

Press release

New exhibition

From October 17, 2024 to April 21, 2025

**Early Days. Indigenous Art
from the McMichael Canadian
Art Collection**

*Discover over 200 years of history and
artistic creation*

Parc des Champs-de-Bataille
Québec (Québec) G1R 5H3

418 643-2150
1 866 220-2150
mnbaq.org

Press Contact

Linda Tremblay
Media Relations Officer
418 644-6460, ext. 5532
linda.tremblay@mnbaq.org



Québec City, Wednesday, October 16, 2024 ✕ The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (MNBAQ) is highlighting Indigenous art from October 17, 2024 to April 21, 2025 through *Early Days. Indigenous Art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection*, a major exhibition produced and circulated by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario.

The MNBAQ will host the exhibition's exclusive Québec presentation on its international circuit. It is proud to contribute to raising the profile of more than 50 artists from 13 nations spanning Canadian soil through 110 works ranging from past traditions to contemporary practices.

This sweeping panorama, celebrating 200 years of artistic creation, has been organized in collaboration with Indigenous specialists in light of recent research. *Early Days. Indigenous Art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection* presents a fine selection of objects ranging from 18th-century ceremonial insignias to the significant work of avant-gardist artists of the 1960, 1970s, and 1980s, and including works by contemporary artists.



The exhibition's key artists include **Caroline Monnet** (Anishinabeg, French), **Norval Morrisseau** (Anishinaabe), **Nadia Myre** (Anishinabeg), **Meryl McMaster** (Plains Cree/Métis, Dutch, and British), **Kent Monkman** (Cree), **Shuinai Ashoona**, **Annie Pootoogook**, **Pudlo Pudlat** et **Nick Sikkuark** (Inuit), **Dana Claxton** (Wood Mountain Lakota), **Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun** (Cowichan-Syilx), **Carl Beam** (Ojibwa), **Robert Houle** (Anishnabe, Sauteaux) and **Faye HeavyShield** (Káínawa), to name but a few.

The exhibition not only affords visitors a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in the richness and diversity of Indigenous art but also reveals our relationship with the earth and our ancestors, and the ties that bind us. It proposes a unique encounter with living cultures that are deeply rooted in our shared history.

The thematic path explained

The design team of the MNBAQ has created an uncluttered space occupied by megalithic assemblages that reflect the territory and natural features to place the works of art and the artists presented at the forefront.

Eight guiding themes structure the exhibition, thus enabling visitors to discover the root of the artistic history of the Indigenous peoples in modern-day Canada: *Open a Dialogue Humorously*, Norval Morrisseau's Heritage, Anishinaabe Artists. *Clear Voices*, *The Art of the Northwest Coast*, *Masks and Objects*, *The Importance of Women in Indigenous Cultures*, *Colonial Contacts and Exchanges*, and *Contemporary Inuit Artists*.



Open a Dialogue Humorously highlights the work of artists whose creative approach focuses on humour in order to discover new spaces for reflection and discussion conducive to exchanges of views and intercomprehension. **Kent Monkman** (Cree) and **Dana Claxton** (Wood Mountain Lakota) are telling examples.

One of the next two sections, *Norval Morrisseau's Heritage* and *Anishinaabe Artists*. Clear Voices, is devoted to artist **Norval Morrisseau**. Also called Miskwaabik Animiiki in Anishinaabemowin, which means “Copper Thunderbird,” Morrisseau is regarded as a pioneer in contemporary Canadian Indigenous art. He was also one of the first North American Indigenous artists whose work was exhibited in museums and commercial art galleries. Visitors will also discover artists that he influenced, including **Bob Boyer** (Métis) and **Alex Janvier** (Denesuline, Sauteaux) from the prairies who opted for abstract painting and the creation of works on paper, inspired by ideas and stories that defy temporal and spatial boundaries.



In the area devoted to the *Art of the Northwest Coast*, the artistic expression of Pacific-rim cultures in modern-day British Columbia, the Yukon, and Alaska, is noteworthy for its dynamic formline style. For over two millennia, artists from this region have reorganized these arrays of fluid lines of varying thickness to create a unique visual universe that brings to life historic events, emblematic figures, and orality. **Robert Davidson** (Haida) is one artist who has reinvented this style. The forms that these communities treasure are also brilliantly incorporated into the paintings of **Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun** (Cowichan/Syilx).



