Inuit Art
QUARTERLY

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Maannaujuq Inuit Sanannguaqsimajangit Tauttungillu
Contemporary Inuit Art & Perspectives

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Cultural Consciousness

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2019–2025
Photograph
75 × 50 cm
COURTESY WILSON SAPLANA GALLERY
© THE ARTIST

LEFT
Rose Tina Alivaktuk and **Krista Ulujuk Zawadski** copying patterns at WAG-Qaumajuq, Winnipeg, 2025
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE

ABOVE
Kudluajuk Ashoona
—
Northern Exposure
2014
Printmaker Niveaksie Quvianaqtuliaq
Lithograph
76.3 × 57 cm
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I Remember My Dolls
1999
Etching
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COURTESY INUIT GALLERY OF VANCOUVER
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As we settle into the holiday season and people gather with loved ones and spend time indoors, the Winter issue's theme, *Memory*, feels very appropriate. This issue, guest edited by Alutiiq art historian and author Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi, dives into the integral importance of memory in the art of circumpolar Indigenous artists.

Jackinsky-Sethi reminds us all to "remember forward," while **Napatsi Folger** shows us how Inuit artists use art as memory-keeping. I especially want to draw your attention to the *Feature* "Threading Ancestral Spaces," by **Krista Ulujuk Zawadski**, about the work of the **Agguaq Collective**, which beautifully highlights the way in which cultural objects can spark powerful acts of collective memory-making and collaboration that are truly relational and transformative. What **Agguaq** is doing is inspiring—supporting artists to have the space and time to gather and work in this collective way is a core part of our mission at the Inuit Art Foundation (IAF).

2025 has been a year of transformation for the IAF. It has been an active and inspiring time since I stepped into this role as the first Inuk Executive Director a few short months ago. I've been focused on pijitsirniq (serving), and what it means to put that concept into daily practice for Inuit artists. This past October, I had the privilege of attending the Suialaa Arts Festival in Nuuk, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). Witnessing such a powerful gathering of Inuit artists and performers from across the circumpolar world was heartening and fortifying. We held a special launch of the Fall *Sovereignty* issue, guest edited by the Director of Nuummi Eqqumiitsulianik Saqqummersitsivik - Nuuk Art Museum, Nivi Christensen. The festival exemplified the importance of relationship building beyond borders and the beautiful things we can accomplish when we share art and knowledge across cultures. It was a tangible reminder that while ajjigiiniluuktaaqtugut—we are all different—we are all deeply connected by a shared history and a collective, creative, sovereign future.

This global perspective reinforces the urgency of our work at home. At the Inuit Art Foundation, we are focused on developing and delivering the resources Inuit artists have told us they need and advocating for them on a global stage. As we challenge systems, build bridges and step across borders, I am looking forward to forging new relationships with you, our readers and supporters, and entering 2026 with a vision that prioritizes collaboration and support, not only for the Inuit artists we love but also the community of committed readers and supporters of the *Inuit Art Quarterly*.

Looking forward together,

LINDSAY AKSARNIQ MCINTYRE
Executive Director and Publisher

Inuuteq Storch

COVER SPOTLIGHT

The cover art for this issue is a photograph from Inuuteq Storch's series *What if You Were My Sabine?* (2019–2025), a series that tells a story about belonging and connection—to place, to nature, to history and to people. In this photograph, Storch captures the glow of the setting sun as it stretches across the community, with soft shadows deepening the undulating lines of the hillside and creating movement in an otherwise still scene. The community in the distance seems like a place Storch is headed, as if he paused for a moment to preserve a memory. Or perhaps the photographer's distance from the town itself symbolizes coming home after being away.

The photo has a nostalgic, peaceful quality about it—the way Storch works with light, capturing part of his own shadow in the piece, makes it impossible to separate the person from the landscape. The quiet stillness feels familiar, like the warmth of a memory: something I've seen before, the feeling of community. Storch's work invites viewers to reflect and consider how memory is inseparable from the places we call home. His work in this series shifts between past and present, closeness and distance, weaving scenes of everyday life with intimacy, history and remembrance.

CARLY BROOKS
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Native Art Department International (founded 2016), *Aanzinaago* (*Caught in a Transformation*) *01* (detail), 2024, Purchased with the generous support of Hatch, McMichael Canadian Art Collection © Native Art Department International.

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I have in my kitchen windowsill a small grass basket that my mother gave me to hold the rings for my wedding ceremony. It holds other things now: a few rocks that I saved from a favourite beach, a polar bear claw that was gifted to me from a summer spent in Utqiaġvik (Barrow), Alaska, and a rotating collection of earrings that I take off at the end of the day. When I look at this basket, it transports me through time and space. I recall picking grasses on the beach on Qikertaq (Kodiak Island), Alaska, on a warm July afternoon. I recall the day this basket was gifted to me.

Perhaps we all know that feeling when a personal belonging, a smell, a song or an image transports us to a specific moment in time. Memories can be very powerful and come in many forms. There are ancestral memories, muscle memories, blood memories and collective memories. Sometimes we think of museums as memory institutions, holding materials that will help us to remember the past and bring it forward. We might think of landscapes as spaces that hold memory too—something I was keen to discuss in my *5 Works* on shaping natural elements into artworks. When we see an image of a particular place, we remember the time spent there and the activity we engaged in at that location. Sometimes we mindfully try to build memories so that they will be set in the minds of our children. Sometimes we carry memories that are not even our own.

This issue of the *IAQ* is dedicated to art forms that share memory in a variety of ways. Art forms can help us remember stories, map spaces, commemorate events, remember specific people or even feelings. Some of us have early memories that are reinforced by their repeated sharing. While brainstorming work to include in this issue, we thought about childhood memories and stories that get passed down and become embedded in our minds. This idea eventually became **Napatsi Folger**'s *Legacy* feature about art forms that express childhood memories, in which she examines artmaking as a form of memory keeping and as a historical record that fights against colonial assimilation.

But maybe all art, in some way, holds memories—safeguarding ideas, images and thoughts for the future. **The Agguaq Collective** has certainly taken this call to safeguard into their work studying historical garments in museum collections, a practice **Krista Ulujuk Zawadski** examines more closely in her *Feature* about building lived memories around garment making. Lastly, in his *Feature* about raven stories, **Ilegvak** shares how memories can be passed down, weaving stories from his uncle Mike with an analysis of art forms that reflect the lessons the raven gives us.

Yup'ik Artist Not Documented
—
Untitled
Late nineteenth century
Woven grass and imbricated dyed seal gut
17.1 × 21.6 × 21.6 cm
COURTESY FIRST ARTS
© THE ARTIST

We have a saying in our communities that you should regularly look back so that you don't get lost. Remembering where we have been will maybe help us think about where we are going. In some of our communities, we talk about remembering forward—consciously creating opportunities to bring the knowledge from the past to the present. I hope readers will think about their own way of remembering forward while reading this issue of the *IAQ*.

Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi
Guest Editor

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As Ikajuqtiit Circle members, you provide opportunities for artists to explore their practices, learn new skills and grow. You raise global awareness and appreciation of Inuit art. The generous Ikajuqtiit Circle members listed on these pages make all this and more possible. Thank you!

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Evening Games of Spring
1979
Printmaker Thomasie Alikatuktuk
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COURTESY WAG-QAUMAJUQ
AND THE GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT
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The Honourable Wilfred P. Moore, in memory of Wallace Brannen, who in 1975 opened/set up the Cape Dorset Studio; late of Halifax, NS, my friend
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Elemental Memories

by Nadia Jackinsky-Sethi
GUEST EDITOR

Memories can be held not only within minds but also within land, plants, water and flames, carrying evidence of their own experiences and our stories. When natural elements are shaped into or depicted as artwork, they can help people recall, create and share stories.

1/
Sarah Ayaqi Whalen Lunn

At rest: A memory shaped by tides
(2020)

Many communities have traditional stories that describe specific landforms as transformed people. *At rest: A memory shaped by tides* by Iñupiaq tattooist and artist Sarah Ayaqi Whalen Lunn depicts Dghelishla (Little Mountain), located on the north side of Tikahtnu (Cook Inlet), Alaska. In some versions of the story about this mountain, it is known as Sleeping Lady. The mountain's shape is said to represent a woman who laid down to nap while waiting for her betrothed to return from a war with a neighbouring tribe, and will wake when the world has peace. Here, Sleeping Lady rests on her side, with blue, green, brown and cream brushstrokes outlining her mountainous curves. This painting shares a memory of a long-ago story about a landform and the lessons it provides if we know how to read it: when we look out across Tikahtnu to Dghelishla, we can dream of peaceful times to come.

2/
Kunaq Marjorie Tahbone

Kunaq's Qulliq
(2023)

There is something about a bright flame that pulls people together and makes a moment feel memorable, especially when it is dark or cold. *Kunaq's Qulliq*, a reddish-brown steatite oil lamp by Iñupiaq and Kiowa artist Kunaq Marjorie Tahbone, shows the orange glow of a broad flame reflected in the oil within the bowl. Oil lamps have endured within circumpolar Inuit cultures for thousands of years. They continue to be important tools during everyday life as well as in ceremonies. Tahbone is one of many circumpolar Inuit artists who teach how to carve and light oil lamps, enabling the creation of lived memories for current and future generations.

ABOVE (LEFT)
Sarah Ayaqi Whalen Lunn
—
At rest: A memory shaped by tides
2020
Watercolour
12.7 × 30.5 cm
© THE ARTIST

ABOVE (RIGHT)
Kunaq Marjorie Tahbone
—
Kunaq's Qulliq
2023
Steatite
7.6 × 15.2 × 10.2 cm
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE (LEFT)
Artist Not Recorded
—
Untitled
c. 5200–4200 BCE
Sandstone
COURTESY WORLD HERITAGE ROCK ART CENTRE - ALTA MUSEUM
PHOTO KARIN TANSEM

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM)
Lingít Artist Not Recorded
—
Untitled
c. 1900
Spruce root, grass and dye
6.6 × 10.3 × 10.3 cm
ANCHORAGE MUSEUM COLLECTION
COURTESY ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

OPPOSITE (RIGHT)
Kunit
—
Ammassalik wooden map
c. 1884–85
Driftwood
14 × 5.5 × 5 cm
COURTESY NUNATTA KATERSUGAASIVIA ALLAGAATEQARFIALU

3/
Artist Not Recorded

Untitled
(c. 5200–4200 BCE)

Petroglyphs can be found around the world. Images carved and pecked into rock at Alta, Norway, show an array of animals along with people boating, fishing and skiing, as well as more abstract geometric designs. The motifs featured in this section of the Bergbukten 1 panel in Alta include bears, elk, reindeer, hunting fences and people. Painted over in red following their discovery in the 1970s, these simple yet durable carved lines record the lives and interactions between people, animals and land from millennia ago. When I have encountered petroglyphs in my own home region, they remind me of how long Alaska Native Peoples have tended the land. Conveying memories of how people used to live, these etched drawings are visual reminders of ancestral connections to place and ways of being.

4/
Lingít Artist Not Recorded

Untitled
(c. 1900)

Alternating bands of dyed spruce root are neatly woven into a circular basket to form this untitled work. The decorative top, featuring a pale yellow floral design in the centre, makes a delicate sound when the basket is shaken. Earlier this year, I witnessed a performance at the Anchorage Museum in Alaska, organized by Sugpiaq artist, choreographer and writer Tanya Lukin Linklater. As performers held up and rhythmically shook several baskets into a microphone, they created a quiet song. What memories does this basket hold? Perhaps the memory of the land where the root was collected, the memory of the artist who spent hours preparing the materials and weaving it and the memory of singing with other rattletop baskets.

5/
Kunit

Ammassalik wooden map
(c. 1884–85)

Before we had Google Maps and Siri helping us navigate, how did our ancestors share nautical directions or map the waters? A Kalaaleq carving made from driftwood offers a glimpse of what navigation looked like more than a century ago: a visual and tactile map of the contours of a shoreline of East Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). Kunit carved out the markings of islands and inlets to orient a traveller and help them recall or share the route along the coastline. This map preserves the memory of a kayaker's journey on the water and gives us a lesson from our ancestors on mapping in a practical way, using a handheld device that doesn't need an internet connection to operate.

