

# GATHERING PLACE

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



Assemblée  
législativ  
de l'Ontario



## ***Gathering Place* - Birth of the Project:**

Artwork lines the hallways and is peppered through the rooms of Ontario's Legislative Building. Landscapes, genre scenes and portraits of Ontario's past Lieutenant Governors, Premiers and Speakers showcase the history and traditions of our province. However the story told is incomplete, lacking the narratives of the province's varied peoples.

As the seat of Ontario's provincial parliament, the Legislative Building is a physical symbol representing our province and a space that can celebrate Ontario's many voices. The goal of *Gathering Place* is to bring forward and honour the experiences of the many Indigenous peoples living in Ontario, as well as to build a bridge of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Indigenous artists and communities from across the province have generously loaned their artwork and cultural expressions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for this project.

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario is humbled to have *Gathering Place* housed within its walls, a lasting and living legacy of the rich Indigenous presence in the province.

We continue to source new Indigenous artwork for *Gathering Place*, if you would like to participate or know someone who may be interested, please contact 416-325-8094.

## Indigenous Peoples in Ontario

The origins of Indigenous people living in what is now Ontario go back thousands of years before the first European settlers arrived. After countless movements, migrations, and relocations, there are several main cultural groups that make up contemporary Indigenous communities in the province. First Nations, Métis and Inuit are three separate peoples with distinct heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Most First Nations living in Ontario today fall under two broad language groups – Algonquian and Iroquoian (also called Haudenosaunee). Within these larger groups, each First Nation has their own unique community, history and culture. The two rooms housing *Gathering Place* have been re-named to reflect the two language groupings – **Ninoododadiwin**, “harmony” in the Ojibwe language (from the Algonquian group) and **Ē dwaę na ga da:t**, “we will raise our voices together in unison” in the Cayuga language (from the Iroquoian group). These names reflect the goal of the project, to bring diverse peoples together to build relationships and mutual understanding.

Ontario is also home to a strong Métis community - a distinct Indigenous people descended from the unions of European fur traders and First Nation women. Additionally, a number of Inuit people now live in Ontario, even though the province is not their traditional homeland. The word “Inuit” means “the people” in the Inuit language of Inuktitut.

Within the countless artistic traditions and techniques practiced by the numerous Indigenous groups living in Ontario, several shared threads emerge. Many of the works on display in *Gathering Place* highlight the relationship between art and spirituality, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and their land, and the healing qualities of art and cultural expressions.





## On the Grounds of the Mississaugas of the Credit

The area of Queen's Park was an important gathering place for First Nations communities. The now underground Taddle Creek – known as Ziibiing ("at the river") in the Anishinaabemowin language spoken by many Algonquian First Nations – ran through the area and groups would congregate here every spring to fish.

Today, Ontario's Legislative Building sits on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The land was once home to other distinct Indigenous groups as well, including the Huron-Wendat and the Haudenosaunee.

W.G. Storm, 1857  
©Archives of Ontario, Horwood fonds (626).1





These three mural panels are a visual depiction of the history of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, from creation to present-day. The original mural was painted directly on the walls of the library at the Lloyd S. King Elementary School, in the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation community. It was created collaboratively by Indigenous artists Philip Cote, Rebecca Baird and Tracey Anthony, with help from aspiring local youth artists.

The panels were originally reproduced to be showcased at the Toronto 2015 Pan Am & Parapan Am Games. As the Host First Nation for the games, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation used their beautiful murals to showcase their long and storied history to the world.



*Kiinwi Dabaadjmowin*, 2015  
Philip Cote, Rebecca Baird, Tracey Anthony  
On loan from the Mississaugas of the  
Credit First Nation





**Russell Raven** (b. 1964) is a Mohawk artist and proud member of the Wolf Clan. His interest in art developed as a child when learning to hunt, fish and live in nature. He draws inspiration from the land, wildlife, and his spiritual journey and connections with the Creator. Russell works in all mediums including painting, sculpting and photography, and is also a renowned chef and tattoo artist. He currently resides in northern Ontario, living close to the land.

