

AMONG EQUALS

EP1: A New Way of Seeing

WORD COUNT - 3952

ANNOUNCER (CLIP)

Good evening. Remember his name: It's Norval Morrisseau, a 31 year old Ojibwe painter whose works were publicly displayed for the first time last week.

RYAN

What are we listening to?

Soleil

The audio we're listening to is from a segment that appeared on the CBC program CLOSE-UP. It's from September 23rd, 1962.

ANNOUNCER (CLIP)

The collectors had heard the new name and came in droves to see and buy his art. They liked what they saw and snapped up all of his 35 pictures for a total of \$4,000. Overnight, Norval Morrisseau, the shy, mystical artist had found the acceptance he always knew would be his.

RYAN

Wow. The discovery of a new talent.

Soleil

The introduction of a seminal figure in contemporary Indigenous art.

Soleil

This is what you call a watershed moment in history. In September 1962, Norval Morrisseau had his first solo exhibition in Toronto's Pollock Gallery.

CORY DINGLE

(10:55.294)

A lot of people study to do art. And then there's a select, rare few individuals that, you know, the great spirit puts on this planet to give us art. And Morriveau was one of them.

Soleil

This is Cory Dingle.

CORY DINGLE

(02:01.454)

I am Corey Dingle. I run the estate of Norval Morriveau.

Soleil

This exhibition was the first of its kind in Canada. It was organized by Jack Pollock, who was, himself, an artist, but also an art dealer and gallery owner.

GREG HILL

00;07;02;13 - 00;07;29;28

on the arts [scene]. It was a commercial art gallery.

Soleil

This is Greg Hill.

GREG HILL

I'm an artist, a curator, and an Indigenous art consultant.

Soleil

Greg also wrote *Norval Morriveau*, a book that covers 50 years of the artist's life and work.

GREG HILL

It was work that really no one was familiar with. No one had seen that kind of imagery before.

Soleil

At least, no one who was dealing in art in Canada at the time.

GREG

So, it's coming from a place, an unknown place, you know, and Jack Pollock felt like he was making a, you know, a grand discovery and bringing this artist, you know, out of the "wilderness" to the city.

CORY DINGLE

We also have to remember, at that time, that Norval was dealing with absolute systemic racism - the "Savage Bush Indian" who were degraded in the eyes of modern culture.

Soleil

At the time, Indigenous art was not seen as art. It was the domain of anthropologists and ethnographers, not gallerists or even art critics.

RYAN

Right...

Soleil

You have to remember that human zoos were still in living memory - just 80 years ago you could go to the Jardin d'Acclimation in Paris, and see Abraham Ulrikab, an Inuk man from Northern Labrador, and his family on exhibit, in an enclosure.

RYAN
(Dismayed)

Hmmph.

Soleil

And still 16 years after that, a group from Sioux Nation lived in a "village" on the grounds of the Cincinnati Zoo. Indigenous bodies were the subject of exhibitions. So, the concept of us as artists... well this was a radical new idea for non-Indigenous audiences.

JOSEPH

We weren't really considered artists, we were considered craft people... It was always considered less, and it was also valued less.

I am Joseph M. Sanchez.

Soleil

Joseph was the youngest member of the Indigenous Group of 7. He has helped us immensely with this podcast.

JOSEPH

...like moccasins and mukluks weren't considered art at all. I consider some of that stuff really fine art because of the kind of craftsmanship and dedication and spirit that's put into some of these objects.

You know, the culture of Native America was always something that could be sold. And people wanted that culture. They wanted the objects. They wanted the symbols, but they didn't want the people. And that's something that we

really were fighting against in the formation of this group.

And also, basically, which didn't consider work by Indigenous people artwork. You know, these were artifacts. They could be special. They could be very artistic, but they were still artifacts.

CORY

And if I talk about that 60s moment, and there's a famous [...] picture of that Norval at that show, and he's just standing, just iron rod straight up, and he's looking at the camera with firm determination in front of his work, and there's a little lady off to the side looking up to him and going, who is this person? And she's fascinated by what she's seeing.

RYAN

He's on display.

Soleil

This brings us back to the show at the Pollock Gallery. This is Norval talking to June Callwood as part of that segment on CLOSE-UP:

JUNE

One of the things that we were wondering about is how you were feeling at the gallery show. And the people came in and looked at your painting.

NORVAL

I felt nothing.

JUNE

Nothing? Did you feel strange about it?

NORVAL

In a way, a little strange.

JUNE

Did you feel like they were judging you?

RYAN

Why is she talking to him like he's six?

SOLEIL

That's going to be a theme, unfortunately.

JUNE

Do you think they understood what you were trying to say with the paintings?

NORVAL

I think. I hope sometimes they understood them.

JUNE

This week, I understand you made \$4,000. What are you going to do with that?

NORVAL

I don't know.

JUNE

What have you wanted?

NORVAL

All I wanted was for people to know this art. That's all I've ever wanted. [...]
but I don't like to be honored. I don't

want everyone here to say here's Norval
Morrisseau the great medicine man or
artist. I don't want them to think that
of me. I want them to see me as I am.

JUNE

And what are you?

NORVAL

An Indian! An Indian among Indians,
just as well, I'm an artist like you're
an artist. And I'm an artist. Not
because I made \$4,000, I'm better than
you, when you made \$200 last week, it's
this way. To be equal. That is what I
like.

Soleil

End of cold open. Time to do the intro.

RYAN

Right! I'm Ryan Barnett and this is
episode 1 in our new series AMONG
EQUALS the History and Legacy of the
Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.
This is a special presentation of Once
Upon a Time in Hollywood North, hosted
by..

Soleil

Soleil Launier.

RYAN

So, what's the Professional Native
Indian Artists Inc?

Soleil

The PNIAI or the "Indian Group of
Seven", as they were called by the
press, was a collective of Indigenous

Artists who, in the early 1970s,
exhibited together [...]

JOSEPH

The reason we formed this group was
that it was all or nothing. You take us
all.

Soleil

To raise the profile of Indigenous
art[...]

JOSEPH

That was a rock star moment for me.

Soleil

And created a permanent space in
galleries for Indigenous artists in
Canada, and around the world.

RYAN

I can't wait to hear the whole story.

Soleil

But first, a break.

ACT BREAK

RYAN

Okay, so, who were the other members in
the Professional Native Indian Artists
Inc.?

Soleil

There was Carl Ray.

CORY

Carl was a great artist. And you know,
if people don't know about Carl's art,
Carl taught art in remote communities,

but Carl was also a great realistic artist.

Soleil

Eddy Cobiness.

DONNA

I love Eddy's renditions of wildlife - particularly so when he goes away from the realistic and gets more into like the Cobiness style which is, you know, closer to the second generation of Woodland style.

Soleil

Jackson Beardy...

PAULA

He represented his people well. He was able to break barriers [...] And he was able to make changes to the concept of Native people through his communication with basically the white culture.

Soleil

Alex Janvier...

GREG

I think he's maybe most of all, an observer of nature and light, always kind of commenting on the quality of light in different places.

Soleil

Daphne Odjig.

BONNIE

She was an amazing, amazing individual. Brilliant, I would say. Just scary, smart. [...] When she began to illustrate [...] the tales of the

elders on Manitoulin Island, she began to develop a style that is now quite iconic [...]

Soleil

And Joseph Sanchez.

JOSEPH

I'm the founding member of Professional Native Indian Artists, Inc. [...]
Working with all these artists has been my education in the art world. My main mentors to date are Daphne Odjig, who allowed me to work in her studio in those early days and mine her library of art books, and the founder of the Phoenix Art Museum. His name was Philip C. Curtis, and he was described as a Victorian surrealist.

RYAN

That's the Magnificent Seven?

Soleil

That's them.

RYAN

So, where do we start?

Soleil

We start with Morrisseau...

CORY

If I start with the origin of Morrisseau, I would say he was a natural born painter. He was a rare individual where it seemed the timing of the earth was transferring from a menagerie of past and present. And he seemed to be holding onto with one hand to the past,

and in the other hand grasping the present. And so when we look at Morriveau's early beginnings, we see an individual who is going to have to walk two paths between two different worlds.

Soleil

Norval was raised in Sand Point, along the southeast shores of Lake Nipigon. He was, indeed, raised in two worlds. He was raised by his maternal grandparents - his grandfather was a shaman, and taught Norval Anishinaabe culture and spirituality, while his grandmother taught him about catholicism.

CORY

He would say, 'we lived in the bush.'

Soleil

But, because this was Canada in the 1930s...

CORY

Very early on, he was quite forcibly taken away from that environment and put into a Residential School, where he suffered the same trials and tribulations that many of them did.

Soleil

At six, Norval was put in St. Joseph's Indian Residential School in Fort William, Ontario.

CORY

His first day he went into the Residential School and he had to use the bathroom. So a father brought him into the bathroom area and there was

these white devices on the wall and he saw another boy urinating in this white device, which we would know as a urinal now, but Norval had never seen anything like that. And he went up and started urinating in the same urinal as the boy, and the father proceeded to whip him for it. And so that was his first day at school.

Soleil

Norval continued to experience abuse, both physical and sexual, while at St. Joseph's. And he ran away. A lot.

CORY

We have police records of him repeatedly running away from the Residential School and being caught by the RCMP and brought back. But one final time they did not.

JUNE CALLWOOD

You had, um, how much education?

NORVAL

Grade 4.

CORY

A little bit later on, there was quite obviously systemic racism in a number of the towns where they even had civil laws that an Indigenous person couldn't come into the town. And so, Morriveau's origin of dealing with another society was through the garbage dump. And he would talk about the stories of, you know, he was allowed to go to the church. You're allowed to go to the mill to work. Or go to the garbage dump, and that was about it. So when we

look at entities that directly affected him, you see these three elements being quite significant,

Soleil
Church, the Mill, and the dump.

CORY
Especially the garbage dump,
unfortunately.

Soleil
At 18 or 19, Morrissette fell gravely ill.

CORY
They thought he was dying.

Soleil
But, as Norval would tell it, he was...

CORY
[...] he was visited by, some entities and told him that they weren't really done with him yet, that they needed him to do something. And that happened two or three times in Norval's life, but in this particular time. And, they told him that he needed to paint these oral traditions of his people or that they would be lost forever, to time. And at that point in time, it was taboo to do so. And he was ostracized for doing it. He got better. He started to paint the traditions that he knew from listening to his Elders and especially his grandfather.

Soleil
Norval wrote about this himself, in his essay My Name is Norval Morrissette... he

writes:

"The Ojibway people were very unhappy about me showing tribal secrets to the white people. There is what some people call a taboo, and a taboo is hard to break. But my grandfather said, "Go ahead." He was a rebel himself. He knew eventually something was going to happen. Something had to happen, but it had to be the personal choice of the individual, because, after all, you are dealing with the supernatural."

ACT BREAK

DAPHNE

I always say, I was born with a paintbrush in my hand, because I've been doing it forever.

Soleil

This Daphne Odjig in an interview she did for the McMichael Gallery 14 years ago.

DAPHNE

My grandfather was a great artist. Since I was the first born, I would follow him all over. I was his little shadow.

Soleil

Daphne Odjig was born in 1919, on Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Manitoulin Island.

BONNIE

Her dad was a member of Wikwemikong First Nation.

Soleil

This is Bonnie Devine.

BONNIE

My name is Bonnie Devine. I'm a visual artist. I do some writing and curating. I'm interested in history. I am an off-reserve member of the Serpent River First Nation, which is an Anishinaabe territory on the north shore of Lake Huron.

Dominic Odjig, that was Daphne's dad [...] He had served in the First World War in Europe. And in Europe, he met Daphne's mother.

Soleil

Joyce Peachy. An English bride.

BONNIE

And... [...] she traveled with him back to Wikwemikong at the end of the war.

Soleil

Daphne was Joyce and Dominic's first born. She grew up on a farm, and had a pet lamb named Molly, who was allowed in the house. As she's described in Daphne's autobiography, Molly's "hard little hoofs sounded like ladies walking in high heels."

She attended a Jesuit-run school, and early on decided that teaching would be her life's work.

BONNIE

[...] she started a little play school in which, of course, she was the teacher, the headmistress, and the main disciplinarian [laughs]. And so she

would teach her younger brothers and sister and the neighbour children, their numbers, their ABCs, how to read. When the younger brother went to school, he already knew his times table and everything. So she was very, very interested in from an early age in education.

Soleil

This will be important later.

RYAN

Okay.

Soleil

She was always a precocious artist, and would exchange services with her fellow students, drawing in exchange for help with an arithmetic problem or composition.

While math and writing were not her strong suits, Friday afternoons meant art class - In that class, they learned water colours:

"I can remember this distinctly..." Daphne recounts in her autobiography, *Paintbrush in My Hand*. She says, "I remember the teacher saying, "You draw that tree as you see it, and you'd draw the tree, not how you feel about it."

Daphne was a little girl seeking self-expression.

At 13, Daphne fell ill with rheumatic fever, the same disease that had weakened her mother's heart as a child. Joyce was terrified for her daughter, and as a result, Daphne was put on enforced rest for 3 years.

RYAN

Enforced rest?

Soleil

She spent her days in bed, or not far from it. She had to watch as her siblings went to school, something she loved. But in that time, she grew even closer to her grandfather.

BONNIE

Her [...] grandfather Jonas Odjig was the stone carver for the village. So he was engaged in carving the gravestones..among other things. And so he had considerable skills in terms of designing, you know, filling up a two-dimensional space with three-dimensional form as relief carving.

CBC

Tell me about your grandfather.

Soleil

This is from a 1992 interview with the CBC.

DAPHNE

He was a tombstone carver, and I would watch him chipping out the stone. And I sat with him for many hours on the porch, sketching.

Soleil

This is something they shared for years together. Again, from her book, Daphne delighted in sharing the creative process with a kindred soul.

BONNIE

You know, her artwork, the way that she made marks on paper, really reflects this notion of carving. So very curvilinear forms, a kind of etched line that she was very interested in emulating. I think probably learned from her granddad.

RYAN

So, by all accounts, she had a relatively happy childhood?

Soleil

Yes, but things changed when Joyce died, Daphne was 18.

BONNIE

Daphne and her younger sister Winnie left the island and went to Parry Sound. Ostensibly to find work, and to try to form their own little household.

Soleil

For Daphne, who rarely left Wiki, she was suddenly faced with racism on a daily basis.

BONNIE

She speaks about seeking work in the community. She sought work as a domestic. Her education, her formal education, had been truncated because of the illness. And so she had a little bit of a disadvantage in that sense. So the work that she sought was domestic work, cleaning people's houses, and dishwashing. And yes, she said, you know, as soon as they heard her last name, the door would be closed. So there were no employment opportunities.

