traditional".²⁶ In a letter to Jeanne Snodgrass (King), Howe eloquently challenged the ghettoization of Indian art,

...There is much more to Indian Art, than pretty, stylized pictures. There was also power and strength and individualism (emotional and intellectual insight) in the old Indian paintings. Every bit in my paintings is a true studied fact of Indian paintings. Are we to be held back forever with one phase of Indian painting, with no right for individualism, dictated to as the Indian always has been, put on reservations and treated like a child, and only the White Man knows what is best from him? Now, even in Art, 'You little child do what we think is best for you, nothing different.' Well, I am not going to stand for it. Indian Art can compete with any Art in the world, but not as suppressed Art.

I see so much of the mismanagement and treatment of my people. It makes me cry inside to look at these poor people. My father died there about three years ago in a little shack, my two brothers still living there in shacks, never enough to eat, never enough clothing, treated as second-class citizens. This is one of the reasons I have tried to keep the fine ways and culture of my forefathers alive. But one could easily turn to become a social protest painter.

I only hope the Art World will not be one more contributor to holding us in chains.²⁷

Howe argued intently that his work was rooted in his tribal heritage and spoke out against its relegation to an area of suppressed "ethnic art", which must have been incomprehensible to him, considering his awareness of the appropriation of the modernists. In fact, even Jackson Pollock acknowledged the significance of Navajo sand

26.

Archuleta, Margaret and Dr. Rennard Strickland. [Shared Visions - Native American Painters and Sculptors in the Twentieth Century](#). The New Press, New York, 1991. p. 9.

27. *ibid* pg. 10.

28. *ibid* pg. 9.

painting in the development of his “drip-paintings”.²⁸ Despite all, Howe continued to work and build on his modernist techniques that remained true to his cultural interests, focusing on Dakota spirituality and figurative representations. His work *Ghost Dance* (1960) paid tribute to the Ghost Dance Movement of the late 19th century that sought to restore the dead (both animal and human) and the land to his people. As he experimented and honed his style, his work became more complex and layered with sub-text. Howe would later go on to explore and experiment with the European art movement of cubism, incorporating cubist elements with his early training at The Studio, developing his own distinctive style of painting, referred to as neocubism.

29.

<http://www.oscarhowe.org/wardancer.php>

Howe was extremely articulate when speaking on his work. His analytical, spatial, figure ground relationships and grounded cultural understanding is paramount. The following two narratives are works described by Howe in his own words.

War Dance

This painting has a mobile appearance. Taken from the Sioux skin-painting technique in the use of the plain background of space, the figure dancer is positioned in dark space to affect a feeling of isolated movement in space. The dark background accentuates by the contrasts of light and dark the movement of triangular patterns that objectify the dancing figure. He is a warrior in battle dress going through his combat movements in rhythm with the dance drum. The linear horizontal stress of patterns gives the illusion of a mobile, fluid in movement and plasticity, suspended in mid-air. The extended parts of his paraphernalia represented time and space of the dance. The subject matter is a dancer with all the parts necessary for the figure; though it appears more or less an abstraction, it is a complete figure in action. The figure was objectified through esthetic points. The procedural method of Sioux art tradition composing with esthetic points to objectify ideas, designs, and forms was used here for the painting. There is a tradition in Sioux art where the artist commits to memory esthetic points in a space. These are terminal points of objectifying lines or design lines in an abstraction. The points were

essential not only for the beauty of lines but also for objectification. So the points have multiple purposes in a composition. The sense of totality in expression and the dimensional aspects can be attributed to the use of esthetic points.²⁹

Buffalo Dancer

In order to understand the topic of the painting, it is necessary to give a short background of the dance. The Sioux Buffalo Dance was a lengthy dance. It had thirty ceremonies and it required thirty days to complete the dance. This was one of the dances which united the bands of the Sioux tribe. Each summer they would come together to hold this medicine men's dance. They used the "circle" for unity; they danced, camped, ate and sat in council in a circle. The Sioux tribe consisted of seven bands, each band slightly different from the others in mannerisms, actions, and speech. To keep these major sacred dances the same, and to strengthen the unity of the whole Sioux tribe, was the reason for the annual meetings. The straight-line construction is a personal concept of expression to gain individuality. The technique derives from the old quill and beadwork, and from an old Indian belief that a straight line symbolizes unrelenting truth of righteousness. In quill and beadwork design only straight horizontal and vertical lines are employed. My technique tends to emphasize the diagonal lines.

The ideational quality of exact representation of the Indian is stressed to reflect the true identity of man as an intellectual being. A refined conception of man's perceptive qualities is conducive to intellectual insight and the abstraction of true realism--realism meaning beauty in the "ugly."

This painting is traditional in technique but original in composition. The introduction of a painted background is a trend away from the convention of two-dimensional Indian painting. The triangular patterns denote the "three point design" of the Sioux symbols. One

point stands for Earth, one for the sky, and one represents the four cardinal points.

The meticulous detail work is observational in purpose: the painting may be seen from a distance for a general impression or it may be observed closely for the study of its parts.

The idea of the painting is to relate foreground with background in composition as well as in meaning of cosmic expression. The rhythmic and orderly patterns in color are expressive of the Indians' poetic and religious concepts of nature. Close harmony with nature is emphasized by formal abstraction as delineated by the solidity of man as he is likened to the solid forms of nature. A ritual yellow is used for the background space. The painting also expresses the time and space concepts of the dance, with its rhythmic relationship by patterns of the third-dimensional movement in space. The detail includes two-dimension as well as three-dimension with contrasts of light and dark areas. So in time each part of the dancer's dress would sway out and away from the body in space. The body movement adds to the rhythmic play of his dress during the ceremonial dance.

The dancer is a medicine man warrior as shown by his warrior breeches with horizontal stripes. The branches relate nature and animal. Sage is used to wipe perspiration from the face. A wavy line on the arms shows mysticism, and the blue line symbolizes peace. The buffalo head and skin symbolize the identity of the medicine man with his totem. The prayer sticks falling from his hand show the completion of the dance.³⁰

Howe's works have been exhibited in New York, London and Paris and he was the first recipient of the South Dakota Governor's Award for Creative Achievement in 1973. His innovative style of neo-cubist style will continue to stand as a powerful message of Native American cultural tenacity and

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[http://www.oscarhowe.org/
buffalodancer.php](http://www.oscarhowe.org/buffalodancer.php)

change. Over the course of his career he was honored by being named Artist Laureate of South Dakota. Two exhibition spaces are dedicated to showing his work: the Oscar Howe Art Gallery at the Dakota Discovery Museum in Mitchell, and the Oscar Howe Gallery at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, South Dakota. Many of his works are done in casein paint (Casein paint, derived from milk, is a fast-drying, water-soluble medium), but he also worked in graphite on paper and sculpture in stone and bronze.

His tenure at the University of South Dakota was not ideal. In Vermillion, Howe faced campus politics, which often kept him outside the mainstream of his department and seldom accorded him the recognition that should have attended his many successes. Despite these difficulties, he spent 25 years on the faculty at The University of South Dakota; and, these were wonderfully productive years. He touched the lives of many students and served as a model for Indian artists across the nation. An advocate for Indian art, Howe served as a teacher and mentor for numerous students, including many who went on to distinguished careers in art, including Arthur Amiotte, Colleen Cutshall, Donald Montileaux, Herman Red Elk and Robert Penn.

Oscar Howe died of Parkinson's Disease on October 7, 1983.



An Anishnaabe Tale

Leland Bell , “Bebaminojmat”

This is my latest work here,,, I call it the internet..Of course I'm just kidding because I'm from Wiki. I was thinking of what subject I could talk about, for quite a while. At first when Bonnie asked me or gave me the opportunity to speak I thought – oh, no, I don't think so. It's harder to speak in front of your peers sometimes, it's like speaking in front of your relatives sometimes. That's quite difficult too. So, I thought I'd talk about Anishnaabe civilization or Anishnaabe art.

