

Aboriginal Arts & Stories Celebrating Ten Years



ABORIGINAL
ARTS & STORIES

A note from Historica Canada

SINCE LONG BEFORE CONFEDERATION, the stories and artwork of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples have contributed not only to the rich heritage and culture of their own communities but also to what is now Canada. For the past decade, Historica Canada has proudly offered the Aboriginal Arts & Stories contest. From the outset, through the generous support of our funders—including presenting sponsor Enbridge and media sponsor *The Walrus*—as well as our jury of Aboriginal youth, ages eleven to twenty-nine, to share writing and artwork inspired by their history and culture. To date, over 2,000 youth have participated in this program, the largest contest of its kind in Canada.

The following pages showcase the writing and artwork of nine finalists from past years. For many, Aboriginal Arts & Stories was a launching point for a career in the arts. For others, the contest offered a forum to share stories of their communities. Each profile highlights the importance of the arts within First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. While Aboriginal Arts & Stories has evolved and expanded over the last ten years, the goal of encouraging artistic expression remains the same.

Many participants approach topics of national importance, such as the devastating legacy of residential schools or the often harsh realities Aboriginal youth face living on and off reserves. But many submissions also offer an inspiring sense of hope, a meaningful exploration of identity, and an openness to reconciliation. Each year presents distinct portraits of Aboriginal life in Canada from the unique voices of youth.

On behalf of our patrons, jury members, and sponsors, Historica Canada is proud to celebrate the next generation of Aboriginal writers and artists in Canada, and to encourage these talented Aboriginal youth. They bring us a fresh new view of an important part of our country's heritage—and for that, among many other things, we are grateful.

Anthony Wilson-Smith,
President, Historica Canada

A note from our presenting sponsor, Enbridge Inc.

ARTS AND WRITING—these are the channels by which we transmit our cultures and beliefs between people, communities, generations, and societies.

At Enbridge, we understand how art and writing can evoke, inspire, and communicate, which is why we are thrilled and honoured to be celebrating ten years of Aboriginal Arts & Stories. Congratulations and thanks are also in order for Historica Canada for its continued leadership of Aboriginal Arts & Stories. Historica Canada's hard work and stewardship have created a great opportunity for a new generation of talented young Canadian artists and writers to contribute to the stories and culture of our nation.

Supporting Aboriginal Arts & Stories is just one of the ways that Enbridge honours First Nations in Canada. We recognize that First Nations and Aboriginal peoples are an integral part of Canada's history and also of our shared future. Supporting First Nations and Aboriginal communities is core to our values, and thanks to Aboriginal Arts & Stories we know that these communities' future generations will be able to share what's important to them.

At Enbridge, we understand the importance of energy. We've been delivering the energy Canadians count on, safely and efficiently, for more than sixty years, and parts of our business go back more than 160 years. Energy is essential. It moves people and products, ideas and information. It fuels our cars and heats our homes. But we also understand that there are different types of energy that are essential to society—we understand the importance of cultural energy. The energy of the visual arts and literature moves people in a different way. Creative energy sheds a different kind of light.

The cultural energy of the young, talented, and promising writers and artists recognized in Aboriginal Arts & Stories illuminates different perspectives, world views, and ways of thinking. Their work makes us see the world in a new way. That's what art does, and that's what the winners have achieved with their vision, talent, and hard work.

Congratulations to all of the winners, and thanks to all who participated! It truly is a privilege to witness the emerging careers of new Aboriginal artists.

Karen Radford,
Executive Vice-President, People and Partners
Enbridge Inc.

