



*written by* **JESSICA WILSON**

*essay by* **BARRY ACE**

**COPPER**

*the art of* **NORVAL MORRISSEAU**

**THUNDERBIRD**

**WESTERKIRK WORKS OF ART, 2010**

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Prior to moving to Ottawa, Barry taught for two years in the Native Studies Program at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. While Chief Curator and Acting Chief of the Indian and Inuit Art Centres at the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Ottawa) from 1994-2001, he curated numerous exhibitions of Indian and Inuit art that have toured both nationally and internationally. ↗

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## CURATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Westerkirk Works of Art's Collection arose out of owner Sherry Brydson's personal interest in collecting and preserving an important part of Canada's national heritage. Westerkirk Works of Art hosted an exhibition of 42 paintings titled *Copper Thunderbird: The Art of Norval Morrisseau* from January – November 2010 at the Elmwood Spa, Toronto. The exhibition and catalogue came about because of a desire to share this unique body of Norval Morrisseau's work with the public.

Norval Morrisseau's style of art is unique, and draws on his many spiritual influences, most significantly, his Native Canadian identity. When looking at his art, it is important to enjoy the creativity and skill that has been invested into each piece. It is also important to be aware of the cultural legacies that are being shared. *Copper Thunderbird: The Art of Norval Morrisseau* attempts to uncover some of the narratives held within Norval Morrisseau's paintings. In this way, we may begin to understand the influences of this great Canadian artist. ↗

[Jessica Wilson, Curator](#)

# FOREWORD

by SHERRY BRYDSON

I was first introduced to Norval Morrisseau's work at Expo '67 in Montreal, where his mural on the Indians of Canada Pavilion, stunning in its colours, subject matter, style and emotion, caught my attention and captured my heart. He had burst onto the Canadian art scene in the early 1960s and this was his first introduction to many Canadians.

Over the years his career went through many ups and downs, through alcoholism and drug abuse, revelations and religious experiences, family and health tribulations. Yet always his art dominated his existence as he strove to overcome his inner struggles through painting.

Morrisseau's spirituality, and his early education about the shamanistic healing practices of the Anishinaabe, passed on to him by his grandfather, have enabled him to convey these sacred healing practices within his art, and ultimately to those who view it.

I believe Norval Morrisseau has a message that he communicates through his paintings. He intended to share the stories of his people, whilst inspiring awe and respect for the natural world. Many of his paintings were provoked by other-worldly experiences,

when he visited the House of Invention he appears to have channeled some of his most exciting works.

For many years I have owned a few of Morrisseau's paintings, which hang in my home for my family and myself to enjoy. In 2006, I had the opportunity to acquire a substantial Morrisseau collection and, after adding a number of other works, the collection presented in this book had been built.

Norval Morrisseau is an artist in every sense, and his talent and originality have earned him a place among the great artists in history. His works are so unique that he is acknowledged as having founded the Woodland School of painting. Norval Morrisseau was, in my view, a national treasure.

The purpose of this collection is to share Norval Morrisseau's work with the world. Thank you for viewing this collection and experiencing Norval's unique vision. I am proud to be doing what I can to share Morrisseau's work with others, to encourage research and scholarly activity and to promote enjoyment of this stunning body of work. ✨

# LIST OF WORKS

All works are a collection of Westerkirk Works of Art, Toronto.