Soleil

Like Norval, she found herself between two worlds. For the first time in her life, she was confronted by her own indigeneity - even in her own household. Her maternal grandmother, who herself married a First Nations man later in life, resented being the butt of gossip among the white community of Parry Sound. Daphne and her sister Winnie were aware of the embarrassment their uncles and cousins felt having "Indians" in their family. The girls' black hair and dark complexions were topics of conversation. Their uncles called them "dirty little squaws" and Winnie's grandmother called her her "little piccaninny", itself a racist term for a black child.

RYAN

But what about her art?

Soleil

Well, Grandpa Copagog, the husband of her grandmother, supported her creative life during this time. He built her a worktable - a tilting draft table with a little bar at the bottom to hold her paper. So, after her long work days, Daphne would sit at this table and draw or paint for hours. She would take Grandpa Copagog's old cigar boxes, decorate them with painted flowers and patterns, and give them to her family as Christmas gifts. But! When she did this, she signed her work "Fisher",

BONNIE

Odjig means fisher in Ojibwe. The fisher of course is a small river animal. And she began to introduce herself as Daphne Fisher.

Soleil

And she signed her work, Daphne Fisher, or sometimes just Daphne. In fact, she did this for decades, only resuming the use of "Odjig" in the 1960s.

BREAK

JUNE

Would you describe for us something that's in one of your paintings? Say, the big coloured one with the bird and what seems to be a snake.

RYAN

We're still in 1962, at the Pollock gallery?

Soleil

Yep. This is Norval talking to June Callwood.

NORVAL

Well, the picture represents a thunderbird. And these arm lightning marks, the ones that are shooting forth from its eyes. The lightning goes on top the snakes head to paralyze it. And these are medicine symbols - representing medicine here - what the Indians know. They are connected with the snake. And, of course, the claw marks, where the blood ... [trails off]

JUNE

What are the patterns on the snake?

NORVAL

Well, the scales for the snake. And those little marks on the thunderbird, I put them there because they looked sacred to me.

JUNE

Do they look sacred?

CORY

Before that, you know, Indigenous art wasn't really looked at as an area of art, even though we disagree now with that concept. But it was completely, it didn't really exist. If it did, it was, you bought something on a train from somebody holding something up for a nickel, right? It wasn't conceived as a...expression of a culture.

Soleil

That's Cory Dingle, again.

CORY

about advancing Canadian understanding, our moral and ethical, spirituality advancement, Morrisseau was absolutely imperative. A towering figure on bringing that forward into Canada's mind and saying, deal with it. You know, you're going to have to deal with this.

GREG

So, the significance of him in that Pollock show in 1962 was, it was like an explosion.

Soleil

This is Greg Hill.

GREG

And it was in terms of its emergence, its reception by critics not knowing anything about something and then, you know, feeling the raw power of his work and that it was something very fresh, something unknown, and realizing that, you know, there, there might be more. And for sure, there was more and more, you know, Morrisseau was a tip of an iceberg, really.

CORY

[...] before Morrisseau nobody painted like this in this form. [...] They gave us a new perspective for humanity [...] And taking bits from everywhere. People see stained glass windows [in his work]. They see 1960 comic books that he picked up out of the garbage. They see, you know, ancient pictographic forms that he saw carved into the rocks around the area that he was in. And so, and I'm not saying that these are the true origins, but this is what people interpret when they try to define where these visions come from.

CARMEN

00:36:26:24 - 00:36:54:16

I think it was November 62 in Weekender magazine, which was this great little magazine that would come out across Canada [...] it was our only, you know, sort of splashy color magazine that we ever saw. And there was a big inset on Morrisseau in 1962 after his exhibition. And it compared him to Picasso at the time. And I think the comparison to Picasso is useful in that Morrisseau created a new visual language for the world.

Soleil

This is Carmen Robertson.

CARMEN

My name is Carmen Robertson, and I'm a Scots Lakota researcher at Carleton University in Ottawa.

Soleil

Dr. Robertson wrote a book about Norval.

CARMEN

00:03:26:04 - 00:04:07:27

In 2016, I published two books on Norval. One is a digital book through the Art Canada Institute. That's really geared at more of a nonacademic audience to learn about his art in life. And then the other is a far more academic book, and that is mythologizing the art or mythologizing Norval Morrisseau, and that is a more traditional academic book. But it allowed me to go far deeper into thinking about sort of the colonial landscape around Morrisseau and what he came out of as an indigenous artist.

[...] Morrisseau was stuck within this stereotypical lens of what it meant to be an indigenous man in the 1960s. So, you know, they were often calling attention to how he looked, his hair was stringy, that sort of thing.

Soleil

The same article, with the same details, was written and published about Norval in the wake of that first exhibition. He was untrained. The generous articles described him as self-taught. He was discovered in the bush by Allister Grosart, or was it Selwyn Dewdney, or Jack Pollock? He was willing to sell his paintings for \$5, when Jack Pollock

proposed an exhibition. He was stirred by nature and the legends of his people.

An article appearing in TIME magazine declared " Few exhibits in Canadian art history have touched off a greater immediate stir than Morrissette's. The Toronto critics approved unanimously and speculated that self-taught Morrissette may have launched a vogue as chic as that of the Cape Dorset Eskimo prints."

But almost as soon as Norval began interacting with the press, he learned to "play the game", working the media and the market.

Soleil

On the next episode of "AMONG EQUALS" we look at Indigenous Artists and Expo 67...

GREG

That was a watershed moment for Indigenous peoples, it was Indian-led, indigenous-led, Indigenous control over the, the content and the narratives. It was really the first time the Indians in Canada had more of a voice in an international forum.

There's this story that gets repeated about the Queen going through the pavilion and leaving ashen faced with not, not knowing what to, not anticipating what, what she was going to be seeing in there.

AMONG EQUALS

EP 2: Indians at Expo 67

WORD COUNT - 3952

Soleil

I want to read something to you.

RYAN

Okay.

Soleil

Actually, it might be better if you read it.

RYAN

Okay.

Soleil

This is a report by Harry Malcolmsen. He was a lawyer, but also an art collector and critic. You might recognize his name from the Malcolmsen Collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

RYAN

Mmm-hmm.

Soleil

I don't have an exact date on this, but sometime around 1965, Malcolmsen invited several Toronto gallerists to view 20 paintings by artist Alex Janvier. The group included the Isaacs Gallery, Moos, Sobot, Pollock and a couple of others. He asked these individuals to assess the work according to three basic questions:

1. Did the art have merit?
2. Did they wish to represent the artist?
3. What would they suggest for future training for this artist?

RYAN

Okay.

Soleil

Read that part. This is his analysis of the results:

RYAN

"I strongly suggest these dealers' reactions are the most authoritative evaluation you can obtain of Janvier's present standing in Canadian art. It's because these persons are professionally engaged in evaluating the work of young artists. [...] They would see work of dozens of young artists in any given year, and, accordingly, are vastly more experienced at judging such work than any critic, public gallery director or collector."

Soleil

I pulled some quotes on what they found

RYAN

Avrom Isaacs from the Isaacs Gallery's reaction: "Mr. Isaacs feels Janvier's work to be a 'hodge-podge of ideas" [...] it is a long, long way from being of a standard to warrant presentation in his gallery.

Ouch...

Soleil

There's more. Walter Moos -

RYAN

"Mr Moos' reaction to the paintings was negative. He said they were of no consequence. They were a mish-mash of styles, and approaches [...] He felt them to have nothing to do with Janvier's Indian traditions; but to be an opportunistic borrowing from readily available art examples."

The Mazelow gallery also notes his work has "little mythological character."

Jack Pollock, of the Pollock gallery. Oh hey, we know him!

Soleil

And Malcolmson underlines that fact in his report. He notes Pollock's relationship with Norval Morrisseau as an "Indian antecedent" in the Pollock gallery.

RYAN

"Mr. Pollock, however, refused to exhibit Janvier's work either by way of a one-man exhibition or by hanging them on an occasional basis in one of the Gallery's rear rooms. [...] he did not want his Gallery to be the home of Canadian-Indian art. He would not show Indian art unless he felt it merited exposure for art reasons."

But Pollock also notes that Janvier's work "did not say anything in relation to his Eskimo background."

Soleil

Alex is Dene... point in fact.

RYAN

But, for a gallery that doesn't want to be the home for "Canadian-Indian art" one of Pollock's knock against Janvier's work is that it's not Indigenous enough in its themes.

Soleil

Jack Pollock referred Malcolmson to take the work to the Sobot gallery. Who is interested in an exhibition, with the "usual" fees paid by the artist and a 40% commission.

RYAN

But - and this is me reading: "Mr. Sobot made it clear his promotion of Janvier

would strongly refer to his Indian background."

Why am I reading this as our cold open?

Soleil

Read Malcolmson's conclusion.

RYAN

"The foregoing reactions are as hopeful and positive as could be expected in relation to an artist painting as short a period as Janvier has. Contrary to popular belief, there are very few native geniuses that, like the rose, blush unseen."

Soleil

This is three years after Norval showed at the Pollock Gallery.

RYAN

So, the art world hadn't really changed

Soleil

Imagine that! I'm Soleil Launière.

RYAN

And I'm Ryan Barnett.

Soleil

And this is Episode 2 in our new series AMONG EQUALS, the history and legacy of the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. In our last episode, we looked at the early lives of artists Norval Morrisseau and Daphne Odjig, and Norval's explosion on the Canadian art scene.

In this episode, we're looking at the quiet aftermath of that show, and what happened next for First Nations artists in the wake of Morrisseau's celebrated debut, including the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67.

All that coming up...

RYAN

Right after this...

Soleil

So, what was it like for Indigenous artists trying to work and trying to get noticed in the 1960s?

GREG

It's a policy of exclusion in terms of admission into fine art galleries. There's a big distinction between an ethnographic museum and a fine art museum or gallery - that the creative products of artists who are of indigenous heritage wouldn't be considered art. And in those days, it was considered "artifact".

Soleil

This is Greg Hill, an artist, curator and Indigenous art consultant.

GREG

And the proper place for artifacts was in ethnographic museums, and not galleries. So, artists were excluded from fine art institutions collecting and exhibiting and the government took action in trying to create art as handicraft as ways of economic activity, which began earlier with the Inuit art market. And starting in 49.

Soleil

In 1949, James Houston, who was an artist and civil servant working in Cape Dorset, in what is now called Nunavut, organized one of the first significant exhibitions of Inuit art for a non-Inuit audience. Houston would eventually found the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative, now known as Kinngait Studios. It was a workspace and distribution centre for Inuit printmakers,

sculptors and carvers, effectively creating new income streams for the people living in northern communities. Kinngait Studios was home to artists like Kenojuak Ashevak and Pitaloosie Saila, and later Annie Pootoogook.

Also in 1949, Prime Minister Louis St-Laurent appointed the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. Its purpose was to investigate the state of arts and culture in Canada. With regard to the state of First Nations art, here's what the commission found. Read this:

RYAN

"There is, we believe, general agreement that certain forms of Indian art have disappeared finally with the customs that gave rise to them; and that the indiscriminate use of totem poles to advertise gasoline stations does nothing either for the cause of the Indian or for the cause of art [...] "The establishment of a national arts and crafts programme is a basic necessity for the development of Indian welfare." [...] Indians in Canada are a minority; and for the most part are economically, socially and intellectually depressed. Their formal education is a responsibility of the Indian Affairs Branch, and we heard it proposed that arts and crafts should be an essential part of that education."

SOLEIL

The success of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-op became a kind of model for Indian Affairs in handling all Indigenous art.

Beginning in the 1960s, for Indigenous artists working in Canada, it almost certainly meant you were entangled in some Ottawa bureaucracy. The Department of

Indian Affairs - I'm going to use that as a blanket name, because the Indigenous portfolio was bounced around and renamed several times - The Department of Indian Affairs took a vested interest in developing a First Nations art market.

GREG

That department exists to take a role in every aspect of people's lives, and that met the criteria for status Indian. [...] I mean, it's kind of the whole premise of Indian Affairs, right? It's a paternalistic government institution that dictates what kinds of economic activities should be undertaken that they determine would have the best chances for profit or for people to make a sustainable living from. [...]

So, it was with that kind of thinking that the Department of Indian Affairs and the Indian art collection began in the sixties, and began to look at art as economic activity. What would sell, what they could promote. And, they began a collection at that time. And some of the artists that we were talking about were involved in that.

Soleil

One of those artists was Alex Janvier.

Janvier was born in 1935 in Cold Lake First Nations - Treaty 6 territory. Indian Affairs assigned Janvier the number 287 when he was a baby. That is how he would be known to the government. At 8 years old, missionaries working locally put Alex, and a number of other children in the back of a truck, and took them to the Blue Quills Residential School, 150 km away from their home. Alex would say later in an interview:

"The missionary might have warned my parents, but I wasn't totally into the picture until I was thrown in the back of the truck."

"We prayed day and night, meal in and meal out, class in and class out [...] We were just harpooned with that stuff. Towards the end they would just openly say that our parents and our grandparents are evil, that they're no good. I could never see my parents as evil."

"My parents knew something strange happened there because my older brothers and sisters were dispirited people when they came home. They didn't last very long. They died. They say it was tuberculosis, but the school just killed them on the inside."

SOLEIL

Janvier started painting at Blue Quills. When Alex was 12 the school gained a new headmaster, Father Etienne Bernet-Rollande. I can't speak to the character of Father Bernet-Rollande, but Alex credits him with his having a separate fate from that of his siblings. Recognizing Janvier's artistic talent, Father Rolande introduced him to works of Picasso, Cezanne and Kandinsky. Quoting alex again:

"It was a feeling of excitement I had never had before. I was discovering new things."

SOLEIL

In 1953, Le Petit Journal, a daily newspaper out of Montreal, profiled a 17-year-old Janvier. In that article, the writer Dollard Morin, describes some of the young artist's work, all of which is on display in the school chapel. There are

sculptures and gouache paintings – all of which present Catholic subjects, but Indigenous in their theme. There's a painting Janvier made of the Virgin Mary, entitled "Our Lady of the Teepees," which featured Mary with "all the features of an Indian mother" carrying the baby Jesus in a carrier.

That painting was reproduced by request and exhibited in Rome.

RYAN

At 17?

SOLEIL

He stood out. When he aged out of the Residential School system, Alex wanted to continue his education at the Alberta College of Art. Well, he actually wanted to study elsewhere, but Calgary was as far as the Indian Affairs officials were willing to send him. Alex said:

They were footing the bill, about \$55 a month. They thought they had a right to determine my whole life.

SOLEIL

Notice a theme?