Shaneen Robinson

First Place Winner, Senior Writing, 2008



34, Cree and Gitksan Nations, lives
and works in Winnipeg, Manitoba

Excerpt from Author's Statement

I AM A PROUD MEMBER of the Cree Nation of northern Manitoba on my father's side, as well as a member of the Gitksan Nation of northwestern British Columbia on my mother's side... I wrote about a First Nations woman who was adopted as part of the Sixties Scoop. *Notay Kiskintamowin* is about her journey of self-discovery and the reclamation of her Indigenous identity. I used many factual situations of the Aboriginal Peoples of Turtle Island and some of the realities we have faced in our history. I tied this in with stories I've learned over the years from my immediate family and friends. Some of the characters and their situations are based on people who have been a part of my life and my own personal journey. I think this piece of writing was a way for me to vent frustration about the negative societal truths our people endure, in a way that stayed true to the humour and perseverance of our people. I am not yet finished this play. I don't know if I ever will be. As I continue to grow as a person and as a writer, I will continue to go back and add to this story.

Excerpt from winning work *Notay Kiskintamowin (Wanting to Know)*

DELLA-ROSE I didn't know I was Native until about 15 years ago... I thought I was Mexican.

PIXIE Mexican? You can tell you're a neech from a mile away... why the hell would you think you were Mexican?

DELLA-ROSE Well I found out I was adopted and that I was born in Manitoba when I was about 13. My older sister Bonnie came to Winnipeg for a symphony performance and when she came home she said there were a whole bunch of Mexicans in Winnipeg, and that I looked like them. So I just assumed I was Mexican.

(Pixie bursts out laughing...)

PIXIE Well trade in the tortillas for bannock baby cause you aint a Mexican yous an Indian! *(Della-Rose chuckles along with Pixie...)*

PIXIE So you were part of the Sixties Scoop eh?

DELLA-ROSE ...What's the Sixties Scoop?

PIXIE *(Pixie waves her hand in dismissal and turns to face Della-Rose)* Girl... you gotta read up on some of your history...

◆ **How did it feel to be one of the contest winners?** When I won, it made me feel a sense of pride and validation as a writer. The roster of judges is what really empowered me and encouraged me to continue writing. It is an indescribable feeling of humility and self-worth when you are given the approval by your personal heroes and then recognized nationally on such a public stage.

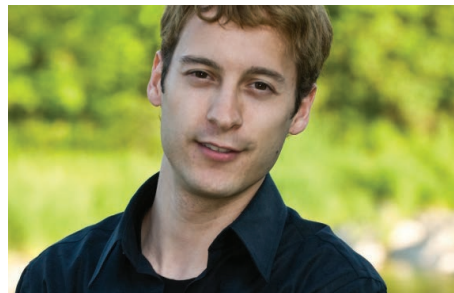
◆ **What opportunities did participating in the contest open up for you?** Since the contest, I've continued on as a journalist, having worked at CTV News Winnipeg and for some freelance outlets as a storyteller. I've had stories run on CTV News Channel and even CNN. I am proud to be a full-time perma-

nent correspondent for APTN National News in Winnipeg... I have had the opportunity to tell very important stories about missing and murdered women, child welfare, and countless other stories important in society—including stories about the arts. The contest, along with my education and ambition, helped open these doors.

◆ **What did you learn about your community, your family, or yourself in writing your story?** The story gave me the opportunity to express some difficult family issues and learn about the history of my parents, grandparents, and my people as a whole... From the experience, I learned that we must deal with the past in a positive way, be open and honest about it.

Howard Adler

First Place Winner, Senior Writing, 2009



33, Lac des Mille Lacs First Nation, lives and works in Ottawa, Ontario

Excerpt from Author's Statement

THE EVENTS I wrote about have to do with historical places and locations and traditional Anishinaabe legends. The reason I chose them is because the entire Johnny Seven Fires narrative is an extended metaphor for the survival and continuation of Anishinaabe language and culture, and these historical events/locations reinforce themes of life and death, beginnings and endings, and continuity and transformation.