The Masks and Objects section assembles early masks from the Northwest Coast dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries, and contemporary models produced for trade. Starting in the 1970s and the 1980s, certain Indigenous artists entered the mainstream art market and created works in traditional forms but with artistic designs. The works include argillite Haida sculptures (carved pipes, anthropomorphic figures) that are considered one of the first forms of Indigenous artistic production intended for trade with merchant seafarers and colonists.

Another section highlights the *Importance of Women in Indigenous Cultures*. The striking works, which embody women's strength and combining their efforts to confront adversity, include the self-portraits of artist **Meryl McMaster** (Plains Cree/Métis, Dutch, and British) and a sculptural

work by **Faye HeavyShield** (Káinawa). Meryl McMaster's staged photographs affirm her link to the earth and mixed ancestry. Faye HeavyShield's sculptural work reflects the importance of solidarity among women, which strengthens communities and sustains family unity.

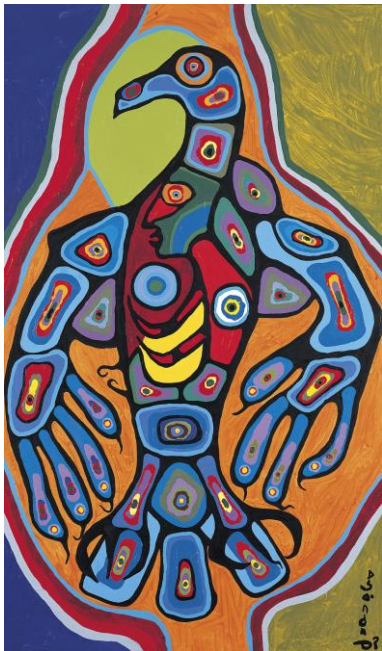
The works in the *Colonial Contacts and Exchanges* section revolve around a rare ceremonial costume from the Great Lakes region. All of the items, garments, and finery presented date from the late 18th century. Certain works are related to the use of the wampum belt, an object embroidered with beads that sealed alliances or negotiations. Others, which evoke the trauma of contagion, will certainly resonate with contemporary visitors, also reminding of us of the often-fatal exchanges between the colonists and the Indigenous.

The last section, *The Canadian Arctic*, presents a panorama of artists from the Far North. For over 50 years, it has been the focal point of some of the country's boldest artistic innovations. Several generations of Inuit artists have distinctively shaped art history and their works are valued the world over. From the late 20th century, engravings, textiles, and Inuit sculptures were the main exports from the Arctic. However, for the past 20 or so years, drawings have become a genre in themselves for contemporary artists, who draw inspiration from the legacy of their forebears. **Shuvinai Ashoona**, **Tim Pitsiulak**, **Annie Pootoogook** and **Pudlo Pudlat** are among the leading figures in this trend.



A bouquet of selected works

Among the seminal works in the *Early Days. Indigenous Art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection*, mention should be made of: *Headdress – Shadae* (2019) by **Dana Claxton**; *Earth Mother Hair, Indian Hair, and Earth Mother Eyes, Indian Eyes, Animal Eyes* by **Duane Linklater**; *Thunderbird with Inner Spirit* (circa 1978) by **Norval Morrisseau**; *Sisters* (1993) by **Faye HeavyShield**; *We Come in Numbers* (2020) by **Caroline Monnet**; and *Bringing Home Food* (2003-2004) by **Annie Pootoogook**.



Headdress – Shadae (2019), Dana Claxton’s photographic work intrigues at first sight with its imposing coloured headdresses. For the artist (Wood Mountain Lakota), this excessive superimposition of items such as beaded caps inspired by hip-hop, a woven cedar hat, and majestic pow-wow and peyote fans, serve as a metaphor for the different layers that make up the Indigenous identity and diversity. Humour also allows us to ask basic questions, e.g., “Can we truly see others beyond the suppositions that we make about them?”

Norval Morrisseau’s grandparents, who lived on the southeastern shore of Lake Nipigon in Ontario, exposed him in childhood to an array of beliefs. His grandfather, a shaman, transmitted to him Anishinabe culture and spirituality while his grandmother taught him the Catholic religion. The two worldviews influenced his work. *Thunderbird with Inner Spirit* (circa 1978) is a revealing example. The self-portrait displays an open channel, from top to bottom, which reflects significant Ojibwa spiritual and metaphysical concepts. The artist represents his own transformation into a powerful being rising toward the kingdom of heaven or descending in the more physical manifestation of life.