The Indian Affairs officials initially didn't allow Janvier to study fine arts, instructing him to instead enroll in the school's commercial art courses.

RYAN

Paternalistic vibes.

SOLEIL

Two of his professors, Illingworth Kerr and Marion Nicoll, stepped in. They recognized his talents.

RYAN

What did they say?

SOLEIL

They told the Department of Indian Affairs quote: "Every once in a while, a natural racehorse comes along. You don't hook that racehorse to a plough."

RYAN

This is jaunty.

SOLEIL

It's Canada, it's the mid-1960s - centennial fever has gripped the nation. By 1965, plans were already underway for Expo 67, the "Universal and International Exhibition" to be held in Montreal. It was five years in the making. The city of Montreal built a literal island out of silt, rock and landfill to help host the event. The theme-

RYAN

The theme?

SOLEIL

Yeah, all World Expo's have a theme. For the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris - the origin of the Eiffle Tower - the theme was "The French Revolution."

RYAN

How timely.

SOLEIL

Well, another hundred year commemoration. For Expo 67, the theme was "Man and His World". This was a huge, costly event priced at something like \$320 million dollars to mount. 90 pavilions were planned and built - most were national pavilions for participating nations, including the United States, Australia,

and what was then called Czechoslovakia. There was a Canadian pavilion, which was an inverted pyramid called "the Katimavik". Inside this pavilion there was a rotating cinema showing films made specifically for Expo by the National Film Board of Canada.

Some of the structures were also built around a theme, the list of which included the "Indians of Canada" pavilion. That pavilion was a 100-foot abstracted tipi-like structure, ornamented with a totem pole.

RYAN

Uh huh, that sounds a bit like a hodge podge...

SOLEIL

If anyone listening wants to see what it looked like, there was an NFB film called *Indian Memento*, which was sponsored by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It offers a detailed walkthrough.

Here's Greg Hill again talking about the significance of EXPO 67:

GREG

That was a watershed moment for Indigenous peoples [...] It was really the first time the Indians in Canada had more of a voice in an international forum.

SOLEIL

In our last episode, I told you about the ugly history of Indigenous peoples participation and representation at world's fairs and expos. At its worst, it was putting people like Abraham Ulrikab on display as living exhibits in a human zoo. At its best - and I should throw a dozen qualifiers in front of that word - it

involved having Indigenous peoples engage in the performance of culture, recreating an anthropologist's idea of what it was to be "Indian" - romantic ideas that were often divorced from their authentic, present realities.

But for Expo 67, despite the fact that the Indians of Canada pavilion was planned with the oversight of the Centennial Commission and the Department of Indian Affairs, at least an "Indian Advisory Council" was established.

GREG

Alex Janvier was one of the people that was working on that pavilion, not only as an artist, but in other capacities as well.

SOLEIL

At the same time that gallerists and curators in Toronto were evaluating the merits of Alex Janvier's painting, he was in Ottawa, invited by the Department of Indian Affairs to take part in a symposium to establish the policy for the department's Cultural Affairs Program. The symposium included Norval Morrisseau, and other First Nations artists like George Clutesi, Tom Hill, Duke Redbird, Bill Reid, Gerald Tailfeathers. Also, among this group invited to consult on the development of the pavilion was Jackson Beardy.

RYAN

What's that sound?

SOLEIL

That's the drop for when we introduce a member of the PNIAI.

RYAN

Soon to be...

SOLEIL

Quincy Pickering Jackson Beardy was born on Garden Hill First Nation in Manitoba in 1944.

PAULA

He was basically brought up by his grandmother. He was taught traditional ways by his grandmother. And he was very fond of her.

SOLEIL

This is Pauline Beardy.

PAULA

But everybody calls me Paula, so... My name is Paula Beardy [...] I am the widow of Jackson Beardy.

SOLEIL

Jackson was the fifth of 13 children, and like Norval and Daphne with their grandfathers, he grew up under the wing of a grandparent.

PAULA

I remember him saying, one night he had a vision of his grandmother or a dream of his grandmother, and he went very cold, and he realized that she had died. So, he often talked about his grandmother and how stable she was. And they had a good relationship and he often referred to her, and he missed her a lot.

SOLEIL

But, like Norval and Alex, and thousands of other Indigenous children, when Jackson reached school age, he was sent to Residential School in Portage la Prairie.

PAULA

I remember Jackson saying they never, ever had enough food.

SOLEIL

And it was at this school that this Oji-Cree boy was separated from that connection to his past **and** to himself. In his book, "Jackson Beardy: Life and Art," author Kenneth James Hues writes about the devastating, alienating impact that 12 years in Residential School had on young Jackson. It was so successful in its efforts to assimilate Jackson into white Canadian culture that it all but erased those first six years with his grandmother. When he returned to his reserve at the age of 18, he felt like an alien among his own people. Not only did he speak English perfectly, but he **thought** in English, having to translate his thoughts into Cree before speaking to people in his own community.

PAULA

And he found it difficult to assimilate because they didn't really accept him - as sort of being like a white Indian.

SOLEIL

Jackson soon began to travel around in what Hues called a "process of retrieving his culture" so as to escape that deep sense of alienation. But it was often an uncomfortable journey because he was often met with suspicion.

RYAN

Why?

SOLEIL

Well, Hughes puts it this way: "In features he looked like an Indian, in dress he looked like a Hollywood Indian, in his attitude he seemed more like a white anthropologist."

RYAN

A little too curious?

SOLEIL

He was doing the honest work of trying to reconnect with who he was and where he'd come from.

At the same time, he was trying to obtain an arts education. He had stayed at the Residential School until he was 18 - even though many kids tried to run away at 16. 16 was the age when the authorities stopped chasing after you. Jackson stayed, because his principal had made the promise that if he graduated high school, he would be able to go to college to study fine arts. But, when the time came, the principal went back on his promise, telling Jackson that artists were "beatniks"-

RYAN

Beatniks?

SOLEIL

He told him that they had educated him to be a "decent citizen" who can live and earn a living in white society. But-

RYAN

There's a but?

SOLEIL

But he would send him to study commercial art if he wanted.

RYAN

And then some profs stepped in and vouched for his talent?

SOLEIL

No, not in Beardy's case.

PAULA

He really disliked the principal. I remember we were sitting watching television and there was an advertisement that came on quite regularly, and it was called Mr. Clean [...] this Mr. Clean reminded Jackson of the principal, and he got really upset.

RYAN

So, he told Mr. Clean, "I'll show you," I hope.

SOLEIL

He did! He told his principal that he'd show him, and he would become an artist, whether it meant he had to "live on crackers" and "sleep on lice-ridden mattresses" as the man had warned.

RYAN

And three or four years later, he's sitting at a table with Norval Morrisseau, Bill Reid, and Alex Janvier advising on art for the Indian pavilion.

SOLEIL

He showed him.

RYAN

I'd say.

CARMEN

In 1966, Morrisseau and a group of people, including Alex Janvier, were invited to come to Ottawa to talk about the art for the outside of the Indians of Canada Pavilion.

SOLEIL

This is Carmen Robertson.

CARMEN

My name is Carmen Robertson, I'm the Canada Research Chair in North American Indigenous Art and Material Culture at Carleton as well [...]

SOLEIL

Carmen also recalls the importance of Expo 67:

CARMEN

Well, the Indians of Canada Pavilion has been written about extensively and as it should be, because it's a really important, pivotal moment. It changed the way the world and Canada saw Indigenous people. However, it seemed like because there's a sense of cultural amnesia in Canada, much of that was forgotten. But in 67 it was a really important flash moment.

SOLEIL

This is Greg Hill again.

GREG

I'm sure that the Government of Canada would have assumed that this would be something of great interest for tourism, for cultural tourism, again, [...] as possible economic opportunities for indigenous peoples.

SOLEIL

Remember how you remarked on the building being a "hodge podge"? The building itself, the massive tipi-like structure was designed by a government architect with little consultation. To build it, the government employed Mohawk ironworkers from Kahnawake, just outside of Montreal. These are the guys that built bridges and the New York skyline. Filling the pavilion, well, that was a struggle between the bureaucrats charged with overseeing the project and the Indigenous council employed to consult on it.

RYAN

How so?

SOLEIL

It was the centennial, a time of reflection for the country, but this meant something very different for non-Indigenous people than it did for Indigenous folks. This tension was reflected in the art that was commissioned for the pavilion.

September 27, 1966, the Winnipeg Free Press published an article about the meeting in Ottawa that brought these Indigenous Artists together. But as Carmen observes in her book on Morrisseau and the Media, the article is focused on Norval's participation. He was **34** at the time, and had a reported \$15,000 dollar commission for a show in Montreal. It was a foregone conclusion that he would be one of the artists selected to create a mural for the Indians of Canada Pavilion. In the end, eight pieces were commissioned for the exterior of the building, these included murals from George Clutesi, Francis Kagige and Norval Morrisseau. There were also panel murals, each three meters in diameter.

But, some of the artists faced difficulties when it came to their proposed visions for their work.

GREG

Alex Janvier's painting - he gave it a title that could be considered critical.

SOLEIL

He titled his panel mural, which was an abstract piece, "The Unpredictable East", a critique on Ottawa's control over Indigenous Peoples.

CARMEN

They did not like the title. And, you know, Alex Janvier created very political titles and edgy stuff, and that was too much for them.

GREG

So, it was moved from the front of the pavilion to the back of the pavilion.

SOLEIL

Alex signed the work with his name, but also his Treaty Number: 2-8-7. This was a form of protest he exercised at the time.

RYAN

What about Norval?

SOLEIL

Norval also ran afoul of Indian Affairs and the Centennial Commission.

CARMEN

Morrisseau, it was not a surprise, that he had one of the major murals because he was at that time a pretty well known artist in Canada. [...] And so, he had an idea for a mural. He presented a maquette, as did the other artists.

SOLEIL

A maquette is a scale model. Cory Dingle of the Morrisseau Estate explains further.

CORY

He kind of pulled a fast one. [...] Morrisseau did an original sketch of what he wanted to do and didn't really show anybody. He showed them one thing and then really had something else in his pocket.

CARMEN

And then when they got to Montreal, and he was starting to create the maquette, it

became clear that his version of what he wanted to do and this was a work of art he had created often times, which shows a mother figure nursing both a bear cub and a human figure - a boy usually. And so, when he started to create that, there was a real concern that this was not acceptable, that audiences would not want to see a human mother or what seemed to be a human mother, but was actually Mother Earth nourish both a bear and a human.

CORY

And they're gnawing at her breasts with sharp teeth. And it's not a scene of Mother Earth with the child of humanity suckling on her breast in a nurturing way. No, it's our modern society gnashing at her teet, ripping her skin, bleeding her dry [...] Morisseau was going to use that platform as almost an environmental protest.

CARMEN

So, they said, You'll have to change this to two people, two boys. And he said, "Well, no, I'm not going to change it." "You really, you have to." So he left. He left Expo and that really gives you a sense of, again, of his agency. He had this sense of who he was as an artist. He was not going to change it. He didn't have to change it.

RYAN

He walked?

SOLEIL

He walked. He wasn't going to bow to the will of Indian Affairs, so he split.

RYAN

And what happened to the mural?

CARMEN

What happened is his apprentice and good friend Carl Ray,

CARMEN

who was a Cree artist who'd been working with him for quite a while, agreed to finish the mural and Morrisseau allowed that to happen. And so Carl adjusted the mural to include two babies and then at the bottom wrote, This is in honour of Moses Potan Nanakonagos. Who's Morrisseau's grandfather that was such an important, pivotal figure and shaman in his life.

RYAN

I heard a ding.

SOLEIL

Yes, Carl Ray, another member of the PNIAl was working with Morrisseau on his mural, and was charged with finishing the work for his mentor.

CORY

I don't know if Norval would say that Carl was Norval's assistant. He was his friend. Carl was a great artist [...] Carl taught art in remote communities, but Carl was also a great realistic artist. And so you kind of have these two different veins of Carl's art where he will do a picture of a moose that looks like a moose. And he was a very skilled realistic artist. And then he, you know, adopted Norval's style of art and expanded on it. And Norval was always very impressed with Carl's lines and the skill of his hand.

SOLEIL

Carl Ray was another artist, like Morrisseau, who broke taboos by depicting legends and teachings in his work. He was born on the Sandy Lake First Nation in Northern Ontario in 1943. At the age of 6

he was sent to a Residential School 300 miles north of Kenora.

RYAN

Sigh

SOLEIL

There he learned about Jesus. He also drew... a lot. He apparently filled his workbooks with sketches, which earned him severe punishments from teachers and school administrators.

RYAN

There was no helpful headmaster to encourage his art?

SOLEIL

Not for Carl. His father died when he was 13, which precipitated his departure from school. He had to work to support his family. He worked in bush camps and mines. Soon, he would contract tuberculosis and be sent to a sanatorium, a place where someone recovers from tuberculosis, in Fort William.

RYAN

Okay... we have another podcast, The Story of a National Crime in which we talked about Fort William.

SOLEIL

Not the best place.

RYAN

Not a good place.

SOLEIL

But, for Carl, the sanatorium afforded him time to work on his art. He devoted his time there to drawing and painting, some biographies of him call it occupational

therapy, which was quite common in sanatoria and segregated hospitals at the time.

He was in the sanitorium for a year, he even sold some paintings while he was there. He eventually returned to Sandy Lake in 1966.

RYAN

Just in time for Expo.

SOLEIL

That's right.

RYAN

So, what happened in the wake of Expo 67?

SOLEIL

Well, Alex lost his job.

GREG

Because he was an employee of Indian Affairs, and he had a contract with them for the pavilion. And then after the pavilion happened, basically his contract was canceled. In the end, he fulfilled the terms of his contract by painting 80 paintings that became [...] a major part of the Indigenous art collection at Indian Affairs.

RYAN

And for Morrisseau?

CARMEN

Expo 67 became a real "flash point" for Morrisseau, because while he was hanging out there ahead of the opening when he was painting, he met Herbert Schwartz, and Herbert Schwartz was an art figure. Actually, he was a doctor at McGill University Medical School, but he was into art, and he asked Morrisseau if he'd be interested in doing an exhibition in

Montreal, and that led to him going to France for his first two international exhibitions.

RYAN

So, he bounced?

SOLEIL

He knew well enough that he didn't need to play nice with Expo 67. He'd be fine. And the pavilion itself, well it became a hot button topic in the press.

GREG

I know that there was some surprise over how things developed and, and the strength of the critical commentary displayed within the pavilion. There's this story about the Queen going through the pavilion and leaving ashen faced, not anticipating what she was going to be seeing in there.

RYAN

What did she see?