These themes are apparent in the recurring imagery of sunrise and sunset, Johnny's casual use of cigarettes and alcohol, his attempted suicide, his ironically life-saving electrocution, his modern carving into the cement pathway at the Petroglyphs, and his spontaneous ability to speak fluent Ojibwa. Even Johnny's name, "Seven Fires," alludes to an apocalyptic Anishinaabe prophecy in which humanity will have to make a choice between a good path or a bad path, between death and destruction or peace and prosperity. Also, Jenny's telling of the story of Jiyaa-waabooz, the ruler of the underworld, re-contextualizes this traditional story as having meaning and value for Johnny, an Anishinaabe youth, and by extension, this suggests that all traditional stories can continue to have meaning and value for future generations of Aboriginal peoples.

Excerpt from winning work *Johnny Seven Fires*

Scene One: Johnny

[Johnny is an Anishinaabe youth and he wears his hair styled in a mohawk which is dyed blood red (not spiked)... He's hunched over the sink and is visibly distraught. The sound of water can be heard from the bathtub filling... Johnny gets undressed and slips into the tub, relaxes, closes his eyes, and leans his head back. Moments pass. He lights a cigarette, smokes some, and then lets the half-smoked cigarette fall into his bathtub. Johnny has an old-fashioned straight razor. He examines it from different angles, feels its weight and then tests its edge on his finger, drawing blood. Moments pass. He calmly begins to cut his wrist lengthwise, but then he sucks in air through his teeth in pain and flinches, which accidentally knocks the CD player into the water. The music stops, everything goes black, and the sound of electricity crackling is heard. End Scene]

◆ **What did you learn by participating in the contest?** Looking back at my submission to the [contest], I think what I learned most is that I can do things that matter, and that people do care about what I have to say. I think being a [contest] winner was a huge confidence booster, and not just for my writing—it made me feel like I could become successful at anything that I set my mind to.

◆ **What opportunities did participating in the contest open up for you?** I think the contest pushed me to seriously consider myself as an artist and a writer, and that has had an enormous impact on my life... When I wrote this story, I intended to actually make

it into a short film. Although the film was never made, today I work as a freelance videographer and video editor, and I think the success of this award-winning video script encouraged me to continue working in this field.

◆ **What words of advice do you have for young Aboriginal writers participating in the contest?** The advice I'd give to other young First Nations, Métis, and Inuit writers and artists is keep doing what you're doing, because it is seriously awesome, it is important, it is beautiful, and you're the only one on the entire planet who can tell the story that you're trying to tell. The world needs to hear what you have to say.

Stephanie Wood

First Place Winner, Junior Writing, 2010



21, Squamish Nation, lives and works in North Vancouver, British Columbia

Excerpt from Author's Statement

I CHOSE TO WRITE about this event, the apology for residential schools on behalf of the Canadian government, and incorporate it within an individual story about the experiences of a survivor who attended a residential school. I chose this angle for my short story submission because I think that the formation and disintegration of residential schools had a major impact on the culture and the survival [of Aboriginal people]... Many Aboriginals today do not know much about their heritage [nor are they] involved with the language or the traditions that it entails. Elder Aboriginals are struggling to maintain the presence of Native culture in their families and pass on the language and the traditions and the stories. I think it is important to acknowledge the pain that Natives have gone through because of residential schools... We must continue to fight against the issues that have continued to this day, like relying on welfare and getting addicted to alcohol and drugs, or getting involved with violence. It was a tormenting experience that people of the culture will never fully recover from emotionally, but [they] can try to build up their society and heritage again within their families and the community.

Excerpt from winning work *The Indian in the Child*

"Mr. Speaker, I stand before you to offer an apology..."

He stood before the people, after a strong apology. Their skin was dark and worn with the reopened wounds of their past.

"...a sad chapter in our history."

A sad chapter... One that would not be forgotten, not among the broken people. Not among the children and grandchildren born of them, born into a life still in lasting affect of this "sad chapter."

Residential schools.

To this day, there is still something foreboding in the name. Born over a hundred years ago, drifting into death only twelve years before this speech.

They were made to convert.

