



Robert Houle - Clip 2

Identity: Nature and Culture

I think, for example, *The Place Where God Lives*, which was created in 1989, when I was artist in residence at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, it came. Two very important things about that, one is, and it has been a very important part of my identity, being from the prairies, was the horizon, the big open sky and it's a cliché, but it's also very true, and I never realized that, until... 'cause I left quite young the prairies in the early 70s, 1970 I came out East. I went to school in Montreal, which was an entirely different landscape. Certainly the horizon was different. So when I went back, I realized not only was the light different, but the horizon was different, and also there was always this ambiguity between the sky and the ground, especially in winter and in the prairies, and at certain times of the day. And I realized that had become a very, very important part of, of how I see life and I guess, sort of the openness, the space, and I guess the other one is Kanata, which is really a rethinking or, a rewriting, if you will of history, of how I see, of how I position myself as an aboriginal artist or as an aboriginal person, and some of the work that I have done has been focussed on this identity, an identity that at times is quite, quite complex. And at times as a young man, and very young, quite dysfunctional, dysfunctional for several reasons. If you were

removed from your family at the age of six, and to go to a Residential School, and to be forced to speak another language, and to also to be punished because you are participating in family rituals and in family things that are natural, and to go back into the residential school on a Sunday evening, and then to be asked to be punished because, and told that you have been worshipping false Gods. These kind of things make you become, to some extent probably very complex and very, that kind of specificity leads to a certain type of personality I would imagine, and for me it certainly has. But as I get older, I realize that it has played an important role in the content, the specificity of my work. It's also made me a lot more, it has given me a lot of character. It's given me a lot of scars, but scars that I'd rather, rather display quite, quite openly.