I believe in anything Anishnaabe. I'm a nationalist. Like, here's a Nish microphone, Anishnaabe podium and there's an Anishnaabe modern mouse. This is an Anishnaabe plastic bottle, because I touched it. I appropriate anything I touch. I think that's what I've been doing for a living for quite a long time. I just appropriate anything it doesn't matter to me. It's mine! I have a guitar, it's an Anishnaabe guitar too. Everything about Anishnaabe to me is important. I don't know very much else. In the sense that I don't familiarize myself with other things too readily because everything is about Anishnaabe civilization. Anishnaabe this and that, is my main thing.

I'm not enamored by European traditions but what I do have is respect for other traditions, like the eastern tradition. The western tradition is not the only important tradition in the world. The African tradition is important. If you ever saw the pyramids and you walked up those steps and you wandered around in the plaza. Well what else can you say? You can look at the art.

And as far as art criticism goes I'm probably like the tree that fell in the forest, I don't care if you heard me. It doesn't bother me. What I'm noticing is this surge of Anishnaabe creativity coming forth. And I think it's unavoidable and no particular group can stop it. Maybe before it could have been stopped but now it can't because you have a surge of it taking place. It's self-identifying, it's self defining itself. And it doesn't really matter what the European tradition says, because it's not measured by that. It's the guy living down the street

from me who measures me. That's the way, as cliché as it sounds.

It's a very grass roots type of thing that's taking place and no one particular group no longer can control it in my opinion. It can't be controlled by the church. It can't be controlled by the government. It might be controlled by the army – they can control bingo games. So, I feel that the surge is coming and the creative people are expressing it.

I don't like the word "Art" because it is very limiting, you have to be hanging some work somewhere to be preserved by somebody. And I don't worry about other artists. It's like my friend said, I'll paraphrase the person,

"Do you know Picasso?" they asked him.
And he said, "What reserve is he from?"

Who cares where he's from. And that's basically what I'm trying to say when I talk about Anishnaabe civilization and Anishnaabe this and that, I'm basically saying "this is what I'm studying, this is what I'm researching, this is what I'm looking for, this is what I'm searching for." And it may or may not appeal to everybody but I can't afford for everybody to like me. But I wish you would so I could pay my hydro bill. So that's what I mean.

And I come from somewhere. I come from some place.
And the first time I met Daphne Odjig was at Schreiber Island. But I wasn't there as an artist, as a visual artist, like people would say, like painting and all that. I was there as a musician. But right at the beginning Tommy Peltier hired me as a janitor. I used to clean the toilets of the artsy fartsy guys. And it's true. They don't stink! I was telling my wife I'd try not to be funny. So anyway that's where I met Daphne though I forget exactly where. So there we were, there was a whole bunch of us there from Wiki and from West Bay, all over the place and I showed her a poem and ah So I'll just talk about other things ...And that's where I learned dignity, from her, and that's probably all I could say.

And I've always tried to practice that dignity whenever I talk to

anybody. I try to treat them with dignity, within reason. If you called me an asshole I'm gonna hit you, even though you're six foot, I could still hit you. How's that for an unacademic term? Just slipped out of my face, my Anishnaabe face.

I showed her a poem and she paid attention to me and that's what she does, she gives you recognition. I guess because she has so much strength she can do that for you and that has been her ongoing influence. And whenever I can, I try to do the same thing to other artists or painters or sculptors or whatever they are. And that's the importance for me of Daphne. She's in a league all by herself. She's in a sphere over there. She has one just to herself, that's how great she is. That's what I think anyway,

So that's where I first started to experience the so-called thing called "Art", and I remember Carl Ray. He liked to play guitar that's what I remember. He liked to sing "Tiny Bubbles" and I'd play with him "Tiny Bubbles". It's a very depressing song. But he was such a courageous man, Carl Ray, and I think he has got so much influence too. Same with Daphne. For the whole idea of Art.

Another guy I never knew painted and he's from my own reserve. I went and looked at his work one time and he says, "Eh ee here look at this," he says. 'Course we're speaking nish. I looked at it eh. It was Pinocchio! And I thought, holy shit this is great ... and that's what I really like. I really like Anishnaabe things. Another person is a guy named Alex Janvier. Later on I did see some of Morrisseau, I didn't mean to ignore or pass him by, but I wasn't that aware of Norval. And later on there were a lot of brave Indians, I'll call them for now. They actually came up at a time when "Indian" was a filthy word. Being Indian was not a good thing to be. But they got up and they looked at it and said "Yeah I'm Indian. So what?" And then later on people began to identify themselves as Odawa, Ojibway, Chippewa, Navajo, Hopi, whatever. They identified themselves tribally. Different things like that. And later on, people began to call themselves Anishnaabe. It had nothing to do with Indian Affairs. Anishnaabe! Woo! Say it again!

Anishnaabe!
That's from the Lion King.

If I can convey an attitude, a message to you, that would be it. This Anishnaabe civilization is self-identifying itself. It doesn't need the Art Gallery of Canada whatever its called, the Man and Museum or something... we don't really need those places because there's such a surge of creativity coming from our communities, not just in the visual arts. It's coming from the dancers. And you may think people that go like that [flaps arms] you can make fun of them. I heard it on the CBC, one guy called in and said, "They looked like birds." Some of them are supposed to be imitating birds. What the hell. Stupid.

So to me, you have those dances. We come from a long, long tradition of creativity. Long, long. And there's an art exhibition that's been going on, that happened just recently, and a person asked me,

"Why do you think Canadian society is now beginning to accept art. Is it because of Norval Morrisseau?" she asked.

"No," I said.

"I think they're actually growing up," I said.

Canadian Society is such a young society. You could probably remember your great grandparents. That's how young it is. But our civilization goes way, way, way back. There's even stories saying that we crossed from here and went to Egypt (I just made that up). But that's what I believe. It's a question of attitude. We're old. We're made to believe that we came across somewhere. I said to my friend, "Show me the footprint." Because who says that those people didn't come from here and then went that way and not the other way. You have to question.

Another thing is this question of preservation that some people are involved in: preservation as opposed to the notion of contemporary art. Preservation, like I alluded to, is the nature of what creativity is about. If you really examine the word and the way it's used, "put in a little jar, preserved". You mix the right things and it's strawberry

jam. Otherwise, it's rotten. And that's the nature whenever people have said to me "Well you're not a contemporary artist." Well, I was born 25 years ago. As far as I can tell I'm alive. If I pinch myself I get itchy. And that's what all those different questions are, ongoing questions, and for me they are not the questions I ask myself, because they're useless questions.

Who is an artist and who isn't an artist?

Who is an Indian and who isn't an Indian?

Who is a woman and who isn't a woman?

All right, just kidding. I'm sorry.

Anyway, what I really believe and what I've been trying to practice is Creativity. And it exists within the traditions! If you look at any tradition in the world, if you look at their philosophies, if you look at their sciences, for instance, European tradition, you know how they say science and art used to be the same in European tradition and then they separated and all that blah blah blah ... you can read about it.

You can read about the Christian orthodox iconography. You can look at Tibetan art. You can look at Australian art. You can look at Mayan art. You can look at anything. But, what is Anishnaabe? And that's what I keep coming back to. You can read about all those other things, "Blah blah blah, blah blah blah, yeah, yeah, okay." But, what is Anishnaabe?

And some people are so afraid to look at their Anishnaabeness. I don't really understand why they're so afraid to look at their Anishnaabeness. What exists in there? I'm not an evil shaman. I'm not going to zap you or I'm not going to suddenly turn into that cassette recorder, or, God forbid, a mouse. But people are afraid and they don't need to be afraid. Because within this Turtle Island, on this Anishnaabe land, is where a lot of our paradigms do exist, and if I've learned anything and I was going to briefly mention that I didn't just pop out of the air. Daphne had a great influence on me and I've always been involved in creativity, whether it's in music - I started out in music, and then writing, then my friends taught me how to paint. We learned through peer learning at the Ojibwe

Cultural Art Foundation, although I was at the Schreiber Manitou Arts Foundation before that. We learned peer learning. We didn't have an instructor, we didn't have anybody saying, "Oh! This is how you stretch this canvas." No, my friend nudged me over. We taught each other how to work. And there were lots of us and there are lots of Island artists. I'm just one of them. Blake [Debassige] is one of them. That Shirley Cheechoo there, she's part of that. James Simon. Randy Trudeau (two of them). There's Mel Madabe and the entire family.