To control.

To civilize.

Those were the goals.

...

To kill the Indian in the child. That had been the ultimate goal. To remove the culture, the language, the beliefs and leave the children as a shell with all but the appearance of the white man, inflated with the ideas of the self-proclaimed dominating race.

◆ **What opportunities did participating in the contest open up for you?** After winning the contest, I decided to study creative writing in university and got an associate of arts with that as my major. The contest helped me with sharing my work and choosing significant subject matter for my stories, and the program also gave me the opportunity to participate in the university's literary magazine.

◆ **What words of advice do you have for young Aboriginal writers participating in the contest?** Art is an opportunity for uncen-

sored self-expression and communication on an unparalleled level. If we have a stronger presence of films and art and books that include First Nations—that don't just show our history but who we are in the present—we can discover how dynamic First Nations culture truly is.

As we have been impacted by our ancestors' past, we are going to impact our future children, our future readers and viewers—so we should embrace the opportunity to contribute to a setting not of censorship and conflict but of realization and openness.

Candace Toma

First Place Winner, Junior Writing, 2011



17, Mushuau Innu, lives in Brantford, Ontario

Excerpt from winning work *Timeline: Ghost of the Future*

The Innu have made Labrador their home for thousands of years. My teacher said, on flying over and seeing the land for the first time, “rough land – tough people.” That is the truth. Throughout our history, we have been hunters, nomads following the caribou herds, living on the land in harmony with nature. In the recent past, however, that has all changed.

I see the past, both my own and that of the Innu people, in flashbacks, images like snapshots that flicker across my mind and are gone in an instant. A recurring mental picture I see is that of my people’s first contact with outsiders. I am standing there watching. Silently I observe the way this event altered the timeline and forever changed my people’s future.

What happened? The past has passed by.

What is happening? Now is the future’s past.

What will happen? This is the past that has not yet been born in people’s minds.

Excerpt from Author’s Statement

I CHOSE TO WRITE this story because it was a personal journey for me. I not only looked at what it means to be Innu now, but what it was like for my people to have experienced the tremendous changes that have occurred just in the lifetimes of our elders. Most of all, I wanted readers to appreciate this from a personal viewpoint. History is, after all, about people. I have not shared this with anyone until now.

...

I wanted to show how painful it can be to be moved from your home and put in a strange place. Davis Inlet is on an island, separated from the rest of the world... The houses in Davis were cheaply and quickly built, lacking many of the necessities we now take for granted. Even though it doesn’t sound like much, it is a beautiful place, and most of our people spent their childhood there. A small part of each one of us will always consider it home. For many, it was very hurtful to make the move, and the abandoned town still calls to us.

Change is often necessary, but sometimes there is a high price to pay.

◆ **What did you learn by participating in the contest?** Participating in the contest caused me to become more self-aware. It caused me to reflect on my personal identity while, at the same time, trying to reconcile this knowledge with my family history and the story of the Mushuau Innu people. I dug deeper into my roots and learned far more about my culture than I would have if I had not entered the contest. The creative process of weaving the stories into a timeline was extremely difficult, and it pushed me to my limits.

◆ **What opportunities did participating in the contest open up for you?** I was singled out for my accomplishment by my community, the Innu nation, the department of education,

schools, and countless organizations. I gave my permission for my work to be reprinted for use in a textbook and in newsletters. Since then, I have moved to a new province to attend [school] and have been trying to adapt to new surroundings and my visual impairment. My creative writing has taken a back seat to life for the time being.

◆ **What advice do you have for young Aboriginal writers participating in the contest?**

Work hard and set aside the time to think and create... If you have an idea, see it through to the end, no matter what the result is. The object is not to win contests but to use the gifts that we have been blessed with to tell our stories and share our vision.