SOLEIL

Well, despite the censorship some of the artists faced in the development process, the Indians of Canada Pavilion was radical for its time. Remember, this all happened during the 60s scoop. Indigenous kids are still being taken from their parents, and given to white families. Residential Schools and Day Schools were still operating. But in this atmosphere, the Indigenous organizers present a sobering account of Indigenous-settler relations.

RYAN

Explain.

SOLEIL

Well, let's go back to that NFB film. So, say you're a white family from Peterborough, Ontario, and you've made the

drive to Montreal - the most cosmopolitan city in the nation. You're there to celebrate the 100th anniversary of confederation. You walk into this massive tipi - though it's made of steel and concrete - but you walk into this tipi and the first thing you see is a sign that says "When the White Man Came We Welcomed Him with Love."

RYAN

That sounds nice.

SOLEIL

Right, and then as you move your way through the pavilion, you're faced with every way in which the white man took advantage of that love for 300 years. Signs saying "War and Peace Treaties Deprived Us of Our Land," "We Wanted to Live Our Own Life on Our Own Land." There's a whole room dedicated to the destructive impact of the Residential School system. For many in attendance, this is how they learned that Residential Schools weren't a positive thing for Indigenous people.

RYAN

I see why the Queen may have been ashen.

SOLEIL

Well, apparently, as reported, the Queen ignored a huge, backlit display that featured a treaty signed by her ancestor, George the second, displayed in a section of the pavilion entitled: The Broken Treaties.

RYAN

Ha!

SOLEIL

The press saw the pavilion as an affront. Settler journalists were... miffed, if I can

substitute one word for another. They felt that somehow the "Indians" consulted in **the** development of the pavilion had tricked organizers**s**. At a time that was meant for celebrating Canada, they had put a wrench in the works - and in the eye of the nation. But evidently, the artists had demonstrated the incredible ways in which art can offer keen social critiques, dispense political commentary, and raise awareness about injustice. They would no longer cater their artistic practices**s** to white buyers**s** and tourists**s**, as the Royal Commission on the National Development of the Arts and the Department of Indian Affairs had encouraged for years.

JOSEPH

And that was the one thing that Daphne told me right in the beginning. You have a gift. Follow your gift. Don't let anyone tell you that it's not your gift, or tell you it's not any good.

AMONG EQUALS

EP3: Daphne's Place

WORD COUNT 4188

RYAN

Are we starting with a clip today?

SOLEIL

We're going to start with a story. When we last talked about Daphne Odjig, she was living in Parry Sound, a few hours from her home in Wiikwemkoong First Nation.

BONNIE

And it was at this time that she began to use a different last name. Odjig means fisher in Ojibwe. The fisher, of course, is a small river animal. And she began to introduce herself as Daphne Fisher.

SOLEIL

This is Bonnie Devine ,

BONNIE

My name is Bonnie Devine. I'm a visual artist.

SOLEIL

Daphne spent many years detached from her Ojibwe identity, signing her artwork with Fisher in place of Odjig.

BONNIE

[...] Some of them are signed, "Daphne Fisher". Some of them are just signed "Daphne". I've got a couple of examples from the sixties where she just signs it Daphne. And so, kind of avoids the whole issue, which I think was, you know, pretty savvy of this young person [...] just trying to make a living, and do the best she can to be accepted in mainstream Canadian society.

SOLEIL

During the Second World War, Daphne moved to Toronto for work , but she continued to paint. In 1945, she married Paul Sommerville, a veteran. And they moved to Fraser Valley, BC. The couple had a son, David. Her husband would later die in a car accident. In 1962, Daphne got remarried to Chester Beavan, and the couple moved to Manitoba. It was during this period that she began to ree-connect with her First Nations identity.

BONNIE

The quick story is that she was invited by her sister-in-law, Rosemary Peltier, to attend the Wiikwemkoong powwow.

SOLEIL

This was in 1964.

BONNIE

She was married, had a family, and had made a bit of a name for herself as a painter in oils and acrylics. So, she gets this invitation to go back to Wiikwemkoong. It's quite arduous even in those days to get up to Wiikwemkoong. Anyway, she's there. It was the fourth annual powwow.

SOLEIL

It's important to remember that powwows had previously been banned beginning **in** the 1850s, it was illegal for First Nations communities to practice dance ceremonies. This ban lasted for decades. Daphne's sister-in-law was also working to revive songs and dances in Wiki.

BONNIE

This was a big deal because there was considerable opposition by the Jesuits who were still the spiritual bosses of the community, sort of in charge, had been in

charge since 1630. They were entrenched there, and they did not want this powwow to go forward.

Daphne went. And she's watching from the sidelines and her sister[-in-law]said, come out onto the powwow ground and dance with us. And Daphne was quite reluctant to do this. For one thing, she'd lived away from an indigenous community since she was 18. You know, she had worked very hard to acclimate and be accepted in white communities and white mainstream art world. She never said this, but I imagine she felt a bit like an imposter or an intruder there. Y'know, a guest.

Anyway, they convinced her to go and dance. And she was watching what everyone was doing and trying to do it too. And she said all of a sudden that the sound of the drum just went into her heart. And she said she knew she was an Indian.

And from that time on, with the encouragement and the help of her sister-in-law, Rosemary, she began to explore some of the stories from the Elders on the island. She embarked on a number of projects with Rosemary to tell those stories and illustrate them. She started to do a little bit of curatorial work, so [she] put together an exhibition of works that were on display during the powwow and so on. And in that way began to realize that maybe there was a space for her in that artistic genre that offered her a chance to express that new identity that she was feeling.

Soleil
I'm Soleil Launier.

RYAN
And I'm Ryan Barnett.

SOLEIL

And this is Among Equals, a five-part look into the history and legacy of the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. In our last episode, we met Alex Janvier, Jackson Beardy and Carl Ray, as they worked on the famed Indians of Canada Pavilion for the International and Universal Exposition in Montreal, otherwise known as "Expo 67". This is episode 3: Daphne's Place.

--

SOLEIL

Hold on. We have to do a little contextual place setting here.

RYAN

Okay.

SOLEIL

So, we've been to Expo 67. Here's Indigenous Artist, Curator and Consultant Greg Hill, again.

GREG

That was a watershed moment for Indigenous peoples [...] It was really the first time the Indians in Canada had more of a voice in an international forum.

SOLEIL

And Carmen Robertson:

CARMEN

It changed the way the world and Canada saw Indigenous people [...] in 67 it was a really important flash moment.

RYAN

But?

SOLEIL

But...

CARMEN

[...] There's a sense of cultural amnesia in Canada, much of that was forgotten.

SOLEIL

So, that brings us to this archival clip.

PIERRE ELLIOT TRUDEAU (CLIP)

We must convince Canadians, and particularly Indians that we need to make a choice. Either they become part of the mainstream of Canadian society, they are equal before the law, with the same rights as other Canadians. Or they remain apart, a little different, not full-fledged citizens.

RYAN

What's he talking about?

SOLEIL

So, picture it, in October of 1967, EXPO packs up, and everyone goes home. On June 25, 1969, just a year and a half later, Jean Chretien, who was the Minister of Indian Affairs at that time, introduced the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, what's commonly known as the "White Paper", on the floor of the House of Commons.

RYAN

So, what was the White Paper?

SOLEIL

Well, it was the Government's proposed solution to its perceived problem with First Nations Peoples in Canada. In 1963, the federal government had commissioned a report on the social conditions of First Nations people across the country. Anthropologist Harry B. Hawthorn, who was charged with conducting the survey,

concluded that First Nations Peoples were the country's most disadvantaged and marginalized populations. He called them "citizens minus" as they experienced higher rates of poverty and infant mortality, and lower rates of education and life expectancy. Hawthorn attributed these things to decades of failed government policies, which governed the lives of First Nations Peoples.

RYAN

Right.

SOLEIL

It's a two volume report, so just to summarize, it was Hawthorn's recommendation that the government bring an end to forced assimilation programs, like Residential Schools. But what the government took from his report, and subsequent consultations with various First Nation communities who expressed their concerns regarding their Treaty rights, education, health care, and self-determination, was that they needed to abolish the legal status of "Indian".

RYAN

Okay, so, to remedy the problems either created by or exacerbated by forced assimilation programs, the White Paper proposed more forced assimilation?

SOLEIL

The White Paper proposed to eliminate Indian status, dissolve Indian Affairs, abolish the Indian Act, convert reserve land to private property, appoint a commissioner to address outstanding land claims and gradually terminate existing Treaties. Do you remember the original title for Alex Janvier's Expo 67 piece, "The Unpredictable East"?

RYAN

Yeah.

SOLEIL

Yeah, that's the White Paper.

RYAN

And this went over?

SOLEIL

Like a led balloon. This happened amid a growing Indigenous civil rights movement in **the** late 1960s.

GREG

I mean, it's a very active period [...]

SOLEIL

This is Greg Hill, again.

GREG

Coinciding with what was happening in the States as well [...] coming out of the civil rights movement.

SOLEIL

In the United States, there was the American Indian Movement, which organized to combat police brutality, poverty and discrimination in urban centers. This group was just one piece of a growing Red Power movement in that country.

GREG

[...] one could even go back further, to the idea of Indigenous men volunteering for the Second World War and going off and fighting, coming back as veterans and not being given the same kinds-of payments for their service [...] In some cases, some men came back and actually lost their homes or their land. So, these are people that saw what it was like in other parts of the world and fought as allies for Canada and then come back and are treated,

very differently from the people they
fought alongside with.

SOLEIL

By the time the White Paper was introduced, the Red Power movement had moved north to Canada. One thing we want to underline for listeners is that Indigenous activism during this period, related to decolonization and the rebuilding of Indigenous Nations, also encompassed revitalizing Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and forms of expression. Indigenous artists were active participants in these efforts. Their works depicted themes related to individual and collective resistance to forced assimilation, colonization, and demonstrations of cultural pride. These works were not the handicrafts whose production the government so frequently encouraged.

GREG

For the senior Trudeau and Jean Chrétien, it was about "just society", in a way of [...] solving the Indian problem by eliminating special status for, "Indians". So, basically, we're going to make you the same as us legally, politically, within the Constitution. So everything will be fine. But it's[...] not addressing any of the issues and the kind of multi-generational problems that still exist today that come out of [...]the cultural and physical extermination policies of the genocidal policies of the government for over a century. So you can't just say with a white paper that you're just like us, white, and, and everything be fine. No more Indian problem.

SOLEIL

In 1970, Harold Cardinal and the Indian Association of Alberta issued a response, which they called Citizens Plus, also known as "The Red Paper". It was a rebuke of the White Paper, stating that "[r]etaining the legal status of Indians is necessary if Indians are to be treated justly. Justice requires that the special history, rights, and circumstances of Indian People be recognized."

In his book, the Unjust Society, which was published around this time, Cardinal elaborated, writing "In spite of all government attempts to convince Indians to accept the white paper, their efforts will fail, because Indians understand that the path outlined by the Department of Indian Affairs through its mouthpiece, the Honourable Mr. Chrétien, leads directly to cultural genocide. We will not walk this path."

The government eventually withdrew this policy, with Prime Minister Trudeau saying, "We had perhaps the prejudices of small 'l' liberals and white men at that who thought that equality meant the same law for everybody."

RYAN

And by "small 'l' liberals" he means?

SOLEIL

Someone who holds liberal views, but not attached to a particular political party.

RYAN

Right.

GREG

It's still amazing. Of course, there are negative things in the Indian Act, but you

know whether [...] to eliminate it or not is still a question that's being debated.

SOLEIL

Just as a button on this topic. Greg Hill told us a story about the time he gave Jean Chretien and his wife Aline a tour of the National Gallery of Canada.

GREG

[...] When we did Morrisseau's show at the gallery [...] they wanted a tour, so I gave them a private tour and [...] I just could not resist asking him about the white paper because of course he had a hand in it. And it was a very jovial, convivial tour. I asked him that question, Eileen just walked away, continued walking, and Mr. Chrétien stopped and his manner changed and everything [...] and just it wasn't going to be a conversation.

JOSEPH

I was first hit by lightning when I was three years old in my grandmother's yard. It hit a tree, it came across the ground, it came up through my feet. And it's the only time I've been hit three times. And it's the only time I was knocked unconscious that I know of.

SOLEIL

Here is Joseph M Sanchez .

JOSEPH

I am Joseph M. Sanchez [...] I was born on the full moon in a place called Trinidad, Colorado, which is on the old Santa Fe trail on its way to Santa Fe. It's actually the mountain pass that comes onto the plains of New Mexico.

RYAN

Should we be hearing a ding here?

SOLEIL

Yes!

SOLEIL

Joseph was born in 1948. At 10 years old,
his family moved out of Colorado-

JOSEPH

[...] to the White Mountain Apache
Reservation in Arizona. This place was a
paradise in 1958. Lots of wild animals,
beautiful streams full of fish, old growth
ponderosa [pine] forest.

SOLEIL

Like the others in this story, Joseph was
a precocious and dedicated artist. His
fifth grade teacher-

JOSEPH

[...] her name was Miss Guterres [...]

SOLEIL

She would allow Joseph to skip phys-ed to
instead stay in her class and make art.

JOSEPH

She taught me this reverse painting on
glass, which was really amazing for me,
was my first idea of making art. And then
she also taught me how to embroider,
crochet, and also started me on my path
drawing all the time [...] That's when I
really clicked into the idea that my
destiny was to be an artist [...] And so
in the sixth grade, it was easy for me to
become the school artist, because I
already had this experience of working
[...] using paints. And so I became a
school artist. I made all the posters. I
made all kinds of stuff for everybody. But
I was constantly getting in trouble

because I loved to draw nudes [...] And I would get sent to the office [...] and get the paddle as they say [...] The punishment really strengthens my resolve as an artist.

SOLEIL

After high school, Joseph joined the Marine Corps.

JOSEPH

I joined the Marine Corps during my first semester of college. I did this after my art teacher at the time - he threw away my whole semester's work that I completed actually in the first couple of weeks, this whole curriculum for the whole semester I did in the first couple of weeks. I must say I was rather enthusiastic.

He said I was insulting him.

SOLEIL

Joseph never went back to class. He ran into a recruiter on campus that, with a guarantee that he could have schooling as an artist, convinced Joseph to enlist.

JOSEPH

And since my mother had just died, I kind of had a death wish [...]

RYAN

A death wish?

SOLEIL

Remember, Joseph was in the United States, and this was the late 60s at the height of the war in Vietnam.

RYAN

Right.

JOSEPH

But it took three waivers for me to get to be a Marine. My eyesight was too bad. I only weighed 100 pounds, less, I think. And my height was only five [feet].

SOLEIL

But he got the waivers and he was in.

JOSEPH

As a Marine, I was an "angry Navajo" and an "angry Apache," and I'm neither of those things.