And you run into the arts and crafts. I love beadwork. Nobody's ever going to turn me away from beadwork or birch bark or whatever it is that I read about here and there. That's where I come from, that's my history, that's the body of knowledge that I come from. And that's what I carry on my back. And it's a pleasure carrying it. It's like being five foot eight, that I am, I mean ten, six I mean. And being proud of that. You know why? Because I'm not going to get any taller. And that's what my life is about - that tradition that I'm really really proud of. And I'm thankful to Daphne Odjig, not just because she's painting and whatever. I'm thankful just for the pure fact that she's alive and has done all this work for us, and like Blake [Debassige] said, so I can stand here.

I'm not ashamed of the Woodland School of Art. You can call it whatever you like. I call it Anishnaabe Art. I called it that thirty years ago and I still call it that. I'll call it that tomorrow too. What the heck I'll call it like that for the rest of time. I'll be like Kermit the frog, I'll make a proclamation.

So that's my hero there, Daphne. But people misunderstand when I say that. They think, "I'm sure she wouldn't want me under her thumb because I'm crazy, or something like that," But she's like a hero to me. She's like Bob Marley. How Native is he? And like Bernhard Cinader. You know what I mean? Those are to me great people. Great people, right among us! And I actually know them. I touched them. In a good way though. Don't look at me like that.

So, there is a natural order probably taking place about Anishnaabe art. There will be other artists coming through. I don't know if there is such a thing as the opposite of a retrospective but if we could look ahead, I bet you there's going to be Anishnaabe art that is so strong, in the sense of being able to give to our own people, that there won't be any question in our hearts of who we are, of who we are and what we think our creativity is. Because we use the English words, we have to use them and sometimes there is a lot of misunderstanding. There's probably misunderstanding if you speak the language too.

They always say there is no word for art in our language. But there is a description of what we do. For instance: Mizinibii'aan mazinaakizon

I'm sure there are some language teachers here that know more than I do and know the linguistic aspect of our language, different things. We just have to adapt and we have to accept the fact that this just became an Anishnaabe microphone and this is Anishnaabe paper. We have to appropriate and our young people are appropriating everything left and right. They don't care if it's made in China, which is where everything is made these days. Since we are part of the global community we might as well own all of it too. And I don't know if that's what would be important to honour artists, but that's what's important to me. And I thought the most that I could do today is introduce myself to the other artists, to the other creative people. That's the most I could do.

Later on we could talk about the paradigms that we've discovered in our studies. We could talk about why, what we mean by identifying certain things, and straightening things out. For instance, it's not Wikwemikong. There's no such word as kong in our language. It's wii kwe kung. That's how we say it. And when we talk about spirit, we're not talking about a halo and flickering lights and everything and a big cross on my back and I'm going to die for all of you tomorrow, and that kind of thing. When I'm talking about spirit it's that part of you, it's close to the idea of Jungian psychology. So if anyone's familiar with that, those different types of philosophies,

it's similar to those notions. That the spirit is not about how holy and if you could turn into a bear or all this kind of junk that people like to thrive on. It's about that ability to accept that part of you that is there too, the spirit. It makes you who you are as a person. It's like your psychological part, your body part, and all the things that you always hear Indian people talk about. But the practice of it is a difficult thing for a lot of people. So the spirit is not about mysticism. It's not about that. It's a part of you that enables you to express creativity and other things. That's the way that I see it, but a lot of those things will be talked about later. But right now, the way that I see it is we're just getting acquainted and maybe some day we'll have an American Anishnaabe Fund for the Arts with no strings attached - we're not caring what you are, we just want you to create - Maybe there will come a time when we can actually visit each other and we'll create those things so we can give back to the community instead of - Oh oh, I'm making a judgement. I can feel it coming ...

We have to give back to our communities, is what I'm saying. And Daphne Odjig, that's what she's practiced all of her life and that's what she gave to me and I'm from a community. I love where I'm from. It has its problems. So does everywhere else. And I think to the non-Native people who are here, you'll see the surge, not just in the pure demographic, the rise of the Anishnaabe people in this area, we're not just talking about a thousand Indians, Nishnaabs, band members or enfranchised or treaty, non-treaty, etc. etc. And you're gonna have a hard time trying to relate to everybody because we all have different opinions, that's how great it is, that's how great the Anishnaabe people are. I might sound like a politician but I really believe that. I really believe that the greatness that Daphne has exuded in her work, I think that I come from that knowledge. That knowledge base that we've been accumulating and it's not just occurring in one place, it's occurring all over the place. That's why nobody can control it.

So on that note, (I went over by five minutes I believe) I'd like to say *chi miigwech* to everybody and thank you for listening to me. I hope this conference will serve everybody well.

Thank you Bonnie, thank you Denise.



Glenna Matoush, Requickening

Ryan Rice , "Aronienes"

I'd like to thank everybody for sticking around for us, being the last ones on the agenda. I am really happy to be able to share my work with you, and I am really honoured to be in the presence of Daphne Odjig. My paper is on artist Glenna Matoush, an exhibition that I did last summer, (1996) at Carleton University Art Gallery.

In order to expand upon the critical examination of the Anishnaabe genre, celebrated as the Woodland School of art, I feel that it is necessary to identify those other artists such as Rebecca Belmore, Michael Belmore, Barry Ace, Bonnie Devine, (who are in the room now) who have been influenced and continue to influence and enrich the philosophical and aesthetic development of this particular First Nations art practice in their respective communities and beyond, and I ask you to witness Glenna Matoush.

I first met Glenna in Montreal in 1990 and was immediately struck by her work. Over the years it became evident to me that Glenna is truly a committed artist who works diligently through the thick and thin of life's dramas. Trained as a printmaker who now works primarily as a painter, Glenna Matoush's painting style moves fluidly between the figurative and the abstract, with a significant number of her works informed directly by nature. She has a unique way in which she gathers items such as natural materials and found objects and transforms them into elements that map out a relationship between a nameless beauty, empathy and reality. She often collages birch bark, leaves, earth and stones into her paintings for a trace of sublime energy.

Matoush also addresses First Nations social and political issues in her art by deconstructing fragments of colonial oppression embedded in New World history. She bears the physical, psychological and spiritual scars of a disrupted childhood, poverty, dislocation and relocation. The raw beauty brought forth in her work establishes a strong indigenous presence and Ojibway perspective that rises above adversity cultivated from her personal and communal experiences.

The subject matter for my exhibition "Requicken: Glenna Matoush"

included the environmental destruction she had witnessed first hand in Cree territory in Northern Quebec, the despair caused by AIDS and the reclamation of indigenous cultural and traditional knowledge. Matoush's work sheds light upon the magnitude of these issues, from which many of us are isolated.

Glenna Matoush was born in 1946 on the Rama Reserve near Orillia, Ontario and was the ninth child of thirteen in the Shilling family. Due to bouts of poverty and hardship that the family endured, half of the Shilling children spent intervals at residential schools in Brantford and Sault Ste. Marie so the family could make ends meet. An artist in her own right, Glenna is a sister of the well known painter Arthur Shilling who along with another artist brother, William were influential to her interest in art at a young age. She went on to study art during the late 1960s at the Elliot Lake School of Fine Arts, the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal, the University of Alberta and Guilde Graphique until the 1980s. She moved to the Cree community of Mistissini Quebec in 1971 where she began to raise a family. Matoush adopted and adapted to the rich Cree culture she was immersed in and still interprets this in her work.

Since 1992 she has lived in Montreal where she is active in both the arts and Aboriginal communities. Apart from her family ties Matoush's connection to her community of Rama has been slight. Although she left and didn't turn back, she nonetheless carries with her the resilience of Ojibway identity, memory and history. Matoush's journey led her through to a systematic bureaucratic government transfer to another band and territory, in which she went from being an Anishnaabe in Rama to a Cree in Mississinni and eventually the urban sprawl of Montreal that silently erased her presence within an Anishnaabe traditional and cultural milieu.