Joseph Tisiga

First Place Winner, Senior Art, 2011



29, Métis, lives and works in Whitehorse, Yukon

Excerpt from Artist’s Statement

THE PAINTING that I have submitted, titled *With Friends*, reimagines the moment of my mother’s removal from her birth family by authorities as a child of the Sixties Scoop. My mother shared her memory of this moment with me while I was a teenager, long before making art was of any interest. Over the years, I thought about her story and about all the other children who had been needlessly taken from their own families only to be haphazardly placed into another family or imprisoned within the mission schools. The reality of it seemed absurd and impossible, that a man of no familiarity could go to another’s house, abduct the children, and escort them into an unknown and horrifying future, like some perverse and unsolicited Pied Piper. Certainly, it doesn’t seem too far removed from the morbid fairy tales and cartoons that I would read as a child.

Consequently, while painting this piece, it was important for me to bear in mind a sense of non-reality (as opposed to fiction) that would reflect the moment that I had no way of experiencing aside from in my imagination... Disjointed and abstracted perspectives suggest the impossibility of my reimagined moment, yet a sinister mood creeps across the surface, unifying the planes.



Winning work *With Friends* (2011), oil on canvas, 48×54”

◆ **What did you learn by participating in the contest?** I was happy to see that there is a targeted interest in supporting young First Nations stories in a sincere way. I think these kinds of events/contests are important in “luring” youth into speaking and being active, and it was inspiring to hear about how many people submitted to the [contest]. There’s a lot of art happening out there!

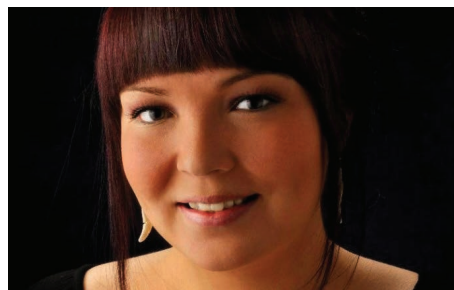
◆ **What opportunities did participating in the contest open up for you?** Interestingly, I have been contacted by two publishers who wanted to use my painting in their textbooks. One publishing for university

students and the other for high school students, and both texts addressing the history of residential schools and the Sixties Scoop. Having work published is always nice; however, the context of my work accompanying that information is a bit of a strange honour.

◆ **What words of advice do you have for young Aboriginal artists participating in the contest?** When you’re starting out with actively wanting to be creative, there is a lot that you will not know, which can be discouraging, but... just create anything until you “know” what you want to do.

Sonia Basile-Martel

Lauréate, cinquième place, arts, 2011



26, Atikamekw, Wemotaci, habite à Trois-Rivières, Québec

Tiré des propos de l'artiste

DÉGÉNÉRATION D'UNE génération confrontée à deux nations. J'appartiens à l'une et à l'autre, je suis une atika-bécoise qui souhaite s'engager face à ce qu'elle est, une métisse. J'ai une vie basée en milieu urbain. J'ai cette appartenance en terres éloignées, Wemotaci, la montagne d'où l'on observe. Assumer que par mes choix, je dois délaisser une de ces cultures. Il y a nikokom, il y a tcoctco, et puis il y a moi, moi qui ne permettrai pas à ce sang de survivre. Une réalité grandissante, à laquelle nous devons faire face, et choisir. C'est le présent, aujourd'hui, en ce moment. C'est une réalité de métis. Mais je pense à nikokom. Nous connaissons une période d'éloignement. Une distance se crée entre nous et nos aînés, eux qui ont tant de choses à nous transmettre. On m'a appris que l'on doit savoir d'où l'on vient pour savoir où l'on ira. J'ai besoin d'apprendre, j'ai soif de cette connaissance, cette partie de moi que je veux honorer. Je dois saisir la chance que j'ai de nourrir cette culture en moi... Nous devons nous battre pour préserver ce que nous sommes et permettre à l'histoire que nous avons à raconter de se créer.