SOLEIL

Joseph spent 28 months in active service as a marine.

JOSEPH

But as the stateside Marine, we were also in riot training for the riots in Los Angeles. And during one of those training sessions, were asked to put our bayonet on the rifle and thrust forward chanting, kill your mother.

RYAN

Wow.

SOLEIL

Yeah.

JOSEPH

I refused that order. And that sent me into a real problem with the hierarchy. They actually put me in a rubber room for a week, saying I was crazy and I was on drugs, but... I had not even experienced anything like that. So, I gave them artwork instead of answers to their questions. And after I left that, I started thinking about leaving the Marine Corps and coming to Canada.

RYAN

Is that what happened?

JOSEPH

That's exactly what happened.

SOLEIL

And as it happened, Joseph moved to Canada just as something new was emerging in Winnipeg. More after this.

SOLEIL

In the years following Expo 67, recognition for this group of artists we're talking about grew. After a disagreement with the Centennial Commission and walking away from his work for the Indians of Canada Pavillion, Morrisseau was invited to exhibit in France. His exhibition, Peintre Indien du Grand Nord Canadien, held at Galerie Saint-Paul in southern France was a critical and public smash, receiving 12,000 visitors, including the likes of famed artists Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall.

RYAN

Yeah, but I read that Tom Hill - he is a Seneca artist and curator who also worked on the Expo 67 pavillion - he's said that Canadians didn't give First Nations art as serious an examination as it received abroad. First Nations works weren't hanging in, say, the Art Gallery of Ontario or the National Gallery at this time.

SOLEIL

Yes, that's correct, but around this time, Carl Ray, the artist who finished Morrisseau's mural, exhibited his work in Winnipeg. While Alex Janvier's work could be seen in Calgary. In fact, Norval Morrisseau and Jackson Beardy both

received Centennial Medals. And each individual was either receiving commissions or Arts Council grants.

While Morrisseau, Ray, Janvier, and to some extent, Beardy were occupied with Expo 67, Daphne Odjig also experienced a growing profile and interest in her work. She had her first solo exhibition at the Lakehead Arts Centre in Thunder Bay, and a second the following year at Brandon University in Manitoba. And, of course, because these artists were operating in similar circles, they began entering each other's orbits. Daphne met Carl in 1968 and Morrisseau the following year, and that pulled her closer to the Expo 67 cohort. And they began appearing in group exhibitions together, in various configurations.

RYAN

Things are finally coming together.

SOLEIL

Yes. And as they began to encounter one another in this period, Winnipeg had a unique gravitational pull for them all. Daphne had moved to Manitoba with her husband Chester in 1964, inching closer and closer to Winnipeg with each work reassignment for Chester, eventually settling there in 1970. Beardy and Ray had met in 1965 while hitchhiking across northern Manitoba. Both men would have exhibitions in Winnipeg in the near future, and settle there themselves. The city's art scene also regularly draws Morrisseau and Janvier back. 1970 was also Manitoba's centennial, which, like Expo 67, resulted in opportunities for these artists. Morrisseau, Beardy, Ray, and Odjig's works were all included in a portfolio of prints released by the Winnipeg Centennial Corporation.

JOSEPH

Winnipeg was an incredible time [...] you know, [...] a lot of artists had come to Winnipeg because rents were cheap, you could have a studio, you could have actually a place.

SOLEIL

And then Daphne made an important decision... This is Bonnie Devine again...

BONNIE

She was a fan of Andy Warhol, and she knew that Andy Warhol had opened something called the Factory in New York City, in Manhattan. And she thought, why can't we have a factory? And so she wanted to open up a place where people could come and they wanted to play music? Fine. You wanted to make movies? Fine. You wanted to paint? You just want to hang around, you know, and party.

SOLEIL

So, in 1971, Chester and Daphne opened a small craft store out of which she ran Odjig Prints of Canada Limited., a new business where she would sell her own work, as well as that of her contemporaries.

BONNIE

She had caught on to this idea that collectives can be extremely powerful in terms of seeding ideas and disseminating thoughts and building new practices. And I think that's where she was coming from with that gallery.

SOLEIL

This is Michelle Lavalley-

MICHELLE

My name is Michelle LaVallee. And I'm a mother and an arts administrator. I'm Anishinaabekwe, who give way. And my family is from Cape Croker, Unceded First Nation, just south of Manitoulin island.

SOLEIL

For Daphne, she was-

MICHELLE

- was really taking control, did not feel supported at the time, really took it upon herself to create a space and a venue for artists to gather and for artists to be able to share their experiences and celebrate differences in the way they wanted to produce art.

JOSEPH

[...] if you walked into the shop in those days it was small in the beginning days. Had a couple of counters, you know, glass cases. She had a lot of moccasins and mukluks, and beadwork. On the walls were her paintings and these prints she had already started to make of Norval and Carl Ray.

SOLEIL

This is Joseph, again.

JOSEPH

When I first saw Daphne, she was just an amazingly beautiful looking woman [...] She liked to wear turtlenecks, and she had a lot of turquoise jewelry and always wore a turquoise necklace. And she was just such a warm person, you know, like so welcoming to everyone[...] She was looking for people who were willing to talk about some sort of authenticity, some realness in their own self. Talk about their own people - maybe it's ceremony, maybe it's just even a

portrait. And I think that's why she liked my work. I had no ceremony, I had none of that going for me. But what I did have was, I was just drawing directly from my experiences of life [...] And she encouraged that.

SOLEIL

Also, in 1971, Odjig Prints put out a catalog advertising the works they had for sale - prints by Daphne, Norval, Jackson and Carl all appear in its pages, as well as a handful of other artists.

RYAN

What was that?

SOLEIL

I'm about to drop a name. I was a little quick on the button.

RYAN

Oh, okay.

SOLEIL

So, Winnipeg in 1971 is this hive of creativity.

RYAN

Like Paris in the 1920s.

SOLEIL

A little bit. And another artist who was there, and orbiting Daphne's place, was Eddy Cobiness, an Ojibwe artist.

SOLEIL

Eddy was born in War road, Minnesota in 1933. His family would split their time between the Red Lake Reservation in Minnesota and the Buffalo Point Reserve in Manitoba. Eddy's paternal grandfather was a great medicine man whose spiritual

wisdom helped guide Eddy through life and his artistic practice. His father died when Eddy was just 6 years old.

RYAN
Hmm.

SOLEIL
After his father died, Rose Cobiness, his Mother, supported the family by working at the fisheries in the summer, and in a hotel in the winter. Eddy, like all the other artists in our story, discovered his artistic abilities at an early age.

Eddy would say, "Over the winter months I would draw on the snow and in the summer on sandy beaches along the lake shore [...] From time to time my mother would look at my drawing and say: 'My son, you have a great gift and some day you will be a great artist!'"

He sold his first drawing at 12. He took that bit of money and bought himself a pen and ink set, and some unlined paper. Around that time, he also received his first oil paints.

When Eddy was 21, he joined the U.S. Army, where he spent the next 3 years. During his time in the Army, he discovered watercolors, and would practice by drawing portraits of the other soldiers' girlfriends from photos they had. As his mastery as an artist grew, he would alternate between media and styles.

RYAN
Yeah, I'm looking at his work right now, and there are acrylic, kind of pastoral images with loons and ducks on a pond.

And then there are these other ones, these delicate ink and watercolor pieces of wildlife, with glowing joints and resonant eyes. They are beautiful.

SOLEIL

Yes, much of his work was by his dreams - bringing them into reality.

JOSEPH

I would go to his place at Buffalo Point, and it was from him that I learned incredible watercolor technique and how to do multiple works at once, which is the way I work today [...] And that I learned from Eddy Cobiness.

SOLEIL

Eddy also signed his work with his Treaty band number, "47".

What's often written about Eddy is who owned works of his. Ed Schreyer, who was the premier of Manitoba at that time - eventually he would be Governor General - he had a Cobiness. Jean Chretien, Minister of Indian Affairs, and eventual Prime Minister of Canada, he had a Cobiness. And Queen Elizabeth the second also had a Cobiness in her collection.

RYAN

That's interesting.

SOLEIL

What's really interesting is how the Queen received his art. It was gifted to her while she was touring Manitoba for its cen-ten-ary. She was in The PaW, and was officially welcomed by Grand Chief David Corchaine of the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood. This was another group that formed in the late 60s, going back to the beginning of this episode, they had

organized to advocate for First Nations living in Manitoba. So, this is a year after the White Paper, and less than three years after the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo, and you remember the Queen's reported reception to that.

RYAN

I remember that she was reported as "ashen" when leaving that exhibit.

SOLEIL

Yes. So, Grand Chief David Corchaine welcomes Queen Elizabeth II to The Pas.

COURCHENE (CLIP)

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome Your Majesty to the ancestral homeland of the Indian people. It has been almost 100 years since our forefathers signed treaties with her majesty Queen Victoria. Treaties in which our forefathers held in high esteem. It is with sorrow that we note that the promises of peace and harmony, of social advancement and equality of opportunity have not been realized by our people. I am sure that you will note on your visits to Indian Communities that Indians have not in effect profited well by the prosperity of this great and wealthy nation. We are hopeful that your majesty's representative will now, though belated, recognize the inequities of the past, and will take steps to redress the treatment of the Indian People of Manitoba.

RYAN

This is 1970?

SOLEIL

This is 1970.

RYAN

Wow. I can only imagine her reaction.

SOLEIL

As I said at the beginning: a social
movement was swelling.

AMONG EQUALS

EP 4: Breaking Glass

EP. 4:

WORD COUNT - 5044

ANNOUNCER

For the Indian, daily life was a canvas, and each man was an artist. He decorated his moccasins, tipis and costumes with intricate designs and brilliant colours vigorously expressed his love of design. But the exclusive right to paint the legends and lore was jealousy guarded by the powerful medicine man. The legends were the last of the great secrets and to release them beyond the bounds of the tribe was unthinkable.

RYAN

What are we listening to?

SOLEIL

This is a film produced by the National Film Board of Canada. It's called "The Colours of Pride."

ANNOUNCER

Norval Morrisseau [...] questioned the wisdom of this taboo. In keeping the stories secret, was there not also the danger of losing them? Perhaps their preservation depended, not on their secrecy, but on a new way of seeing and understanding the legendary past.

SOLEIL

Here, read the film's description -

RYAN

"An introduction to four Indigenous painters whose work in recent years has stirred interest in Canada and abroad.

Despite the artists' differing styles and origins, their canvases reflect their common heritage."

SOLEIL

This short documentary was released in 1973 and features interviews with Norval, as well as Daphne Odjig, Alex Janvier and another artist, Alan Sapp.

RYAN

So, three artists that we know will form the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.

SOLEIL

That's right, all in one film. And it was not the first NFB film to feature Norval. He had appeared in "The Indian Speaks" a few years earlier. But this one is unique, because it features nearly half of the PNIAI around the time they were beginning to work and exhibit together.

CARMEN

[...] I also asked Alex specifically about what it was like during the filming of "The Colours of Pride".

SOLEIL

This is Carmen Robertson.

CARMEN

[...] I said to him also, "what went on?" [...] "were you talking about this as a group? [...] He said that he didn't even know the names of any other artists that were involved in the project. They came out to [...] Alberta and filmed him and that was that. And he knew nothing else about it.

RYAN

They didn't know they were being interviewed for the same film?

SOLEIL

No. Not at all.... Do you want to hear the last thoughts from the film?

RYAN

Sure.

ANNOUNCER

Four painters from four provinces separated by miles in distance and style each paints independently of the other and each is a distinctly individual artist. Yet, they're linked by a common source: their Indian heritage. And together they form a new and unique expression.

CARMEN

[...] it seems just so odd to me. There was an opportunity to really engage in how these artists were already trying to help a new generation, and were organizing themselves to change the gallery system for them. And none of that is covered in "*Colours of Pride*."

SOLEIL

So, a film crew set out to capture a moment of emergence for First Nations artists in Canada, but they failed to identify the other story happening under their noses.

RYAN

So, what was that story?

SOLEIL

Well, we're going to cover it today. In our last episode, we met Joseph Sanchez and Eddy Cobiness, Daphne reconnected with her Indigenous identity, and she opened Odjig Prints of Canada so she could sell

her artwork, as well as the works of her contemporaries.

This is part four in our story: Breaking Glass.

SOLEIL

If you recall from our last episode, Daphne had started her new venture.

RYAN

Yes.

SOLEIL

She had a shop, with a gallery and workspace in the back, and it became a hub of activity for First Nations artists working in the area.

Joseph

[...] It was meant to share her work with the people, and also I think she wanted to help everybody. If you walked into the shop in those days it was small in the beginning days.

SOLEIL

This is Joseph Sanchez.

JOSEPH

[...] She had a lot of moccasins and mukluks and beadwork. And on the walls were her paintings and prints she had already started to make of Norval and Carl Ray. And quite a few of the other artists [...] She was looking for people who were willing to talk about some sort of authenticity, some realness in their own self. Maybe it's a ceremony, maybe it's just even a portrait.

SOLEIL

Daphne established her place somewhat in the mold of what Andy Warhol had done with the Factory in New York City. It was

a meeting place to create work,
experiment, share ideas...

Joseph

[...]A place like Daphne's shop [...] and the making of prints, the artwork then started to circulate more, and people got to see it differently [...] they got to relate to us as artists. They would come into Daphne's shop, and they'd look at this work, and they too realized this, all the creativity that's there. And it's also a creativity that they're not familiar with, because basically the art of the world is Western European [...] And having to come to grips with looking at a Norval Morrisseau, that's so powerful that you can't take your eyes off of it, and he's talking about something that you can only understand in your heart. Or Daphne's piece *From Mother Earth Flows the Water of Life*, draws you in [...] These are our thoughts, feelings, representations of an indigenous life that was here long before the colonizer arrived. And it was suppressed. The goal was to assimilate that information and turn the Indians into an assimilated personality where their goals and their desires would be the desires of the dominant culture [...]

MICHELLE

You saw artists who were pitted between or against government programs and government supported institutions and non-native public expectations of what indigenous art should be, what an indigenous person should be and does act like, and how it should, how we should be represented.

SOLEIL

This is Michelle Lavallee.

MICHELLE

And so these institutions and public expectations were really wanting art that reflected a stereotype of Indianess.

SOLEIL

What began to form in that back room at Daphne's shop was the idea of creating a new art language and educating collectors, and creating what Joseph would call:

JOSEPH

[...] a less greed motivated mentality by curators and directors and gallery owners to allow an authentic indigenous view of our cultural heritage emerge and get past this romantic fantasy of Native people, which in truth is a documentation of our genocide.