By investigating the language of representation and challenging colonial disparities, Matoush's work draws attention to key social, cultural and environmental concerns that affect her, her children and her community. Her paintings function then as sites that uphold her communities' collective memories, (which includes both Anishnaabe and Cree) and knowledge for everyone to witness. Matoush's individual style addresses fragments of memory, spirituality and

dislocation while shedding light upon matters that revere the spirituality and power of the land, witnessed first hand in Cree territory in northern Quebec and upon her own return to traditional Anishnaabe knowledge and territory.

I chose to explore Glenna work thematically through a sense of healing, consolation and coming to terms with forms of grief. I felt the Haudenosaunee concept of “requicken” or “requickening” defined as to reanimate, to give new life, to quicken anew, was key in exploring curatorially while engaging critically with Glenna’s layered work. The practice of healing, rooted in many forms of indigenous traditional knowledge and cultures around the world is necessary today as a means of disarming the contemporary tragedies and disparities we encounter while guiding us to higher ground and to a place of consolation.

The traditions of healing are testament to survival, proof that we should not live with grief but rather in peace. In order to achieve peace we must first recognize and identify what negatively effects and blurs our reality, our relations with each other, as well as with the environment. Matoush employs art as a device to react not only to the dysfunctional life she has faced, but to address important issues of concern to all. Her bright coloured canvases lift the darkness that can on occasion cloud our collective mind. I saw in her paintings prayer-like expressions of hope. A testimony that faith in requickening is relevant for an optimistic community, a continuity for everyday life. With this logic and vitality embedded in her work, Matoush astoundingly pacifies manifestations of grief for peaceful resolutions, freedom and respect that restore harmony, peace and balance to the soul.

Through the act of requickening we can comfort, heal and lend hope to all levels of community in flux. Over time the term “requicken” has slowly disappeared from our vocabulary even though it is of fundamental nature, it goes counter to society’s outlook today, making it more important than ever. Nonetheless the Haudenosaunee have kept the word requicken alive as a literal translation for a section in the Condolence Ceremony, a traditional

healing custom for those seeking peace that continues to be relevant and vital in matters of diplomacy and survivance. The requickening address is one element in the Condolence Ceremony, a corner stone in an ancient Long House practice that pacifies the minds and embodies the hearts of mourners by transforming loss into strength. It is a gift promising comfort, recovery of balance, revival of spirit to those who are suffering. The symbolic gestures contained in the requickening ceremony, wiping away the tears, clearing the throat and unblocking the eyes to soothe those in a state of sorrow with support and sympathy. The essence of requickening is to pacify those in anguish so they can be led to see clearly, listen carefully and speak logically once again. The concept of requickening metaphorically affords us with moments of hope by way of recovering strength, reclaiming valuable wisdom and restoring the soul in troubling times.

As Matoush tends to life's harsh conditions in her practice and lived experiences, distilling it in her art as a part of the process of creating a gentle visual language that speaks eloquently across cultures. "My Great Grandfather Chief Yellow Head who is buried under McDonalds on Yonge Street" is one of the first works that I chose for the exhibition because while I was working at the Indian Arts Centre I would look at this piece every day and it has been embedded in my mind since then. So this painting depicts a forgotten chief's spirit resurfacing from the land unexpectedly. The piece was inspired by a Vicky Gabereau CBC radio interview with an archeologist who announced that Chief Yellow Head's remains had been discovered in downtown Toronto. The announcement stirred Matoush's childhood memories. She remembered tales of graves on Chief Island, a sacred site on Lake Couchiching being desecrated in search of a medallion buried with the chief, which was given to him by Queen Victoria. In response to this disrespectful disturbance Matoush sought to recover the well-respected Chief Yellow head's dignity and embraces him as family. She ultimately discovers that the chief was actually her great grand uncle rather than her great grand father.

"Not an Act of God" 1998 memorializes the 1986 drowning of twelve thousand caribou at Penaspisco River. This phenomenal disaster occurred when the dams at one of Hydro Quebec's installations in Northern Quebec were opened up to relieve the

swollen rivers. This irresponsible and misguided act caused the river to flow at violent speed killing the George River herd of caribou as they traveled their habitual migratory route. The following day Robert Bourassa, former premier of Quebec, made a public announcement stating it was an act of God. In "A River Disappeared and That's a Fact", Matoush acknowledges the effects of disrupting, diverting and containing a natural river flow. The overwhelming beauty and power of this ancient eco-system are depicted in her colour-saturated canvases, transforming them into sites of transition that still hold hope for the future.

"East Main River" is another painting in the series that acts as an affirmation of survival and sustenance even while the strands of hair that line the middle of the painting signify the necessary steps taken to test for chemical poisonings in humans and foreshadow potentially negative consequences to come to those communities. "Twelve Minutes to Two" is a book work that Glenna made where she honestly applies the logic of requickening in her book by injecting comments on the dismaying consequences of the global AIDS epidemic. Hand-shaped tabs invite viewers to make contact with the book in the manner of a birch bark or Midewiwin scroll. By turning each flimsy page the visitor is invited to reckon with the fragility of life to the spirit and memory of Timmy Diamond a thirty year old Cree husband and father of three who succumbed to AIDS. The bookwork metaphorically acts as a source of knowledge, creating an awareness of yet another universal social ill that has had troubling effects on Native communities.

"Shaman Transporting Souls to the Heavens" is part of an ongoing series based upon the well-known petroglyphs in the Petroglyphs Provincial Park, a sacred site near Lakefield Ontario. Matoush challenges archeologists who have hypothesized that vikings could have created the images etched in the lime stone by reclaiming the petroglyphs, particularly that of the water vessel occupied by several figures and honouring them as evidence of ancient aboriginal presence in the area. At the same time the Shaman series addresses matters of repatriation and reclamation. Matoush revives the etched forms to map a journey between heaven and earth that we all must face one day. In "Shaman Transporting Souls to the Heavens" the

petroglyph forms are reshaped, embellished and fashioned into organically replicating cell-like structures. In "Untitled", Matoush isolates a fragment to expose its DNA of the soul, a symbol of life that contains spirit, blood lines and genetic information. The hallowed vessel maintains its arduous journey by rising above adversity time after time.

"Sweat Lodge in Rama" reflects the reemergence of the traditional practices that were publicly dormant yet privately practiced for many years on the Rama Reserve. As part of her active concern for wellbeing, Matoush acknowledges the relevance of ceremony as a step towards cleansing the soul and requickening the spirit in the Ojibway community.

NOTE: A significant part of this presentation is from the catalogue produced by Carleton University Art Gallery Requicken: Glenna Matoush, published in the summer of 2005 to coincide with the exhibition of the same name.