Duane Linklater’s fresco *Earth Mother Hair, Indian Hair, and Earth Mother Eyes, Indian Eyes, Animal Eyes* evokes the mural that Norval Morrisseau created for the Canadian Indian Pavilion at Expo 67. The work is entitled *Earth Mother and Her Children* and it presents a human child and a bear cub nursed by an anthropomorphic figure personifying Mother Earth. The work was censured at the time by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, supported by the organizers of Expo 67. They demanded that the artist modify the overly explicitly visual element. When the time came to paint his mural, the artist was conspicuous by his absence and his assistant, Carl Ray, completed the work. To symbolically evoke Morrisseau’s absence, Linklater (Omaskêko Ininiwak) adopted the practice of delegating the production of his own mural, which draws inspiration from the iconography of Morrisseau’s original work. Huron-Wendat artist Manon Sioui has reproduced the mural presented at the MNBAQ. [The work appears on page 1.]

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's boldly colourful *New Climate Landscape (Northwest Coast Climate Change)* (2019) brilliantly incorporates the forms dear to the communities on the Northwest Coast. The Cowichan/Syilx artist has for several decades lived and worked in Vancouver in the traditional territory of the Coast Salish. The coastal rain forest of the Pacific Northwest is frequently the focus of his creations, thus emphasizing the artist's attachment to the territory. However, he does not hesitate to criticize the use and violation by the colonists of the land and their underhand machinations to extract resources from Indigenous lands. [the work appears on page 1]



Artist **Faye HeavyShield's** sculptural work *Sisters* (1993) is elegantly composed of plaster effigies representing 12 life-size inward-pointing women's shoes arranged equidistant from each other in a circle. The split end of the shoes alludes to a deer's hoof, suggesting the animal's attributes of elegance, strength, and delicacy. Some observers will see in it a representation of the artist and her five sisters, whereas the work unfolds like a metaphor for the solidarity between women that bolsters communities and families.



Annie Pootoogook certainly heads the list of artists from the Far North who have redefined contemporary Inuit art. Her work lies within the scope of established artists such as Ashoona and Pudlo Pudlat, but she is part of the famous Pootoogook family from Kinngait in Cape Dorset. Her pencil drawings are autobiographical, forceful, and original and represent scenes of contemporary northern life. The work *Bringing Home Food* (2003-2004) is far removed from mythical visions of the North and reflects instead the works that implacably capture changing living conditions in the North.



Multidisciplinary artist **Caroline Monnet** is of Anishinabeg and French ancestry and a native of the Outaouais region in Québec. She does not hesitate to combine the visual vocabulary of popular and traditional culture with elements of modern abstraction to create her own formal language. *We Come in Numbers* (2020) encourages contemplation. The intriguing foliated jet-black surface alternately evokes the fine plumage of a crow, the cracks of burnt wood, or the charred pages of a book. To produce this fascinating composition, the artist used Tyvek fibres, an insulation used in construction. By incorporating this type of materials into her work, Caroline Monnet can symbolically evoke the drastic consequences of the housing crisis that is affecting Indigenous communities. She also reminds us that insulation often remains visible on the outside of houses in the

Indigenous communities that are frequently unfinished because of social injustice and a lack of resources. The work's title, *We Come in Numbers*, simultaneously highlights the seriousness of the situation and the great resilience of the Indigenous peoples.

The artists of the exhibition

A

Barry ACE (born in 1958-), Odawa, Anishinaabe
Karoo ASHEVAK (1940-1974), Inuit
Shuvinai ASHOONA (born in 1961-), Inuit



B

Carl BEAM (1943-2005), Ojibwa
Dempsey BOB (born in 1948-), Tahlтан, Tlingit
Linda BOB (born in 1945) Tahlтан, Tlingit
Bob BOYER (1948-2004), Métis

C

Benjamin CHEE CHEE (1944-1977), Ojibwa
Dana CLAXTON (born in 1959-), Wood Mountain Lakota
Ruth CUTHAND (born in 1954-), Plains Cree, Scottish, and Irish

D

Robert DAVIDSON (born in 1946-), Haida
Johnny DAVIS, Chief Lalak̓inx'idi, "The One Who Always Went Too Far"
(1867-70-1921), 'Nakwaxda'xw, Kwakwaka'wakw
Blake DEBASSIGE (1956-2022), Ojibwa
Beau DICK (1955-2017), Kwakwaka'wakw
Simon DICK (born in 1951-), Kwakwaka'wakw

E

Albert Edward EDENSHAW (1812-1894), Haida
Charles EDENSHAW (1838-1924), Haida

F

Jeneen FREI NJOOTLI (born in 1988-), Vuntut Gwitchin

G

Charlie GEORGE Sr., Chief *Xilx'idi*, “Throws Away a Blanket” (1874-1944?), ‘Nakwaxda’*xw*, Kwakwaka’wakw