- 1 Thunderbird, c.1960's**  
acrylic on birchbark  
18.5 x 16 inches
- 2 Turtle, c.1960's**  
acrylic on birchbark  
16 x 16 inches
- 3 Totem Bear, c.1960's**  
acrylic on millboard  
56 x 29 inches
- 4 Great Horned Medicine Snake, 1960-1964**  
acrylic on millboard  
54 x 38.5 inches
- 5 Spirit Power, c.1960's**  
acrylic on paper  
27 x 37 inches
- 6 Three Loons I, c.1960's**  
acrylic on paper  
25 x 22.5 inches
- 7 Three Loons II, c.1960's**  
acrylic on paper  
25 x 22.5 inches
- 8 The Sacred Bear Ancestral Figure, c.1970's**  
acrylic on paper  
33 x 42 inches
- 9 Interdependence of All Things, c.1970's**  
acrylic on canvas  
27 x 42 inches
- 10 Sacred Fish Shaman Ride, c.1970's**  
acrylic on canvas  
25 x 17 inches
- 11 Artist Speaks to Moose Spirit, c.1970's**  
Acrylic on canvas  
51 x 56.5 inches
- 12 Petroglyph Thunderbirds, c.1970's**  
acrylic on canvas  
57 x 52 inches
- 13 The Legend Becomes Real for the Child, c.1970's**  
acrylic on canvas  
41 x 54 inches
- 14 Man In Nature/ Day and Night, n.d**  
Acrylic on Board  
36 x 30 inches
- 15 Shaman, c.1970's**  
acrylic on canvas  
25 x 31 inches
- 16 Flowers of Life, 1972**  
acrylic on canvas  
30 x 19 inches
- 17 Fish and Loon, 1974**  
acrylic on Canvas  
20 x 32 inches
- 18 Battle Between Thunder, 1975**  
acrylic on canvas  
19.5 x 35 inches
- 19 Balance of Nature, 1975**  
acrylic on canvas  
39.5 x 62 inches
- 20 Salmon Spawn, 1975**  
acrylic on canvas  
32 x 22.5 inches
- 21 Salmon, 1976**  
acrylic on canvas  
18.5 x 25.5 inches
- 22 Tales of the Story Tree, 1978**  
acrylic on canvas  
78.5 x 52 inches
- 23 Spirits Within, 1976**  
acrylic on canvas  
46.5 x 43 inches
- 24 Wasakajak, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
25 x 22 inches
- 25 Energy Shaman, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
21 x 30.5 inches
- 26 Inorganics, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
26 x 29.5 inches
- 27 Thunderbird, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
58 x 55.5 inches
- 28 Large Single Fish, n.d.**  
Acrylic on canvas  
26 x 34 inches
- 29 Ojibway Family Life, 1978**  
acrylic on canvas  
50 x 87 inches
- 30 Wasakajak, 1976**  
acrylic on canvas  
55.5 x 53 inches
- 31 Catchers of the Universe, 1978**  
acrylic on canvas  
51 x 70 inches
- 32 Shamen Face Evil, 1979**  
acrylic on canvas  
23 x 30 inches
- 33 Family of Loons and Fish, 1979**  
acrylic on board  
24 x 48 inches
- 34 Thunderbirds, 1970**  
acrylic on canvas  
27 x 30 inches
- 35 Shaman, c.1980's**  
acrylic on canvas  
52 x 44.5 inches
- 36 Astral Figures, 1980**  
acrylic on canvas  
19 x 35 inches
- 37 Ojibway Family Under the Tree of Life, 1987**  
acrylic on canvas  
93 x 57 inches
- 38 Alkaleids, n.d**  
Acrylic on canvas  
21 x 32 inches
- 39 The Stories I Learned on my Travels, 1984**  
acrylic on canvas  
63 x 63 inches
- 40 Moose, n.d**  
acrylic on canvas  
30 x 44 inches
- 41 In Honour of Ojibway Family, 1996**  
acrylic on canvas  
37.5 x 78 inches
- 42 Loon Diving, 1993-1994**  
marker on paper  
40 x 31.5 inches

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Celebrated Ojibway artist Norval Morrisseau was born in Fort William, Ontario in 1932. Raised by his grandparents, he learned at an early age the stories and legends of his heritage from his grandfather Moses (Potan) Nanakonagos, a sixth generation Shaman of the Midewiwin society.

The most widely recognized themes in Morrisseau's artworks address the oral traditions and legends of the Midewiwin as seen in petroglyph rock paintings of Northern Ontario. A common theme throughout his entire body of work is the exploration of spirituality, allegory, and representation. Using the narratives of the Ojibway oral traditions, Morrisseau created a new

visual vocabulary that gave the legends of his people an image for the first time. However, traditionally in his culture only the Shaman had the right to paint the sacred legends, and thus his work invited criticism from the elders in his community. Morrisseau maintained that he was a true Shaman, because it was the Shamen who were the artists of his people:

*"I am a shaman-artist... My art speaks and will continue to speak, transcending barriers of nationality, of language and of other forces that may be divisive, fortifying the greatness of spirit that has always been the foundation of the Great Ojibway."*<sup>1</sup>

Morrisseau also explored other themes in his artwork, always dealing with some aspect of his own spirituality. The Christian religious iconography that he became familiar with during his childhood years at St. Joseph Catholic School in Thunder Bay, as well as his interest in mysticism after his conversion to the Eckankar religion in 1976, are both subjects of his art.