*I Had a Dream* is a multimedia mural inspired by a dream – Russell awoke early one morning to a messenger from the Creator pushing him to tell the story of Indigenous history through his art. *I Had a Dream* tells the story of the Haudenosaunee people from creation, to colonization and slavery, to treaties signed under duress, residential schools, and the loss of traditional lifestyle on reserves. It finishes on a hopeful note, with the Chiefs and the Canadian government coming to a peaceful reconciliation and joining forces as equal powers to lead the land together.

While painting *Clifford's Closet Medicine Man*, a smudging ceremony was held to honour the Haudenosaunee ancestors. Russell asked the Creator to invite pure and positive energy into his painting, and to cast out all negative energy. He hopes that those who view this medicine man receive the positive energy in which it was created.

*Clifford's Closet Medicine Man*  
Russell Raven  
Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River  
On loan from the artist



*I Had a Dream*  
Russell Raven  
Mohawk, Six Nations of the Grand River  
On loan from the artist



**Barry Pottle** is an Inuk artist from Nunatsiavut in Labrador (Rigolet), now living in Ottawa. Through his photography, he looks to capture the uniqueness of the Ottawa Inuit community - which has the largest urban population of Inuit outside of Canada's north. The concept of urban Inuit is relatively new and unexplored, and Pottle gives voice and reality to this emerging society through his art.

In the 1940s and '50s, the Canadian government developed the Eskimo Identification Tag as a means of identifying Inuit for census purposes. The program provided each individual with a unique number that was a precursor to the Social Insurance Number of today. Inuit people either wore their tag or had to memorize their number. Pottle's *Awareness* series showcases the history and effect of the Eskimo Identification Tag program on Inuit communities and individuals, both the positive and negative.



*Awareness 1 & 2, 2009 - 2010*

Barry Pottle

On loan from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada  
(INAC)



**Tim Doctor** (b. 1988) is a multi-racial artist who lives and works in Brantford, Ontario. He started taking an interest in art as a child, and today his artistic style is often influenced by his experience with street art. In addition to being an artist, Doctor is a single father, raising his son.

*Turtle* symbolizes an important aspect of the Haudenosaunee creation story. The turtle represents the animals that the land was first created by, and the back of the turtle has 13 segments which represent the 13 full moons in one year.



*Turtle*, 2017  
Tim Doctor  
Cayuga, Six Nations of the Grand River





### **Mukluks**

These mukluks were locally made out of split moosehide. Winters are cold and snowy in Marten Falls First Nation, located in northern Ontario, and the mukluks are worn to protect from the elements.

### **Moccasins and Mittens**

Crafted out of moosehide by local artisans in Marten Falls First Nation, the beaded designs on these mittens and moccasins symbolize life, Mother Nature, and all the natural elements.

### **Tamarac Birds**

Tamarac birds symbolize the cultural activities surrounding the goose hunt in the Marten Falls First Nation. Each spring, hundreds of fowl are collected. In the past, the Tamarac birds were also made in larger sizes to use as decoys.

### **Canoe Paddles**

Locally crafted in Marten Falls First Nation, these paddles are designed for shallow water use. When boating on the Albany River, the paddles can also be used as poles in the shallow areas.



All objects on loan from  
Marten Falls First Nation





**Martin Panamick** (1956 -1977) was an important member of the Manitoulin School of Art. He used stylized and symbolic forms to depict Ojibwe legends and themes such as interconnectedness, spirituality, and the co-existence between the human and animal realms. Panamick's life was tragically cut short by a motorcycle accident when he was 21, but he remains a significant presence in the Manitoulin School of Art.