L'œuvre primée *Se souvenir pour ne pas oublier, Nikokom* (2011), photographie numérique, 18×9.5"

♦ **Qu'avez-vous appris en participant au concours?** En participant au concours, j'ai pu exprimer et partager une part de moi-même, de nous aussi. Nous, les jeunes autochtones, qui avons tant de choses à découvrir et à défendre. Nous qui sommes la survie d'une culture, son souffle, son avenir. En laissant notre trace à travers ce concours, nous dialoguons avec le reste du monde, et nous prenons notre place.

♦ **Qu'avez-vous appris au sujet de votre communauté, de votre famille ou de vous-même en réalisant votre œuvre?** Pratiquer mon art me permettra toujours d'entrer en contact avec les autres, de concevoir nos relations comme une œuvre en soi, une beauté à figer dans le temps. Au moment de photographier ma grand-mère pour

la réalisation de mon œuvre, j'ai vécu un échange privilégié avec elle, un moment de silence rempli d'amour, de fierté, de transmission, de communication. Même sans mot, tout cela était possible entre nous.

♦ **En tant qu'artiste, quelles opportunités ce concours vous a-t-il apporté?** Ce concours m'a permis de m'affirmer en tant qu'artiste, mais surtout en tant que jeune femme riche d'un héritage autochtone dont elle est fière.

♦ **Quels conseils pouvez-vous apporter aux jeunes artistes autochtones qui participeront au concours aujourd'hui ou dans l'avenir?** Ce que j'aimerais dire aux futurs participants, c'est de ne pas avoir peur d'oser. Il faut parfois sortir de soi, pour réellement apprendre à se connaître.

Stephanie Wesley

First Place Winner, Senior Writing, 2012



31, Lac Seul First Nation, lives and works in Thunder Bay, Ontario

Excerpt from Author's Statement

I CHOSE TO WRITE about the subject of Anishinaabe students who have died while attending high school over the last decade in Thunder Bay, Ontario, because it is an issue that is close to my heart.

I graduated from Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School in 2004, and the year I spent at the school opened my eyes to my own culture. In public school, I was never taught about my culture and I didn't learn about residential schools. It wasn't until I went to DFC that I learned of our history and culture, and I wouldn't trade my experience there for anything. I discovered who I am as an Anishinaabe woman and found my passion for storytelling.

Unfortunately, some students attending DFC have to face many problems while in the city. Being away from home and surrounded by sometimes hostile strangers takes a toll on the youth. Underage drinking is a serious concern when it comes to these students getting an education.

...

I pray for the safety of our youth and hope to inspire them to live the good life and to keep pursuing their dreams and education.

Excerpt from winning work *Jonas*

Anishinaabek families from the most remote and isolated parts of Ontario rejoiced with visions of their children graduating from the first Native high school of its kind and going on to live successful lives. Most of the students would succeed, except for a certain few.

Sadly, over the course of DFC's history, seven of its students would die mysterious, alcohol-related deaths. No one understood why seven young bodies had been pulled from the rivers of Thunder Bay. They couldn't find any answers. Some believed it was by accident that the students fell into rivers. Others thought there was a darker reasoning behind the deaths. It was hard to rule deaths as homicides when there weren't any suspects, but motive was not hard to find. Some residents of Thunder Bay could be very cruel and racist with their beliefs, attitudes, and actions towards DFC's students. Culture shock, homesickness and prejudice often lead to underage drinking, but not all the time.

♦ **What did you learn by participating in the contest?** *Jonas* was inspired by local events in the city I call home, and it was a way to help spread awareness of the difficulties First Nations students who leave their homes to pursue their education face.

♦ **What opportunities did participating in the contest open up for you?** The contest definitely gave me a running start into the writing world. After the win, I started a summer job at a First Nations' newspaper and delved into my role as a journalist and columnist. I am currently still working with that newspaper, and I am also the youth editor for their First Nations' youth magazine.