Adventure Canada

Inuit artist Leonie Auluk shares her techniques with a visitor during a community stop in Gjøa Haven, Nunavut

©Kristian Bogner

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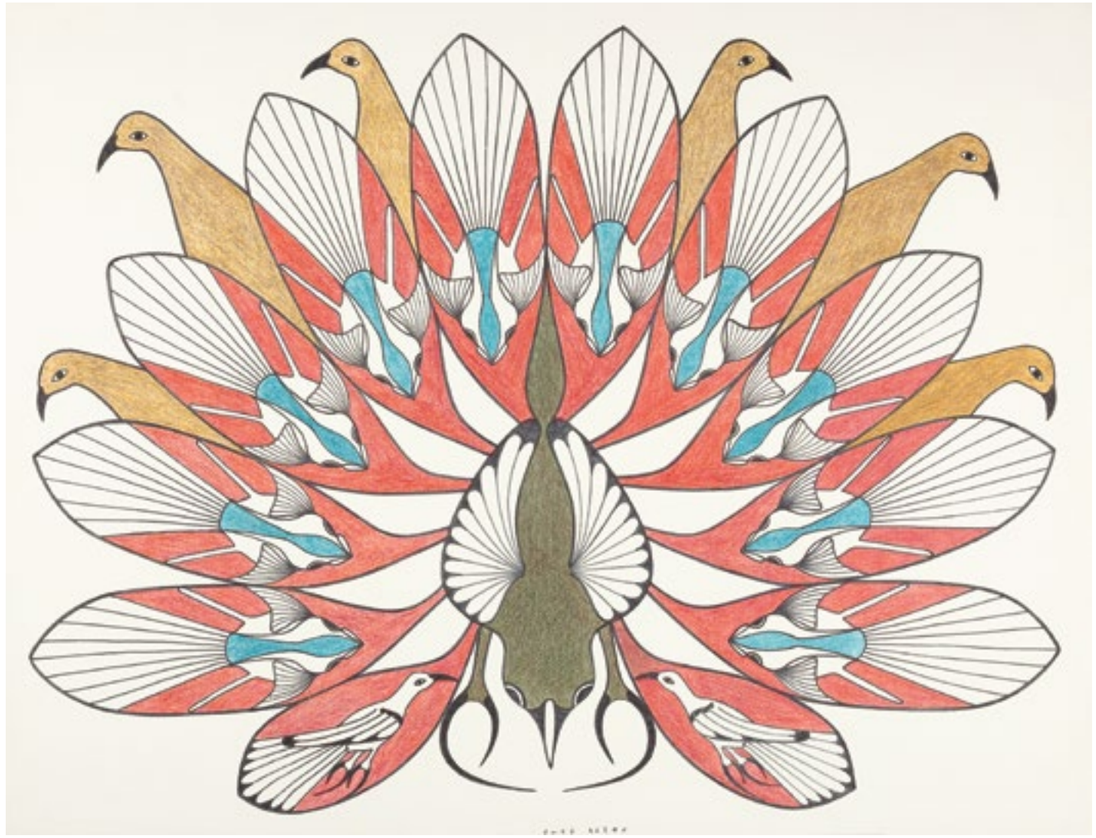
Untitled
Eliyakota Samualie

by Jamesie Taligvat Evaluardjuk Fournier



Eliyakota Samualie
—
Untitled
1986–87
Coloured pencil and
felt pen
50.3 × 66 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION
DORSET FINE ARTS
COLLECTION WEST BAFFIN
ESKIMO COOPERATIVE
COURTESY MCMICHAEL
CANADIAN ART COLLECTION
© THE ARTIST

When I first saw this piece I was mesmerized, and if the beast depicted therein were venomous, I would have certainly been its prey.

I first came across *Untitled* (1986–87) by Eliyakota Samualie (1939–1987) earlier this year at the *Words on Paper: Drawings from Kinngait* exhibition at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinburg, ON. Of the more than two hundred works featured, Samualie's work leapt out to me.

Geometric art is a personal favourite of mine and I was immediately entranced by Samualie's hypnotic vision. In *Untitled*, a brilliant, sable-coloured raptor hunches over with its tail fanned out, bidding its viewers beware. Feathering in smaller birds and fish within the piece, Samualie's control of concentric imagery leaves me spellbound. Meanwhile, the use of negative space—the naked blade-like petals between the feathers—transfixes me in place. When I first saw this piece I was mesmerized, and if the beast depicted therein were venomous, I would have certainly been its prey.

This work evokes many reactions, some of which are even conflicting. The rich red plumage elicits marvellous attraction, which is elevated through the glamorous sense of danger presented by the raptor's talons and defensive stance. Yet the fish are the picture of tranquility, from their restful sky-blue patterning to their voluminous tails that echo the butterfly koi commonly seen in Japanese printmaking—a practice that influenced the early years of printmaking within Inuit Nunangat. However, the two angelic birds bookending the fish within the foremost feathers appear to whisper to the raptor, perhaps suggesting counsel or temperance from our higher selves. Perhaps the tan-coloured birds peeking behind the raptor highlight the value of extending support to our more vulnerable community members, something we can all aspire to.

Born and raised on the land near Kinngait, NU, Samualie was a graphic artist and sculptor who began drawing in the early 1960s and whose works were included in numerous Cape Dorset Print Collections. The main body of Samualie's work features wildlife, particularly arctic birds, splayed in a graceful balance that focuses Samualie's sense of symmetry and honours her northern cultural perspective. The breadth of her graphic work leaves one astounded that anyone could accomplish such intricate conceptions with only pen, pencil and ink. Her work is best understood in person: high-quality artwork scans often sterilize the more nuanced and subdued tones inherent in a piece. It is only when we are in the softer, natural presence of these fine works do we feel their gravitas truly come alive. Only then do they become more than mere concept.

I am surprised I had never come across Samualie's work before visiting *Worlds on Paper.* Despite my wonder, what I cannot unsee in *Untitled* is that the unassuming background birds are almost aligned with the raptor's red feathers—but not quite. I tell myself to let it go as my eye twitches over their deliberately misaligned outlines. It was certainly within Samualie's skill set to have them fall in line, but perhaps she thought that having their figures blend into the feathers would forgo depth or would have made the piece too perfect? Whatever the case, I am more than happy to have stumbled across Samualie's work and her perspective centred therein.

—
Born and raised in Denendeh, Inuk writer and poet Jamesie Taligvat Evaluardjuk Fournier's debut horror book, The Other Ones *(2022), won silver at the 2023 Independent Publisher Book Awards in the Horror category. His poetry collection,* Elements *(2023), was shortlisted for a 2024 Indigenous Voices Award and won a 2024 NorthWords NWT Book Award. His debut children's book,* Lemming's First Christmas *(2025), was published in English and Inuktitut.*

Untitled
Liselotte Wajstedt

by Dennis Møller

The illustration draws me in, as I have a profound connection to trees. I believe we share a spiritual bond with them. Although we don't have many trees in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), I still feel drawn to and spiritually connected to them. This drawing serves as a poignant reminder of our deep bond with nature.

Liselotte Wajstedt is a Sámi multimedia artist from Giron (Kiruna), Sápmi (Sweden), whose artistic practice encompasses a diverse range of mediums, including film and video, collage, painting, photography, sculpture, textiles and installations, all of which deepen her connection to her cultural heritage. *Untitled* (2024) depicts a fusion of a face made with tree branches and roots. It serves as an expressive and symbolic representation rather than a realistic portrayal of a feminine face. The stylized face evokes a sense of serenity in the organic connection between humans and the environment and embodies a symbolic natural order, suggesting that we become part of nature upon our passing.

I perceive life and our choices in a manner akin to a tree and its branches. A single decision can lead us down a particular branch, even if it is an erroneous one. Despite the potential dead ends and setbacks in each branch, you can always return to the core and progress upward. This illustration can also be interpreted as Háldi, a forest creature from Sámi folklore. Háldi is an Eádni (mother in Sámi) of the earth, who may lure children into the woods. Sámi traditional stories tell that she is neither malevolent nor benevolent but rather neutral in character—inviting lost children into the woods and taking them as her own. However, it is believed that the lost children are well-cared for by Háldi. The stories say she provides them with warmth, nourishment and protection within her mystical realm deep in the woods. These children live among enchanted groves, surrounded by the ethereal beauty of Háldi's domain, where the trees whisper ancient tales and the air shimmers with magical light. Artwork featuring Háldi often depicts her as a gentle figure, enveloped in flowing roots with soft, closed eyes that reflect the forest's quiet wisdom.

The composition of this drawing is framed to draw the viewer's attention directly to the face. The visual contrast of the dense branches serves as a backdrop, accentuating the face that harmoniously blends with the roots and the earth, evoking a profound sense of belonging and tranquillity. Wajstedt employs an assured use of technique through charcoal, creating deep blacks and exquisite depth through shading. This technique effectively captures the organic connection between the artist and nature. The lines are fluid and precise, capturing the serenity that permeates the enigmatic expression on the face. The harmonious blend of dark and light tones encapsulates the profound emotional resonance of acceptance in death and the subsequent return to nature, symbolizing the restoration of the borrowed life. The face thus conveys the universal human experience of mortality. Regardless of life's circumstances, we all ultimately face death. This serene acceptance of death embodies the essence of the human condition—one that we can't escape.

—

Dennis Møller is an emerging Indigenous director from Kalaallit Nunaat, with a vision to strengthen Indigenous voices one story at a time. His interest in filmmaking began in high school, and he went on to study at Ilisimatusarfik, Kalaallit Nunaat; Noroff University College in Oslo, Norway; and Oslo Fotokunstskole, further honing his storytelling skills while working on a number of experimental projects that would later inform his work as a director and photographer.

Liselotte Wajstedt
—
Untitled
2024
Graphite
15 × 11 cm
© THE ARTIST

Sutaarutit (To Gain Material)

Three recipients share how they used this Kajungiqsaut Grant funding in their artistic practices last year

What does it take for an artist to develop their craft? Talent, dedication and most importantly, time. It takes time for an artist to hone their skills and refine their process. It takes time for an artist to experiment with new techniques and materials. It takes time for an artist to develop their style within the art form, to find what sets their work apart from others. Sourcing supplies can take up valuable time for artists, but funding opportunities can help reduce that barrier so they can focus on their practice.

The Sutaarutit grant is one of the three streams of the Kajungiqsaut Grants funding initiative, which was co-developed by the Inuit Art Foundation (IAF) and the Canada Council of the Arts to support Inuit creatives pursuing their many and multi-faceted ambitions. Sutaarutit provides up to $1,000 in funding to assist artists in obtaining tools and materials for their projects. Iniqarvik (to have space) and Turaagaq (vision) make up the two other Kajungiqsaut Grant funding streams, and the IAF is proud to say that the number of applicants for the funding initiative has grown each year since its inception in 2023.

Last year, the IAF proudly supported 49 Inuit artists through the Sutaarutit grant. These three artists provide a glimpse of how the funds can be used across various art forms.

Yurak (Siku Rojas) is multidisciplinary artist from Iqaluit, NU, who practices a wide range of mediums, including graphic arts, painting, jewellery and tattooing. With their funding, Yurak purchased the necessary tools and materials to experiment with different styles of stained glass, including glass and a glass grinder. They began by making small ornaments for family members, such as uluit, rain clouds, sun catchers and flowers. After gaining familiarity with the practice, Yurak then set their new skills toward producing more complex pieces in stained glass, including an anatomical heart and *Berry Patch* (2025).

OPPOSITE
Jessica Malegana
—
Watch and Learn
2023
Digital illustration
© THE ARTIST

LEFT
Yurak
—
Berry Patch
2025
Glass and solder
25.4 × 16.5 × 0.3 cm
© THE ARTIST

BELOW (LEFT)
Irene Ikinilik
—
Untitled
2024
Quilted polyester lining, quilted polyester batting and canvas
© THE ARTIST

BELOW (RIGHT)
Peter Qumaluk
—
Ivory earrings in the shape of beluga flippers
2025
Ivory and sterling silver-plated findings
Approximately 5.1 cm
© THE ARTIST

Irene Ikinilik is a self-taught sewist from Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), NU, who learned how to prepare hides in order to make traditional clothing from her grandparents. Ikinilik applied this knowledge to her artistic practice as she began sewing fashion outerwear using both synthetic and organic materials, blending traditional Inuit and contemporary designs. Each of her works is an expression of her culture and where it comes from, such as the spring/fall jacket she made with the canvas and quilted polyester lining that she bought with her funding.