*Jakabaysh and the Big Fish, 1976*  
Martin Panamick  
M'Chigeeng First Nation, Manitoulin Island  
On loan from the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Museum



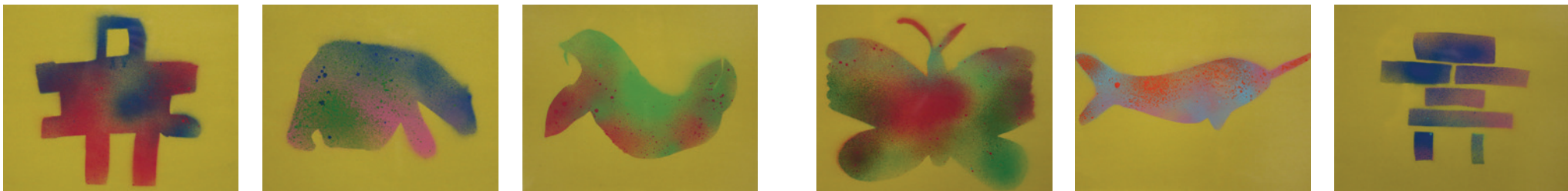
**Blake Debassige** (b. 1956) is a renowned member of the second generation of Ojibwe artists who practice the Woodland School of Art, popularized by artist Norval Morrisseau. Ojibwe legends feature prominently in his pieces, and Debassige champions many issues through his artwork, such as environmental degradation and Indigenous language preservation.

Tobacco ceremonies are conducted by many First Nations. The ceremony, also known as a smudging ceremony, can be performed for a variety of purposes such as to open or close a community meeting, as part of a healing ceremony, or to honour the spirit world.

*Tobacco Ceremony*, c. 1975  
Blake Debassige  
M'Chigeeng First Nation, Manitoulin Island  
On loan from the  
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Museum