After the age of nineteen, Morrisseau signed all of his artworks in Cree syllabics using his Ojibway name :Miskwaabik Animiiki, Copper Thunderbird. The thunderbird and other totemic figures such as the bear, the turtle, and the snake are subjects frequently found in his work. Other common motifs include Shaman, plants, animals, ceremonial processes, and spiritual creatures. By using the X-ray style that he is now recognized for, Morrisseau was able to reveal the inner soul of the figures within his paintings.

Each of Morrisseau's pieces is legible as a narrative because his unique vocabulary of symbols and colours has been used to create a visual language. Morrisseau intended his art to convey the spirit of his people:

*"My paintings are... icons; that is to say that they are images which help focus on spiritual powers, generated by traditional belief and wisdom... I bring together and promote the ultimate harmony of the physical and spiritual world."*<sup>2</sup>

Morrisseau's career as an artist spanned many decades, during which he was awarded a number of accolades. In 1978, Morrisseau was made a member of the Order of Canada. He was acknowledged as a Grand Shaman of the Ojibway in 1986. In 1995, he was awarded with the First Nations' highest honor, the Eagle Feather, and in 2006 he became the only First Nations artist to have been awarded a solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada. However, what was perhaps the most significant achievement of Norval Morrisseau's career was his ability to communicate through his artwork the richness of the cultural traditions of Canada's Native Peoples. ✨



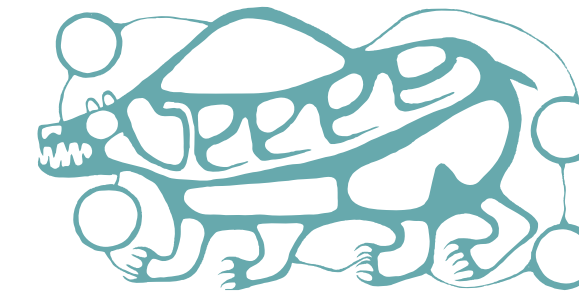
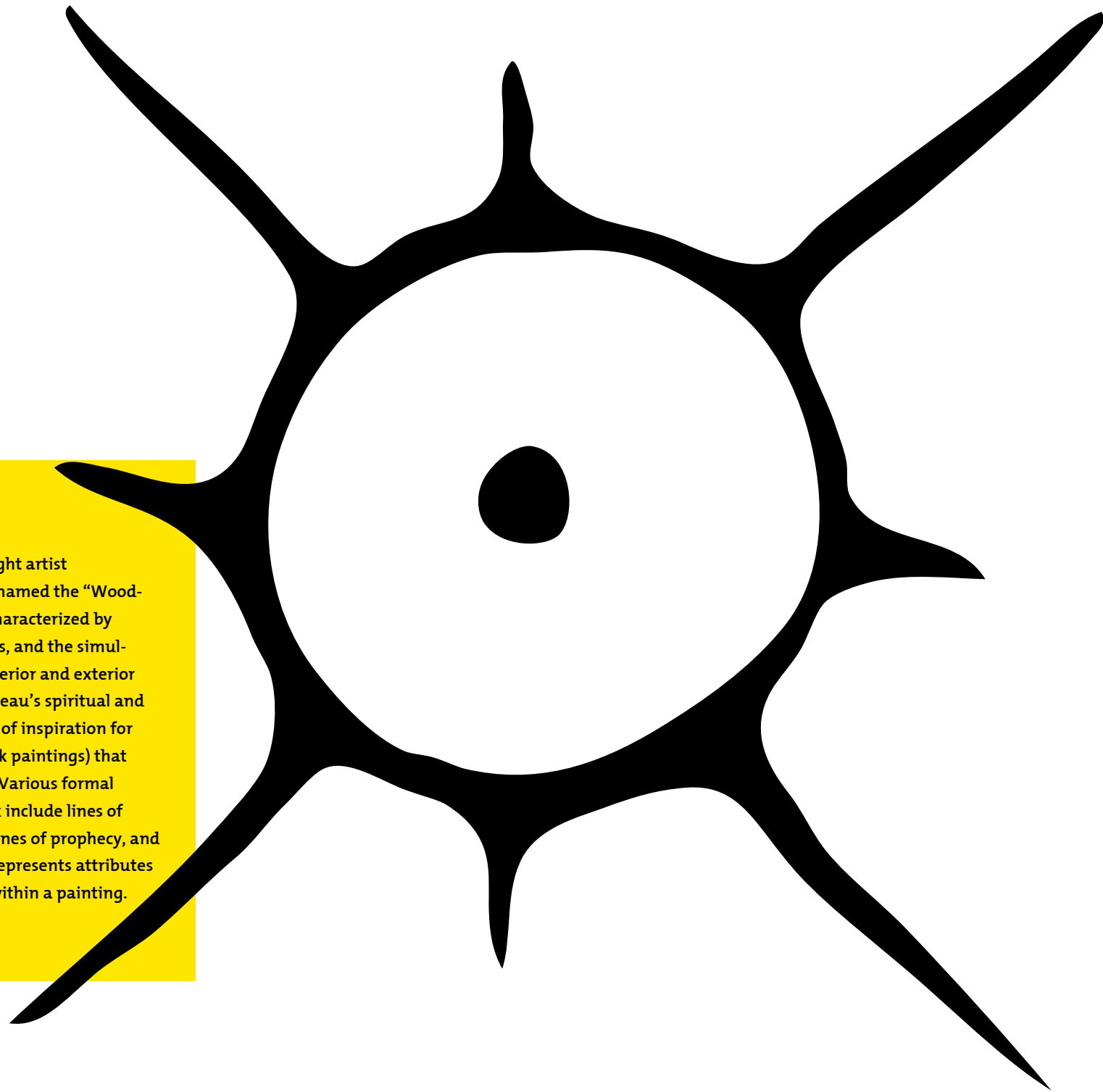
photo of artist **NORVAL MORRISSEAU**

