



A Piece of Me



A Piece of Me

UBC Museum of Anthropology Pacific Northwest Sourcebook Series

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Pamela Brown, Editor and Curator, *A Piece of Me* Exhibition and Sourcebook
Revised in 2011 in collaboration with the Overly Creative Minds Program (OCM) from Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA)

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A Piece of Me

A collaboration with the Overly Creative Minds Program (OCM)
of the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), 2011.
Produced by Pam Brown, MOA Curator, Pacific Northwest.

A Piece of Me

An exhibition of artworks by urban aboriginal youth in the
Native Youth Program and Overly Creative Minds Program

A Piece of Me explores the diverse ways that personal identity and transformation are expressed by urban aboriginal youth. This exhibit is the result of a collaboration between participants in the Native Youth Program (NYP) at the UBC Museum of Anthropology (MOA) and the Overly Creative Minds Program (OCM) at the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA).

Students selected an object that inspired them from MOA's collection. They then transformed this inspiration into their own artwork, reflecting their personal identity. The resulting work reveals the diverse identities the students have carved out for themselves, and the strength they have gained in the process.



Bottom left: Tsilhqot'in cradle, made by Mrs. Tommy Jeff.
Museum of Anthropology A8815.

Jaime Attig-Blankinship

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

2011

I am from the Nlaka'pamux, Secwepemc, Nez Perce and Muskoday Cree Nations. I am a 16-year-old secondary student from Merritt, BC. I am very proud to be who I am and I always will be.

The piece I chose as inspiration from the Museum of Anthropology collection is a Tsilhqot'in baby cradle (A8815). The Tsilhqot'in and my community both carried our babies in cradles, a tradition that some women still follow. My mother carried me in a baby cradle made by my aunt.



Top right: Inuit figure.
Museum of Anthropology Na1083.

Kizzy Black

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

2011

I grew up in Vancouver, and my ancestry is Cree, Dene, Ojibwa and Inuit. I chose to do a painting of a small Inuit figure (Na1083). I wanted to interpret this piece as something that would catch the eyes of children, to interest more Native children in their culture.

I exaggerated the sculpture to represent that despite having such a large culture, so many of us know only a little bit of it.



Left: Thunderbird leggings, mask and cape made by Calvin Hunt, 1982.
Kwakwaka'wakw: Kwagu'l. Museum of Anthropology 863/1-4.