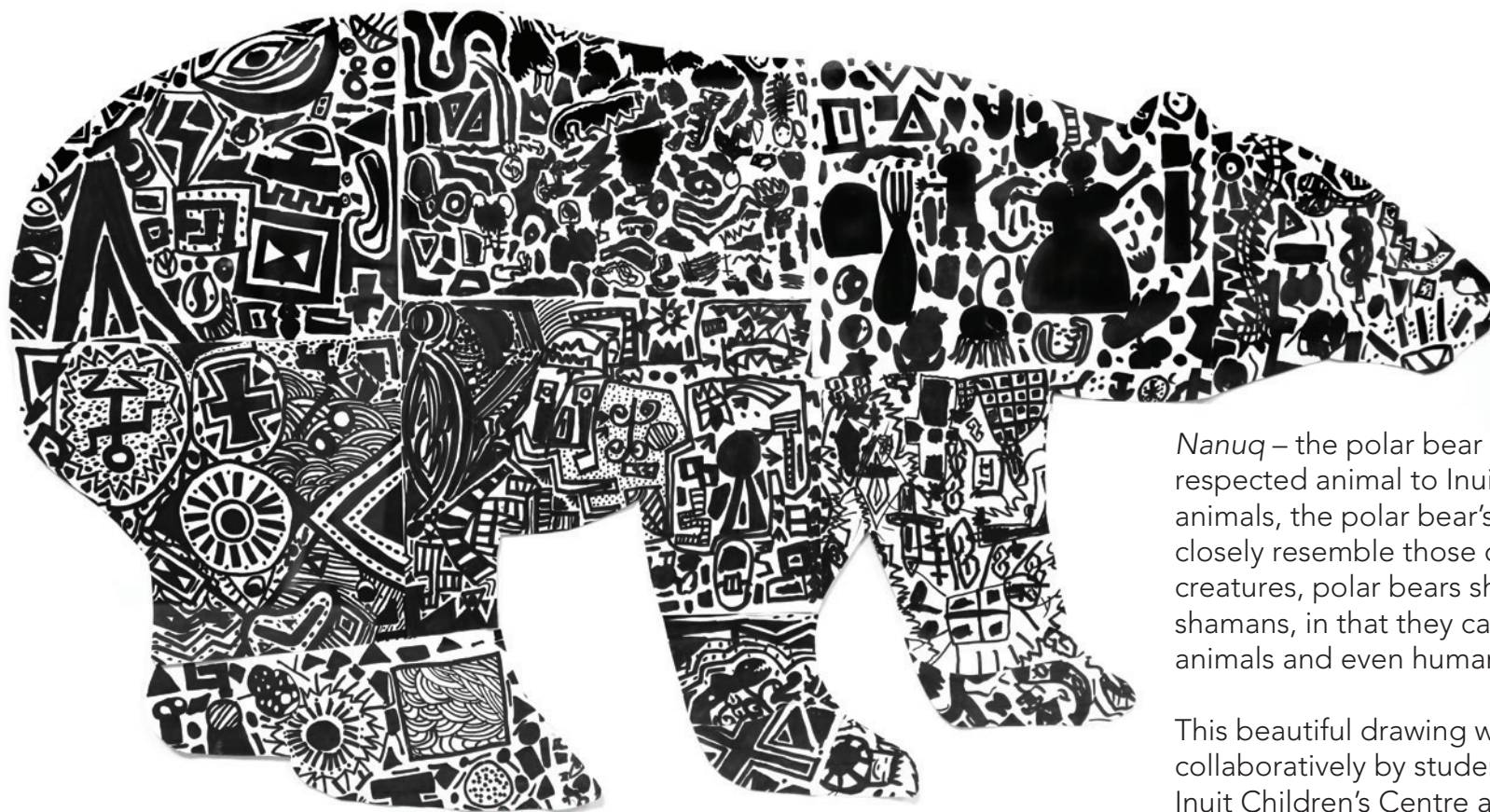




The presence of printmaking in Inuit communities dates to 1957, with the most well-known prints created by the Cape Dorset Studio. These prints were created by students at the **Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre** and showcase the diverse subjects that Inuit printmaking can capture such as animals, myths and history, traditional ways of life, and contemporary culture.

*Inuit Prints, 2015*

Created by students at the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre  
On loan from the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre



*Nanuq, 2014*

Created by students at the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre  
On loan from the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre

*Nanuq* – the polar bear – is a tremendously respected animal to Inuit. Out of all the arctic animals, the polar bear's hunting habits most closely resemble those of humans. As powerful creatures, polar bears share similar traits with shamans, in that they can transform into other animals and even humans.

This beautiful drawing was created collaboratively by students at the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre and showcases the strong connection between the Inuit and the polar bear.





**James Simon** (b. 1954), also known by his traditional name of Mishibinijima, takes a patient and thoughtful approach to each piece he creates. His work is exhibited and collected all over the world, and includes a portrait commissioned by the Vatican of Pope John Paul II. Simon finds inspiration for his paintings by immersing himself in the spiritual energy of the land, water and sky.

Many of Simon's works include bird figures. The inclusion of cranes and loons in his pieces represent the Ojibwe leadership clans. There are seven Ojibwe clans, each which are known for different skills within the larger community – for example settling disputes, medicinal knowledge, warriors and poets.

*Untitled*, date unknown

James Simon

Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, Manitoulin Island

On loan from the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation Museum





These birchbark baskets are designed to hold foodstuffs such as dried fish, dried meats, and berries in the summer. During the winter, they are used to store pemmican – a high energy snack made out of meat and sometimes dried berries.

Birchbark Baskets  
On loan from Marten Falls First Nation





This garment was worn by a Giigidoh-NiNii, a member of the Anishnabek Nation from Manitoulin Island. This type of outfit is worn at traditional powwows and ceremonies when a grass dancer is requested. The grass dance is an all-encompassing healing dance, performed to aid in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional healing. The dance is also performed to bless the grounds before a large communal gathering. A dancer will enter the space from the east and travel clockwise, making offerings to each of the four cardinal directions.