Photo Credit: Graham Bezant/GetStock.com



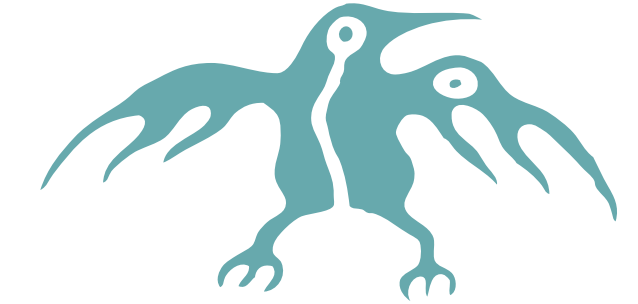
### Form, Colour and Shape

Norval Morriseau was a self-taught artist known for his unique style, later named the “Woodland School of Art”. This style is characterized by strong black outlines, bold colours, and the simultaneous representation of the interior and exterior of the figures in his work. Morriseau’s spiritual and cultural upbringing was a source of inspiration for him, as were the petroglyphs (rock paintings) that Morriseau saw as a young man. Various formal conventions in Morriseau’s work include lines of communication, lines of power, lines of prophecy, and divided circles. Each convention represents attributes of figures or a particular theme within a painting.



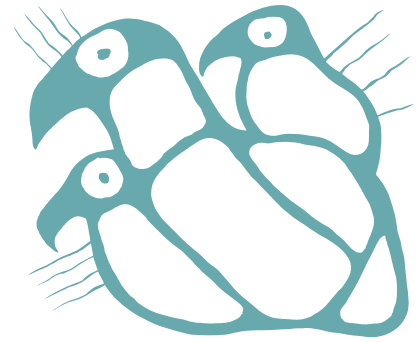
### Bear

The bear is a totem figure for the Ojibway and according to Anishinaabe beliefs, it protects members of its clan by warding off enemies and strangers. The Ojibway believe the bear is a powerful being that has a special relationship with their people. Often referred to as ‘grandfather to the Ojibway’, the bear is thought to have strong curative and spiritual powers. The bear totem represents strength, power, individual direction, and masculinity.



### Petroglyphs

Petroglyphs found in Ontario, which date from as early as 900 AD, were created by ancestors of the Ojibway. The images were a great source of inspiration for Morriseau. Morriseau’s own artwork reflects the petroglyphs in both form and theme, however he added narrative to the sacred images, something that had not been done by any artist before him. Although Morriseau was criticized for depicting the sacred knowledge of his people, he believed that he was preserving the heritage of the Ojibway through his art.