Brian Charlie

Untitled

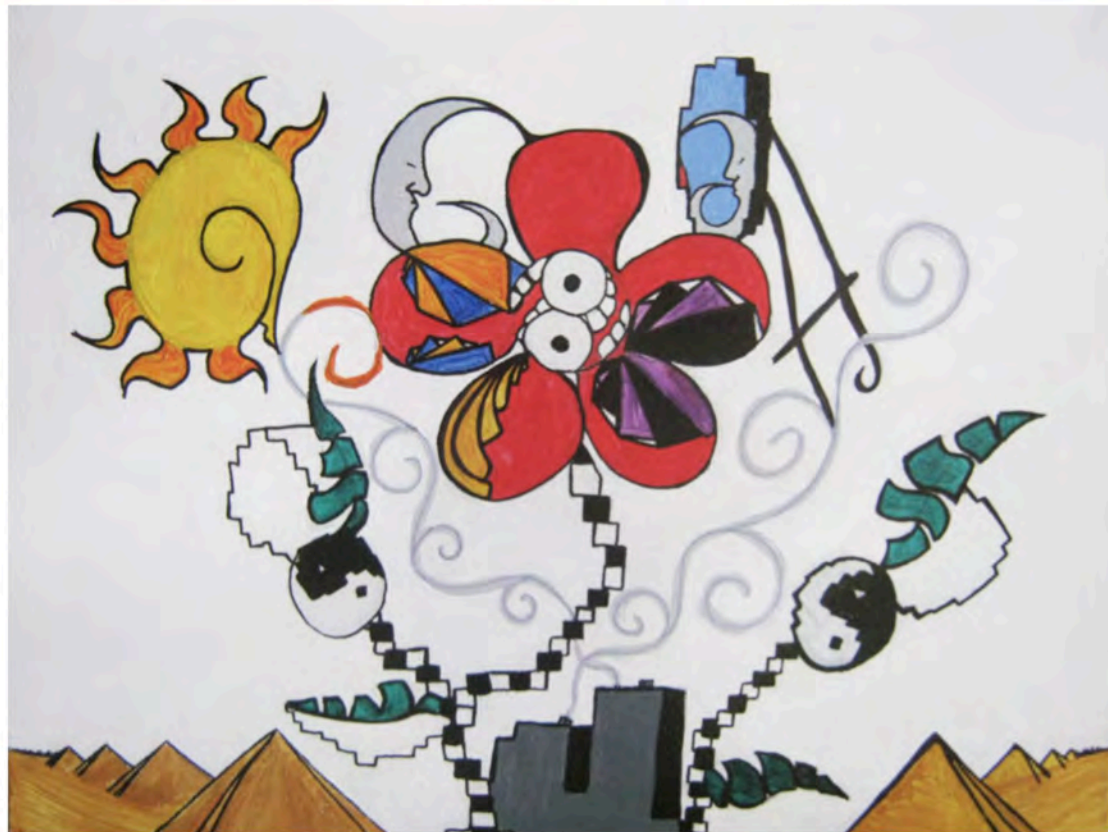
Acrylic on canvas

2011

I am from the Squamish Nation. I am 18 years old, and graduated from high school recently in Vancouver. I chose to paint the Thunderbird Costume (863/1-4), though in our culture we call it regalia. The Thunderbird was my inspiration because it represents my father's side of the family.

In my painting, I want to show the power, freedom, and movement in the piece that I have interpreted. I incorporated angling throughout the painting to encourage people to look at it from their own perspective.

The most challenging aspect for me was the size of the canvas and painting of the details. I chose to do this painting to challenge myself, and am proud to have accomplished something that means so much to my father and me.



Top right: Dene Moose-hair tufting, 1992.
Museum of Anthropology 1785/1.

Elvis Chevrefils

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

Collaboration with Joan Williams, 2011

My heritage is Algonquin, and my nationality is French, Native, Filipino and Spanish. I am 20 years old and currently a student at the Vancouver Community College. I graduated from Windermere Secondary School last year, where I completed a program called Ace-It.

The artwork (1785/1) that I chose as inspiration from the MOA collection inspired me because of its use of flowers: flowers are loved by everyone, and can be given as gifts to family members and friends.



Bottom left: I Am Always Thinking About the Animals, by Simon Tookoome, 1973.
Inuit. Museum of Anthropology Na 1494.

Francine Cunningham

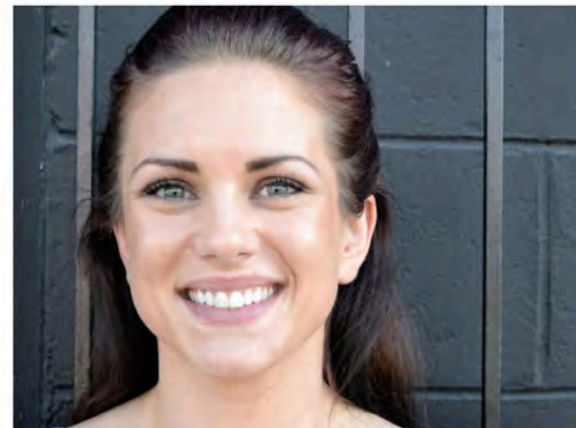
Trinity

Acrylic on canvas

2011

I am a student at the University of British Columbia entering a two year M.F.A program with a focus on Creative Writing. The piece that struck me the most was *I am always thinking about the animals* (Na1494) that was on display in the Museum of Anthropology exhibit, *Faces and Voices of the Inuit Art Market*. I loved the bold colours, shape and the simple lines of the piece. My work always flows and blends well so I was attracted to this piece because it was different than what I am used to creating.