Each regalia is unique to the individual dancer and this regalia in particular has colours that relate to the individual's qualities and spirit. The blue beading and fabric represents his connection to the water and the sky. The red, orange and yellow represent the colours of the fire and his connection to the sacred fire. The dancer who wore this regalia is also a sacred fire keeper, and additionally, a sacred fire represents the doorway to the spirit world. The diamond pattern found throughout symbolizes the four cardinal directions, as well as the medicine wheel directions and its teachings. When dancing, the bells above the moccasins will ring in tune with the drumming, which also helps call in the spirits during this ceremonial dance.



Grass Dance Regalia  
Donated by the Whitefish River First Nation





**Lindsey Lickers** is a Haudenosaunee/ Anishinaabe multi-media artist, arts facilitator, and program developer originally from Six Nations of the Grand River with ancestral roots to the Mississaugas of the Credit. Her traditional name is 'Mushkiiki Nibi Kwe', which translates to 'Medicine Water Woman' and she is of the Turtle Clan. Recently, she was awarded a commission to create a permanent public installation for the Region of Waterloo's light rail transit system that will speak to the historical stewardship of the land base of Waterloo and the importance of agriculture from a First Nations perspective.

Lickers created *Ka'shatsténshera – Power* to celebrate the sacred, natural abilities people have to create and map their own lives. At the same time, our lives are interwoven and overlapping with each other's experiences. This piece speaks to the power we have to create, because of the choices we make for ourselves.

*Ka'shatsténshera - Power*, 2017  
Lindsey Lickers  
Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe



**Timothy Mohan** is a self-taught, colourblind artist of Canadian Irish and Cree descent. His artwork is derived from a variety of sources and inspirations, including his Indigenous ancestry, wildlife and nature, which he fuses together in a multilayered, cohesive whole. To achieve this end result, he combines different artistic mediums and applies modern tools and techniques to his pieces. Mohan strives to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and actively supports non-profit organizations by donating original artworks and prints to be used for raising funds.

Mohan was inspired to create *On The Run* when he was working in Hell's Gate, British Columbia, on the air tram. He was inspecting cables on the air tram, which rises 152 metres above the Fraser River, and sketched out a preliminary drawing looking down at the rushing water. For many northwest coast First Nations, the salmon symbolizes abundance, fertility, prosperity, and renewal. Mohan shares that "some people of the Pacific Northwest coast believed that salmon are immortal humans who live in villages deep under the ocean. In the springtime, they put on salmon disguises to offer themselves as food to the people. After the salmon were eaten, the people would put the full fish skeleton back in the water in the belief that its spirit would rise again and turn back into an immortal salmon person, thus creating the cycle of life."

*On the Run, 2018*  
Timothy Mohan







George Simpson's Canoe Brigade, 2009

Kristy Cameron

On loan from the artist

**Kristy Cameron** (b. 1968) is a Métis artist and teacher who was born and raised in Atikokan, Ontario. As a descendant of numerous fur traders, she often incorporates Indigenous and historical content into her art. Spiritual weavings are seen throughout her pieces, which evoke mystery, energy, contentment, and joyfulness. Cameron has collaborated twice with award-winning Métis author David Bouchard to illustrate the books *The Seven Sacred Teachings* and *Dreamcatcher* and the *Seven Deceivers*. These books are used by educators across Canada.

*George Simpson's Canoe Brigade* tells the story of the Hudson's Bay Company's Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land, George Simpson. He is shown here in his personal canoe with his elite crew of Iroquois paddlers, hand-picked from Caughanawaga, French-Canadian voyageurs, and his personal Scottish piper. The men are singing the traditional French song *À la claire fontaine*, and keeping beat with their paddles while Simpson sits beside his clerk Robert Miles. Simpson explored much of what became Canada during his forty years with the Hudson's Bay Company (1820-1860), visiting the numerous far-flung fur trading outposts under his control and travelling to areas previously uncharted by European settlers.





A carver who works with both wood and antlers, **William Bondy** has lived his entire life on Manitoulin Island. His pieces evoke a sense of spirituality, inspired and nurtured by the elders of his town of Wikwemikong. Over time, William has created his own unique moose antler carving techniques.