I was also contacted by a university professor in Winnipeg

and was invited to sit on a panel as an emerging writer for the 2012 Manitoba Indigenous Writers Festival, which was a great experience, and I met so many writers. I was invited to the second festival and had just as much fun as I did the first time.

♦ **What advice do you have for young Aboriginal writers participating in the contest?** Remember that even though we as First Nations people have had so much negativity inflicted upon us, there are still a lot of good things about our past and our people. It is important to make your readers smile and to make them laugh if you can.

And always, always leave your readers feeling hopeful.

Suzie O'Bomsawin

Lauréate, troisième place, récits, 2013



28, Odanak, habite à Odanak, Québec

Tiré des propos de l'auteure

J'ENTENDS souvent des commentaires désobligeants au sujet des Autochtones. À chaque fois, je me demande si ces gens connaissent l'histoire de ma famille, de ma communauté, de ma nation, des peuples autochtones du Canada. S'ils ont pris le temps de nous connaître avant de nous juger. Je profite de l'opportunité qui m'est accordée, grâce à ce concours de rédaction, pour partager quelques unes des connaissances que j'ai acquises au fil des années au sujet de l'histoire des Autochtones du Canada.

...

Cette histoire n'est pas unique à ma famille, d'autres familles autochtones l'ont également vécue. Mon grand-père me l'a racontée plusieurs fois, mais cela m'a pris un moment avant d'en comprendre réellement le sens. Je désire maintenant vous la narrer à ma façon. Je tiens ainsi à rendre hommage à mon grand-père et à ma mère en partageant une partie de leur histoire avec la population canadienne. Sans eux, je ne serais pas la personne que je suis maintenant. Trois personnages et un registre relate l'histoire de trois membres d'une même famille, de trois générations différentes, dont la fierté d'être qui ils sont a été remise en question à plusieurs reprises...

Extrait de l'œuvre primée *Trois personnages et un registre*

La jeune femme

En 1962, dernière d'une famille de quatre enfants, est venue au monde la fille tant désirée par ce couple aimant. De sa naissance à ses dix-neuf ans, elle passa une grande partie de sa vie dans la réserve indienne d'Odanak. La vie y était bonne auprès de sa famille, de ses amis, de ses racines. Puis vint la période de l'adolescence: les fréquentations, les sorties, les rencontres et, finalement, l'amour. On dit qu'on ne contrôle pas l'amour. Que le cœur choisit l'être cher. Puis, étant seulement trois cents dans cette réserve, ça limite les choix. Donc, en 1982, le grand jour arriva! En l'Église d'Odanak, la jeune fille se maria à un non-Abénakis. Des suites de ce mariage, comme cadeau de cette union, le gouvernement du Canada annonce à cette jeune femme qu'elle est maintenant émancipée et qu'elle doit désormais quitter la réserve.

Une bague plus tard et voilà, son nom, au registre est maintenant retiré.

◆ **Qu'avez-vous ressenti en apprenant votre sélection au concours?**

Une grande fierté! En fait, ma mère était tellement fière de moi que je ne pouvais qu'en être fière également. J'étais vraiment contente de pouvoir assister à la soirée de remise de prix, qui a lieu à Montréal, en sa compagnie.

◆ **En tant qu'écrivain, quelles opportunités ce concours vous a-t-il apporté?** Je me considère encore plus ou moins comme une écrivaine. Je voulais surtout raconter cette histoire et la faire connaître au plus grand nombre de personnes possible. Je sais que mon histoire a circulé largement par les médias sociaux et, en soi, cela représente une opportunité.

◆ **Qu'avez-vous appris au sujet de votre communauté, votre famille ou vous-même en écrivant votre histoire?**

J'ai appris que j'avais un certain talent pour l'écriture. Je pense que j'ai mis en mots ce que ma famille et certains membres de ma communauté ont toujours voulu raconter, mais sans savoir à quelle tribune s'adresser.