I called my piece *Trinity* because it represents the creator, the earth, and me. The rules of three are repeated visually through the piece to reinforce this idea. I also like playing with the idea of the holy trinity but giving it an Aboriginal slant.



Bottom left: The Owl by Kenojuak Ashevak, 1969.
Inuit. Museum of Anthropology Na 753.

Carly Dickinson

Untitled

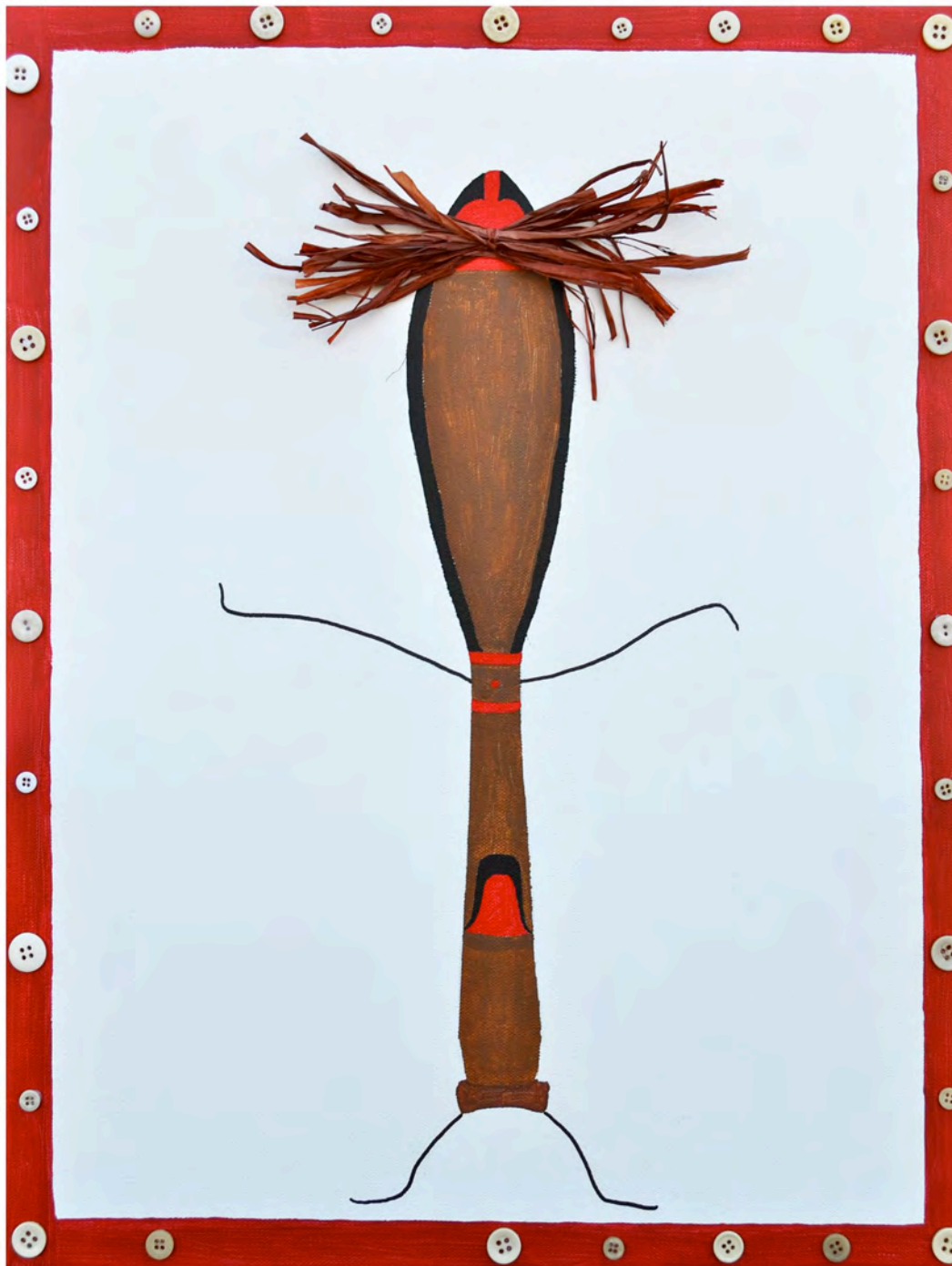
Acrylic, buttons, and twine on canvas

2011

First and foremost, I am the mother of a two-year-old little girl. While working with the Native Youth Program at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA), I was inspired by the Japanese Inuit print *The Owl* (Na753), by Kenojuak Ashevak, that was on display at MOA in the exhibition *Faces and Voices of the Inuit Art Market* (June 19 to September 25, 2011). This image of the owl reminds me of my daughter, with her love for the night, her big bright eyes, and her observant nature.

The Owl also inspired me to explore myself creatively. In this print, I see a beautiful creation born of two different cultures coming together, something that I value greatly. To me, this owl represents important parts of my identity as a mother and as a lover of art and Japanese culture. In my own owl artwork, I have incorporated these inspirations, choosing to work with a variety of media and cultural influences.

I have had the privilege of working with the amazing youth in the Overly Creative Minds program through my work with the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) here in Vancouver, and with MOA's Native Youth Program.



Top right: Paddle made by Charlie H. Dudoward, 1966.
Tsimshian. Museum of Anthropology 2713/31.

Robin R. R. Gray

Thriving

Acrylic, straw, buttons, and permanent marker on canvas

2011

Tansi, my name is Robin R. R. Gray and I am a Tsimshian and Mikisew Cree First Nations woman. I was born and raised in Vancouver, but I now live in the U.S.A. I am a PhD student in socio-cultural anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. My research areas include community-based participatory research, pedagogy and power, Native youth, decolonization, the Indian Residential School System, and intergenerational effects.