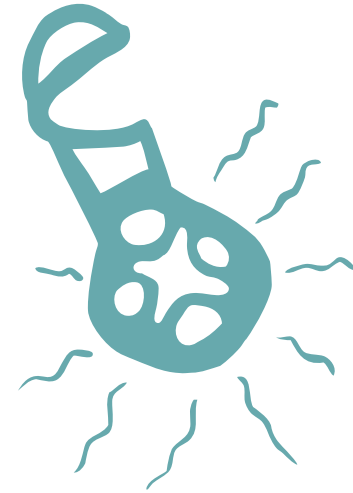
Loon

The Ojibway are made up of different clans, membership of which is passed on through paternal lineage. Each clan has a designated animal totem to protect its members. The loon represents one of the original Ojibway clans, along with the bear, catfish, marten, and crane. The loon symbolizes family, control, and loyalty to the Ojibway. By returning to the same place each spring to raise its young, the loon is often a symbol of home and belonging. Decorative depictions of the loon are popular subjects in Morrisseau's artwork, as are the legends involving these birds.



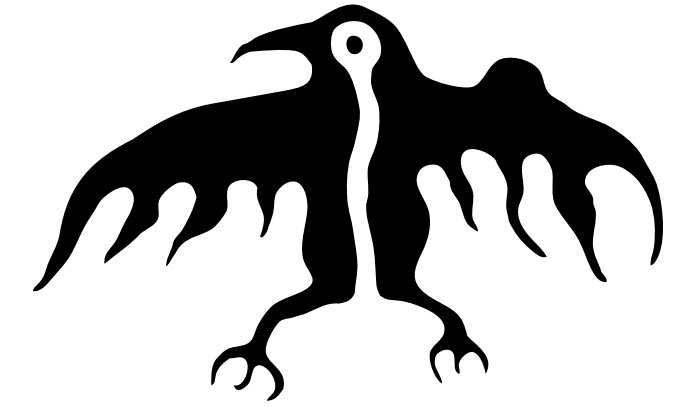
Eckankar

Norval Morrisseau joined Eckankar in the 1970's. This religion holds that followers can obtain a unique understanding of the self by exploring their personal relationship with God. According to Eckankar teachings, through spiritual exercise, each individual can obtain spiritual freedom and become one with God. Morrisseau found that the teachings of this religion paralleled his own spiritual ideas that were inspired by his Anishinaabe heritage. Followers of Eckankar believe that all nature has a single soul that is free to travel as light in order to seek spiritual enlightenment. Morrisseau's interpretations of Eckankar beliefs are illustrated through the abstract figures that float freely within the canvas of many of the artworks he painted during the 1970s.