Peter Qumaluk is a sculptor and jeweller from Puvirnituq, Nunavik, QC. With his grant, Qumaluk purchased new tools and materials to further his artistic practice, such as walrus tusks, sterling silver-plated findings and ivory. Hailing from a family of artists, Qumaluk enjoys working with his hands to make qamutiit, uluit and jewellery such as earrings and necklaces. His passion is apparent in all the works which he creates, such as *Ivory earrings in the shape of beluga flippers* (2025).

The IAF is proud to have supported the 2024 Sutaarutit recipients, and we strongly encourage applicants from any stage in their artistic careers to apply to the next cycle!

Learn more at **inuitartfoundation.org/kajungiqsaut**

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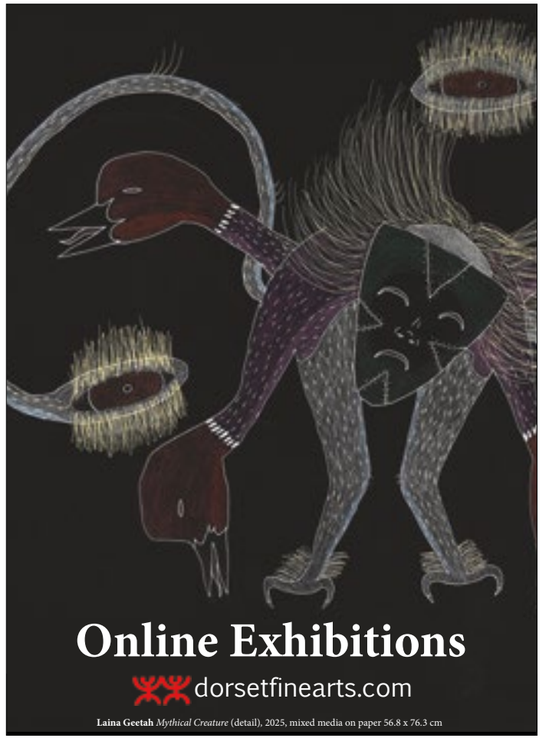

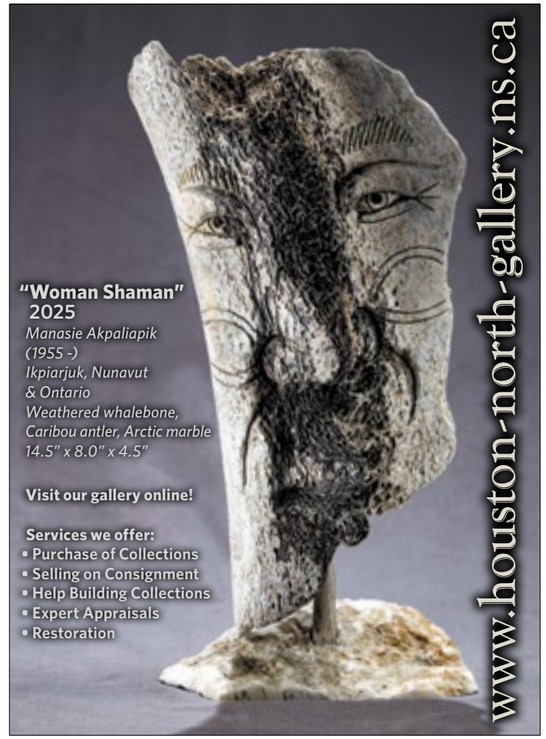

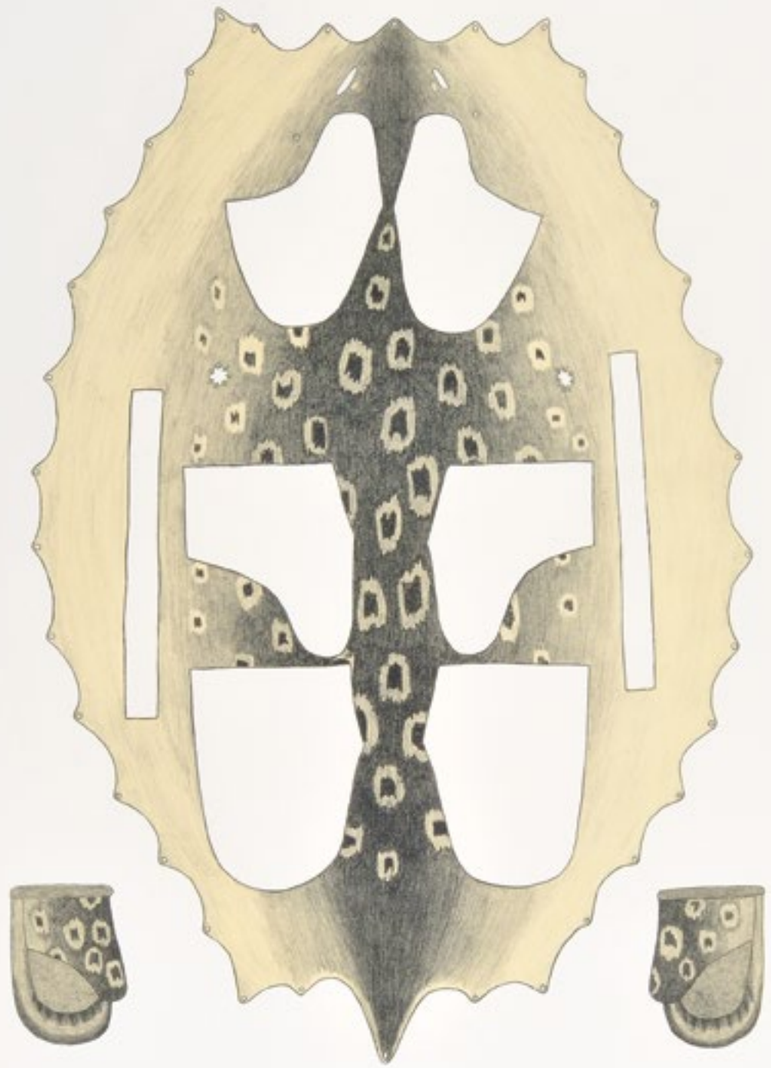

by
Krista Ulujuk Zawadski

translated by
Maggie Putulik

THREADING ANCESTRAL SPACES

The Agguaq Collective

ᓄᕕᑎᕆᓂᖅ ᓯᕗᓕᐸᑕ ᐃᓂᖓᒋᓐᓂᒃ

ᐊᒡᒍᐊᖅ ᑲᑐᑎᖃᑎᒌᑦᑐᑦ

ᑎᑎᕋᖅᑐᑦ
ᑯᕆᐸᑕ ᐅᓗᔪᒃ
ᓴᕙᑦᓴᑭ

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ᒫᒋ
ᐳᑐᓕᒃ

Cultural materials should be seen as a living link—an ongoing conversation between the past, present and future. By recreating sewing patterns, engaging with Elders and fostering intergenerational collaboration, the Agguaq Collective is breathing new life into fragments of memory held in these objects.

PREVIOUS
Kananginak Pootoogook
—
Sealskin Used for Mitts
1991
Printmaker Pitseolak Niviaqsi
Lithograph
76.2 × 55.9 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION DOREST FINE ARTS
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM)
Brenda Putulik working on a pattern for a 120-year-old tuili from the Kivalliq Region, 2023
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE

RIGHT & OPPOSITE (TOP)
Agguaq Collective close visiting with beaded tuili made by **Nivisannaaq "Shoofly"** at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, 2023
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE

One of the most beautiful things about sewing or making is the connection you create between yourself, traditional knowledge and the person or people who are sharing their knowledge with you. Ancestral space is created in those moments; relations become threaded across time between your ancestors, your present and your descendants through the act of sewing or making cultural materials. Living memory is a key element in the continuation of our ancestral knowledge, and it is a fundamental aspect of the work of the Agguaq Collective. The meaning behind our name, Agguaq, loosely translates to "patchwork." For the collective, we interpret it as patching the knowledge gaps left by the violence of colonialism on Inuit and our knowledge base. We are inspired by the concept of looking back in order to go forward and igniting living memories through relationship building. Mentorship and connection to our ancestral knowledge are part of that.

The members of Agguaq were brought together in 2022 by our founder, Lori Tagoona Randall. Lori reached out to artists and sewists to create a group that would go to museum collections and visit Inuit piqutiit (belongings), annuraat (clothing) and uktuutiit (patterns) to connect with ancestral knowledge and gain inspiration for new creations. In the fall of 2022 we met in Ottawa, ON, to begin our journey as Agguaq, which included Winifred Nungak, Melissa Attagutsiak, Mishael Gordon, Lori and me. Avery Keenainak, another founding member, was not there in person. Rose Tina Alivaktuk and my aunt, Brenda Putulik, joined the collective in early 2023.

In Ottawa, we began to shape our collective. Cultural vitalization was important to each of us, as well as building relationships with our communities. We also wanted to make an impact in some way to address some of the experiences we have had that stem from colonialism—namely, lateral violence—by making an inclusive and safe space for our creativity to blossom. Through cultural vitalization, we want to emphasize the importance of visual, tangible and intangible culture to sustain and rejuvenate Inuit heritage. Through relationship building, we want to foster community ties and intergenerational relationships to strengthen communal bonds and knowledge transfer. Lastly, we want to utilize our platform as a collective to address and highlight issues important to the Inuit community. These goals have shaped how we work as a collective and how we hope to keep knowledge moving forward. Our practice—rooted in ancestral knowledge and contemporary making—reaffirms that living memory must be reckoned with as a transformative force.

Between 2022 and 2025 Agguaq visited several museum collections. Our first visits were in Winnipeg, MB, where we were hosted by the Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq and the Manitoba Museum. We later visited the Avataq Cultural Institute and the McCord Stewart Museum in Montreal, QC; the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City; and the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo, Norway. Sometimes our collection visits were like speed dating—looking at a lot of piqutiit in a short amount of time—or close visiting, spending time looking at the details of one piqutik. Sometimes the visits are a combination of both approaches, depending on our goals, time and the museum.

Collaboration and collective knowledge are integral aspects of our work together. I knew the skills and knowledge I have with

ᐃᓕᖅᑯᓱᓕᐅᔪᓂ ᓴᓇᓱᒻᒪᓂ ᐅᖃᐅᓯᐅᑎᓇᓚᐅᑦᓯᓂ ᑲᔪᓱᖅᑐᓂ—ᐅᖅᑲᓱᐅᑎᓇᖅᑐᓄᑦ ᑕᐃᔾᓱᒪᓂᐅᓕᐅᖅᑐᓂ, ᐊᐢᓇᐅᔪᔾᓗ ᓱᐅᓂᐅᓂᐊᖅᑐᓂᓗ. ᑕᒪᓐᓇᓗ ᐅᖏᑉᓱᐅᖅᑲᐢᓂᓂᖅ, ᐃᓕᐅᑎᑎᓂᓗᓂ ᐃᐢᓇᖅᑐᓂᓗ ᑕᐃᒪᓐᓇᖅᑐᓂ, ᑲᑎᒪᔨᖅᑎᑦᑎᓂᒃ ᑲᑎᒪᔨᖅᑎᑦᑎᓂᒃ ᑭᒃᑯᓱᒃ ᑲᑎᒪᔨᖅᑎᑦᑎᓂᒃ ᓴᖅᑭᑎᓪᓗᒍ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᑐᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓂᖅ ᐃᓕ

museum collections could be a valuable contribution to the project, even if my artistic side was not as strong. I also knew that other members, who are amazing artists and sewists, would bring valuable skills and insights that would fill the gaps. Although my strengths lie in academia, research and navigating colonial institutions like museums, the others' strengths lie in deeper cultural knowledge and skills in sewing and pattern making. Rose Tina has both practical sewing and historical knowledge; Brenda understands the different styles of clothing from across the Arctic; Avery brings a youthful optimism and eagerness to learn that is intoxicating, as well as diverse sewing skills; Winifred and Melissa are both talented contemporary sewists who have experience in the fashion industry; Mishael is a talented sewist and designer, and she is a strong leader; and lastly, although Lori's focus has been facilitating the collective, she brings her mad skills in sewing and design. We have come to realize that our individual memories, when taken together, are valuable in strengthening our collective knowledge.