For this project, I was encouraged by the youth at the Native Youth Program and Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) to explore my artistic abilities for the first time. I decided to choose a contemporary Tsimshian paddle. I was compelled to reinterpret this piece in relation to my identity because of the symbolism of the paddle in my life and in the lives of so many Indigenous Peoples. In my work, I have found it useful to make a distinction between what it means to survive and what it means to thrive by using a canoe and paddle metaphor.

Survival is the equivalent of just keeping your head above water, struggling to stay alive. However, when we are thriving, it is the equivalent of having the vision, skills, and knowledge to build our own canoes so that we can paddle on water with grace. The canoe represents stability and space for community; it represents what it means to flourish rather than to struggle.

My piece is titled *Thriving*. I turned the paddle into a person to honour those people in our lives who demonstrate what it means to thrive. I believe that with a strong cultural foundation, our youth can flourish—especially in an urban setting where we are typically outside of our ancestral homelands.



Top right Paddle made by Daniel Houstie.
Heiltsuk. Museum of Anthropology 1768/103.

Nigel Grenier

Recurrent tide

Acrylic on canvas

2011

My traditional name is Waydetai from the house of Hagbegwatku. I belong to the Gitksan and Cree nations. I am 18 years old, and just graduated from high school. This is my first year in the Native Youth Program, and next year I will study Arts at UBC.

My project is based on a Heiltsuk paddle (1768/103) carved and painted by Daniel Houstie. The central design is an eagle, with a large salmon head incorporated into the wing. I chose this particular object because of the beauty of its design and the use of colour. I wanted to incorporate a paddle because I am a rower, and my connection to the ocean has shaped my identity in an undeniable and inalterable way.

I express this by integrating poetry into my painting. I covered part of my face with the design of a traditional painted paddle to symbolize that the very personal part of my identity that the ocean has formed is also a traditional one that my ancestors shared in their great canoes. On either side of me, the ocean has a different quality to depict its dynamic nature. Finally, I used the Vancouver skyline as my backdrop since it is my home.



