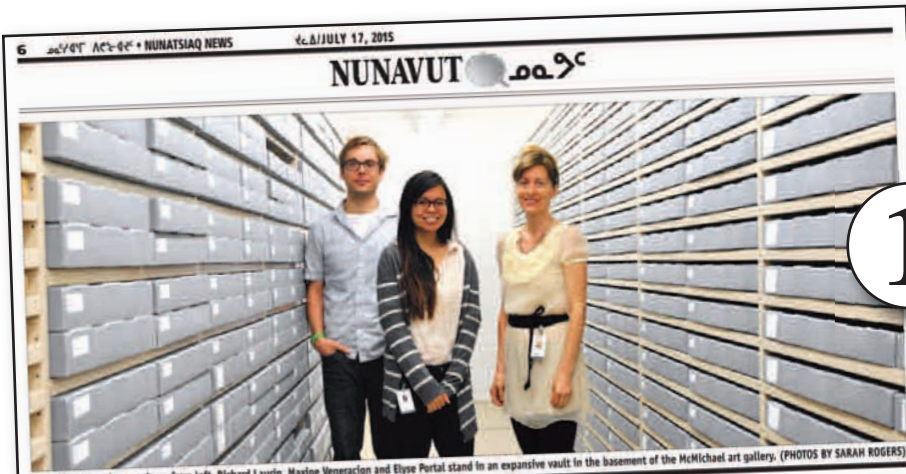


BEST ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT STORY



1

SARAH ROGERS *Nunatsiaq News*

A very interesting story that brings to the forefront efforts to digitize and protect First Nations art. It's difficult to tell these types of stories in a compelling way - often they can get lost in 'process.' This story didn't. I really enjoyed reading this. I learned a lot - and was brought into the archives through the writing.

Pioneering Cape Dorset artworks enter the 21st century

More than 100,000 drawings and prints to be digitally preserved

SARAH ROGERS
TORONTO — A piece of Cape Dorset's cultural history lies in one of the most unlikely places. The basement of Ontario's McMichael Canadian Art Collection, just north of Toronto, holds a record of history that spans more than three decades. Its expansive vault houses more than 100,000 drawings and prints, on long-term loan from the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in Cape Dorset.

The thousands of drawings are stacked in long boxes, separated by sheets of Mylar, and marked with the names of the co-op's artists, many of them now departed — Lucy Qinnayuaq, Peter Pisevuk, Ekeeshuile Parr and her famed artist husband, Parr, to name only a handful of the more than 100 artists represented there. The collection is a snapshot of life around the Baffin community from the mid-1950s, when local artists first started producing work with the co-op, up until the late 1980s — a period that saw tremendous change for Inuit.



A giant stone sculpture of a polar bear carved by Paula Salla greets visitors to the McMichael Canadian Art Collection gallery outside of Toronto.



Arts student Maxine Veneracion lays out a drawing — believed to have been done by the late Cape Dorset artist Joe Jaw — to be photographed and digitized.

The drawings, etched in graphite, coloured pencils and felt ink, depict Arctic animals of every kind — wild and white being hunted — as well as the craggy landscape and early interactions between Inuit and Qal-looait and the new tools they introduced, such as boats and airplanes. "It's really a hidden history," said Elyse Portal, curator and research assistant for the York University-based Multilingual Inuit Cultural Heritage project or MICL. "It's a history that was produced for the public, but most people haven't seen these. Often times, [artists] were asked to portray things they'd seen in their lives."