One experience that has changed me and boosted my confidence in making new patterns or recreating old ones is when Brenda and I worked on copying a tuili pattern from the early 1900s. I have been studying this particular amauti style called a tuili, a distinct style where the shoulders are large and the hood is long and narrow with a small opening. The shoulders provide room for the woman to reach back into the pouch and bring the child to the front to breastfeed without having to pull the child out of the amauti. Brenda is skilled in pattern making and adjusting and is a very talented sewist. While visiting a 120-year-old tuili from the Kivalliq Region, which is currently at the AMNH, we had the opportunity to create a pattern. Brenda used brown paper to copy the tuili while in the collection, using her intimate knowledge of the complex and intricate pattern to draft the different pieces of the garment and using measuring tape to ensure accuracy. I have always wanted to do this in collections, but was never able to do a full pattern until this visit to the AMNH.

From the outset, we wanted to build relationships with Elders and knowledge holders. We felt that spending time with piqutiit, annuraat and uktuutiit alongside more knowledgeable people would benefit the mobilization of knowledge. Though each of us is already knowledgeable in piqutiit, annuraat and uktuutiit, we know that Inuit pedagogies emphasize that learning alongside others is important, that Inuit knowledge mobilization is not a solo experience. In short, we invited Elders into our collective to ensure intergenerational knowledge could be fostered. Enter Rose Tina and Brenda, our young Elders, or Elders-in-Training, who have the most generous and loving energy. They have become more than friends and mentors to us through this journey; they have become family. They have helped each of us, from guiding us through pattern making and the history of different patterns to helping us expand our creativity through the creation of contemporary works inspired by annuraat we visited in collections. Rose Tina has worked with Avery on patterns from Panniqtuuq, NU, including ones from their direct ancestors or mentors, and has helped us all better understand different styles from other regions.

Mentorship is one of the pillars of Agguaq's goals, and working with Rose Tina and Brenda has been meaningful because we want to model what it looks like to create mentorship opportunities for future generations. Brenda helped me conduct a tuili-making gathering in 2022, and she also guided me in adjusting Agguaq's *Melissa Pattern*—a project that I will get into below—which ultimately helped me combine three different patterns into one. Brenda helped me combine a silhouette that is rooted in the tuili, with high hip curves, sleeves from an amauti pattern and a large hood inspired by a particular parka that is based on

LEFT
Brenda Putulik working on a pattern for a 120-year-old tuili from the Kivalliq region, 2023
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE

OPPOSITE (LEFT)
Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) Artist
Not Recorded
—
Untitled (Attigi [Male])
c. 1950
Caribou hide, wool fleece, wool and antler
COURTESY WAG-QAUMAJUQ
PHOTO ERNEST MAYER
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE (RIGHT)
Western Arctic Artist
Not Recorded
—
Untitled (Mother Hubbard Parka)
2001
Cotton, wolf fur and Delta Braid
COURTESY WAG-QAUMAJUQ
PHOTO ERNEST MAYER
© THE ARTIST

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[ᐊᖏᔪᑎ])
c. 1950
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© ᐊᖏᓕᐅᑎᔪᑦ

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ᑕᐃᔨᔪᖅᙱᕐᓂᑐᖅ (ᑲᓕᑯ)
2001
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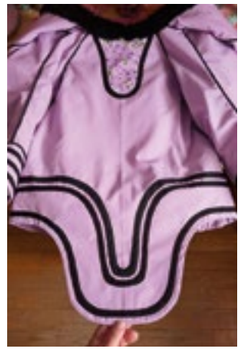
ᐊᖏᓕᐅᑎᓇ ᐅᓇᓴᑦ ᒪᐃᔪᑦ
© ᐊᖏᓕᐅᑎᔪᑦ

ᐊᑐᐃᓐᓇᒥᒃ, ᐅᖅᐅᔪᓇᓐᓕᓕᒋᐅᖅᓯᓐᓂ ᑲᑐᑎᓂᑎᑦᒪᓂᖅ. ᐃᓕᓴᐅᑎᖅᑐᓂᓂᖅ ᐱᓕᒋᓪᓚᒃᓴᒪᓂ ᐃᓗᐊᒥᓂᑐᒪ. ᐃᖅᐱᓇᓐᓂᒪᓐ ᑐᕆᓚᖅᑯᔪᓕᒋᓂᒪ — ᑕᐅᓐᓇ, ᓴᓕᖅᑯᔪᓕᐊᖅᑐᓕ ᐊᐅᓚᖅᑕᐅᔪᓕᓕᒋᐅᖅᑎᓪᓗᒍ ᐃᓐᓇᐃᓚᓂᒃᑯᓕᓪᓗ ᐱᓕᖅᓯᓪᓕᐊᖅᑯᔪᓪᓗᒍ. ᐃᓕᖅᑯᔪᐅᔾᖅ ᓴᖅᑭᑎᐊᖅᓯᖅᓂ, ᐅᖅᔨᓴᖅᑭᓯᐊᖅᑐᓂᒃ, ᐊᓯᖅᓱᓕ ᑐᐅᓯᖅᑕᐅᔪᓕᒋᐅᖅᑎᓪᓗᒍ ᐃᓐᓇᐃᓚᓂᒃᑯᓕᓪᓗᒍ ᐃᓐᓇᐃᓚᓂᒃᑯᓕᓪᓗᒍ ᐃᓕᓴᐅᑎᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐃᓕᓴᐅᑎᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐃᓕᓴᐅᑎᖅᑐᓂᒃ



ABOVE
Rose Tina Alivaktuk's recreation of the amauti from the Panniqtuuq area in 2022.
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE

RIGHT
Nunavimmiut Artist Not Recorded
—
Untitled (Amauti)
c. 1890–97
Sealskin, dog fur and sinew
143 × 70 cm
COURTESY MCCORD STEWART MUSEUM MONTREAL

OPPOSITE
Winifred Nungak and **Rose Tina Alivaktuk** close visiting with an amauti from the Panniqtuuq area (c. 1890–97) at the McCord-Stewart Museum in Montreal, 2022
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE

the amauti hood. This was a garment that I had always envisioned and hoped to make but could never figure out on my own. It is my new favourite pattern, partly because it is exactly how I envisioned it, but mostly because working alongside Brenda has been very special to me. This is a significant way for memory to be carried forward while looking back. This is the kind of work that folds the threads of memory across generations that ultimately fosters innovation, much like how I envision our ancestors did.

Each collection we visited has been meaningful in its own way. In our 2023 visit to the McCord Stewart Museum in Montreal, we saw a sealskin amauti with dog fur from the Quebec side of the Hudson Strait area, in Nunavik, dated around 1890–97. The amauti was quite petite, with a narrow akuq (tail) and a large hood. The sleeves had four distinctive dark pukiit (lines) around them and three pukiit around the hem. Much like older patterns made from hides, the pattern was composed of several individual pieces, culminating in an almost puzzle-like structure that exudes the ingenuity and engineering skills Inuit sewists have. Clothing made from hides requires attention to detail to make the best use of the hide itself, resulting in multiple pieces being used to make a single garment.

None of us had ever seen a garment that old, which brought to mind the sentiments of the Elders who visited museum collections in the short documentary *Inuit Piqutingit (What Belongs to Inuit)* (2009) by Bernadette Dean and Zacharias Kunuk, OC, ONu, LLD. The Elders state that museums are important because sometimes they preserve our cultural material in ways that we cannot. The visit to the McCord Stewart was emotional for many of us. It was particularly meaningful because we were able to learn more about that particular style, which had elements that were no longer in our living memory, including the long band at the top of the hood that creates the kukukpaaq (point), which is usually made from a piece that is the shape of a bell. Rose Tina immediately recognized the importance of bringing this knowledge back to life and recreated the garment when she went home.

ᐱᔾᓕᐊᑐᓴᓕᐊᓐ ᐃᓱᐊᐊᒋᐅᐅᑦ ᑕᒪᔨᐊᑯ ᑲᑎᖅᓯᖅᓱᒪᓂᕐᓗ ᐅᑦᑐᕐᐅᒪᒍᑦ ᑲᑎᖅᓯᖅᓱᒪᓂᕐᓗ ᓄᓇᕗᑦ ᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓗᒍ ᑕᐃᒪᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓗᒍ ᑲᑎᖅᓯᖅᓱᒪᓂᕐᓗᒍ ᐅᑦᑐᕐᐅᒪᒍᑦ ᐅᑦᑐᕐᐅᒪᒍᑦ ᐅᓪᓗᒥᒃ ᑕᐃᒪᐃᓕᓴᕐᓂᐊᕐᓗᒍ

Through collaboration, we can mend the fissures in our knowledge base that were created by colonialism and, in doing so, manifest what our name—and ultimately, our sense of fostering our living memories—alludes to: patchwork through innovation and ingenuity. We bring with us our own understandings of Inuit heritage and knowledge, which, coupled with collaboration, meant we were keen to make something together. In February 2024 we gathered in Iqaluit, NU, to dream up where we want to take Agguaq next. It was also an opportunity to sew and make together as a collective. During our time together, we discussed what kind of garment we'd like to make collaboratively. We wanted to make something that reflected our intergenerational and collaborative approach to our work thus far. After much discussion, we realized that although we had shared experiences in the collections, what we each took from the visits was quite personal. We came up with the idea of starting with a core pattern—a bodice, in this instance—and personalizing our garments based on our experiences with the cultural materials we visited in museums.

We wanted a central element that linked all of our garments together, a representation of each of our experiences in collections that are storied in the pieces themselves. We called this our *Melissa Pattern*, as Melissa had drafted the core design. Winifred made a white garment with her signature sinik (trim) work that was based on an amauti we saw at the AMNH. She explained that in her region, Nunavik, the hoods are rounded, but in Nunavut they are pointed. However, the amauti at the AMNH had a tiny kukukpaaq, which Rose Tina attributed to connections between families and communities, highlighting that the original maker had relations from the Qikiqtaaluk Region. These types of small details in our clothing—ones that speak to connections across vast geographies and waters—are tangible elements of memory and memory-making, especially since we are a collective of individuals from different communities and regions.

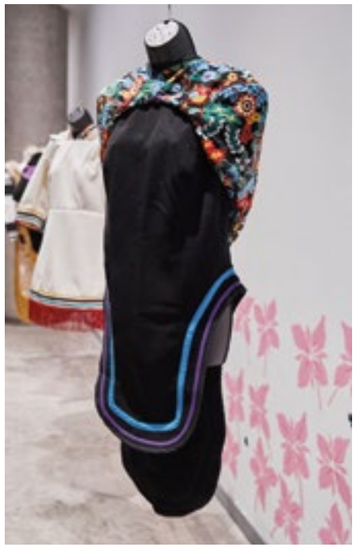
Agguaq's journey has been a powerful testament to the strength of collaboration, cultural revitalization and the living nature of memory. Together we have not only deepened our understanding of Inuit heritage but also addressed the gaps left by colonial violence. Our visits to collections have provided the space to re-engage with ancestral knowledge, turning piqutiit from the past into active, evolving sources of inspiration. This is not just about preservation; it's about the relational work of remembering, where memory is passed on, innovated and carried forward through creative processes. Living memory is not a static archive but a continuous process of transmission and transformation.

—

Krista Ulujuk Zawadski is a curator, researcher, anthropologist, beader, sewist and land-based educator from Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet), NU, and Kangiqliniq, NU. She holds a PhD in Cultural Mediations from Carleton University.