Bottom left: Bentwood box made by Captain Richard Carpenter.
Heiltsuk. Museum of Anthropology 2779/1 a-b.

Jayleen Humchitt

Bentwood box

Acrylic and feathers on canvas

2011

I am 16 years old, and in grade 10. I love to create art in any form, and I am a drummer in a band called Smudge. I chose the bentwood box (2779/1 a-b) by Heiltsuk artist Captain Richard Carpenter as inspiration for my painting because my father is from the Heiltsuk Nation. I included wolf designs on the box to represent my mother's clan, and the feather to represent my father's clan, the Eagle Clan.



Left: Nisga'a totem pole.
Museum of Anthropology A8212.

Dustin McGladrey

Piece of me

Acrylic on canvas

2011

My art represents my own reality, but also what is interpreted by the viewer, through the eyes of another. I see these unique interpretations as a representation of our individuality.

My piece was inspired by a traditional Nisga'a totem pole (A8212), carved from the wood of the Tree of Life. This particular totem features a man falling from the sky, a bird-like creature, and a woman holding a child. What most intrigued me was the man falling from the sky: the significance this man must have held for the Nisga'a people, and what might have led them to believe that he had come from the sky.

The landscape, sky, figures, and stars in my painting come together to represent the dream world that emerged when I first drew inspiration from the totem. The body on the top right is a representation of the man falling from the sky, onto the dark side of the earth, and into a sea of stars. The figure at the bottom of the painting is the image of the woman holding her child - a part of the landscape. The bird, flying over the landscape, represents my own natural connection with my artwork.



Top right: Bracelet by Robert Davidson, 1967.
Haida. Museum of Anthropology 2512/3.

Vanessa Parnell

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

2011

I'm a 15-year-old secondary school student from the Haida, Tsimshian and Nisga'a Nations. I come from the Yahgu7laanas clan in Haida Gwaii.

My project is based on a dogfish (shark) bracelet (2512/3) made by Haida artist Robert Davidson.

In my painting, a couple of gold bracelets sit on a vanity dresser with some makeup and a pearl necklace. I painted this because I wanted to incorporate traditional Aboriginal culture with contemporary aesthetics and setting. I believe that letting people know that although culture is a huge part of my life and is very important to me it's not who I am completely. I'm showing that I have many different sides to my identity.

The Robert Davidson piece was important to my cultural identity because the dogfish is one of the crests of the Yahgu7laanas clan. I also perform the shark dance in the Rainbow Creek dance group. Another reason I decided to place the bracelets on a vanity dresser is because the mirror always reminds me of my younger sister: she loved theatre and loved to act and, if you ask me, she was a bit of a drama queen sometimes! I used green and purple acrylic paint to create this piece because green and purple are two of my favourite colours.



Top right: Shaman Revealed, by Ningeokuluk Teevee, 2007. Inuit. Reproduced courtesy of Dorset Fine Arts.

Diamond Point

Emerging Strength

Acrylic and permanent marker on canvas

2011

I come from the Musqueam Nation here in Vancouver, and am currently entering my final year of high school. I've been working with the Native Youth Program at the Museum of Anthropology for three years now.

I chose *Shaman Revealed* by Ningeokuluk Teevee, an Inuit print in the *Inuit Prints: Japanese Inspiration* exhibit that was at MOA, as inspiration for my piece. This print shows an Inuit person unzipping themselves to reveal a wolf emerging from within. This piece instantly caught my attention because it was an interesting idea to play around with and make my own. As soon as I got home I drew many sketches to play around with this idea in terms of my own personal identity.