SOLEIL

But to do so, these artists couldn't operate siloed from one another, the way they would be portrayed in "The Colours of Pride." They would have to come together.

For years, they had crossed paths, had pieces appear in the same shows or were commissioned to create work for a common exhibition, as was the case with Expo 67. But in 1972-

MICHELLE

Non-Indigenous curator, well, there really wasn't Indigenous curators at the time, but Jacqueline Fry featured Jackson Beardy, Alex Janvier and Daphne Odjig in a three person exhibition at the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

SOLEIL

The exhibition was called Treaty Numbers 23, 287, 1137, named for the respective Treaty numbers of the artists.

MICHELLE

And it was the first exclusively contemporary First Nations exhibition to be held in a public gallery in Canada.

SOLEIL

This is what Fry wrote in the catalog for the exhibition:

"New artistic movements, even when they concern our own culture, require an open, fresh emotional and intellectual approach. When new work comes from a culture other than our own, an even more demanding situation arises [...] The works of other cultures make us ask questions about our own values and ideas. Instead of looking for what we expect to find, we need to relax, examine things carefully, and then find what is really there."

RYAN

Ah yes, a bit of cultural humility.

Joseph

Well, that's the first exhibition that truly broke the glass ceiling of Canadian art [...] And the curator, Jacqueline Fry, was really ahead of her time by doing that.

SOLEIL

This is Joseph, again.

JOSEPH

And the idea that using those treaty numbers was that, that was the disrespect that the colonizer had for the people. You're just a number. You don't have a name. You're not a person. You're a number. You're number 23, and your children are gonna be, you know, 24, 25, and 26 [...] So, if you used...the person's name and their own language, that was not going to help the assimilation of these people.

SOLEIL

Greg Hill expands on this idea.

GREG

[...] pointing out how there's this different kind of identity and system for Indians and Canada at that time. And making people aware of this paternalistic system, but also at such an important time of the three of them having this exhibition at a public art gallery [...] I think it really signals [...] ways of communicating critical ideas through contemporary art.

Michelle

And I think Treaty Number was really important because it was at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. It really lent institutional credibility to their practice and gave a boost to their public profile, which then later or soon after was reinforced.

SOLEIL

In his review of the show, John Graham, art critic for the Winnipeg Free Press wrote. Here, read this:

RYAN

"Out of the fund of legends, traditional forms, patterns and colors, these three artists have developed separate aesthetic frameworks and constructed their own configurations upon them. Inextricably part of a multi-layered and multi-cultural society, such creative statements give promise of greater appreciation of the contribution to be made by this part of the whole mosaic."

SOLEIL

But even before their show at the WAG -

Joseph

It was [...] Jackson and Daphne who had started to talk a lot. And this idea was begun by them. And through the shop, this idea was circulated in the conversations as artists came in and would sit there in the back room and...drink coffee and talk about, well, there's a show in Toronto, and there's no natives or there's this artist is getting \$20,000 for a painting, but I'm only getting \$20. Why is that? It's basic discrimination.

SOLEIL

A vision began to develop...

JOSEPH

[...] those conversations [...] became stronger and stronger. I don't know if it was Daphne whose idea was to form a group, or Jackson [...] Norval was always on board with Daphne [...] And Carl was with him as well. They were longtime friends. And then came in Alex Janvier [...]

SOLEIL

Daphne would soon invite Eddy and Joseph to join their burgeoning group.

MICHELLE

[...] it definitely is one of the first self-organized art activist groups in our history [...] one of the beautiful things is how each artist was encouraged to follow his or her own path. And the more senior members like Norval and Daphne and Eddy and Alex, who began producing work in the fifties and sixties, also complemented and mentored the younger members of the group [...]

Donna Feledichuk

There was a handful of Indigenous artists whose works had made a little bit creeped

in the mainstream like Norval Morrisseau
[...]

SOLEIL

This is Donna Feledichuk.

DONNA

I'm Dr. Donna Feledichuk. I'm the director of Portage College's Museum of Aboriginal Arts and Artifacts in Lac La Biche, Alberta.

SOLEIL

Today, the Museum of Aboriginal Arts and Artifact is the only Museum in the world to host a permanent exhibition featuring this group of artists.

DONNA

[...] Benjamin Chee Chee was starting to gain some prominence at the time. Alex Janvier had a bit of success. Daphne had a little bit of success. But they were pockets, and it wasn't the norm, it was the exception. And frequently when numerous artists at the time, not just the group, but other artists that were working at the time were taking works to galleries, they were getting rejected quite frequently [...] And so, the group really was a resistance to the establishment [...] and really advocated for that: 'we're an important group of artists in Canada.'

Michelle

They fought against exclusionary practices that was treating their work [...] the work of all native artists as craft [...] I think gathering together in Daphne's place really helped them. And one of the main goals was to fight to establish a forum and the spaces for the voices and perspective of Indigenous artists.

GREG

I think they formed a group because they realized they could do more as a group, you know, more power in numbers. Norval, I mean, had already had his solo exhibitions and Alex, you know, would have been trying to get exhibitions and grants and was being refused. I think that they realized they had common goals and, and to achieve them, they would be more powerful as a group.

SOLEIL

But what would they call this alliance?

Joseph

I think that was probably the hardest thing we had to do, was to create that name.

SOLEIL

Norval, Alex, Daphne, Jackson, Carl, Eddy and Joseph put their heads together. They called themselves the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc.

JOSEPH

And it was inadequate at best. But we had to make a statement. The word "professional" and "Native Indian" and "artist" were things that we were not considered. So, it was useful.

SOLEIL

Soon after, Jackson Beardy filed the paperwork to incorporate the PNIAI.

JOSEPH

[...] a name like that was important in the corporate sense, in the incorporation papers. Because they wanted-when we were applying for grants-that you're professionals. Where's your degrees? Which

of you have a degree? I think Alex is the only one that has a degree in the group.

SOLEIL

Now formed, their next order of business was to draft a proposal to the Department of Indian Affairs. They sought a grant to achieve the goals of their association of professional First Nations artists. They wanted to develop a fund that would enable artists the freedom to paint. They wanted to develop marketing strategies with commercial galleries, hopefully leading to greater opportunities for the artists. They wanted to travel to communities and connect with young artists, and they wanted to develop a trust fund, using a portion from sales of their artworks to assist emerging artists.

Paula

Well, when I was a young nurse, I worked up north in northern Manitoba. I was working in Oxford House, which is still a nursing station.

SOLEIL

This is Pauline Beardy. She is Jackson Beardy's widow.

PAULA

And what would happen is that all the aircraft would come into the dock by the nursing station. In those days there was no runways [...] Then this little boy comes running up to me, said, Oh, nurse, nurse, there's a real Indian coming up the pathway [...] But it was Jackson, and he was wearing [...] a beaded cowboy hat. And he had the long hair in the braids. He had a moose hide jacket that was beaded and beaded belt and cowboy boots [...] So, that's how I met him [...]

SOLEIL

Pauline remembers being there for those early days of the group.

PAULA

Jackson was involved in the legalization of the group, so he was important for the lawyers. And then as a group, they set up art shows across the country [...]
I could say that he was instrumental in helping set up shows, going out, talking to gallery owners, you know, phoning gallery owners, that kind of thing.

Joseph

And then little by little things became offered to us.

SOLEIL

One of the first exhibitions offered to the group was at the War Museum in Ottawa.

JOSEPH

Which is one of my most memorable moments [...]

SOLEIL

Daphne had received a letter from the Canada Council for the Arts offering the newly formed PNIAI their first show.

JOSEPH

Norval was sitting in the corner and he just stood up and said, there's no way we're doing the War Museum.

SOLEIL

To Morrisseau, this was just another way of marginalizing them as artists. It was just what the establishment had been doing all this time, treating their works as second class or worse. 'We should be in the National Gallery, not the War Museum,' he said.

JOSEPH

And he didn't speak often, Norval, but when he did, he really was very adamant about his point of view, and he was a guiding light. and from that moment, the conversation came, what is it that we need to do then? And it was Alex who suggested that we go to Dominion Gallery.

SOLEIL

But the road to Montreal's Dominion Gallery was not a straight one. Despite the presence of Norval, Alex, Daphne and Eddy as members of the new collective, they had to build momentum to achieve this lofty goal. Following the success of the Treaty Numbers exhibition a year earlier, the group of seven artists would show their work together for the first time on the eighth floor of the Eaton's Department store. It was an inauspicious start to this new endeavor, though as part of this exhibition, Eddy would present one of his pieces to Steve Juba, the Mayor of Winnipeg. Because, you know, when seeking free promotion for a show, it never hurts to be pictured with the mayor.

RYAN

Indeed.

SOLEIL

Here, read this article from the Winnipeg Tribune: it's entitled "'Neglect' of Indian art spurs group"

RYAN

They're artists and there's seven of them but their names bear no resemblance to A.Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris or Frank Johnston [...].

SOLEIL

A reference to the famed group of Canadian Landscape painters who operated during the 1920s and 30s.

RYAN

The snide side of me wants to point out that this article misspells Daphne, Norval, and Eddy's names. AND, for some reason, spells Jackson Beardy—the one name that DOES resemble A.Y. Jackson— with an 'X'.

SOLEIL

So, this article is important for two reasons. First, it just may be the origin for the PNIAI's nickname: "The Indian Group of Seven".

Greg

The moniker "Indian Group of Seven" comes about as kind of a joke, because of course the group of seven is this mythologically fantastic group of Canadian artists that are the epitome of Canadian identity still, and the audacity of a group of seven Indian artists in the early seventies coming forth and happened to be seven of them. And the way of ridiculing them would be to call them the Indian Group of seven. So, like, who do you think you are?

JOSEPH

It was kind of not useful for recruiting other artists. I think they were not really thinking that way. In the Western European art world, I would say that this was something like a joke to them. [...] And it's true that that's the name that really stuck with us.

Carmen

And I remember as a young curator, you know, 20 some years ago, people saying to me, "Oh, yeah, but he's a member of the Indian Group of Seven," and it's like, God, can't we get past this?

GREG

So, it's kind of an uncomfortable moniker, but it's a lot easier to say than the Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated.

SOLEIL

The second reason this article is important is that in it, Daphne, Joseph and Eddy talk about the group's reason for forming. The need for outreach to young people in rural or remote communities, their plan to devote a portion of their earnings to a trust fund, and finally, as Joseph is quoted at the end of the article, "just seeing some of our works would be an incentive in itself for any developing artist [...] there's a lot of talent being wasted because of lack of exposure and encouragement."

SOLEIL

The first major exhibition in which all seven members would have work on display was called Canadian Indian Art '74, curated by Seneca curator and artist Tom Hill at the Royal Ontario Museum.

RYAN

Not a gallery.

SOLEIL

No. Unfortunately.

JOSEPH

It was [...] at the ROM in Toronto. And in that show, you walked down into the basement, passed all the dinosaur bones to get to our exhibition. And that really solidified this whole idea that we're nothing more than artifacts. And this was, for a political point of view, this is something that we *had* to change. We no longer could be always the guys that are

shown the glass cases, in the basements of museums with dusty bones, or the bones are our own ancestors, which is just a travesty in itself.

SOLEIL

The show was subtitled: an exhibition of contemporary art and traditional crafts. So, the old tropes of Indigenous art as artifact persisted, but this recognition of contemporary Indigenous art as a thing-

RYAN

Was a step forward?

SOLEIL

If only a few degrees from lateral. In fact, two years earlier the ROM had purchased 11 works by Morrisseau. The museum's **first** purchase of any fine art for its collection.

RYAN

Wow.

SOLEIL

Of course, the purchase of this work was spearheaded by Dr. Edward Rogers, curator of ethnology for the museum.

RYAN

Gotcha...

SOLEIL

But 1974 brought two other important developments. Daphne expanded her operation to include the New Warehouse Gallery. Of course, it was a space to show and sell works by members of the group, but also the work of other Indigenous artists, including Alvin Redman and Wilma Simon. The grand opening offered Daphne and the other artists the opportunity to talk about their mission statement as a group. The second development was the

release of a new NFB documentary, once again, featuring Norval Morrisseau.

CARMEN

The Paradox of Norval Morrisseau is a heavy film.

SOLEIL

This is Carmen Robertson .

CARMEN

There are some really good things about it, at times, Morrisseau gets to speak freely.

SOLEIL

The 28-minute profile of Morrisseau, which utilizes footage captured for earlier NFB productions, like *The Indian Speaks* and *the Colours of Pride*, also features original interviews with Norval and Jack Pollock. In his review of the film for *Artcrafts Magazine*, Tom Hill wrote: "The film interview itself is **super**lative when Morrisseau non-chalantly discusses the critics' comments about his position in the Canadian art scene and his primitive X-ray technique of drawing [...] the interview also externalizes for the audience the introspective personality of this multi-dimensional artist [...]"

CARMEN

[...] even though we've got Duke Redbird, his lyrics and Shingoose singing this amazing song, Norval Norval, what's driving you throughout and speaking to the realities that Morrisseau was dealing with, you know, they're throwing your body around and all of this really important stuff.

What we have at the same time is this male narrator speaking over all of these "truths" I guess you could say in some way, and changing that dialogue to one

that fits within an assimilationist way of thinking. And that's really what was being promoted in Canada, was to assimilate Indigenous people in the 1970s.

SOLEIL

One of the troubling aspects of this doc is that Norval appears to be under the influence of alcohol throughout parts of the film. Carmen Robertson notes in her book about Norval and the media that it appears he was drunk only in one interview, but as it's edited into the film, it reads as much more.

CORY

The lazy drunk Indian narrative.

SOLEIL

This is Cory Dingle talking about how Morrisseau is seen in Europe versus at home in Canada.

CORY

When I speak to my counterparts in Germany and we're gonna do a show, or France or Italy. I don't have to deal with the drunk Indian narrative [...] I get "grand shaman", mystical individual who has a deep understanding of human nature, and they see him almost as like, as I mentioned, as somebody who travels between two periods of this earth's time and brings forth ancient knowledge. And so, individuals from other countries see him in this mystical grand shaman form, not the drunk Indian selling paintings for bottles. Never hear that.

SOLEIL

It was a narrative that followed Morrisseau through the 1970s and really, for the rest of his life.

CORY

We have our archive of all the articles [...] and it's absolutely fascinating, but yet it still goes on [...] Every single article about Morrisseau mentions that he's a drunk.

CARMEN

And the NFB in that way was a really important tool because it was teaching Canadians about Indigenous artists and Indigenous art who had no real way of understanding or knowing about this art otherwise. So they become incredibly important and influential documents, but teaching materials as well. And so it's so hard to undo this, and I can't tell you how many times with Morrisseau in the press in Canada, in other documentaries, the concept of *The Paradox of Morrisseau* comes up again and again because it's so difficult to undo that. His obituaries across Canada and the world when he passed in 2007, often mentioned paradox within them.