Midewiwin

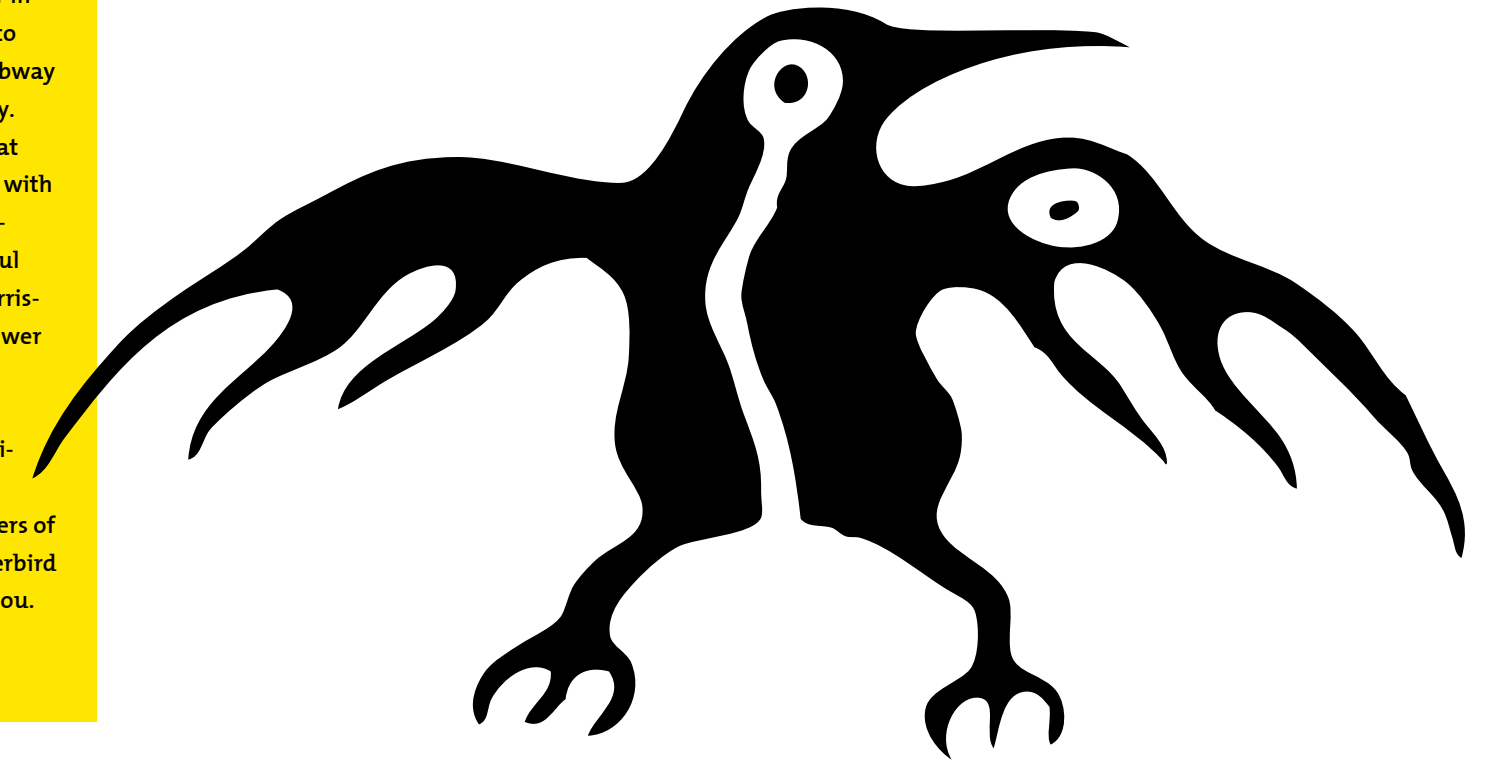
The Midewiwin are also known as the Grand Medicine Society. Morrisseau's grandfather, Moses "Potan" Nakananogos, was a member of this secretive sect of healers. Members of the Midewiwin society recorded sacred teachings on scrolls of birch bark, using them to ensure knowledge was passed on between generations of shamans. Morrisseau's art is inspired by the scrolls of the Midewiwin, and the stories that they contain.



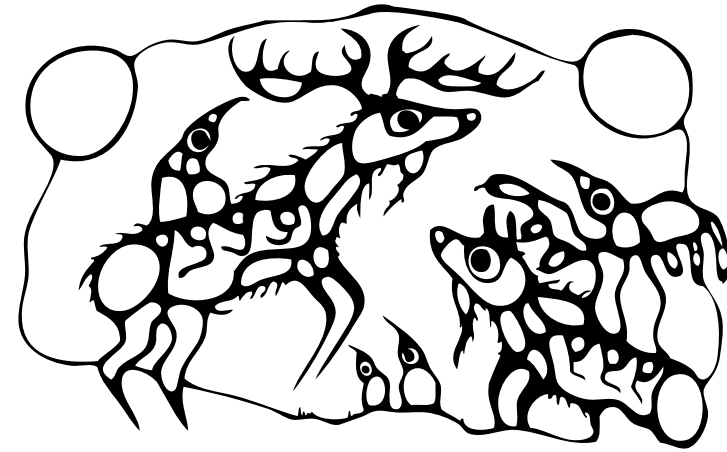
Thunderbird

Morrisseau's relationship with the thunderbird is significant to his artworks. As a young man he became very ill with tuberculosis and was taken to a doctor in Fort William, Ontario. When his health continued to deteriorate Morrisseau's family called upon an Ojibway medicine woman to perform a renaming ceremony. Morrisseau recovered from the illness and from that point on signed all of his artworks in Cree syllabics with the name Copper Thunderbird. According to Anishinaabe tradition, renaming a person with a powerful name can bring new life to that person, and in Morrisseau's case the thunderbird totem brought him power and strength.