H

Bob HARRIS, Chief *Xi'xa'niyus*, “Gives All His Blanket Away” (1870-1930), A'wa'etłala, Kwakwaka'wakw

Faye HEAVYSHIELD (born in 1953-), Káinawa

Robert HOULE (born in 1947-), Anishnabe, Saulteaux

Maria HUPFIELD (born in 1975-), Anishinaabe

Henry HUNT, Chief *Mup' inkim*, “Four Times a Chief” (1923-1985), Kwakwaka'wakw

J

Alex JANVIER (Alexandre Simeon Janvier) (1935-2024), Denesuline, Saulteaux

K

Joshim KAKEGAMIC (1952-1993), Cree

Siassie KENNEALLY (1969 - 2018), Inuit

Janet KIGUSIUQ (1926-2005), Inuit

L

Duane LINKLATER (born in 1976-), Omaskêko Ininiwak

M

Caroline MONNET (born in 1985-), Anishinabeg, French

Norval MORRISSEAU (1932-2007), Anishinaabe

Nadia MYRE (born in 1974-), Anishinabeg

Meryl MCMASTER (born in 1988-), Plains Cree/Métis, Dutch, and British

Kent MONKMAN (born in 1965-), Cree

N

Shelley NIRO (born in 1954-), Mohawk

P

Josie Pamiutu PAPIALUK (1918-1996), Inuit

Tim PITSIULAK (1967-2016), Inuit

Annie POOTOOGOOK (1969-2016), Inuit

Itee POOTOOGOOK (1951-2014), Inuit

Pudlo PUDLAT (1916-1992), Inuit



S

Nick SIKKUARK (1943-2013), Inuit

Henry SPECK Jr. (born in 1937-), Tlawitsis, Kwakwaka'wakw

Henry SPECK Sr. (1908-1971), Tlawitsis, Kwakwaka'wakw

Simeon STILTHDA (1799-1883), Haida

T

Art THOMPSON (1948-2003), Ditidaht, Nuuchahnulth

Jutai TOONOO (1959-2015), Inuit

W

George WALKUS, Chief Yakal'anala-Wakas, "Always Giving In This World—Great River" (1882-1958), Gwa'sala, Kwakwaka'wakw

Jut-ke-Nay Hazel WILSON (1941-2016), Haida

Y

Lawrence Paul YUXWELUPTUN (born in 1957-), Cowichan/Syilx



Visit the exhibition with Xavier Watso

The audio guide is an excellent tool that enables visitors wishing to enrich their experience to proceed more intimately at their own pace. The *Early Days. Indigenous Art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection* audio tour is accessible in French and in English on mobile devices. It invites visitors to discover and appreciate the cultural practices, core values, and creativity of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis artists past and present. Accompanied by Abenaki host, columnist, actor, and exhibition spokesperson Xavier Watso, visitors will discover through 20 stops the major themes of the exhibition through a selection of works that highlight the originality, reflection, and creative expression of the artists exhibited.

TO LISTEN: [Audio guide Early Days](#)

Credits

The *Early Days. Indigenous Art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection* exhibition has been produced and circulated by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, Ontario.

Curatorship and Didactic Texts

Sarah MILROY

Executive Director and Chief
Curator, McMichael Canadian
Art Collection

Design and graphic design

Philippe LEGRIS, MNBAQ

Gallery Mediation

Florence GARIÉPY, MNBAQ

*Collaborator for the presentation
in Québec City*

Eve-Lyne BEAUDRY

Director of Collections and
Research, MNBAQ

Management

Marie-Hélène AUDET

Head of Mediation, MNBAQ

Yasmée FAUCHER

Head of Museography, MNBAQ

*The Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec is a state corporation funded by
the Gouvernement du Québec.*

Québec 

Early Days. Indigenous Art from the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

Pierre Lassonde Pavilion of the MNBAQ

From October 17, 2024 to April 21, 2025

PRESS CONTACTS:

Linda Tremblay

Media Relations Officer, MNBAQ

418 262-4681 | linda.tremblay@mnbaq.org

Montréal

Rosemonde Gingras

Rosemonde Communications

514 458-8355 | rosemonde@rosemondecommunications.com

Page 1 – Photo: Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, *New Climate Landscape (Northwest Coast Climate Change)*, 2019. Acrylic on canvas, 193 × 243.8 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase by BMO Financial Group in 2020 (2020.10) © Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun / Photo: Courtesy of Macaulay & Co.