SOLEIL

So, you'll remember from earlier in the episode the group's goal was to have a show at the Dominion Gallery in Montreal.

RYAN

Yup.

SOLEIL

Founded by Rose McMillan in 1941, the Dominion Gallery was purchased by Max Stern in 1947. Under Stern's direction, the gallery became the pre-eminent gallery in Canada that promoted works by living Canadian artists, including Paul Emile-Borduas, Emily Carr, and E.J. Hughes. The Dominion Gallery also had the largest collection of international

sculptures in Canada, including works by Henry Moore and Auguste Rodin.

RYAN

Sounds nice.

SOLEIL

In terms of infiltrating the fine arts establishment, the Dominion Gallery was it. Here's Joseph.

JOSEPH

[...] if we got a show at a major Canadian gallery, who brought work from all over the world, and if he accepted our work, that would open other doors to gallery representation or even considering us for exhibition. And we sent this guy from the Secretary of State, and he went and met with Max Stern.

SOLEIL

Eventually, Stern wrote back, but the news wasn't great. In his letter, he stated that the gallery would like to have works by Daphne, Alex and Norval, but was not interested in the rest of the group. But he would take works by Alan Sapp, as well.

JOSEPH

I said, "Well, Alan Sapp's not a member."

SOLEIL

No doubt, Max Stern spotted the advantage of having all four artists from The Colours of Pride in one gallery show.

JOSEPH

The reason we formed this group was that it was all or nothing! You take us all, and that's the reason we're making a presentation this way, that we're a group of artists, we're representing all our people. I do know that he sent me a note saying that he didn't show works on paper,

but I didn't have any canvases. So he did accept my works on paper, and also I think works by Norval, everybody worked on paper in those days. You know, very few of us had canvases [...] And in that way...he finally agreed, and we did have a successful show there [...]

MICHELLE

They were also looking to fight against imposed definitions and impose processes and marketing of their work [...] They sought to control their own creative processes and they didn't want others to determine the validity of their connection to their own heritage [...] it was a big question at the time, you know, what is native art? But they defined it for themselves.

Phillip:

Then, 1975, Dominion gallery have this commercial exhibition.

SOLEIL

This is Phillip Gevik.

PHILLIP:

I'm Phillip Gevik. My expertise is Canadian art.

SOLEIL

Phillip has been the owner and operator of Toronto's Gallery Gevik for nearly 50 years, and has represented the works of several members of the PNIAI.

PHILLIP

It was the big time, opened up the world for them because all the other commercial galleries showed the interest in selling them as the group of seven.

SOLEIL

It's a little hard to hear, but Phillip cites this show at the Dominion Gallery as

THE exhibition that made all the other galleries turn their attention to the PNIAI. But...

CARMEN

Alex Janvier was saying that to me once, that he was frustrated by [...] the Max Stern exhibition at the Dominion Gallery in Montreal, because really they were not being paid at a level that was commensurate with what mainstream artists were being paid.

And that's clear If you look at archival documents and, you see the amounts in their stock books that works are being sold for in comparison to what mainstream artists were being marketed at, you understand why Morrisseau was continuing to push that idea.

And why the PNIAI was frustrated by that reality.

Joseph

So I didn't get to go to Montreal. I had no money to travel, so. I think only Jackson went.

Ryan

The gallery didn't pay for them to travel to their own show?

SOLEIL

Well, Joseph explains.

Joseph

No, there was nobody really... Support wasn't like that at the time, you know. And it wasn't until we did the next show, which was at Wallach Gallery in Ottawa. And Daphne at that time had received this residency in Sweden, and so she was away painting in Europe, and Norval... I forget where he was; he might have been in Europe as well. So it was just the five boys were left to represent.

SOLEIL

Joseph doesn't remember who covered the bill, but he remembers arriving at the Wallach gallery in a limo, along with Eddy, Carl, Jackson, and Alex.

JOSEPH

[...] It was really a scene. [...] we're all dressed to the nines [...] There were so many people, something like I'd never seen before, you know [...] And we all got out and people are clapping and you know, girls are hugging us and, you know, we were, you know, as a, like a 24-year-old man, you know, I thought I'd arrived. That was really a rockstar moment for me, where I was just like a, everybody was, wow, wow, you know.

SOLEIL

Pauline Beardy shares another memory from the Wallach show, the moment when she and Jackson overheard a conversation between two women at the show.

PAULA

These two old ladies said that Native people were such heathens, and we had to have a good laugh about that because they didn't realize, you know, that they'd been overheard.

DONNA

I mean, they put themselves out there and they took everything that came with that with, you know, with folks not accepting the work, and the comments that came with that, and they still soldiered through, right, and got it to where it was accepted.

JOSEPH

And the show was very successful [...] I guess, the largest show that they've ever had in Wallach Gallery [...] That's, we'd finally really done that. We're really happy about the concept of, we've made that champagne reception, but we had broken a barrier.

SOLEIL

So, they had their champagne toasts, and the recognition of major galleries in Canada. And attention from Europe would soon follow. And while interest in the group and their work was growing, so too was their media presence. They would work to change the representation of First Nations in the public and industry discourse. They also continued to explore and represent their histories, relationships with the land, and to colonization through their work.

AMONG EQUALS

EP5: The Image Makers

EP 5: WORD COUNT: 4,777

SOLEIL

Previously on Among Equals.

Joseph

There were so many people, something like I'd never seen before and they brought us in like a limo or whatever.

SOLEIL

1975. Joseph Sanchez, along with Carl Ray, Eddy Cobiness, Jackson Beardy and Alex Janvier attend the opening of the self-titled Professional Native Indian Artists exhibition at the Wallack Gallery in Ottawa.

JOSEPH

[...] it was just the five boys were left to represent.

SOLEIL

The PNIAI had been operating as a collective for just over a year, and they were already seeing the benefits of this coalition.

JOSEPH

And we all got out and people are clapping and you know, girls are hugging us and, you know...as a, like a 24-year-old man, you know, I thought I'd arrived. That was really a rockstar moment for me, where I was just like a, everybody was, wow, wow, you know. And the show was very successful. They were, I guess, the largest show that they've ever had in that gallery, Wallack Gallery. We're really happy about the concept of, we've made that champagne reception, but we had broken a barrier.

SOLEIL

Later that year, all seven would again show at the Art Emporium in Vancouver.

RYAN

So, it was working? The rising tide does lift all boats!

SOLEIL

That's right. And not only were they exhibiting as a group in back-to-back exhibitions, but they were receiving commissions. Jackson was commissioned to create a painting for the Catholic Conference of Bishops. For his piece, Jackson painted his interpretation of the Nativity, taking a Catholic scene and depicting it through an Oji-cree lens. Here's what Jackson wrote in his artist's statement for the piece:

"We see the virgin mother-to-be holding on to an embryo connected to the sun symbol (the Great Spirit) who has deemed it necessary to send his messenger to his people. The mother is also connected to Mother Earth who is nursing her. [...] On the other side we see an elder in prayer, ritually offering a bowl filled with sacred things. You can see the sun symbol is bearing him down with doubts, fear, depression, and all the ills of his time, his back to the very miracle he is praying for... It will take time for all to fully comprehend this phenomenon which has come to pass."

Daphne also received a commission from El Al Airlines for a series of paintings depicting Jerusalem. And Alex, well, he began his mural: "Tribute to Beaver Hills." Here, look at this.

RYAN

Wow.

SOLEIL

What do you see?

RYAN

Well, it looks like Alex's work - abstract, colourful, almost like calligraphy, and it's wrapping around a spiral wall under a big domed skylight. Y'know, from this picture, it almost looks like the interior foyer of the Guggenheim.

SOLEIL

Yeah. The mural is painted on the inside wall of a spiral stairwell, not unlike the Guggenheim in New York City, just on a smaller scale. Alex's mural follows the curves of the spiral wall, with each ring carrying a new stage in the story he's telling. At the top, under the domed skylight, he begins with creation-the formation of matter, earth, water... The middle ring, he depicts the emergence of powerful, spiritual beings, followed by humans. The third ring signifies people living in harmony with nature and spirits, which ends with the arrival of European settlers and colonial violence. Then the severing of Indigenous ways of being. As the mural snakes around the base of the staircase, Alex depicts the aftermath of colonial violence unfolding in tandem with the quiet resistance, power, and re-emergence of the Indigenous people of Beaver Hills.

RYAN

Where is this?

SOLEIL

It's at the Strathcona Community Centre and County Hall in Sherwood Park, Alberta.

RYAN

And can anybody see this anytime?

SOLEIL

Sure, if you're in the area and it's within opening hours.

RYAN

I hope that our listeners will make the trip to Sherwood Park.

SOLEIL

So, back to that show at the Wallack Gallery.

JOSEPH

[...] it was necessary [...] if the work of Native art was going to be sold as equal to all other art in Canada, it needed to be in those galleries. And so that was an acceptance.

SOLEIL

Remember, Bonnie Devine said it best:

BONNIE

[...] they began to be spoken about as artists and there was an element of cool. You know, what they were doing was cool. And suddenly, they kind of broke through this visual that non-Native Canadians had of Indians.

JOSEPH

For me, it led me to be sent to Toronto [...] to be...measured for the wax museum [which] is really a bizarre thing for me.

SOLEIL

Joseph explains his brush with the Wax Museum on Yonge Street.

Joseph

[...] the Juno Awards decided to have an award for multiculturalism and music. And they wanted a native artist to create the

award itself in a painting. They wanted a painting. So I did an oil painting, I think it's two by three feet, and they had this plaque underneath, and they would give it for ten years [...] And so with that fantasy going on, the Toronto Wax Museum called me and said, well, we'd like to make a wax figure of you. Because in those days, I sported a cane with my long hair and my mustache. It was my real surrealist look. And so they took all these photographs of me dressed in my, what I call my Bob Marley suit, you know, skin tight, white Levi outfit, holding a black cane, silver tip cane, and my painting behind me. So these were like really, really fantasies.

RYAN

So, the group and its members had achieved some form of celebrity.

SOLEIL

Celebrity, recognition, desirability - this is Phillip Gevik from Toronto's Gallery Gevik. He explains the evolving customer base for the group's work.

PHILLIP

Well, most of them, educators, teachers, and people with the money and more interest in Canadian culture. And then come collectors [...] when they buy them they only buy Indigenous art. They don't buy anything else.

SOLEIL

The group had set out to establish a forum and spaces for the voices and perspectives of Indigenous artists, and by 1976, they had charted a path forward.

RYAN

But...?

SOLEIL

Well... we'll get into the butts, but first, intros.

RYAN

I'm Ryan Barnett.

SOLEIL

In our last episode, Eddy Cobiness, Carl Ray, Joseph Sanchez, Jackson Beardy, Alex Janvier, Daphne Odjig and Norval Morrisseau came together to form an artists collective. There was power in numbers, they felt, and if they wanted to challenge the arts establishment in Canada, the seven of them stood a better chance if they worked together. This is the fifth and final episode in our series: The Image Makers.

Joseph

I grew up on an Apache reservation, and humor is just a part of their everyday thing. When they loved you, you got teased.

SOLEIL

This is Joseph Sanchez, again.

JOSEPH

So you know, and I think Native people have always used humor as a teaching tool, as well as a show of camaraderie, family love. And it definitely was not any different with the group.

SOLEIL

In those early days, the group would meet in the back of Daphne's shop. From there, they would plot their next moves, but it was also where their unique bonds were forged.

JOSEPH

Alex and Norval loved teasing Daphne about her English heritage, her regal stature, about being the queen. You know, Alex was especially [...] He really loved teasing her. And in the portraits he did of the group, he depicted her [...] with all this British symbolism in the painting. And me being that damn American was just endearing to me [...] we like you, man, you're just that damn American [...] Norval and Alex that teased the most [...] Norval loved to tease Alex about, he "only made designs". He didn't do anything else. They were funny guys, and they just loved doing that whole thing with each other.

SOLEIL

Early in their formation, this group of 7 artists had sent a proposal to the Department of Indian Affairs and the Canada Council for the Arts. They were seeking fun-ding to help support their activities—\$10,000 in salaries and \$5,000 for materials for each of the artists.

RYAN

Was that a lot?

SOLEIL

Well, in Canada, in 1975, \$10,000 was about half of the average income. But it didn't matter, Alex and Joseph recall, they were never successful in receiving any sort of government grant for their activities. Alex remembers having to pay out of pocket to travel from Edmonton to Winnipeg to attend the group's meetings. "That \$50 ticket broke me every time I went," Alex told Michelle Lavallee. "I had to take money out of the family to do that, so we would be on soup for a week."

So, despite their success, it was a financial struggle to create and show. And

then something happened that altered the group's ability to self-organize.

RYAN

What happened?

SOLEIL

Daphne sold her shop, and moved to British Columbia.

Phillip:

She closed them down. 1976 [...] She said, "Phillip, I have a lot of visitors come every day. My studio, the gallery there, I can't paint. I can't produce paintings anymore. But I want to paint. If I want to paint, I don't need the gallery." That's why she left the gallery. Closed the gallery, sold it.

Joseph

Everybody was kind of leaving the area. In '77, I'm already down south.

SOLEIL

Joseph returned to the United States in 1975. For a time he traveled back and forth to Manitoba.

JOSEPH

So, just the physical distance, you know. And there's always a lot of difficulty contacting Norval and Carl. Without having Daphne's shop, we weren't really doing as much as we could. It was pretty much starting to wind down. We had just different little shows here and there.

SOLEIL

The group would continue to exhibit together through 1977, but the shows weren't resulting in the growth they had anticipated.

Joseph

I believe that there was really a lot of interest in the big three.

SOLEIL

Norval, Daphne, Alex...

JOSEPH

People wanted to have exhibitions, which I don't think we took a lot of them. But we weren't getting the larger venues, the major galleries that we had thought we could get into.

SOLEIL

And then, in 1978.

Joseph

What I had heard is that he was murdered. And he was murdered in some sort of [...] party situation.

SOLEIL

Carl Ray was killed.

JOSEPH

You know, and that he was left to freeze to death in the snow. That was kind of what was told to me, you know. I really know, and even today, I try to find out more about what really happened to him. But...it seems that it [...] was people that he knew and partied with. And they were just in an alcohol-fused craziness. They stabbed him and left him to freeze to death outside.

SOLEIL

In our research for this series, we couldn't find a news article or obituary that gave the details of Carl's death. But the details that are repeated are that on September 28, 1978 Carl was stabbed in a bar fight in Sioux Lookout, Ontario.

Shortly after, he died in hospital. He left behind 110 paintings, the creative output of his 35 years on this earth.