Thunderbirds are powerful guardians to the Anishinaabe, and are believed to be both intelligent and wrathful. The birds are thought to be the messengers of the four winds, reigning over the skies. The thunderbird is considered to be the most powerful of the Manitou.

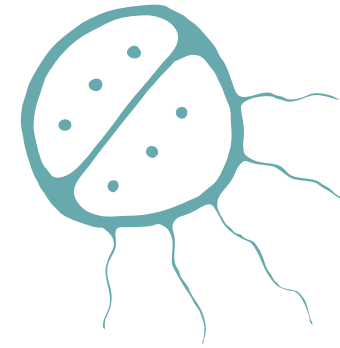






#### Lines of Communication

Morrisseau uses lines of communication to illustrate connections between figures and ideas within his artworks. Connections can be spiritual or physical. Morrisseau often uses lines of communication to tie ideas together.



#### Lines of Prophecy

Lines of prophecy are used by Morrisseau to reference the idea of “speaking in tongues”, divine revelations, often associated with the talk of shamans.



#### Lines of Power

Morrisseau paints lines of power radiating from the heads and bodies of figures in many of his paintings to signify the power of that being. The length of the lines indicates the intensity of power.



#### Lines of Movement

Lines of Movement are used to highlight important motion within Morrisseau’s paintings: the beating heart, the transference of power, or the shaking of a shaman’s tent.



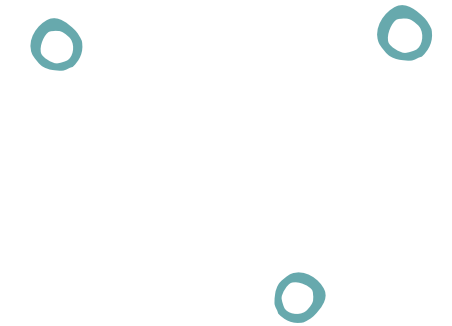
#### X-Ray

Morrisseau reveals the inner structures of the figures within many of his artworks. The x-ray style is one that Morrisseau is well known for pioneering, and is characteristic of the Woodland School of painting. Inner anatomical structures of the figures in his artworks are highlighted, and stylized versions of organs and bones such as the spine, heart and brain are often depicted.



#### Divided Circle

The divided circle is a recurring symbol in Morrisseau’s artworks. It symbolizes the dualities present within the world; for example – good and evil, heaven and earth, day and night, and man and nature. Divided circles are often connected to figures within Morrisseau’s artworks by lines of communication.



#### Three Dots

The three dots that Morrisseau uses in a number of his paintings symbolize the body, mind and spirit. They reflect the Anishinaabe belief that everything in nature is interconnected and is of equal importance. The notion of three also references the Christian idea of the Holy Trinity, an idea that Morrisseau would have picked up as a child during his time at the St. Joseph Catholic School in Thunder Bay.

# NORVAL MORRISSEAU: ARTIST AS SHAMAN

by BARRY ACE

Having had the extraordinary opportunity, early on in my career, to work for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) in the Indian Art Centre as Chief Curator, I had the honour to meet, interview and spend time with numerous prominent Aboriginal artists from across Canada, including Norval Morriseau. As well, I have had the unbridled privilege to work with what can only be described as the most significant collection of contemporary Canadian Aboriginal art in the world. It was during this period, in the summer of 1995, that I had my first opportunity to meet the legendary Norval Morriseau. Norval was in Ottawa to attend an exhibition and honoring ceremony bestowed upon him by the Assembly of First Nations. I clearly remember receiving a call from a downtown hotel where Norval asked me if it would be alright if he came and visited the Indian Art Centre. I told him that of course he could come over, and he concluded our conversation by asking me to meet him downstairs with one of those yellow slips of paper (taxi chit), since he did not have a lot of money to spend on taxi rides.