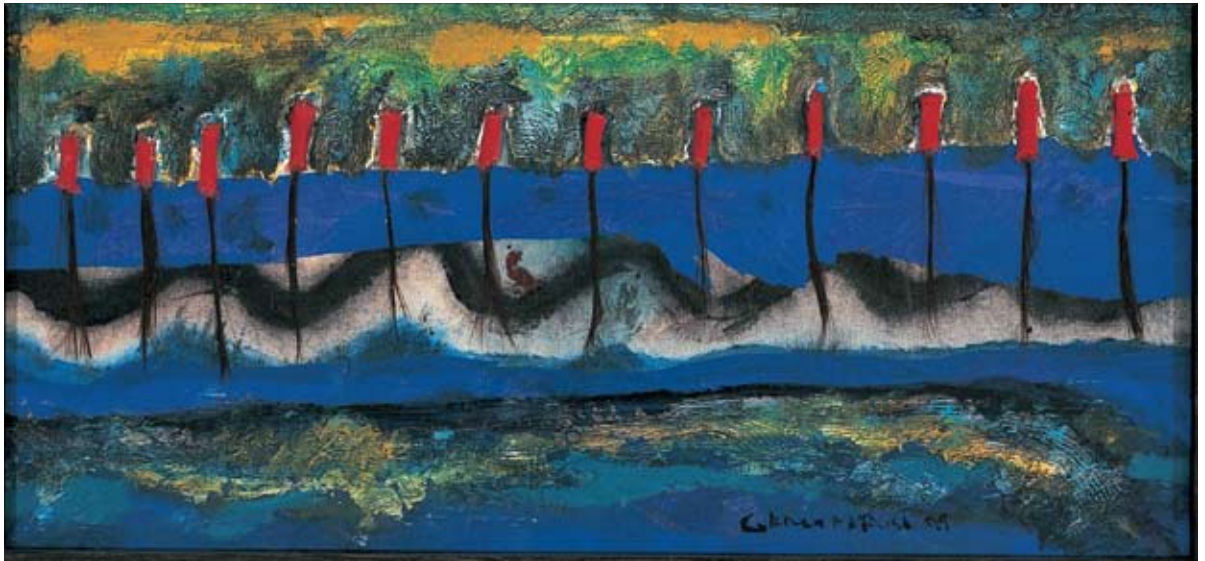
Plates

Awashish Camp
Glenna Matoush
2006

East Main River
Glenna Matoush
2006

A River Disappeared, And That's A Fact
Glenna Matoush
2006









A Curator Reflects, Towards a Haudenosaunee Perspective

Greg Hill

This talk is aimed at trying to come towards some kind of discussion about an Iroquoian or Haudenosaunee curatorial perspective.

Ryan talked about his approach to Glenna's work. I am going to talk about my approach to two exhibitions that I did independently and then how that leads into the [Norval] Morrisseau exhibition at the National Gallery.

But before I do that I just want to add my voice to the chorus of voices that we've heard all weekend congratulating and honouring Daphne Odjig at this time. I think it's been said and will be said over and over again just how much Daphne has contributed and made events like this possible. Her exhibition is, I'm happy to say, being toured by the National Gallery, and it will conclude that tour at the National Gallery. Another great thing that happened through the hard work of Bonnie [Devine] and Celeste [Scopelites] was the publishing of the catalogue in three languages and that was a major coup to get the gallery to do that. So thank you Bonnie and Celeste for your perseverance in working with the gallery to bend those rules and do all of that. I think you have really accomplished something there.

With that I'll just get into it - I'm just going to try to piece this back together as we go along.

In 1998 I did an exhibition called Tsi Karhakta: Aktatye tsi Yohate. I want to show this to you and I really wanted to start here because this is something, as an independent curator, where it's an exhibition that happened in an artist run centre, Saw Gallery, in Ottawa where you have quite a bit of freedom to do things in a very different way. And one of the things that I found in my own work in working at the National Gallery is that it's that big institution and you compromise yourself in certain ways in order to get things done and it's a process of negotiation and exchange. And hopefully it's one where things are advancing and moving forward but something does get lost along the way. And this lends itself to larger discussions about these ideas of what is an Aboriginal art what is an Aboriginal space. When we think of the broadest definition of art we include

not just the visual arts but all the arts. How do we do that? If we think that art is culture, that art is the way we do things, then how do we appropriately promote that and display it and foster it? I wanted to try to think about how I could do that as an Iroquoian person and this exhibition was a learning process for me in a way of trying to do that. The translation of Tsi Karhakta: Aktatye tsi Yohate is "At the Edge of the Woods: Along the Highway."

There is a concept of moving towards culture, moving through four stages of culture: In the woods, at the edge of the woods, in the clearing and in the LongHouse. What I wanted to do was reconceptualize the gallery as that kind of metaphorical space. So you can see there the title wall and you can see how the walls are all painted and this is a projection of Melanie Printup Hope's "Thanksgiving Address" which is an oral recitation that's done when Iroquoians come together to recognize our relationships with all living things and to bring our minds together as one. Melanie Printup Hope had done this through digital beadwork and you could click through it and get this address as the first work that you would see when you entered the exhibition. The walls are completely covered with these paintings and these paintings are the design works, the bead work designs, the clothing designs, pottery designs, the Iroquoian designs that create that kind of metaphorical forest, the "edge of the woods". So you are framed or wrapped in this metaphorical structure, this Iroquoian structure.

You enter the space and you move along this wall, you're moving counterclockwise in the space and the first work you come across is this work by Bill Powless, which I have now forgotten the title of but I have an image of it here, I had an image of it. [someone speaks from the audience] Ah, of course ... Anyway, I can describe it and you can see it. Basically it's an image of a man who's been walking through the woods, he's coming to the edge of the forest to the clearing, he's wearing a suit and tie, he's obviously had a bad time of it, he's all scuffed up, being in the woods and he's coming to the edge of the clearing. So you walk through the space into a long house structure, which is another artwork by an artist, Kelly Green, and she called this piece "The Solar Long House" and it's made of

reclaimed materials. As an urban Indian she reclaimed underground cable for the poles. She then ironed sheets of heavy duty plastic together to simulate elm bark and she created this structure, which is a long house structure that you would go inside. She had an electronic council fire which is/was basically a screen saver running on a computer and then these six sections of I beam to refer to the Six Nations and the history of ironwork, that Mohawk people, Six Nations people are known for. So there would be this council, referring to these things and you move through to this place, which was a computer station that Melanie Printup Hope had set up. What you could do there was email beads, electronic beads that you constructed on the computer and then she would sew them into an electronic wampum belt. And when you clicked on the beads you would get a message that you could email with the bead as well. It didn't completely work but it was a really good idea.

And again, when you came out of the long house you came upon this design, which is an Everlasting Tree design. In the Iroquoian conception of the world you have the Earth and then the Sky World and above the Sky World, above the Sky, you have the Everlasting Tree. And the fruit of the tree, the Everlasting Tree, are the Light that we see: the Sun. Basically the Everlasting Tree is like the Sun.

So you got a sense of that, of being wrapped, I thought, in Iroquoian culture and I wanted to try it again in a different way and did a second exhibition - I should say also that these mural paintings are the work of David Kanatawakhon Maracle, who is a language teacher at the University of Western [Ontario] who is kind of a closet artist but who came out of the closet as an artist with these exhibitions. We worked on these murals together, painting two galleries in their entirety in a very limited amount of time.

But this was a show at Harbour Front in 1999, I think, and I just pared it down to Jeff Thomas and David Kanatawakhon Maracle so we could approach it again and see how it worked. Jeff Thomas had been, if you are familiar with his work, a photographer, Onondaga, living in Ottawa, and a lot of his work is the exploration of urban centres and finding evidence of Aboriginal peoples in an urban

centre. He has done a whole body of work, photographing public sculpture, that refer to Aboriginal peoples, almost always in very stereotypical ways. Then he takes these images and represents them back to us in a very critical way. This was a website project that he'd done with Indian Affairs called "Intersection" and this was part of it called "The Gateway" but you can then see how the designs move along, the Sky Dome designs, the tree designs, water designs, the Everlasting Tree, interacting with it.

As I was telling you, the idea of Jeff's work was going out into urban centres, documenting these places. This is Place d'Arms in Montreal. He's photographed it and then juxtaposed it with Curtis photographs. Presenting those right on the wall, framed by these human figures that refer to the Six Nations each with the different Kahsto:'wah on their heads to indicate which nation they are from.

Then one of the things we did with the mural designs in this instance was to try to make it site specific but also to incorporate something that would really locate it in the present day. Being at Harbour Front you just look out the window and you see the CN Tower and the coincidentally named Sky Dome. Sky Domes are a major part of Iroquoian designs. Kanatawakhon put a reference to the CN Tower and to the Sky Dome within this mural painting.

From that to - keep that image in your mind - to Norval Morrisseau is quite a jump I think, visually and culturally and it's something that I struggled with. How was I going to take, as an Iroquoian person, an approach to this exhibition and show this work by this very important Anishnaabe artist? Basically what I thought I would try to do, and this is the whole thesis of the exhibition, was to try to approach one aspect of his work, which was this idea of Norval Morrisseau as an artist and Norval Morrisseau as a shaman and the very many different interpretations of that within Western art history, through Morrisseau himself. And just try to work through some of those layers within the exhibition. Actually, I should say, I'm really working through that more in my catalogue essay for the exhibition. The exhibition itself I think and, I hope, does some justice to Norval Morrisseau's work over the years. It was kind of a chronological

presentation of his work and hopefully you got a really good sense of how his work developed and changed over the years and the great contribution that he made not only to Aboriginal art in Canada but to art, as we understand it, in the world.