Page 2 – Photo: Pudlo Pudlat, *Composition (Flying Kites)*, 1991. Coloured pencil and ink on paper, 50.8 × 66 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, promised gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron (L2023.32.3) © Estate of Pudlo Pudlat / Photo: Craig Boyko

Page 3 – Photos from top to bottom: Kent Monkman, *Wedding at Sodom*, 2017. Acrylic on canvas, 183 × 305.5 cm McMichael Canadian Art Collection, acquired in 2019 with the assistance of Salah Bachir and Jacob Yerex. (2019.2) / © Kent Monkman / Photo: Courtesy of the artist // Attributed to Albert Edward Edenshaw (1812-1894), *Raven Rattle*, c. 1860. Wood with paint 11 × 31.7 × 10.3 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase in 1974 (1974.6) / Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid // Nisgaα, *Face Mask*, 1850. Wood with paint and abalone inlay, 22.5 × 20.8 × 11.3 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase in 1979 (1979.5) / Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid

Page 4 – Photos: Meryl McMaster, *Between the Start of Things and the End of Things I-III*, 2019. Digital C-print, 101.6 × 152.4 cm (each pannel). McMichael Canadian Art Collection, gift of the artist (2020.12.A-.C) © Meryl McMaster / Photo: Courtesy of the artist and the Stephen Bulger gallery and Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain

Page 5 – Photos from top to bottom: Dana Claxton, *Headdress-Shadae*, 2018. LED firebox with transmounted lightjet chromogenic transparency, 152.4 × 101.6 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase by BMO Financial Group in 2020 (2020.5) © Dana Claxton / Photo: Courtesy of the artist // Norval Morrisseau, *Thunderbird with Inner Spirit*, c. 1978. Acrylic on canvas, 208.3 × 127 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Purchase 1979 (1979.6) © Estate of Norval Morrisseau / Photo: Craig Boyko

Page 6 – Photos from top to bottom: Faye HeavyShield, *Sisters*, 1993. Shoes altered with plaster, gesso and acrylic paint, 105 cm (outside diameter installed). McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase in 1995 (1995.2.A-.L) © Faye HavyShield / Photo: Toni Hafkenscheid // Annie Pootoogook, *Bringing Home Food*, 2003-2004. Colored pencil and felt-tip pen over graphite on paper, 50.8 × 57.8 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, gift of Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron (2016.10.5) / Photo: McMichael Canadian Art Collection // Caroline Monnet, *We Come in Numbers*, 2019. Tyvek sewn on fabric, wood, 218.4 × 232.4 × 19.1 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase BMO Groupe financier, 2020 (2020.6) © Caroline Monnet / CARCC, Ottawa, 2024 / Photo: McMichael Canadian Art Collection

Page 7 – Photo: Carl Beam, *Various Concerns of the Artist*, 1984. Photo etching on paper, 121.7 × 80.5 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, purchase 1985 (1985.29.3) © Succession Carl Beam / Photo: Craig Boyko

Page 9 – Photo from top to bottom: Nick Sikkuark, *Flying Spirit*, 1982. Caribou antler, bone, hide, strands of hair, and stone, 31.5 × 30 × 29 cm. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, gift from the Christopher Bredt and Jamie Cameron Collection (2019.7.27.A-.B) © Estate of Nick Sikkuark // Xavier Watso, Abenaki host, columnist, actor, and exhibition spokesperson

General Information

OPENING HOURS OF THE MNBAQ*

Until May 31, 2025

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday until 9 p.m.

Closed on December 25

Closed on Mondays, except March 3, and April 21, 2025

** During the construction of the Riopelle Space, only the Pierre Lassonde Pavilion is open.*

ADMISSION*

** Save up by purchasing your ticket on line*

Featured exhibitions

Adults: 24 \$

Seniors (65 and Over): 23 \$

Ages 18 to 30: 15 \$

Ages 13 to 17: 7 \$

Families (2 adults accompanied
up to 5 children aged 17 and
under): 52 \$

Group rate (15 people or more)
for hotels, tour operators and
companies: 22 \$

12 years and under: **free**

Membres: **free**

Wednesdays from, 5 p.m. to
9 p.m.: **half-price**

First Sunday of every month: **free**

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Parking, Bookshop-Boutique,
Wi-Fi access, free wheelchairs,
self-service cloakroom and Baby
Changing Room

TO CONTACT US

418 643-2150 or 1 866 220-2150
mnbaq.org

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER AT MNBAQ.ORG

An excellent way to stay up to
date on news, events and
activities at the Musée!

FOLLOW US