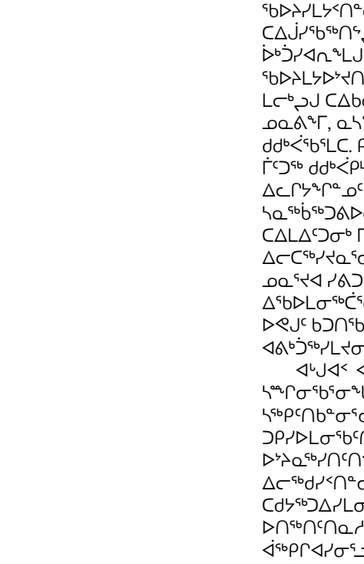
ABOVE (LEFT)
Rose Tina Alivaktuk
—
Paunnakuluk
ᐸᐅᓐᓇᓗᓄᑦ *1869*
2024
Tuttu leather, sealskin leather, glass beads and paunna in resin
COURTESY FOFA GALLERY
PHOTO LAURENCE POIRIER
© THE ARTIST

ABOVE (CENTRE)
Winifred Nungak
—
Kukuppaalik
2024
Soft shell light fabric, bias tape, ric rac and fringe
COURTESY FOFA GALLERY
PHOTO LAURENCE POIRIER
© THE ARTIST



ABOVE (RIGHT)
Mishael Gordon
—
Arna - 1/2295 A
2024
Embroidered lace, Italian polyamide wool and cotton bias tape trim
COURTESY FOFA GALLERY
PHOTO LAURENCE POIRIER
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE (TOP)
Agguaq Collective at the McCord Stewart Museum in Montreal, 2024. First row from left to right: **Lori Tagoona Randall**, **Avery Keenainak** and **Melissa Attagutsiak**; Second row from left to right: **Mishael Gordon**, **Krista Ulujuk Zawadski**, **Rose Tina Alivaktuk**, **Winifred Nungak** and **Brenda Putulik**
COURTESY AGGUAQ COLLECTIVE



OPPOSITE (BOTTOM)
Krista Ulujuk Zawadski, **Winifred Nungak**, **Rose Tina Alivaktuk** and **Avery Keenainak** presenting garments made from the original *Melissa Pattern* at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association conference in Bodø, Norway, 2024
COURTESY TAQRALIK PARTRIDGE

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ᑭᓴ ᑎᓇ ᐃᓕᑕᖅᓯᐅᖅᑎᑦᓗᓂ ᐱᓕᓯᒡᖓᓂᓴᓂᒃ
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ᓴᓇᐅᔨᓐᓇᖅᑯᑯ. ᐃᓕ ᑕᕐᕋᐅᑐᒍ ᑐᑭᓯᒪᓂᖅᑐᖅᓄᑦ
ᐃᓅᓂᕆᑎᓂᖅ ᖃᐅᓴᒪᓂᖅᓄᑦᓗᓂ, ᑕᕐᕋᓗ, ᐃᓕᓗᐋ
ᑲᑐᑎᖅᑎᑦᓂᖅᑎᑦᑲ, ᑐᑭᓯᒪᓂᖅᑎᑦᓴᕐᕕᐊᓴᖅᓂᖅᓂᕐᑦ.
ᐊᐅᓐᓄᐃᑲ 2024-ᖓᑎᓕᒍ ᑲᑎᓕᐅᖅᓯᒪᐅᒍ ᐃᓴᖅᓗᐃᑦ,
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ᐊᓚᒪᓗ ᓯᓇᓂᑦ ᒥᖅᓯᕐᓇᒪᓐᓚᓐᓂ ᐊᑕᐅᑦᑎᖅᑯᑦ. ᑲᑎᓯᒪᑐᒍ,
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ᐃᑲᖅᓴᓂᖅᑐᓂᓗ ᖃᖅᑭᓯᐊᓂᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐊᓐᖏᕐᕋᑭᓂᖅᑐᓂᒃ,
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ᐃᓕᓴᐅᖅᑐᓂᒃ ᐊᓐᖏᕐᕋᑭ

The Dichotomy *of* Ravens

by Ilegvak

In this *Feature*, Ilegvak reflects on the nuanced relationship between Yupiit and ravens, considering how Yupiit traditional stories and Inuit artworks from Alaska and Canada echo some of the personal experiences he and his family members recall about the enigmatic bird.

The muffled baritone voice of my uncle Mike reverberated through the spaciousness of the wireless connection: "Grandma never told too many Raven stories."[1] His words boomed from the village of Akiaq, Alaska, as he answered my questions about Tulukaruk (Raven) stories. However Uncle Mike remembered people telling stories about ordinary tulukaruut; how they would say that "in times of trouble, they show up . . . if a bear is coming for you . . . the ravens would show up and start attacking the bear that is coming over to attack you or to harm you or to have you for dinner."

The coolness of my cellphone pressed against my hand as I leaned against a bright yellow wall in Sheet'ká (Sitka), Alaska, listening in fascination to the family history and Yupiit worldview my uncle was gifting me as he described aspects of the long-standing relationship between ravens and Yupiit. The complexity of our interactions, interdependence and reciprocity with ravens spans from timeless qulirat, which is Yugtun for traditional stories. From the past, now woven into the fabric of the present, this relationship is too intricate to unravel. Nor is unravelling it necessary when words and stories can describe a way of life, painting a lucid picture of memory that still breathes through each generation.

The collaboration with our other-than-human relatives runs deep into the ancestral past of many Arctic Peoples. In Yupiit storytelling, there are qulirat about people being looked after by animals and learning from them, sometimes while the animals are in human form.[2] Uncle Mike clears his throat in reflection. "I think there are several stories about the ravens saving lives." He expressed that his grandma experienced something like this: "She told us that

PREVIOUS
Kingmeata Etidlooie
—
Untitled
1976–77
Coloured pencil and felt pen
51.4 × 66.4 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION DORSET FINE ARTS COLLECTION WEST BAFFIN ESKIMO COOPERATIVE COURTESY MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE
Ooloosie Saila
—
Landscape and Raven
2025
Coloured pencil
56.5 x 76.2 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION DORSET FINE ARTS COURTESY DAVIC GALLERY
© THE ARTIST

ABOVE
Ayaprun (Jennifer Angaiak Wood)
—
Raven Saves His Daughter
2024
Basswood, red cedar, basket rings, dowels, feathers, dried seal intestine, acrylic, imitation sinew, copper wire and nails
71.1 × 57.2 × 19.1 cm
© THE ARTIST

she was berry picking, and the bear was sneaking up on her. And then the ravens started attacking that bear. . . . They notified her to get away from that tundra so that bear won't get to 'em."

The wooden mask *Raven Saves His Daughter* (2024) by Yup'ik artist Ayaprun (Jennifer Angaiak Wood) recounts a similar act of heroism. The work forms a structure similar to ellam iinga (the eye of awareness), a symbol of a circle with a dot in the centre, often with four lines radiating outward. The mask depicts the old Qaluyaaq (Nelson Island), Alaska, Yupiit story about the shore ice breaking away where Raven's daughter was jigging for tomcod.[3] When Raven heard that his daughter was floating out to sea, he scooped up dirt from the tundra in his parka and threw it down, creating land where the dirt fell, saving his daughter.

The silent cry from the open, rounded mouth of the Raven's yua (spirit) reverberates outward from the flat, broad face of Ayaprun's work—which is the likeness of water, tundra and ice. A vibrant, sloping red ring simultaneously contains the face's multiple blocks of colour while propelling energetic momentum past the smooth curves of the raven's body and extending into the expanded openness of the bird's spread wings—lengthy, wavy wood grain that looks like rolling ocean waves. Suspended from the ellanguat (a wooden ring around a mask—a word translating to "awareness" or "universe," among others) are two shimmering figural carvings of tomcod, fading from silver underbellies to sea-green backs, and a wrinkled and translucent seal-gut parka. The work's expansive, subtle intricacy reveals an ancient relationship with tulukaruut while representing its contemporary relevance, transcending qulirat, rendering the intangible and accentuating the compassionate side of Tulukaruk that safeguards.

Uncle Mike rhythmically continues, "Another story is when we're moose hunting. When there's lots of ravens where we're hunting, the ravens identify the presence of moose." He emphasizes and draws out the last word. "We look for ravens when we're hunting, and . . . we hang around with [the ravens] because we know they're hanging around the moose, the live moose. And when we catch it, we leave the guts . . . and they have a feast on it."

Ravens continue to be connected to the cycles of Yupiit life, even as our ways of being have changed drastically since European contact, such as different modes of consumption and waste management. As Uncle Mike describes, "Ever since we've got this dump, it's a haven for the raven. They're eating all that garbage, and it's not good. . . . I don't know if they can withstand all those toxins and chemicals and eating dogs and carcasses." In his playful cadence, he lets out a rhythmic chuckle. "[But] they're tough. They don't die."

Brian Adams captured this situation in his 2020 untitled photograph of Sitŋasuaq (Nome), Alaska. Sleek yet blurry, jagged dark silhouettes of startled ravens streak across the ether. Their aerodynamic, soft feathers form serrated edges as black wings cling to the frigid air. With the focus on the background of the eerie, enchanting quiet of the frozen inlet, Norton Sound, the stained and weather-worn dumpster is reminiscent of a splatter painting.

With the smudge of motion, I can almost hear the soft swish of the birds taking flight, letting out caws of alarm and agitation. The snapshot's portrayal evokes the scent of brisk, clean air mingling with musky feathers and rancid garbage. Where butchered moose carcasses once lay, feeding the birds and waiting to slowly return to the land, a fading metal dumpster now sits on the tundra. And although the out-of-focus bin and birds are centred in the photograph—highlighting the contemporary, colonized adaptations of both Inuit and ravens—what remains in focus is the land, sea and horizon. What remains clear are ancestral homelands.

The resounding voice of Uncle Mike strikes a serious tone as he explains another important aspect of the relationship between Yupiit and ravens. "My grandma told us not to kill 'em for no reason at all, to shoot 'em or harm them. Because they said karma might happen. Bad things might happen to you if you do that to the ravens." The tales of a naughty or trickster Raven are well known in old Yupiit qulirat, such as the one where he was kicking sea anemones for amusement—one closed up around his leg and he lied to it so it would let go—or being a bully in Tulukaruk Qanganaarrluar-llu (Raven and Squirrel), or teasing in Tulukaruk Puyitaaraak-llu (Raven and Two Redpolls),[4] to name a few, let alone the many that span across the Arctic.

"You have to be very careful not to harm them, but to let them be. That's what she said. And that's the same thing that my mom told me about that, to leave them alone. But when they're in your dog yard eating your dog food, that's a different story." His crisp chuckle cascades into deep, hearty laughter.

Uncle Mike's reminder of the ways ravens can get into things they shouldn't is part of a larger sense of ravens as opportunists in artworks across Inuit Nunangat, depicted in pieces such as the drawing for the print *Raven Takes the Catch* (1985–86) by Kananginak Pootoogook, RCA (1935–2010), in which a raven gobbles up a fisherwoman's haul while she is focused on jigging for her next fish; *The Thief* (1970) by Agnes Nanogak Goose (1925–2001), in which a crouched-over woman is poised to give a whack to a raven rummaging through her bag for food; and *Untitled* (1976–77) by Kingmeata Etidlooie (1915–1989), in which

OPPOSITE
Brian Adams
—
Untitled
2020
Photograph
35.6 × 35.6 cm
© THE ARTIST

LEFT
Shirley Hootch
—
The Flight!
2020
Walrus ivory and baleen
Approximately 5.1 × 3.8 × 0.6 cm
© THE ARTIST

“two larger-than-life ravens loom over a small hooded figure in a parka holding a knife. The tension spreads throughout the scene as the birds appear to have snuck away tasty treats.

In summarizing the Yupiit worldview and cultural memory about the cawing, glossy black birds, Uncle Mike said, “Mainly the raven is those two things—saving and then stealing food . . . and we don’t appreciate that.” Whether saving or stealing, the significance of ravens to Yupiit culture can be clearly seen in their prevalence in our iconography, from qulirat to masks and even the jewellery we adorn our bodies with. *The Flight!* (2020), a pair of walrus ivory earrings made by Yup’ik artist Shirley Hootch, highlights the expansive wingspan of ravens, showing them as more of a quiet predator than a songbird as they fly over the tundra. The opaque white of the ivory around the heads of the sculpted ravens travels along the tips of the wings to the tail, as the carving transitions from one creamy outer edge of the tusk into the granular mottled pattern of the centre, and back to the other edge. Five black dots made from baleen stretch across each earring; stark against the ivory, they are a nod to the prevalence of dots in Yupiit artwork. Hootch sanded and polished the carving until the cuts, grain and scratches transformed into an unworldly smooth shimmer.

These wide-ranging artworks, qulirat, my uncle’s words and mine and my great-grandmother’s personal encounters exemplify the reverence, mystery, caution, frustration and humour that colours the relationship between Yupiit and ravens. It is through this mutuality that we are forever interwoven. As my uncle reflects, “They raid the fish cache. And that’s not good. But I think there are two types of ravens, the good ravens and the bad ravens. The good ravens enhance and save your life.”