The exhibition examined some of what we've talked about. Some of the origins of Norval's art is based on his familiarity with the pictographs and petroglyphs of the region. So there are works selected to make that kind of a connection to those origins. This work as well refers to the birch bark scrolls and the kinds of drawing, the visual imagery that's informed all of his work that comes after this. And then some of the ongoing repeated imagery, the idea of transformation, the idea of Norval Morrisseau as Thunderbird, as transforming into Thunderbird, his name Copper Thunderbird, works that comment on that. But also which document and show how Morrisseau's work has changed over time. This Thunderbird work is at the Red Lake Heritage Centre, and just as an aside, I think it was announced earlier, they are organizing an honouring for Norval I think in July of this year, of 2008. And then a slightly earlier work by Norval, a work on birchbark, and you can see again this idea of transformation. So Norval, the Shaman and the Thunderbird.

In the catalogue I wanted to place Norval's work within the context of a Western art history from our perspective, from this perspective, and I thought one way to do that would be, (and much has been said this weekend about how work is quoting the work of non-Native artists), not how we look at Picasso but how did these artists look at us? It's a question that's being raised all the time. I wanted to look at how some western artists have appropriated the idea of Shaman, how they exploit that in their own work and how that feeds into interpretations of Norval as well.

Yves Klein was one of those artists that I looked at and one aspect of his work was that he was a Rosicrucianist and he in particular was interested in the idea of transcendent flight, of transcending the body and flying, and he published a newspaper to announce a performance that he had done which was basically throwing his body off of the roof of garage. There you see him flying and

documenting this as an example of how he had achieved flight. But what you don't see is that he had attempted this a couple of times, really hurt himself badly and in this instance the photograph has been doctored. He was a judo master, and he has six of his students there to catch him. They have been edited out of the photograph. So when you look at the actual photograph and you see this curious darker gray area, that would have been where they were.

And then, Joseph Beuys. So, Joseph Beuys too, a German performance artist, built a lot of his career on the idea that he crashed his plane, was rescued by indigenous people and that they wrapped him up in fat and felt, which became the signature materials for the rest of his career. And none of it was true apparently. This performance called, "I Like America and America Likes Me" circa 1975, was how he enacted the idea of being a shaman himself. He literally flew himself into the space by plane but also was transported by ambulance on a stretcher. He never touched the ground in America. They got into the space that he had created in the gallery, which was a caged in space where there was a feral, a wild coyote. And he was put in in that space for a week. Living with this coyote, with his signature accoutrements, the cane, his hat, these big boots that he wears, and this felt for sleeping, for protection. But here you see coyote ripping the felt off and I think that says a lot about the kind of exposure that I think happened in this instance. Or I like to look at it that way.

Let's just look at a picture of Norval. That's Norval circa 1995. Recent updates are that his health is very good and he will be hopefully appearing in New York for the final showing of the Norval Morrisseau exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian, which happens on Thursday. It's really fantastic that he's going to be there.

Finally, just to go back to artists that work with the idea of Shaman, I wanted to talk about an Aboriginal artist as well. So James Luna, a performance artist, Lusieno, does a lot of work all over the world and is doing quite a bit of work up here in Canada as well. He had a really interesting thing to say I think, about the idea of working

with spirituality. He says himself that "I'm not trying to disassociate myself from my people, from tradition, I'm trying to clear a space for it in the modern world." This was a performance, actually a promotion for a performance that he did at the Venice Biennale in 2005 called *Luminato I believe*. And what he did over a period of four days was a repetitive act around the circle of stones and you see there cans of Spam and other items that make a very different kind of reference to the present day, and to the conditions of Aboriginal peoples and ways. And as he performed the ceremony, as he danced around and walked around the stones he would periodically change his outfit and he went through a series of different stereotypical ways of dressing himself, invoking different kinds of stereotypes and it became something that transcended just that, that level of critique that was just about stereotyping and it became ... people were moved by his performance, by his repetition. I think it created a different kind of space.

Norval himself has made use I think of a whole variety of approaches to shamanism in his own work. He has always referred to himself as a shaman. I think he has his own particular understanding and expression of that and it comes through quite strongly in works like this. This is a 1983 piece called "Androgeny". It's in the collection of the Department of Indian Affairs in Gatineau and in it you can see that he is capturing a whole world view. In curating this exhibition and in working with Norval, I really think that it is the work itself that is communicating Norval's own interpretation of what it means to be an Anishnaabe person, what it means to be an Anishnaabe artist, and this differs very much in the kind of approach that I had taken with the other exhibitions that I showed you. I wanted to do that to contrast the different views but also to put out to all of you the question of how do we approach the display of our own work, how do we approach the display of other aboriginal cultures from ourselves because, we are trying to think about this idea of having an Aboriginal perspective. Well, just what aboriginal perspective is that? And how can we respect the diversity of those very different approaches? And then try to communicate that in this way, in an exhibition, in an institution like the National Gallery. These are questions that I would put out to everyone and I think we have time

to discuss it a little further too and that is the format I think for this final talk and I thank you all for our attention.

Q & A largely inaudible

(Asking about the wall paintings, if there were female figures depicted in addition to men.)

Greg Hill:

It may be more appropriate to say that those figures come from wampum belt designs so I'm sure there are female figures as well but in that instance it's referring to the nations and the depictions of the nations with the male figures in their Kahsto:'wah but I'm not sure, Ryan [Rice], do you know more contemporary work?

Ryan's answer is inaudible

Greg Hill: the short answer is I'm not sure. But if there aren't then you should make some.

Question: How do we balance trying to write about work in a way that captures the specificity of the artist's culture if that culture is not our own? How do we walk that fine line?

Greg Hill: to address the issue of the cultural specificity of an artist's work and present that (and while you were asking that I was thinking that it should be in dialogue first with the artist) and how do we write complexly about an artists work and how do we walk that fine line where we don't sink into something we don't want to do?

Ryan Rice: I've worked with several Anishnaabe artists over the years and I guess it's specific to how you want to frame their art work. Two years ago I did a two-person show with Barry Ace and Maria Hupfield and both of them have a lot of play in their work. So I was looking at the idea of "Trickster" and how Trickster has become sort of a generic term within the arts discourse and people are constantly saying "Oh, that's Trickster" and set it aside sort of, so I wanted to delve deeper into the idea of Trickster and focus it on the teachings that they learned from Nanabush and Nanabozho and how that

informed their art work. So I took that approach.

In working with Carl Beam I looked at more of a pan Indian approach, because his work reaches many levels, and it was more of an idea of Gerald Visener's Survivance Theory. So that's how I approached that.

I did an Iroquois show also that was mainly looking at all the elements that are involved within the traditions and culture. So I guess it depends on each exhibition and I think you have to respect the culture when you're dealing with a solo show. In a group show it's more of a larger picture that you're painting or putting together.

I worked with Mary Ann [Barkhouse] and Michael [Belmore] in another show so I was looking at more how they use traditional elements that enter their work to become contemporary pieces. I think Michael's was a wampum belt, Mary Ann's was button blankets, so looking at honouring and respecting those traditions and doing the research and dialoguing with the artists. But of course I would specialize more in Iroquoian stuff rather than say West Coast stuff, but you know, just to be respectful and make sure that you don't step on anybody's boundaries or do the wrong thing.

Question: This is a question for Greg. I'm hoping you can tell us, as an Iroquois, curating an Ojibway artist such as Norval Morrisseau, what were the essential similarities and differences between the Ojibway and the Iroquois iconography?

Greg Hill: I think that one of the things that you could see, that I hope is obvious, is that there aren't a lot of similarities between Norval Morrisseau's work and the kind of work that I was showing you in the previous two exhibitions, at least there are not a lot of similarities to me. When I look at it. I'm sorry, was there another part to your question?

Question: When you were working very closely with Norval's work, was there anything that you recognized from the traditional images that you saw when you were growing up Iroquois?