My painting shows a strong Coast Salish woman emerging from the city. I used the zipper theme from *Shaman Revealed* to show how this woman is unzipping the exterior façade of the city to show her true self as a strong aboriginal person. This piece shows my identity as an urban aboriginal youth, living in a city like Vancouver. It shows that people tend to get caught up in today's society, and that sometimes they can forget who they are or where they come from. This piece shows that no matter where I go or who I become in my life, I should never lose sight of where I come from. I will always be aware of being from Musqueam, and will never forget who I am.

I incorporated the word "Musqueam" translated into my language, Hənq̓əminəm, into my painting because I have the word tattooed on my body. My tattoo represents a huge part of my own personal identity, and I felt it was a last final touch for the painting. It always reminds me that no matter where I am in the world, I will always have a reminder of who I am and where I come from.



Top right: Pashtun Burqa garment made in 1935.
Museum of Anthropology 811/7.

Robyn Putnam

Untitled

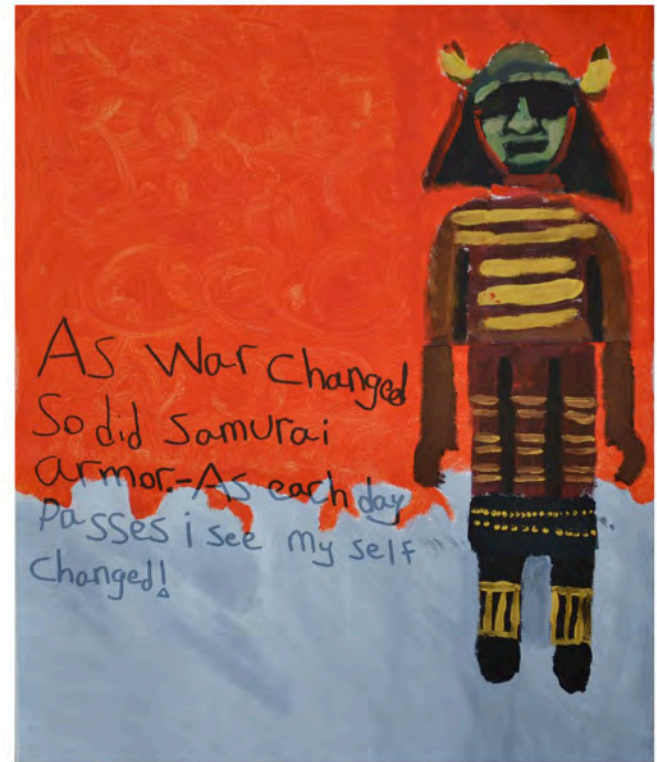
Acrylic on canvas

2011

I am a fourth-year student in the First Nations Studies and Psychology programs at the University of British Columbia. I have been working at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) since 2008. This is my second summer working with the Native Youth Program (NYP). I feel extremely privileged to have the opportunity to work with such an amazing program!

This summer the NYP teamed up with the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA). One of the projects we did was a visual art project. We each selected an object from the museum to paint. The object I selected is a burqa garment (811/7). This burqa was made in Ghazni, Afghanistan in 1935. The garment envelops the entire body from head to toe and consists of a pillbox headpiece, a mesh facepiece and a full sack-like covering. It is embellished with embroidery and fine pleating.

The reason I selected this object was because I wanted to find a connection between myself and women from another culture. After completing my research, I learned that the burqa is part of the female traditional Pashtun costume. For Pashtun women, the burqa symbolizes seclusion and dignity; it also signifies hospitality, honesty, caring for relatives and dressing properly. The burqa is more than a fabric covering, it symbolizes values. Before researching this object, I did not fully understand the importance of the burqa. I now know that while the burqa may be a symbol of degradation in some parts of the world, for Pashtun women it symbolizes values that I practice in my life.



Jonathan Wildman

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

2011

I am Cree and Métis, 17 years old, and currently in secondary school. My painting is about change. I believe that change is important, because without it, a person cannot grow. In order to portray this, I have created an orange swirling background, which indicates constant movement. In the foreground I have chosen to represent a Samurai warrior, inspired by the Samurai armour from the MOA collection (N2.1321). Even though the armour is for war, the artistry is unlike any other armour I've seen.