—

Ilegvak is a 2024 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant recipient, a 2023 Inuit Art Foundation Alaska Native Art Writing Fellow and a 2022 United States Artists Fellow. He is originally from his family’s village of Akiaq, now based in Sheet’ká. He has been published in First Alaskans Magazine, Alaska Humanities Forum *and the* Inuit Art Quarterly. *His visual art has been shown in museums, galleries and fashion runways across Turtle Island.*

NOTES

1 All quotes Mike Williams, interview with Ilegvak, August 2025.

2 Ann Fienup-Riordan, ed., “Introduction | Kalikam Ayagnara,” *Qanemcit Amllertut/ Many Stories to Tell: Tales of Humans and Animals from Southwest Alaska* (University of Alaska Press, 2017), transcribed and translated by Alice Rearden with Marie Meade, 1–37.

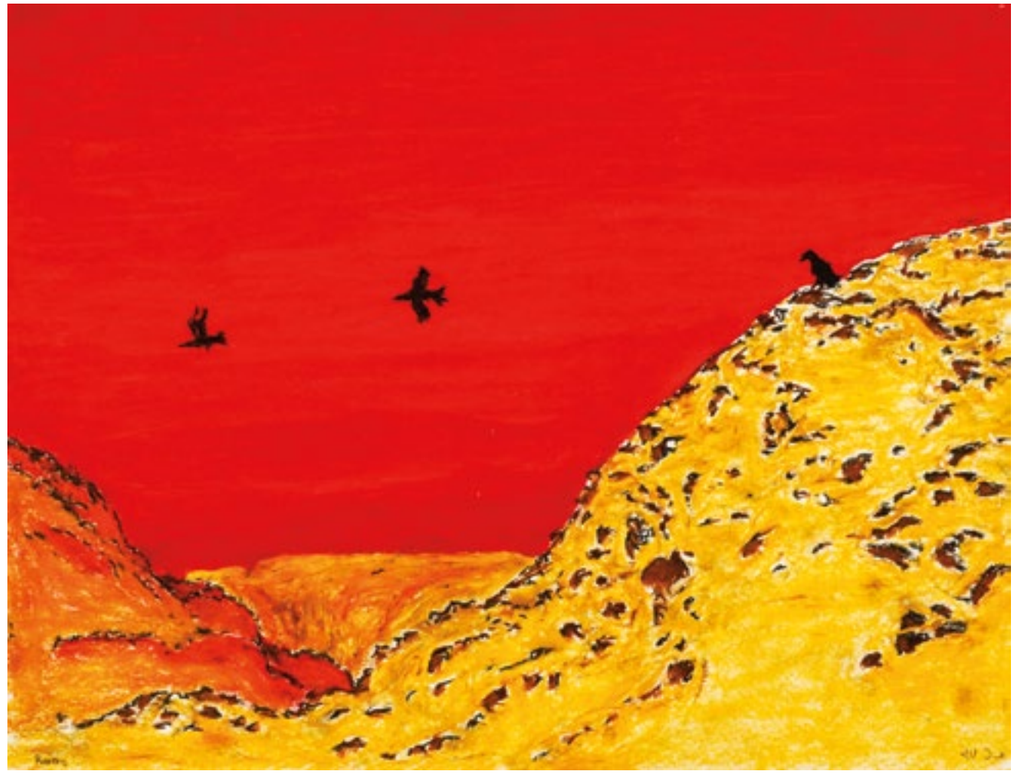
3 Ann Fienup-Riordan, ed., “Qaluyaat | Nelson Island,” *Qaluyaarmiuni Nunamtenek Qanemciput / Our Nelson Island Stories: Meanings of Place on the Bering Sea Coast* (University of Washington Press, 2011), transcribed and translated by Alice Rearden, 1–33.

4 See note 2 above, “First Ancestors | Ciuliaqatuut,” 44–117.

OPPOSITE
Kananginak Pootoogook
—
Drawing for the print
Raven Takes the Catch
1985–86
Coloured pencil and felt pen
49.6 × 65.9 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION
DORSET FINE ARTS
COLLECTION WEST BAFFIN ESKIMO COOPERATIVE
COURTESY MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION
© THE ARTIST

LEFT
Agnes Nanogak Goose
—
The Thief
1970
Printmaker Joseph Kitekudlak
Stonecut
46.5 × 61 cm
COURTESY INUIT ART FOUNDATION
© THE ARTIST

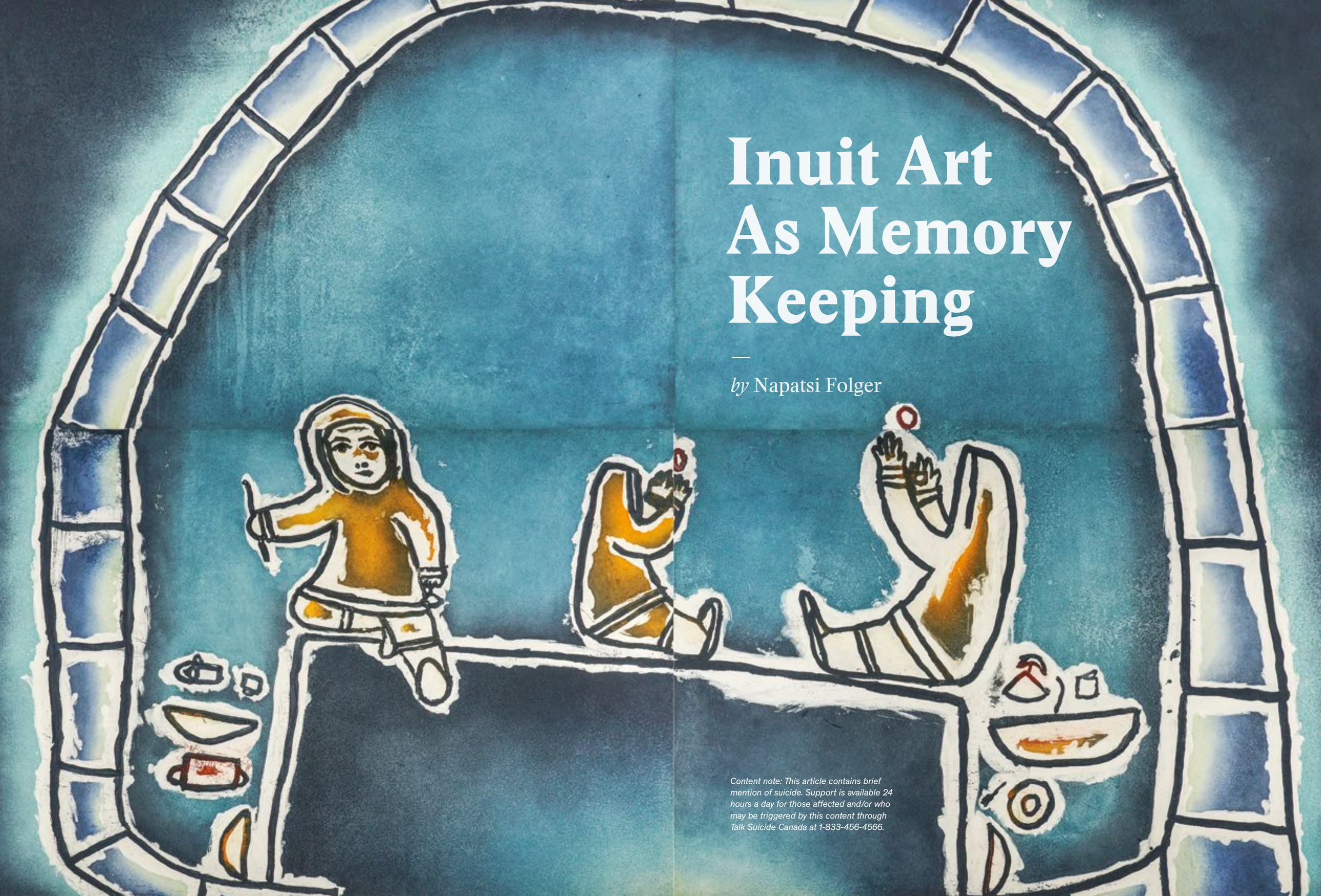
BELOW
Jutai Toonoo
—
Ravens
2007
Pastel and oil stick
50.8 × 66.7 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION
DORSET FINE ARTS
COURTESY FEHELEY FINE ARTS
© THE ARTIST



Inuit Art As Memory Keeping

—

by Napatsi Folger



Content note: This article contains brief mention of suicide. Support is available 24 hours a day for those affected and/or who may be triggered by this content through Talk Suicide Canada at 1-833-456-4566.

At the core of so much Inuit art are concepts rooted in childhood memory. One of the challenges Inuit artists have faced throughout what Inuit art historian Nancy Campbell terms "the modern period," between 1948 and 2000,[1] and continuing into today, is the pressure to conform to Western notions of what defines Inuit art. The twentieth century was a period of rapid cultural and political change for Inuit, so art that depicts memories serves an important cultural purpose: preservation. In this *Feature*, the *IAQ*'s Tauttunnguaqti Napatsi Folger discusses both contemporary works of art that depict memories of childhood and works by legacy artists whose pieces have been studied and valued for decades. From the use of syllabic text in prints and drawings to the prevalence of contemporary artists honouring their grandparents and Elders through childhood memory art, these pieces demonstrate how Inuit art *is* Inuit history.

PREVIOUS
Elisapee Ishulutaq
—
Children Playing Inside Igloo
2014
Sugarlift, etching and aquatint
134.6 × 241.3 cm
COURTESY FEHELEY FINE ARTS
© THE ARTIST

ABOVE
Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik
—
The Bay
1982–5
Coloured pencil
COURTESY INUIT ART FOUNDATION
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE
Josephina Kalleo
—
Festive Dress (Ollosiutut/Uvlosiuktut)
1980
Felt pen
20.5 × 25.7 cm
COURTESY THE ROOMS PROVINCIAL ART GALLERY
© THE ARTIST

I have read a lot about Inuit art over the years, and two phrases always catch my eye as both an editor and a thinker: "Their work depicts traditional life on the land" and "I wanted to record the old ways." At its root, the idea of "traditional life" implies that Inuit culture is static, antiquated or exists only in the past. But this is untrue. It is essential to recognize that Inuit have always had to be adaptable due to the inherent nature and changeability of our environment. One of the major changes Inuit experienced in the twentieth century was the establishment of permanent settlements and the imposition of a foreign political body, which—although first contact occurred centuries earlier—only began in earnest in the more isolated areas of the Canadian North in the early 1900s.

With that in mind, it's easy to reframe how "early" Inuit art and artists—those creating from the 1940s to 1960s—are viewed if you take a step back and look at both Inuit and global cultural and political shifts happening at that time.

With the collapse of the white fox fur trade in the 1930s, Inuit were in need of new income streams to supplement the trade goods, including non-perishable foods, that they had come to rely on due to overhunting and fishing by Europeans over the previous two centuries.[2] Following the collapse of the British Empire as a global superpower—most historians agree that by the end of World War II, Britain was no longer a hegemon—the citizenry of the United Kingdom was trying to establish a new national identity. Concurrently, Inuit lives were being drastically changed by the colonial government. This was the period when memory art first began to appear on a significant scale. To outsiders, Inuit artists were creating works about one of the last "unexplored" regions of the earth. During this time, British cultural connoisseurs and their North American expats, critical of the waning Empire, were driving Western cultural aesthetics at the height of the Primitivism movement, an aesthetic idealization of so-called primitive societies and their moral superiority to the now-corrupt value systems of "civilized" societies like those in Europe.

Inuit artworks were seen by White consumers as a refreshing departure from the nationalistic European art. But for Inuit, creating art—even as rigidly controlled as it was by the Hudson's Bay Company, the Canadian Eskimo Arts Council and other non-Inuit players—was one of the last forms of free cultural expression. Canada had already banned important Indigenous practices like the potlatch in the Pacific Northwest First Nations communities, and Christianity had been firmly implanted into Inuit society (at least on the face of it) by the mid-twentieth century, so art felt like the last chance for cultural preservation in a world that was rapidly coming under colonial control in every aspect of life. Children were abused at school if they spoke Inuktut, so cultures that historically relied on oral traditions had to pivot quickly to remember and make sure future generations remembered, too.