Greg Hill: As I was growing up Iroquois. That's an interesting statement actually. I grew up in Fort Erie Ontario, I think I grew up as a Fort Erian, and I've had to learn what it means to be Iroquois and my whole process of gaining an understanding of what Aboriginal art was, interestingly started off with artists like Norval Morrisseau and with Daphne [Odjig]. Because these are the artists that had the publications in the libraries when I was a student in art school trying to figure out what kind of direction I would take and just what does it mean to be an Aboriginal artist. It was Norval Morrisseau that I came across first, so in developing those concepts I guess I started there and then actually had to go through the process of rejecting that as I learned more about my own traditions and I knew that I wanted something that was truer to myself. That kind of personal process is hopefully interesting and answers your question I'm sure.

Question: I heard you mention during your talk Greg that Norval Morrisseau may be going to New York City, which think is fantastic. I had heard that he probably would not be going but now you had mentioned that he is going to be there. Is that a change of heart and health for him? I think it is wonderful that he will be there.

Greg Hill: It's not a change of heart, it's just his health is good. The last information that I had was that he wasn't going to be able to make it but I think it's great that now he apparently is.



Closing Remarks, Carrying the Vision

Alex Janvier

Hello!

How are you?

*Half sleeping or... this is not going to be an intellectual exercise here.
So relax.*

I'm Alex Janvier.

I'm an artist.

I've been one since... I've known since I was called an artist at the age of twelve and went on to do something about it. By the time I was fifteen I was already being called an artist. I didn't know what that was, but that's what I was called.

I was called a lot of other names too. In that residential school, you know. But one thing that was absolute in all that time, 287 Cold Lake was me, and I'm still 287 to this day, by the Department of Indian Affairs.

And that kind of story does a lot of unusual things to your life. It tears your language, your culture, your beliefs and so on. They probably removed a lot of it. But one thing that stayed with me was my language. I was able to speak my language to the end and I still do.

And somewhere in my life I got turned off with everything and I went to an art school. I was painting since I was the age of twelve. They called me an artist and I didn't know what it meant anyway. But that's what I did.

And I was sent to college in North Battleford and I didn't realize at the time there was a thing that was happening behind my back, that they were educating me to become a Catholic priest. I didn't know that. At the time I wasn't too aware of the ladies and what could happen between me and a lady. So, I was kind of dumb at that level. So they had me in the collar for a while and that changed my direction and thinking.

You know, I suddenly realized, what the hell are these guys doing to my life, you know? Here I am, you know, Dene, from Cold Lake.

I have a language, I have a belief that I was told that I would go to hell with and they offered me one that would take me to heaven. And there was a change of manner in that which I called God. And I got pissed off with that of course.

But in the meantime I kept painting, painting, painting, and like I said they called me an artist and I didn't know what the hell that meant, but I enjoyed what I did.

What really happened from there is kind of history, little by little. And before I go too far I'd like to congratulate my old friend Daphne. She was a ringleader in this Group of Seven that they used to call it, mockingly comparing us to the Canadian Group of Seven, and the newspapers picked it up as such.

We were eight, actually, including Bill Reid. I can count eight. There are four of us still alive and four have gone by. And we've all brought this thing forward. We didn't know exactly what we wanted to do. But we had a vision, and that vision is what you are listening to today. In the variations are the visions that you've heard about today.

It's here.

You are the living listeners to that vision that started under the tutelage of that lady over there. That white haired lady, you know. Norval Morrisseau used to call her the British subject, because her mother was British I guess and I didn't understand all that. There was a funny humour that went around, those Nishnaabe had a funny humour. I never understood it. And they still have that too, I think. But I'm not here to call a fight.

Anyway though, one thing that did happen, is that we were instrumental, eight people, that changed the world, the art world in Canada. And as timid and as [*applause*] unorganized as we were, we went on and something did happen. We always believed that we had some kind of a vision and I'm going to speak on that today.

So far, you know, we've talked about a lot of things.
You know there was a vision seven generations ago, about us. And those people are gone now. Now we have to have a generational, a seven-generation vision today, because we want this thing to reach the generations ahead of us.
And we're not going to die.
We're not going to be eliminated.
This is our country.
This is where we belong.
This is us.
The land is us and we are the land and everyone of us knows that, down deep inside and wants to carry it as a vision for you, vision for us, into the next, seventh generation.

And I believe that all of you have come for something, you wanted to hear something.

Well, one of us is still alive, er, there are four of us are still alive, one can't make it today and there's two sitting out there, Daphne and Joe Sanchez and myself and we started this vision sometime in the early seventies mostly and then we went on to change and rip apart the apartheid Canadian art, borrowed art from Europe, borrowed art from the United States and it was called Canadian art. And we were not elected to even participate. Anyway, we went on and it didn't matter to us. We were disorganized and as disorganized as we were, we just pushed ahead.

We needed some rubber stamp to this whole situation that was called "Indian Art", you know, and it was a thing that was shoved aside to the museums. And so, we were compared with the War Museum and the Art Museum of Indians and we were shoved in there somewhere. But we had a different idea. We had a different view about this.

So Daphne had a place in Winnipeg and we used to congregate there and in those days for a hundred dollars you could go from Edmonton to Winnipeg and back on an airplane, almost first class. (You know, you were always the seat behind first class, that's about

the highest level that most Indians get to, you know.) And that's where some of us made it. Mine was way back in the last seat. I was in the cheapest paid chair.

But we had a vision and we believed that we had something. And we were not equally the same, not one of us. Some of us were educated in art schools and the other ones were non-educated in the art school of hard knocks. And with both ends we started to fill this vision as quickly as we could.

We had several attempts at getting together at Daphne's place in Winnipeg, the eight of us ... you know ... sometimes we'd almost have a fight. Some old rivalries from way back would come in every once in a while and the Haidas would pick on the Anishnaabes. They'd never had a fight before but I guess one was coming.
[laughter]

And that's about the way it was. But you know something, we stuck together in spite of all that, in spite of our differences and you know I was really honoured to see Daphne get honoured here in this gathering because that is a very special woman. She put up with the rest of us crazies you know. And we were crazy. I mean we had all kinds of funny ideas. Morrisseau wanted to take this whole show to Russia you know. He wanted to dance underneath the chandeliers with a chosen woman of his first choice.

So we sent this guy, John Dennehy, the name won't mean a whole lot to you but he meant a lot to us. We used to call him God because we used to get him to do impossible things for us. So he tried to get us into Russia to have the first major shocking show in the world and we couldn't even get past the Russian embassy because of the Cold War.

Anyway, we had other Cold Wars with the Canadian government. We had to open up a lot of doors. And so, we exhibited from town to town and city to city. But we never had the approval. We always had the snickering journalists making fun of us behind our backs of

course. None of them ever smiled or laughed in front of us. You know their papers, their writings would come out kind of comparative, comparing us to the so-called Canadian Group of Seven.

The story started somewhere in the west. I think Vancouver was the first show, and then we went down the line. But we still needed a rubber stamp approval for what we were doing. And so we asked John Dennehy to negotiate a show at the Dominion Gallery in Montreal. And we knew that the famous Max Stern would be the man that would probably okay this show and if he okays it then we were in, you know?

So we did that and we had a show at the Dominion Gallery. And it changed. We finally got that rubber stamp and then other gallery owners started to open up their doors, kind of half-squintingly and haha, you know. You know they tell you stories, "I'm a friend of so and so, that Indian guy, a real good Indian", so we had all kinds of wild stories thrown at us like that. They were all in love with us! One by one!

But what really happened there was the beginning of the vision. And in 1962 in Yorkville in the great city of Toronto, Morrisseau busted it wide open. The show - in ten minutes - sold everything. And the awareness became much more, comparatively, successful. And from then on we began to change the art world in Canada. And that's what we - didn't plan it that way, but we were there, and our works started to work for themselves, the paintings started to speak for us, you know.

We didn't have to defend ourselves anymore.
We didn't have to defend our work.
We just painted and it was starting to be on the move.