The piece *Collaboration* showcases the relationship between the Anishinaabe people and the Canadian government. Though the relationship has not always been positive, more recently we have seen the two sides begin to work together in a more collaborative, supportive, and cooperative way – symbolized by the peace pipe. The turtle joins the Anishinaabe side with the government side, representing Mother Earth and the importance of taking care of her. The thirteen scales on the turtle's back signify the thirteen moons, or months, in the Anishinaabe year.

Viewers may be surprised to see the peace pipe included in this artwork as it is a sacred item not considered appropriate for display. However for *Collaboration*, William has created a replica peace pipe, allowing it to be publicly shown. The inclusion of the sacred eagle feathers may also cause surprise. These ones have not been blessed, and William included them as an important symbol representing the Anishinaabe people.

*Collaboration*, 2013  
William Bondy  
Odawa, Manitoulin Island  
On loan from the artist





*Untitled, c. 1969-1971*  
Carl Ray, Cree

**Carl Ray** (1943-1978) was a Cree artist born on the Sandy Lake Reserve. He worked as a trapper, gold miner and logger, and started painting as a therapeutic activity when he contracted tuberculosis. He was mostly self-taught, but also apprenticed under Norval Morrisseau. Along with Morrisseau, he was one of the first Indigenous artists to defy taboos and depict sacred legends. Carl was an original member of the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated, now recognized as The Indigenous Group of Seven. His later work went beyond legends to explore the life and current issues facing Indigenous peoples. Carl was fatally stabbed in 1979 at the age of 35.

This untitled piece was painted by Carl Ray between 1969 and 1971. It depicts the story of the Rolling Head, a legend from the Sandy Lake Cree. In the forefront are two bothers fleeing from the decapitated skull of their mother, who has been possessed by an evil spirit. The brothers escape the Rolling Head, thanks to their father who gave them medicine weapons to protect them. Their father loses his life in his efforts to save his sons from the evil spirit.



*White Beavers, 1982*  
Norman Knott  
Curve Lake First Nation  
On loan from the Whetung Ojibwa Centre

**Norman Knott** (1945-2003) was a self-taught artist who lived on the Curve Lake First Nation reserve near Peterborough for the entirety of his life. Knott inspired many young Indigenous artists through his works that features both realistic and spiritual representations of wildlife.





**Norval Morrisseau** (1931-2007) developed the unique painting style of the Woodland School of Art, a style that is characterized by bright colours and the use of pictographics with thick, black contour lines. Morrisseau's works showcase aspects of shamanism, animism, and the interconnectedness of all living things. A Member of the Order of Canada since 1978 and the first Indigenous artist to have a solo show at the National Gallery of Canada, Morrisseau was acknowledged as Grand Shaman of the Ojibwa in 1986 and, in 1995, the Assembly of First Nations bestowed on him their highest honour - the presentation of an eagle feather. Dubbed the "Picasso of the North", Morrisseau's legacy continues today as an internationally-acclaimed Indigenous artist.

Salmon Life Giving Spawn, 1977

Norval Morrisseau

Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek

(formally known as Sand Point First Nation)

On loan from the Whetung Ojibwa Centre





*After Batoche*, 2017  
On loan from the artist

**Brian Kon** is a Métis artist born in Winnipeg. He has lived and worked in Niagara Falls since 1996. His style of art is called dot art, or bead art painting, which is a modern version of traditional beadwork created by Métis people. Each "bead" is applied as a single dot of paint to create the image. Many of the designs in his paintings can be traced to beadwork found on historic clothing and possessions of Métis people.

*After Batoche* is a tribute to Louis Riel and the Métis people after the Battle of Batoche in Saskatchewan in 1885. At that time, Louis Riel turned himself into the Canadian army. At his trial, he was found guilty of treason and was hanged on November 16, 1885. During his trial, he made a statement that Brian takes as a great honour as an Indigenous artist: "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake it will be the artists who give them their spirit back."



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