In his introduction to *Qikaaluktut: Images of Inuit Life* (1986), David F. Pelly recalls that Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik—the artist who illustrated the book and approached Pelly to write it—once told him, "Even my own children don't know how we lived when I was young."[3]

One of many drawings Tulurialik made about her childhood memories depicts visiting the Hudson's Bay post when she was a child during the pre-settlement days. In this image, titled *The Bay* (1982–5), the focus is not on a single person but on a busy scene that reflects as much as the artist could remember about what life was like before she and her family settled permanently in Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), NU. This was the first time I saw a reference to "the old ways" from an Inuit artist. Tulurialik wrote in her introduction

to the book, "For a long time I have wanted to combine stories with my drawings so people down south—and my own children—could understand the scenes from our old ways."[4] You see the addition of text in many drawings from the period between the 1950s and the 1980s across the Arctic.

Artists like Peter Pitseolak (1902–1973), Kananginak Pootoogook, RCA (1935–2010), Tivi Etok (1929–2025), Josephina Kalleo (1920–1993) and many others also depicted scenes from their childhoods, incorporating descriptive text into their images and sometimes even sculptures. Kalleo, for example, made a number of drawings with similar subject matter to those in Tulurialik and Pelly's book, and in her piece *Festive Dress (Ollosiutut/Uvlosiuktut)* (1980) she wrote text descriptors under the different depictions of dress styles. This practice of including descriptive text was of particular importance for Nunatsiavut artists like Kalleo, who had been consistently exposed to European peoples and culture for the longest of all Inuit groups in Canada, yet were uniquely excluded from art spaces in the Canadian art context for decades due to the Newfoundland government's staunch refusal to hand over jurisdiction of Indigenous Peoples to the federal government following its 1949 decision to join the Confederation.[5] When considering the wider cultural context in which Inuit artists were operating, it's clear that they were creating art as historical records. Artmaking was essential in the fight against total assimilation into Western culture.

While contemporary Inuit artists have more freedom to express themselves, there is still a good deal of focus on childhood memory art. Nunatsiavummiuk sculptor Gilbert Hay expressed it succinctly in a 1989 interview: "You ask why Inuit artists are producing 'memory art,' rather than social commentary," he said. "It's because of fear. . . . We were and still are trying to document our own history."[6] Even in 1989, Inuit artists were still very much at the mercy of colonial pressure. For many contemporary Inuit artists, the intent has remained the same—it is our circumstances that have changed. This is, in part, due to how close we still are to the trauma that we and our relatives have experienced over the last century. Shuvinai Ashoona's 2011 coloured pencil drawing, *Carrying Suicidal People*, is a strong and layered example of that. The image shows two Inuit carrying the limp bodies of loved ones. Ashoona is known for remaining ambiguous about the meaning of her work, and this piece is no exception. While the bodies of the people being carried are limp, you can interpret them as either dead or as people who are overwhelmed by depression or other debilitating mental health issues. I see this piece as a representation of the lasting impacts of suicide in the lives of the Inuit who have experienced the loss of loved ones to suicide. If you take the title of this piece into account, you can link the idea of "carrying" to holding the weight of grief after losing someone to suicide. It is something that has affected Inuit in every northern community, with the rates of suicide in Inuit communities estimated to be between five and twenty-five times higher than the rest of Canada.[7] While reasons for suicide are very personal and circumstantial, instances of suicide in Indigenous communities are deeply rooted in the effects of colonialism and intergenerational trauma. It's a sobering reminder that for many Indigenous people, childhood memories are not all games and nostalgia.

If we look at how Inuit art is perceived—particularly legacy artworks—it can often be misinterpreted as depictions of the time period in which the artist was working. But when you read quotes or watch films of the artists speaking about their art, it becomes clear that many of the scenes expressed in early Inuit prints, sculptures and drawings are either memories of "the old ways" they have from childhood or from childhood memories of stories their grandparents would tell them. Look at *Nanook of the North* as an example, a 1922 film ostensibly made as a documentary that falsely depicted Inuit life as culturally static and frozen in time. In his portrayal of the film's titular character Nanook, Allakariallak was told to use spears and "traditional" hunting tools, despite Inuit having access to and regular use of modern technology such as rifles and other tools by this time. Many Inuit still lived primarily subsistence lifestyles, travelling through their lands to follow food sources for hunting, but contact, colonization and exchanges of knowledge and goods had been established for several generations before before the artists—who began making artwork for a global audience in the 1950s—were even born.

For some contemporary Inuit artists, memory art serves a slightly different purpose. Although it still plays an important role as a historical record, the mediums and messages are often more subversive. Many Inuit artists who are living and working today grew up either fully or mostly immersed in Western culture. Through radio, television and film programming and settled community life, we were even more removed from the old ways than our parents and grandparents, so to us, our Elders were the core culture keepers and teachers. They represented and continue to represent our connection to our heritage, so the nostalgia Inuit express in artworks like Darcie Bernhardt's series of paintings of their Nanuk and Nungki, Eldred Allen's

OPPOSITE
Peter Pitseolak
—
Untitled
1967–73
Graphite, coloured pencil and felt pen
50.7 × 65.5 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION
DORSET FINE ARTS
COURTESY MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION
© THE ARTIST

ABOVE
Shuvinai Ashoona
—
Carrying Suicidal People
2011
Coloured pencil and ink
128.3 × 61 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION
DORSET FINE ARTS
COURTESTY FEHELEY FINE ARTS
© THE ARTIST

RIGHT
Thomassie Kasudluak
—
Father Preparing Young Child for Summer Trek
1987
Stone, sealskin, leather and sinew
17.1 × 12.7 × 5.7 cm
COURTESY FIRST ARTS
© THE ARTIST

2021 *Resemblance* photography exhibition, and Megan Kyak-Monteith's animated short *Large Feast on a Bed of Cardboard* (2019) all explore the ties we have to our families, be they through the sharing of food, the subtle and nurturing teaching of skills, the transmission of Inuktut or the deep ache of losing it. Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016), celebrated as a revolutionary Inuk artist in her own right, was also famously the daughter and granddaughter of artists Napachie Pootoogook (1938–2002) and Pitseolak Ashoona, CM, RCA (c. 1904–1983). Her work was deeply influenced by her iconic artist family members, and while much of her work focused on contemporary life in Kinngait, NU, she also continuously depicted memories of her grandmother. Pieces like *Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on the Bed* (2006) and *Composition (Pitseolak Ashoona)* (2003–04) are just two of multiple pieces dedicated to capturing these intimate yet formative moments. In the former, Ashoona is shown drawing in bed; in the latter, she is drawn more like a portrait or bust from the shoulders up. But in both, Pootoogook makes sure to include her anaanatsiaq's tools: a fineliner pen, a pencil and an eraser.

At the crux of so much Inuit storytelling is memory—remembering the past and telling stories that guide generations. The goal of many Inuit artists, both legacy and contemporary, was and is to preserve the elements of a rapidly changing way of life. My wish for Inuit artists today is for them to embrace their own intent and consider the impact of their work, with the knowledge that humans have a penchant for relating to the world in metaphors that relate to our own experiences. Make art that challenges audiences to break away from imposed Western conceptions of Inuit stories. My favourite poet, Wallace Stevens, wrote in his poem "Nuances of a Theme by Williams" about the sun: "Lend no part to any humanity that suffuses // you in its own light. // Be not chimera of morning, // Half-man, half-star."[8] I love to think about memory art with that attitude, to appreciate it not as a relic or idyllic remembrance of a simpler time, but as artwork that has shed a burdensome cloak of Western ideation. Inuit art has its own intentions. The most exciting part about it—even beloved legacy favourites from the early and mid-twentieth century—is that Inuit are now freer to share those intentions and breathe new life and depth into how the world perceives our work.

—

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NOTES

1 Nancy Campbell, *Annie Pootoogook: Cutting Ice* ᐊᐃᓂ ᓴᑐᒍᒃ: ᑕᑯᑎᑭᓴᑎᑎᓵᖅᑎᑦ. (Goose Lane Editions, 2017), 34.
2 Norman Vorano, "Creators: Negotiating the Art World for Over 50 Years," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Fall/Winter 2004: 11.
3 Ruth Annaqtuusi Tulurialik, quoted in David F. Pelly, *Qikaaluktut: Images of Inuit Life* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 3.
4 Ibid., 2.
5 Dr. Heather Igloliorte, *Sakkijajuk*. (Goose Lane Editions, 2017), 8.
6 Gilbert Hay, quoted in "Speaking for Themselves," *Inuit Art Quarterly*, Spring 1990: 11.
7 Samuel Wat, "Safe spaces across Inuit Nunangat a must in suicide prevention, advocates say," *CBC News*, August 8, 2025, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/safe-spaces-inuit-nunangat-suicide-prevention-1.7603514.
8 Wallace Stevens, "Nuances of a Theme by Williams," *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 39.

OPPOSITE (TOP)
Darcie Bernhardt
—
Nanuk and Nanogak
2018
Oil
121.9 × 152.4 cm
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE (MIDDLE)
Megan Kyak-Monteith
—
Large Feast on a Bed of Cardboard (still)
2019
Animation
56 sec
© THE ARTIST

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM)
Eldred Allen
—
Left to right: *Henry John Palliser*; *Greta Michelin*; *John Michelin*; *Mary McLean*
2021
Photographs
© THE ARTIST

ABOVE
Annie Pootoogook
—
Pitseolak Drawing with Two Girls on the Bed
2006
Coloured pencil and ink
51 × 66 cm
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION DORSET FINE ARTS COURTESTY FEHELEY FINE ARTS
© THE ARTIST

BELOW
Janet Nungnik
—
Normal Day
2005
Wool felt, embroidery floss and beadwork on wool duffle
73.7 × 142.2 cm
COURTESY MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION
© THE ARTIST

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COMPOSITION (MUSKOX BY THE WATER), ca. 1995, Coloured pencil, 22 1/4 x 30 in.

Abraham Anghik Ruben
Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq

CURATED BY HEATHER CAMPBELL WITH DARLENE COWARD WIGHT
MAY 24, 2025–MAY 31, 2026
WINNIPEG, MB

BELOW
Installation views of *Abraham Anghik Ruben*, 2025
COURTESY WAG-QAUMAJUQ
PHOTO DAISY WU

OPPOSITE (LEFT)
Abraham Anghik Ruben — *Becoming the Goddess of the Sea*
2025
Italian marble
182.5 × 67.5 × 72.0 cm
COURTESY WAG-QAUMAJUQ
PHOTO LIANED MARCOLETA
ALL © THE ARTIST

This retrospective solo exhibition of Inuvialuk artist Abraham Anghik Ruben, OC, features over one hundred works, including sculptures and paintings produced from 1975 to 2025.

Guest curated by Heather Campbell at the Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq (WAG-Qaumajuq), *Abraham Anghik Ruben* features works that represent important milestones in Ruben's career—from displacement and disconnection in the North to reclaiming his culture to climate change. The exhibition also focuses on his deep interest in Inuit and Viking history and culture and their similarities, particularly the roles of shamans.

To create a unique, fulsome experience, Campbell integrated recordings of Ruben speaking about his work. Exhibition visitors can use a QR code to listen to him as they walk through the exhibition, an especially important element given the history of Inuit artists not always having the opportunity to share their voices.

Here, Campbell gives us a behind-the-scenes look into the making of this show.

OPPOSITE (RIGHT TOP)
Dreams of Valhalla
2013
Brazilian steatite
48.0 × 115.5 × 25.5 cm
COURTESY KIPLING GALLERY
PHOTO DANIEL DABROWSKI

OPPOSITE (RIGHT BOTTOM)
Song for Greenland
2023
Acrylic
122 × 243.8 cm
COURTESY KIPLING GALLERY
PHOTO DANIEL DABROWSKI

What are some of the central themes in the show? There are these two general themes of Inuit culture and Viking culture and how they've overlapped. So it was a matter of finding those common elements. These became the sub-themes of Beginnings, Masks, Shapeshifters, Sacred Creatures, Life-givers, Migration and A New Quest. **How was your experience working with the artist?** Sitting down with Ruben and having him talk about each of the pieces, then going into the exhibition space in December was amazing. Just getting to hear each of the stories that he had for the pieces was incredibly helpful. **What was the first work you selected for this exhibition?** I knew that I wanted a large whale bone piece that the WAG-Qaumajuq already owns. I wanted that front and centre when you went into the exhibition. It's the foundational piece that presents Ruben's culture. That's where I think he gets his strength and his storytelling from—memories and the ancient past.