PHILLIP

From a young age he is gone. I love the Carl Ray work.

SOLEIL

In the wake of his death, a series of cross-Canada exhibitions were held to raise money for his widow Helen, and their children.

JOSEPH

[...] that was a time that kind of signified probably an end of the group when Carl was taken out.

SOLEIL

In April of 1979, just seven months after Carl's death, the Professional Native Indian Artists Inc. officially dissolved, according to Corporations Canada.

MICHELLE

I mean, it really was quite a short lived group [...]

SOLEIL

This is National Gallery curator Michelle Lavallee.

MICHELLE

[...] but what they came to it as, as one of the first self-to-organize activists, artists, groups, their experiences and the groundwork they laid. Really set things in motion for artists, groups in general moving forward.

SOLEIL

Despite no longer operating as a cohesive collective, various members did still exhibit their work together in the early 1980s, and their individual profiles

continued to grow. However, on December 8, 1984, they would suffer another significant loss with the untimely passing of one of the principal architects of the PNIAI: Jackson Beardy.

PAULA

He died of a heart attack [...] he was 40 [...]

SOLEIL

This is Jackson's widow, Paula.

PAULA

He'd been sick on and off for a few years. It was a direct relationship to alcohol abuse. So he had been quite ill in the hospital on and off for quite some time. And, he was getting chest pain. So he went to the hospital and was put in intensive care [...] he wasn't eating. And he said, he wasn't going to live. And so he just told me to go and look after our son, Jason. And he died shortly after that. It was directly related to alcoholism. And as you know, a lot of Residential School children died from alcohol related problems.

Joseph

[...] that symbolizes kind of the problem of not only within the group, you know, like Norval suffered a lot from alcoholism and being kind of taken advantage of [...] when he was in alcoholic states. And the same with Carl, you know, he was, they would party hard when they came to the city, you know.

SOLEIL

In 1979, MacLean's magazine published a feature entitled, The New Age of Indian Art. It was published after Carl's death, and the shocking death of Ojibwe artist Benjamin Chee Chee, but before Jackson's passing. In it, writer Christopher Hume

reports that following Norval Morrisseau's 1962 debut, more than 100, quote: "Indian artists are exhibiting in galleries across Canada." Here, read this part:

RYAN

Okay. Hume writes, "It's nothing less than a renaissance, or perhaps, as some would have it, the last great outpouring of a dying culture."

SOLEIL

So which was it?

RYAN

What?

SOLEIL

Was it a renaissance or the outpouring of a dying culture?

RYAN

Uh-

SOLEIL

I'm kidding! Here, just listen to this clip from an interview Jackson did in 1980.

JACKSON

"My way of saying things at the visual level says what language cannot say. And I think that that in itself, by my visual interpretation, they can relearn the traditions and also it forms a natural communication between all cultures. I'm a medium from generations back."

SOLEIL

It started as taboo for artists like Norval Morrisseau, Carl Ray and Jackson Beardy to depict their peoples' stories and teachings through their work. But by the time this article was published, some 20 years after Norval began this kind of

work, Jackson had filmed a segment for Sesame Street in which he teaches his son Jason the story of the Thunderbirds—and by extension, teaches all the children watching Sesame Street that same lesson. So, in just this short period, it had evolved from taboo to something to be shown in 1970s pop culture.

RYAN

Right.

SOLEIL

This was not an outpouring of a dying culture. This was a vital act of continuity, resistance and resilience. And one of the lasting, and most visible legacies of the PNIAI is the Woodland style of art.

CORY

Norval wasn't really crazy about the term Woodland art. It was coined by a reporter in a magazine in the 70s.

SOLEIL

This is Cory Dingle.

CORY

He didn't create that name or have anything to do with that name. But, you know, now he's considered the origin of the Woodland School of Art.

Joseph

There was not a Woodland School before Norval. You know, and I think the members inspired art that did not have to be within the boundaries of Western European aesthetics or "isms". Indigenous people have been creating for millennia. We don't need, you know, colonizers to describe how we communicate with each other, or to our creator, or to make it into another ism.

SOLEIL

The Woodland School of art, as it's known, has its roots in birch bark scrolls that date back [more than] 400 years in First Nations culture. Norval took inspiration from this traditional method of knowledge transfer and translated it to another medium. Typically, Woodland work is oral traditions translated into a visual medium. It's characterized by its use of bright **or** earthy colours, heavy black lines, lines of movement, power, and communication, which connect figures within a composition. Duality is a major theme in the works of Woodland artists, whether it be between animal and man, or man and spirit, or First Nations spirituality and Christianity. Duality is often symbolized with a divided circle. Another major stylistic feature of Woodland art is the use of a kind of "x ray" imagery - the artist draws the outline of a figure-a loon, say-but its body reads almost like an x ray image, showing its inner spiritual life.

CORY

And so all of a sudden now we have [...] connection of, you know, a drawing of spirituality, drawing, you know, non-Christian based religions. And so it almost like a whole other tree sprung up right beside another tree of art [...] it infused a whole other genre, in a sense, a whole other perspective [...] onto the larger Canadian art scene where at that time it was old masters and you know, white people painting trees, basically, right? [...] woodland art is in the same vein of surrealism, impressionism [...] it gave us a whole new different language to play with [...]

SOLEIL

Of the members of the PNIAI, Norval, Carl, Jackson, Eddy and Daphne are all recognized as Woodland painters. The first generation also included artists, like Benjamin Chee Chee and Roy Thomas. And there have been subsequent generations, which include Blake Randolph Disbassige, Bob Boyer, Frank Polson, Christian Morrissette, and Brent Hardisty.

PHILIP

Those are the groups, the second generation which was educated from the school. Their work right now is outstanding, they're different than the Group of Seven. They've done very well...And there are, so many of the talent right now, is there! We should be proud of what we have and the world appreciates it.

SOLEIL

This is Bonnie Devine.

Bonnie Devine:

And suddenly, they began to be seen as intelligent, active, entrepreneurial, talented. forward thinking. You know, all of those things that of course they were, but there had been a screen in front of them that prevented people from really discerning who they were. And I think that has endured. That hole that they made, that they pierced through that screen, has stayed open. And many, many other artists, including myself, were able to pass through there and begin to participate in the contemporary art world in a meaningful, productive way.

GREG

[...] they came together for a relatively short time but had a big impact. I think, you know, if what they did and coming together led to, the the organization of groups like SCANA, the Society of Canadian

Artists of Native Ancestry, which included members like my Carl Bean, Gerald McMaster, Edward Poitras, Joane Cardinal-Schubert [...] So, these kinds of very important figures that were the second wave really of, of what PNIAI did as a group in organizing as artists to take things into their [...] own control, to demand access to galleries and to collections to create exhibitions [...] if there weren't those opportunities. And to just [...] really fight for it.

MICHELLE

It was really creating this excitement on the contemporary art scene. They were portraying the reality of Indigenous Peoples from their own perspective and really got the wheels rolling so that everybody could move on to the next stage.

SOLEIL

This is Michelle Lavallee again.

MICHELLE

[...] their influence definitely continues to inspire, you know, and many artists have taken up mentoring just even through mimicking the style [...]they demonstrated not only the the resilience and the permanence and the existence of First Nations culture, but just the continued presence as creative sources rooted in in their culture, rooted in the multicultural world of today, and really looking to inspire people, even beyond their community.

RYAN

So, what happened with PNIAI after the 1980s?

SOLEIL

Well, Joseph, of course, and Alex are still with us. Eddy passed away in 1996,

Norval in 2007, and Daphne in 2016. But their works remain. In 2006, Norval was the subject of the first major solo exhibition of a First Nations artist at the National Gallery of Canada. This is Greg Hill.

GREG

And that was [...] partially through the lobbying efforts of artists all along and groups that we're talking about, but also came down, I think in particular meeting between Leon Martin and Jim Logan from Canada Council and myself and PierreThéberge where they advocated for this to happen, and he said yes [...] so I had the opportunity because I was an assistant curator at the National Gallery at that time to say, okay, well here, make the proposal to do the Norval Morrisseau exhibition and Pierre Théberge calls me into his office and I submitted a proposal to do the show [...] And you know, I'm an untested green curator at the gallery, and I'm kind of on the bottom rung of the curatorial ladder there. And he just basically said, "Can you do this?" Of course, I didn't really know, but I had to summon up all of my confidence and say, yes. And then [...] I had to figure it out.

SOLEIL

Norval Morrisseau, Shaman Artist ran from February 3 to April 30, 2006, and contained 60 original pieces by Morrisseau.

GREG

So that show meant a lot to the history of the institution in terms of finally doing that. That commitment to, I think, to what it signals to artists, contemporary artists working, that here, one of our very important senior artists is finally

being honored at this institution so that there is that recognition. And that, I think that instills a kind of hope, or that there's that possibility that it can actually happen for, you know, another artist practicing at the time.

SOLEIL

Cory Dingle.

CORY

And I'm being cheeky, I know. But if I went to any other country and we weren't dealing with the Indigenous aspect of it, and I said, your National Gallery hasn't done a show of your greatest artist that you've ever produced yet? No, of course we do. We've done like 10, right?

SOLEIL

A retrospective of Daphne's work followed in 2009, and one on Alex Janvier in 2016. All three of these artists, it's worth noting, received the Order of Canada, before ever being featured at the National Gallery.

RYAN

How close together were their awards?

SOLEIL

Norval received his in 1978! Daphne in '86. Alex received his Order of Canada just a mere seven years before his National Gallery show.

RYAN

What does this show us?

SOLEIL

Well, there are still systemic issues facing Indigenous artists today—a second-class citizenship. Not the least of which is seen through the valuation of their work.

CORY

If we talk about just price per painting, we get multiple times the money in a contemporary setting than we do in an Indigenous setting. We have Indigenous auctions of Indigenous art [...] if you're an Indigenous person, you're in an Indigenous auction. And sadly, that Indigenous auction gets a fraction of value attained to it than a contemporary auction. And why is that? Why do we celebrate when an Indigenous painting, like we had a record-breaking sale a month ago of one of Norval's works for around \$360,000. Why is that celebrated as an amazing feat when a Harris goes for 7 million?

SOLEIL

That's Lawren Harris, a member of the original Group of Seven.

CORY

And Harris is a fantastic artist, but he is not Norval Morrisseau in that sense. As legacy goes, as contributions to society goes.

SOLEIL

And then there's the issue of forgery.

GREG

I'm involved with, with the group the Norval Morrisseau Heritage Society, which was mandated by Norval in 2005 to try to address specifically, head on, this problem of forgeries of this work. And there were forgeries of his work for decades before then [...] but it was a small problem and it was, and it was a problem that he didn't want to do anything about because in some cases, you know, it could be a family member. So it's out of you know, these are acts of desperation as

opposed to organized crime, creating hundreds and hundreds of forged works and selling them on art auctions and in an organized way.

SOLEIL

But then...

GREG

And then these thousands of forgeries, really, really awful paintings which dragged down Morriseau's legacy. So the scale [...] of that process of that you know of forgeries of, of his work is, is unbelievable. And it's criminal. And we recognize that when we become aware of it.

CORY

Now, Canada doesn't have any resources that they wish to lend to the art world to help us determine scientifically if a painting is fake or not. We can say all the things that we wanna say, but if nobody has saw the painting get forged, then it doesn't matter who says what, the painting's real. And if we say it's fake, we get sued. And even recently, we told an organization that two paintings that you have for sale, we believe are suspect. And we even have the side by side comparison of the original painting and the fake painting. And these paintings are so horribly dead. It's so obvious. And they threatened to sue us. So how do we clean up the market?

SOLEIL

But the story of the Morriseau forgeries could be a whole other series.

RYAN

So, to conclude?

SOLEIL

If listeners wish to see the PNIAI's work together, there is a place to go, and that's at the Museum of Aboriginal Peoples' Arts and Artifact in Lac La Biche, Alberta.

Donna Feledichuk

So we are the only museum anywhere in the world that has a permanent collection on display of the Professional Native Indian Artists' Inc.

SOLEIL

That's Donna Feledichuk.

Joseph

It started with Donna Feledichuk, when she became director of the gallery, took over the museum [...] as it was a teaching collection. It was kind of not being administered. She took it over and really put some heart into it and started by [...] hanging all this work that nobody had ever seen [...] And that became the genesis of a new museum.

DONNA

So, in terms of a collection in our institution, we teach the Visual Artist Program. The group is hugely important to looking at the foundational artists in each of the genres. So the group is our, kind of a cornerstone for all of our collections and really important to our program here at the institution [...] I mean they really were the ones that are kind of the foundation of visual arts for Indigenous artists in Canada.

So when you go to a normal art museum, you're going to have gallery spaces. Usually you have to stand quite a ways back from the works... Our works are in the hallway of our building. You can get, you know, two inches, an inch away from it and[...]. When I talked to Alex and

Joseph, that was really important to them because it made the work accessible to people, right? You can get up to it, you can see it, you can spend the time with it that you need to spend with it. ...you can feel the spirituality of them.

SOLEIL

It seems fitting that it's a teaching collection, given the origins to the group and their focus on youth and the future.

JOSEPH

So it's an interesting thing with what's happened to Native art. I rely a lot on hope that all these new young academics step up to the plate, go back to a bit of authenticity. Because if you get a master's, there's a bit of a trade-off to the master. The master always wants you to do his work first and be like him before you can get to yourself. And for a native artist, that self can be completely lost in the isms of Western European fantasies about what art is.

I encourage young artists to look to nature, listen to nature, get out of our...consumer society. Try not to be enticed by what I call the "colonizers' gifts"... fame and fortune, those kind of things. They take a toll on you, and they come with a price.

If you want to be an artist, think about your family, your children, the Elders from all of our relatives, the four-legged, the winged creatures, the insects, the ancestors in the oceans, our trees. They have such information for us, but we quit listening.

Don't be wined and dined and forget where you come from. And above all, please share your work and your success with your own people. The art world wants art heroes. So we'll take one of you, but the rest of you

are not welcome. This was something that the group itself thought about in those days, and it's even worse today. It's more important to share your work with more people. Bring everybody with you.

RYAN

So, how do we wrap this up?

SOLEIL

Well, I think we need to give Joseph the last word.

JOSEPH

There was one thing that I wanted to add about the dissolution of the group. Why did the group ultimately dissolve? And the group did not dissolve. The corporation papers did not get refiled. So, this dissolution was like a government-based thing. And it wasn't like any kind of consensus of the members of the group. You know, I think our corporate entity just kind of sailed off into the sunset of time. But the seven of us, we banded together to change Canada's perception of its art. So, we became friends, comrades, spiritual souls, forever in our minds and hearts.