◆ **Quels conseils pouvez-vous apporter aux jeunes écrivains autochtones qui participeront au concours?** D'écrire avec leur cœur. D'écouter leurs rêves. De ne pas s'arrêter à penser que ce concours est ouvert uniquement aux artistes renommés. J'en suis la preuve, je n'avais jamais écrit de texte pour un concours avant et j'ai obtenu la 3^e place dans ma catégorie!

Brandan Wilson

First Place Winner, Junior Art, 2013



16, M'Chigeeng First Nation, lives in Copper Cliff, Ontario

Excerpt from Artist's Statement

I TOOK A VERY tongue-in-cheek approach to my work this year. As a First Nations person living off reserve, I encounter many stereotypes of Natives. I wanted to explore this idea of what people think of Native people now, especially after the Idle No More movement. Also how 500 years of "civilization" has affected us.

My model is my seven-year-old brother, Phoenix. I made an outfit for him based on the stereotypical Hollywood version of a Native person. I made everything he is wearing. We went around our city of Sudbury, and I took photos of him in non-traditional places—no rivers, no lakes, no Mother Nature. Just him in and around the city, in places like the grocery store, back of a police car, soup kitchen, church, rectory, and school. These places have had a direct impact on our Native culture.

There are two larger photos of Phoenix holding his status card. No other culture in Canada is identified by the Canadian government by ID cards. I wanted to show that my brother, myself, my family, and my culture are more than just a card, and civilization wasn't civilized.



Winning work *Living The Dream Since 1492* (2013), photography, 32.5×28.5"

◆ **What did you learn about your community, your family, or yourself in creating your art piece?**

When I first started my piece, I was not sure how to execute my idea of the concept... I learned that I am capable of quite a bit more than I thought I was. When I was making the outfit for my brother to wear in the pictures, again I surprised myself. My family was a huge support, and my brother was great. I was dragging him to all sorts of locations and it was cold (it was March) and he had no shirt on, but he was a real trooper, and he never complained. My mother has been a huge supporter in my life and a wonderful teacher.

She has taught me about our Aboriginal culture and instilled pride in me in all I am and do. My grandfather was so proud of me... He attended both award ceremonies with me, and seeing him look at me with such pride made me very happy.

I also realized that I am very proud of being Anishnaabe and am proud that I had the opportunity to teach others and express myself.

◆ **What words of advice do you have for young Aboriginal artists participating in the contest?** Get out there and do it. If you have a vision or a dream, just do it. Take a leap and believe in yourself and your abilities.

Aboriginal Arts & Stories

First Place Winners 2005-2014

2005

Junior Writing
Nicole Nicholas

2006

Junior Writing
Alicia Elliott

Senior Writing
Sable Sweetgrass

2007

Junior Writing
Chantelle Cheekineew

Senior Writing
Kerissa Dickie

2008

Junior Writing
Nigel Grenier

Senior Writing
Shaneen Robinson

2009

Junior Writing
Trevor Jang

Senior Writing
Howard Adler

2010

Junior Writing
Stephanie Wood

Senior Writing
Nathan Adler

2011

Junior Writing
Candace Toma

Senior Writing
Alyssa Megan General

Junior Art
Taylor Thom

Senior Art
Joseph Tisiga

2012

Junior Writing
Tommy Starr

Senior Writing
Stephanie Wesley

Junior Art
Victoria Swain

Senior Art
Melanie Jewell

2013

Junior Writing
Robert McCue

Senior Writing
Hanna Waswa

Junior Art
Brandan Wilson

Senior Art
Catherine Blackburn

2014

Junior Writing
Andrea Lanouette

Senior Writing
Aviaq Johnston

Junior Art
Mercedes Sandy

Senior Art
Nicole Paul

Enbridge Emerging Writer*
Dorothea Assin

Enbridge Emerging Artist*
Emlyn Cameron

*New award in 2014

Artwork and writing from the 2014 winners is available online at our-story.ca and in the September tablet edition of *The Walrus* magazine

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