And all of us we never got a bloody grant through those years. Everybody else in Canada was getting grants for this and that and that and this and that. Us, we couldn't even get even a fucking nickel from nobody. So we had to do it out of our own pocket. We

had to scrounge. I had to scrounge to fly back and forth to Daphne's home base in Winnipeg. And every time I came to the airport they didn't even have to bother asking, Winnipeg? Then they'd give me the ticket.

So, that's how we got started. Once we got Max Stern, Dr Max Stern's rubber stamp, the world of art changed. And from that day on it became something that never happened before in Canada. We were starting to exhibit in regular galleries and so on.

Now, it sounds like this is a wonderful thing. But the main galleries, the National Gallery and all the other galleries that are funded by government and so on, wouldn't even look at us. It was an impossible thing to do. So we had a Cultural Apartheid right here, right in this so-called free country and we still have to deal with that.

But none of us stopped painting. We just kept going. And individually we developed in our own directions and our own levels. And all of us survived. We survived one year. Then we would celebrate again, you know get together and plan for another one, another show somewhere. And this is the way it started.

And I'm glad we stood up for that because if we didn't do that, we'd probably still be in the same do - going to the museums and being pushed down and that. While everybody else is getting government - your tax dollars is pushing all the other artists up, but your tax dollars didn't come down to our level. And it's still like that today. But I did see a lady here that was sitting here yesterday and she is now working inside the Canada Council and she's going to get us some more bucks you know. Boy! Nice promises eh? *[laughter]* But it usually doesn't come that easy.

The fact is that we are honouring someone who stood in front of us boys and she's a strong lady and I really am happy that I came. As usual I paid my way you know and I did it again. But they decided to let me bed down somewhere, somebody's going to pay for my bed while I'm here. So that's good, at least I'm getting something out of this raw deal you know. *[laughter]*

Anyway. There are people who are gone now.

Carl Ray is gone.

He was full of mischief, full of beans, up in the air. When he'd get a room he'd have a case of whiskey you know. And he would drink it just like water and he would talk and talk and talk.

And Jackson Beardy. If you ladies haven't seen a playboy, why, that guy trying to play that role like you wouldn't believe. Jewels on, boy, he was a real...the man to be.

Eddy [Cobiness] was more traditional. He was the man to go to when we were absolutely stuck. We would finally go to Eddie. And Eddie would give us a simple and straight answer and it would be right to the point and usually it was the right answer.

And the rest...

Like Daphne, always had her doors open, any time, like a mother to the rest of us fools running around in circles.

And Joe [Sanchez], he was the baby of the whole works. But he was a playboy, you know. He had the barbell curled-up moustache that he's still got there. He's displaying it yet. I don't know what the hell for. He's getting grey. But the barbells don't seem to change colour, so maybe he just sticks it on you know?

But that's the way we were you know. We were just a conglomerate of different people and that's where we made history come alive.

We didn't know that, we were too engrossed in the change ups and the intolerance of the art world of that moment. They are still intolerant today. They don't give us as much. Canada Council, I hear we had a lady here that would change all that. But she's been in there quite a while and I haven't seen too many bucks come across yet. We're going to have to apply for big bucks. So get that in your head. Don't go home without thinking about those big bucks you can get from the Canada Council. I want you to get a big chunk of money.

That's the vision. The vision was started a long time ago and now you're going to complete it and turn it into a preparation for the next seventh generation to come.

You know we've had people way back, in seven generations, way back, they thought of us one day. That we would continue our type of people.

We are the people of this land.
And the land is us.

And we are the people who are going to change what we want to change. And we want it, we know that. It's in our children's blood and in our grandchildren's blood and you know that that is where we're heading. We were told that's where we're heading.

You know if you think back from the stories of your grandfathers and grandmothers, they had already forecast what was to come and today that's where we're at.

You know we're the most beautiful people on earth and we keep putting our heads down feeling shame. Of what? Something we were told, that we're savages and that we ain't going to go to heaven and we're going to go to hell. We're in hell already! What the hell we got to worry about? Why labour it more?

And I would like to give that vision to each and every one of you
You came for a conference to hear something and to hear somebody
and here it is.

You can change your life.
You can change the way you think.
The way you've been forced to think.
You can undo that.
You can go to the ceremonies.
You can go to the sweat lodges.
You can go to the elders.
They still have some secrets that they haven't told you yet.

And you gotta ask.
And if you don't ask you ain't gonna get it.

We'd rather go and ask the Indian Affairs right? About our culture?
That's a hell of a position to put ourselves in. They don't know
anything about us. They don't know a whole lot about us.
But you know something?

We know who we are.
We know our land.
We know a lot of things about the life around the land
and that's what was handed down to us.

That's our vision. That's the bottom line of all our dreams, the dream
that was passed on to us, the seventh generation down the road.
Now we have to pass that on to the seventh generation from here
and they too can pass it on and that's our job, to pass it on.

My message is quite simple:
to realize who we are. We're the best people, the strongest people.
We've been tested in every way and yet we survived.

So we are the land and the land is us.

And if you have heard it, go home to your campfires and tell your
people what you heard. Tell your children! Pass it on! That's how I
got it. They passed it on to me and I almost lost it in the residential
school. I almost lost it in trying to become a white man. And every
time I used to drink, man, I was a white man every night. That was a
crazy thing to be but, I see now. I asked a white man one time, how
do you guys do that? You know, how did you become a white man?
How come you are so successful and you're this and that? He said,
"I don't know." That's what he told me. He didn't know!

So sometimes I think we exercise thinking beyond our position. We
are who we are. Whoever Anishnaabe is, it's in your heart, it's in your
spirit, it's in your body.

And while you're still breathing you've got every right to follow that to the seventh generation.

And this is all I'm going to say.

I successfully defended ourselves through the painting.

My paintings are just about who I am, where I've been, what I've seen and what I have painted about is about what the hell happened to us.

And with that, I'd just love to take you out for dinner, but I can't afford it.

Thank you very much.

-A Witness Scrapbook-



*Honour Song, Debbie Robertson
photo: Wanda Nanibush*



*Daphne Odjig
photo: Margo Little*



*Celeste Scopelites and Bonnie Devine
photo: Margo Little*



*John Rodriques, Mayor of Sudbury,
and Angela Recollet
photo: Margo Little*

-The Gallery and the Symposium-



*Daphne Odjig, Bonnie Devine
photo: Wanda Nanibush*



*Margo Little, Alan Corbiere
photo: unknown*



*Joseph Sanchez, Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier
photo: Margo Little*



*Angela Recollet
photo: Wanda Nanibush*



*Leland Bell
photo: Margot Little*



*Denise Bolduc,
Mistress of Ceremonies
photo: Wanda Nanibush*



*Shirley Cheechoo,
Blake Debassige
photo: Margot Little*

-Blues Night-



Jacques and the Shakey Boys
photo: Wanda Nanibush



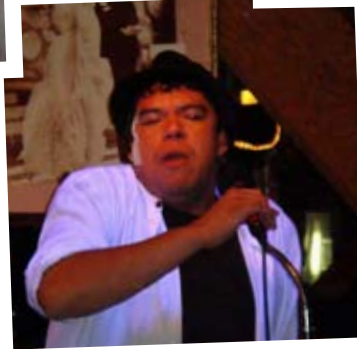
Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Greg Hill, Bonnie Devine,
Robert Houle
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Greg Hill, Steve Loft
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Karaoke fever,
Joe Osawabine
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Daphne Odjig, Joseph Sanchez
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Harry Ace, Ryan Rice
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Karaoke Fever 2, These Boots are
Made For Walkin', Rebecca Belmore
photo: Wanda Nanibush



Alex Janvier, Joseph Sanchez
photo: Wanda Nanibush

-The Performances-



*Red Road, Rebecca Belmore
photo: Wanda Nanibush*



*Dear Daphne, De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group
photo: Wanda Nanibush*



Tom Peltier, Jomin
photo: Wanda Nanibush

That's our vision. That's the bottom line of all our dreams, the dream that was passed on to us, the seventh generation down the road. Now we have to pass that on to the seventh generation from here and they too can pass it on and that's our job, to pass it on.

- Alex Janvier