What were the challenges you faced? It was a bit of a challenge because it was 50 years of sculpture. It was also a challenge because most of [the curating] was done virtually. I originally thought that it wouldn't be as much of a challenge as it was working remotely, but we managed to make it work somehow. **How did the exhibition space influence your planning?** The space can be a challenge because all of the walls are curved, and there is one part that's partially covered by the gallery space above it. So we knew that there would be empty space higher up in that room. That's how we came up with the idea of using printed banners as well as utilizing the wall dividers. It's fun to have that much space, but it does have its own challenges too. **If you could have this as a travelling show, where would you want it to go next?** We would have to go to the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, of course! I think it would be great if Ruben's family, friends and community could see it and recognize their own stories in his work. And then if it could go across Inuit Nunangat after that, it'd be incredible. **What do you hope people come away with after seeing this exhibition?** I hope that they understand just how brilliant Ruben is and how contemporary and global he is, and that there are so many Inuit today who are global citizens. He's bringing Inuit art into the future. He's inspiring all of us—younger generations and youth that are coming up—and giving us the inspiration to look outside our culture as well, if that's what we want to do. **If you had to summarize this show in three words, what would they be?** Awe-inspiring, intriguing, aspirational. **If this show had a soundtrack, what album would it be?** I would love to see a collaboration between Tanya Tagaq, CM, and the Paulatuk Moonlight Drummers and Dancers. Her haunting sort of wolf cries and that guttural deep-within-you kind of sound, along with that steady beat of the drummers, would be a great soundtrack.

Becoming the Goddess of the Sea (2025)

This Nuliajuk piece was created for this exhibition. I think choosing this white stone—which is reminiscent of Greek marble statues of gods and goddesses—and having an Inuit goddess being represented in that way, in that material and at that scale is very, very powerful. Ruben describes it as the exact moment when Nuliajuk is sinking after having her fingers cut off, and she's in mid-transition from a woman to a goddess.

Dreams of Valhalla (2013)

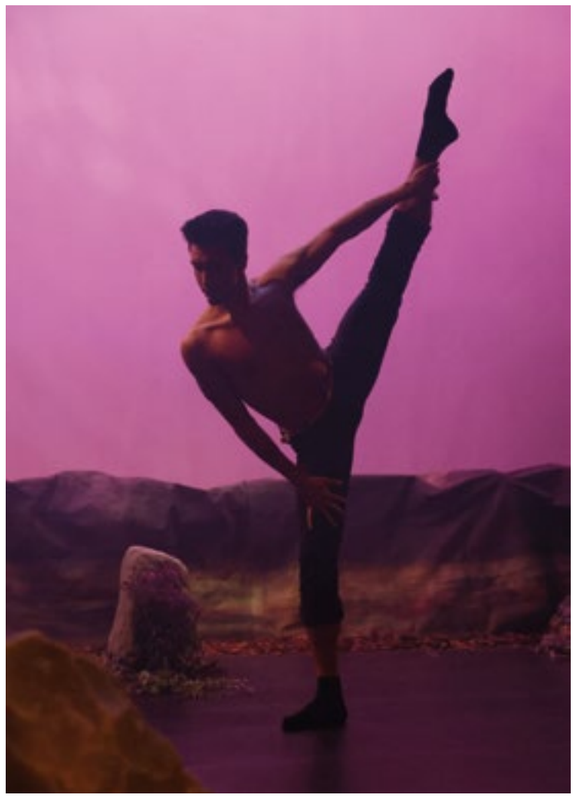
You can see that Ruben really enjoyed having new iconography to play with while using his technical carving abilities. If you look at the piece, it is a Viking boat with figures inside of it. Both sides of the boat have intricately carved, sinuous patterns interwoven. You can see directly from one side through to the other, and [the boat is] being held up by other creatures. I was just awestruck by his technical ability. It's unbelievable, astonishing.

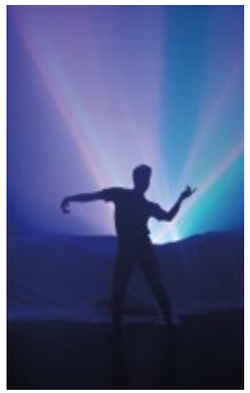
Song for Greenland (2023)

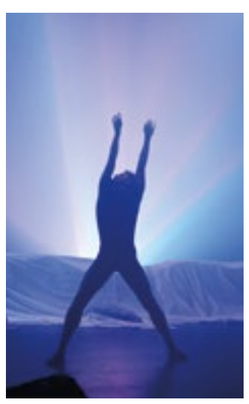
Ruben's paintings are almost like graffiti. This one, *Song for Greenland* (2023), has a turquoise-blue border and a very colourful centre with all of these vibrant colours flowing into one another, but you're seeing images and scenes within this intertwining pool of shapes. You stand in front of it, and you feel as if you could study it for hours and never tire of it. It's so inspiring to know that after working for 50-plus years he's still trying new things.

Simik Komaksiutiksak

by Stefan Chua



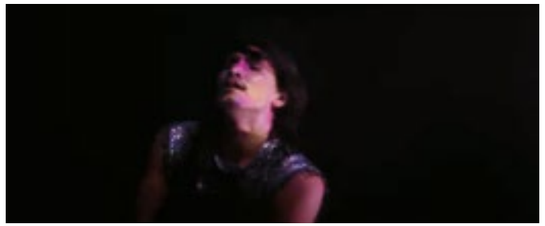




When I spoke with Simik Komaksiutiksak, I noticed there was a feeling of measured poise—something you might expect from an acclaimed professional dancer. At times, it gave way to earnestness: "Something that was always there for me was contemporary dance . . . being able to express myself without words, and being able to use my body that way."[1]

Born in Kangiqliniq (Rankin Inlet), NU, Komaksiutiksak has carried this philosophy of dance as a grounding, restorative act throughout their lifelong practice. From once weekly classes in Ottawa, ON, to developing their career in Montreal, QC, Komaksiutiksak has found a home alongside other dancers and artists in the city's thriving creative community. Among their mentors are Inuk performing artist Sylvia Cloutier, co-founder of the Inuit performing arts company Aqsarniit; Barbara Kaneratonni Diabo, the award-winning Kanien'kehá:ka choreographer and performer; and Victoria May, Red River Métis-Michif dancer and founder of the Watershed Dance Program. "It's [all] definitely thanks to these women in the dance industry," Komaksiutiksak gushes.

Since arriving in Montreal in 2021, Komaksiutiksak has added almost as many titles as mentors to their name. They are often billed as a contemporary dancer, a circus artist, a choreographer, a model. Earlier this year, Komaksiutiksak debuted their first show, *Anxiety*—which parses their lived experience as a queer Inuk alongside those of other dancers in a collaborative and nontraditional piece—receiving praise as a new director. When I peeked at their Instagram, I saw recent images of a handcrafted sealskin and beaded qaurutik and a sealskin necklace, suggesting that



"jewellery maker" could be added to their list of titles too.

I find Komaksiutiksak is perhaps best understood in their performances. Take, for example, the music video for Elisapie's "Qimatsilunga (I Want to Break Free)" (2023), in which Komaksiutiksak is a central figure. In the piece, Komaksiutiksak is framed alone; at first, only a single warm light illuminates their dark room. When the performance opens, Komaksiutiksak's left arm gently reaches out—cloaked in a dark hooded jacket, their face remains blurred. In the next scenes, their upper body rolls to one side before they begin spinning, as their arched back softly straightens to fullness—like a painful memory whirling around the body, climbing to its peak.

Then, a defiant shaking of their head, a twisting hop and finally, a leap—Komaksiutiksak's legs spin their body over, knees lifting as their arms extend up toward the sky. When the piece ends, Komaksiutiksak unzips their jacket to reveal a bright, bedazzled garment and faces outward, their expression of relief now legible in the newly vibrant and multicoloured light. There is a transformative power at work when Komaksiutiksak moves on screen, which they explore even further on stage in *Anxiety*. If trauma is a visceral memory that stays and lives within our bodies, then Komaksiutiksak imagines that healing can be a physical exercise too.

Less frequently mentioned, Komaksiutiksak is also a dance teacher who teaches in the North and South. "I teach youth who have also been through very hard times, who also struggle with generational trauma . . . I know some of the things that they're going through." Currently, Komaksiutiksak teaches every Saturday in May's Watershed Dance Program, a dance camp for Indigenous youth in Montreal. Their class is currently working toward a fall show, in which they will perform choreography from *Anxiety*. Yet Komaksiutiksak seems more enlivened by their students' work than the accolades of legacy: "Just teaching them throughout the weeks, to see them less shy, then at the end when we all do the choreography."

When I ask Komaksiutiksak what they'd like audiences to take away from *Anxiety*, their earnestness breaks through that air of poise once again: "I just wanted everyone to feel a little more beautiful leaving the piece." Leaving our conversation, I can't help feeling a little more beautiful myself.

—

Stefan Chua is a writer based in Vancouver, BC.

This Profile *was made possible through support from RBC Emerging Artists.*

OPPOSITE
Simik Komaksiutiksak featured in the APTN television series *PULSE*, 2022
COURTESY NISH MEDIA
PHOTO RANDY KELLY

ABOVE
Stills from **Elisapie's** "Qimatsilunga (I Want to Break Free)" featuring **Simik Komaksiutiksak** dancing, 2023

LEFT
Simik Komaksiutiksak
—
Anxiety
2025
Dance performance
45 min
COURTESY MONTRÉAL, ARTS INTERCULTURELS
PHOTO AURORA TOROK
© THE ARTIST

NOTES

[1] All quotes Simik Komaksiutiksak, interview with Stefan Chua, July 2025.

Serendipity Sound
Linda Infante Lyons

From my home in the Kachemak Bay region of Alaska, I look out across a span of glaciers. These sparkling ice giants have carved the contours of my homelands over a deep timescale, fjords that are the spawning grounds for our salmon, the terminal moraine that holds the shape of the Homer Spit, mountain valleys and cirques. Glaciers have dominated the backdrop of this region for about twenty thousand years. If we know how to read them, the elements of this place tell its history: glacially deposited rocks hold the memory of being moved across land; volcanic dust and pollen spores trapped in the ice from a centuries-old explosion hold the memory of former climates. Glaciers are always recording, always remembering. The United Nations has designated 2025 as the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, so now is a good time to remember our fragile and changing environments.

Serendipity Sound (2018), painted by Alutiiq visual artist Linda Infante Lyons, depicts a glacier spilling into a lake. Her paintings are full of vivid colours, and this one is no exception, seeming to glow as the ice reflects the orange and pink hues of the sky. At the bottom of the painting, the teal meltwater streams across a purple-hued mudflat. To paint a glacier is to commit to remembering it. This painting sparks visceral memories of walking the beaches in front of Kachemak Bay glaciers. I can imagine standing here and feeling a cool wind coming off the mountain. "Remember me," says the glacier as it carves out the valleys and sculpts the bay.

Glaciers hold human memories too. I don't remember the first time I hiked to Grewingk Glacier in Kachemak Bay, but I have made countless visits and each time I see the ice sheet, it brings up memories of previous visits. My body knows the landscape, from the trail that winds its way from where we dock our boat to the spot where we arrive at the edge of the lake. I know the wild kin that reside here: the tern, bear, otter and seal. I know the sounds of this place too—creaking ice, lapping waters and gentle winds.

Cikusinaq is the Koniag Alutiiq word for glacier, from the root word ciku (ice). Our ancestors lived their lives in the shadow of these glaciers for more than eight thousand years. Sometimes we find remnants of their lives on the beach when we are hiking—a net sinker, an ulu. I like to imagine how our landscapes have changed since people have lived here. Perhaps the ice sheets at that time covered the entirety of the mountain range rather than fitting between two peaks, such as the one in Lyons's painting.

Two hundred years from now, our descendants may see the Kenai Mountains without glacier fields. I leave you with this painted memory of our glacial landscapes.

NADIA JACKINSKY-SETHI
Guest Editor

Linda Infante Lyons
—
Serendipity Sound
2018
Oil
61 × 76.2 cm
© THE ARTIST

Crying Over Spilt Tea

curated by
Grace Braniff

Mary Pudlat ᒥᐅᓇ ᐳᓪᓚᑦ (Canadian (Kinngait ᐃᑦ), 1923–2001). *Tiliutuk (Making Tea)* (detail), 1991

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Aylan Couchie

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Image Credit: Aylan Couchie (Anishnaabe), *maashi goon (snow blowing hard)*, 2020, Still from video, 5:28min

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