The text in the painting is my own. In writing these words, I realized that with each new day in the Native Youth Program at MOA, I have been changing, too.



Top right: Rattle attributed to Willie Seaweed. Kwakwaka'wakw. Museum of Anthropology A5259.

Faith Sparrow-Crawford

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas

2011

I am a seventeen-year-old musician from the Musqueam Nation. This painting represents three important parts of who I am: it represents my family, my heritage, and the music within me. This rattle is a beautiful representation of who I am.

My painting was inspired by a round metal Kwakwaka'wakw rattle (A5259), with what appears to be a killer whale on one side and a bear on the other. According to the catalogue record at the museum, this rattle could have been used in the Tsetseka among the Kwakwaka'wakw, when the novices were initiated into the secret dancing societies. This piece was very inspiring to me because it is a musical instrument.

I painted the face of a wolf on my rattle in memory of my great-grandfather, Edward Sparrow. When I was very young my grandpa named my brother "stqó:ya," meaning wolf. He gave my brother this name to represent strength. Since then, the wolf has been an extremely special animal for my family.



Bottom left: Chinese shadow puppet.
Museum of Anthropology 1180/2.

Joan Williams

Untitled

Acrylic and buttons on canvas

2011

I am Coast Salish, French, and Irish. I have been involved with the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) for the past year, and am currently taking part in the Music, Arts and Culture mentorship program, and in the Overly Creative Minds program. I am 17 years old, and plan to pursue my creative work as a photographer and graphic designer once I graduate from Killarney Secondary School.

The piece I chose (1180/2) from MOA's collection inspired me because of my love of dragons and Chinese culture. I am also interested in the simplicity of toys in the past, the materials used to make these toys, and how this compares to the present. In my artwork, I represent the present mixed with the past. The dragon is now made of metal and held by robotic hands, and a cityscape is seen in the background.

Acknowledgements

We were honoured to collaborate with the Overly Creative Minds Program (OCM) from Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) on *A Piece of Me*.

We would like to acknowledge Dustin McGladrey from UNYA for allowing us to use the title of his art piece, *A Piece of Me*, as the title of this exhibit. We hope to continue our collaboration with UNYA into the future. Thanks to Dena Klashinsky (Community Developer & Program Coordinator), and Linda Gray (Executive Director) at UNYA for their generous support of our collaboration.

Special thanks to Francine Cunningham, MOA's Native Youth Program (NYP) Manager and Carly Dickinson, UNYA Coordinator, Overly Creative Minds Program for organizing and making the project possible; and to Robyn Putnam, NYP Research Assistant, for all her hard work.

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A big hug to the NYP students who participated in the project: Nigel Grenier, Jaime Attig-Blankinship, Diamond Point, Jonathan Wildman, Faith Sparrow-Crawford, and Vanessa Parnell.

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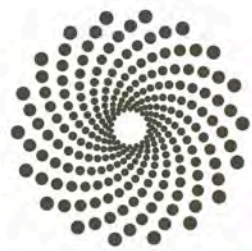


About NYP and UNYA

The Native Youth Program (NYP) gives urban Aboriginal high-school students the opportunity to research and interpret their heritage in a museum setting. Now in its 32nd year, NYP is a collaborative work-study program of the Museum of Anthropology and the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. It is internationally known for excellence in training and the outstanding success rate of its graduates. NYP provides seven weeks' experience for six students aged 15 to 18.

The Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA) empowers Native youth through education and training, personal support, live-in programs, sports and recreation. Its programs serve a range of ages from 13 to 29 and include community development, training, research, educational materials, and advocacy. UNYA's main goal is to provide opportunities for Native youth that will help them reach their full potential and personal goals.





MOA

A place of world arts + cultures



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An exhibition of artworks by urban aboriginal youth in the
Native Youth Program and Overly Creative Minds Program