The drawings arrived in Toronto on a chartered plane in March 1991, following an agreement between the McMichael and Terry Ryan, then the co-op's general manager. While fires had destroyed co-ops in both Sanikililak and Baker Lake in recent years — and their Inuit art collections along with them — Ryan wanted to find a place to safeguard Cape Dorset's collection until a better venue could be built. Almost 25 years later, that still hasn't happened. But as part of an initiative between the gallery and York University, it's hoped each piece can be digitized and preserved as part of a database that will one day return to Nunavut, where the images were born. The painstaking process of digitizing each image begins in another room in McMichael's basement. That's where a camera, set up on what looks like a miniature crane system, captures each image and sends it to a computer program for colour touch-ups before they are transformed into digital files. Each piece is photographed four or five times, to ensure the whole piece is captured, along with any syllables or text written on the page. On a Wednesday afternoon, York University arts student Maxine Veneracion is working on digitizing pieces from what the group of archivists call a "problem box" — one containing pieces whose creators remain unknown or uncertain. This particular drawing is covered in large colourful birds, filled in with felt tip pens. They speculate the drawing could have been penned by Joe Jaw, a well-known carver. But as part of the digitization process, archivists will confer with elders and art experts to try to identify untitled pieces. More than 4,000 pieces have already been digitized, including many of the works by Cape Dorset's Pudloo Pudlat. Some of those drawings are the first-ever interactive Inuit art exhibition now on at the McMichael, called "Inngirajut Inuagilngiqaqaminnut: Journey Into Fantasy." With the help of Nunavut game developer Pinguaq, visitors to the exhibit can play three different video games, narrated in Inuktitut and using graphics animated from Pudlat's prints. In the often solemn space of a gallery, it's a bit of a surprise to find a drawing on a tablet that can be interacted with. The drawing is a mix of traditional Inuit art and modern digital art. The drawing is a mix of traditional Inuit art and modern digital art. The drawing is a mix of traditional Inuit art and modern digital art.

LAURENT ROBILLARD-CARDINAL *Bulletin d'Aylmer*

A compelling story that makes interesting use of going back and forth in time. A well told story that emphasizes how childhoods can shape us.

2

Heading towards the Oscars Former Aylmer student wins Golden Globe

Laurent Robillard-Cardinal
What a way to start 2015 for former Aylmerite Dean DeBlois. First the film director wins a Golden Globe for best animated feature on January 11 for *How To Train Your Dragon 2* and he's nominated for an Oscar in the best animated feature category. Born in Brockville in 1970, DeBlois moved to Aylmer at a young age and attended St. Mark's Elementary (Lord Aylmer today) before graduating from D'Arcy McGee High School. DeBlois had a fertile imagination from the beginning and, thankfully for his fans, certain teachers promoted it. "From the very start I had teachers who encouraged me to draw and write stories. My grade one teacher, Mrs. Donlan, was especially supportive of my artwork, and her support gave me confidence to continue." DeBlois told the *Bulletin* in an e-mail interview. "Throughout elementary school in an e-mail interview, I became part of my identity, and my teachers continued to push me, both in drawing and writing. There were many outlets to express my creative side, and one project on *Native Canadian communities* even made it into the *Aylmer Bulletin*! As part of St. Mark's first French Immersion program, our class was treated to many museum visits, field trips, and even a student exchange with children from Quebec City. It definitely broadened my mind.

Wednesday February 18, 2015
Le Bulletin...L'Écho Page 13

恭禧發財
Joyeux Nouvel An chinois!
Happy Chinese New Year!

The Year of the Wood Sheep/Goat
2015

It's the year of the Ram, no the Sheep, no wait, it's the Year of the Goat!
Actually, it's the year of all three because in Chinese the character is the same for each of them. Most commonly it's referred to as the Year of the Sheep. So what does it mean for you?

The Year of the Sheep promises to be a year of balance, stability and steady, but calm, growth. It will be a welcomed break from the hectic pace of this past year of the horse, although the adrenaline junkies or the fire-types might find the Year of the Sheep kind of dull.

There is a caution to be added with this year and it has to do with the elemental connection. Each year, one of the five elements is connected with the sign. The five elements are water, wood, fire, earth and metal. This is the Year of the Wood Sheep. Wood brings a level of growth and detail to this year.

But the caution has to do with the greater picture... it has to do with the long term... it has to do with the impending year of the Fire Monkey that will be coming in 2016. The year of the Fire Monkey promises to be a crazy, unpredictable, perhaps even volatile year.

Those who take advantage of the docile energy of the Year of the Sheep to balance and centre themselves will be prepared to handle the surprises that come in the year of the Fire Monkey. But those who push too hard this year or go against this opportunity to find inner and outer stability may find themselves falling out of a burning tree next year.

So if things seem dull this year, avoid the urge to throw too much spice in your life and take the lesson from the Mountain Goat: Climb the cliff one step at a time.

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Wishing you and the community a Happy Chinese New Year!

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Joking power Cree stand-up comedian Howie Miller uses humour to laugh at racism

by Joel Barde

Howie Miller possesses a devastating, lighting-quick wit. And he uses it to tremendous effect — to explore, expose and finally laugh at some of the racist stereotypes many Canadians associate with First Nations people.

Take for example the opening joke of one of his older sets. "I love being Native. I love all the free stuff," he declares to the crowd. "The land is free. The Medicare is free. Did you know we even get free cab rides? Yeah — in the back of cop cars."

Miller's birth family is from the Paul Band, a Cree First Nation 70 kilometres west of Edmonton, Alberta. But he was adopted at an early age and raised by a white family in Edmonton, where he continues to live.

Being the only Native in an all-Caucasian family gave him a unique perspective on race from an early age. "This experience gave me an interesting view of life — I saw both ends of the colour spectrum."

In school, Miller was also an anomaly. But that, he says, doesn't mean he felt ostracized because of his race. "The schools I attended were so white that race didn't even seem to matter," he explains. "It was never brought up. I was just Howie. If I did something stupid, people didn't make fun of me because I was Native, they made fun of me because I was Howie. Race didn't really play a factor."

Naturally funny, Miller was a class clown, using his talent for mimicry to make fun of his principal's baritone and pleads to "be reasonable."

"I remember a substitute teacher who said, 'Hey, I've had enough of you.' And I replied, 'No, you have not!'"

After high school, Miller did a series of low-paid, largely ungratifying jobs. He worked at a McDonald's, at a car wash, and fought fires in British Columbia.

They were tough years, and he wasn't merely fending for himself.

"I started having kids when I was 17 — like a good Native boy," he jokes. By 23, he and his wife already had four boys.

It was at that point Miller began working as a stand-up comic, playing sets in Edmonton's local comedy clubs.

And soon after, he began touring. He was the only Native stand-up comic working in western Canada, a unique and powerful voice on the comedy club circuit.

"I was lucky. I got a lot of work very quickly, which really helped. It helped with everything — with my writing, my delivery and my timing."

One of the highlights in Miller's career was meeting and becoming friends with his idol, comic Charlie Hill. A much sought-after stand-up comedian and actor, Hill had made a name for himself through politically charged humour.

"He paved the way for everyone doing Native-serving humour. He was the godfather of what we do, of what I'm now doing," explains Miller.

The two became close friends before Hill's untimely death in 2013, often travelling together between shows. "Charlie could plough through an audience of 300 or 3000 people. And our styles were similar. He would tell jokes that were in your face. And that's what I like to do, too."

Edgy, in-your-face humour, of course, is not for everyone. And Miller says he's developed a keen ability to read a crowd. He goes into a set with a beginning, middle and end. But he always leaves room to change things up, depending on who he's entertaining.

"I'll know within the first 30 seconds how they perceive me. I generally look to the older people in the crowd to get a sense of whether or not they're laughing. And if they are, I might go into the more colonialism, dark, back-handed humour," says Miller.

"I don't want to be offensive. And I don't want people to feel too uncomfortable. This isn't about white bashing. But at the same time, I want to communicate the truth. That's important to me."

That sensitivity comes in handy for the corporate gigs Miller plays, where the largely wealthy, buttoned-up audience members tend to be more conservative than the First Nations crowds he plays to on reservations.

"Some people are so sensitive — it's just amazing. I'll make a self-deprecating joke, even about my weight. And people will get offended for me," says Miller.

3

JOEL BARDE *the Nation*

A compelling and powerful portrait. It would have been interesting to put his story in a larger context - not just comedians, but other First Nations writers, for instance, who make use of comedy.

Honourable Mention: **JESSE STANIFORTH** *the Nation*