I agreed to meet him in front of the DIAND headquarters at 10 Wellington Street in Hull, Quebec. In

the back seat of the taxi sat Norval Morriseau looking a lot older than I had expected him to be, but still, he appeared as stately and astute as ever. Although he seemed in some pain brought on by severe stiffness in his legs, his staunch independence and gargantuan charisma had not suffered in the least. Norval immediately told me that he had just had an operation to replace both kneecaps, and that his doctor had told him to remain confined to his wheelchair. He went on to explain that after only a couple of months, he went to see an elder on the Squamish Reserve near Vancouver, who told him to “throw away that wheelchair”. Norval said he complied and the old man then gave him a “grizzly bear walking stick”. He went on to recount that this old man revealed to him that “this walking stick was medicine”. I was simultaneously taken aback, because Norval, without any prompting from me, immediately launched into a diatribe on sacred healing practices.

Norval's walking stick only further embellished the mystique of his public “Indian” persona, and I remember this particular walking stick was really phenomenal. The top of the stick had a realistically carved full-figured grizzly bear, and affixed directly below, was a real

grizzly bear paw, complete with fur pads and claws clutching a huge translucent ten-inch octagonal crystal. Surrounding the bottom half of the walking stick were row upon row of triangular rattles, honed from the hooves of deer that clacked and swayed in unison to Morriseau's labored gait. To further complement his shamanistic persona, Norval wore an incredibly intense red and black Northwest Coast jacket with a huge graphic Haida thunderbird motif that covered the entire garment. His shoulder length hair was slightly unkempt, jutting out from his head at all angles forming a haloed tangle of black and grey strands. Looped around his neck, he donned a small grouping of medicinal roots resembling miniature two-legged torsos side-by-side, each sewn together with sinew. In his right hand, he clutched a beautifully incised birch-bark container suspended on a thick strip of tanned hide.

Norval proceeded to tell me that this was his “medicine pouch” that contained an assortment of traditional medicines and remedies that he always carried with him. As we entered the main foyer of the building, Norval was unequivocally aware of his surroundings as men and women in power suits rushed past on their way to meetings through the Les Terrasses de la Chaudiere complex. Commanding absolute attention, Norval pounded his grizzly bear walking stick on the granite floor of the main foyer and the sound of the rattles emanated throughout the stone interior. His eclectic and eccentric appearance immediately stopped passerby dead in their tracks. He stared back at them for a moment without uttering a word, and

he turned to me and said softly, “There, I have their attention now. Let's go and have some tea.” I felt like I had just taken part in some kind of strange theatrical ritual of the past. Something so compelling that I was immediately drawn into it and positioned not only as a witness, but as an active participant in Norval's public performance piece. It was truly an amusing intervention and interruption. Morriseau had wittingly demonstrated to me the power and effectiveness of his public persona, a time and space where theater becomes art.

After our tea, I spent most of the early afternoon with Norval, pouring over DIAND's vast collection of Morriseau works and ephemera, while Norval intermittently interjected personal observations and reflections on various aspects related to the works and manuscripts strewn on the table in front of us. When I began opening the archival grey boxes of materials, I observed Norval slowly surveying the neatly wrapped papers, manuscripts and drawings. I could not help but begin to wonder what was going on in Norval's mind, confronted with a good proportion of his personal hand-written letters and manuscripts sent to Selwyn Dewdney of the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto in the early 1960s.

During this visit with Norval in 1995, he answered many questions I had about the manuscripts and artwork contained in the collection, and I remember at one point, we came upon a small painting on two fragments of birch-bark, stitched together with spruce root. It immediately reminded me of several Midéwin scrolls I had seen at the Royal Ontario Museum



in Toronto. I asked Norval about this particular piece, and he told me that it was in fact a remnant of a birch-bark scroll that originally belonged to his grandfather. Norval went on to say that his grandfather Moses Potan was a Midé elder. “This was my grandfather’s [pointing to the incised figures and lines scratched into the surface], and I painted this [pointing to the symbols and imagery painted in acrylic overtop of the incised markings] on top.” I was curious to know what medium he was using when he was painting on bark and roofing back paper. He told me he would often paint with oil, acrylic or tempura, and sometimes when supplies were low, he would use any combination available. I was impressed with his ability to recall time, place and events, so I asked him if he remembered painting this particular work on birch-bark.

He looked at me and said, “A lot of people ask me if I remember doing a particular painting, and I tell them of course I remember doing that painting, and I remember exactly what I was thinking about that the time when I was doing it” (Morrisseau, personal conversation, August 30, 1995). Before leaving the Indian Art Centre, Norval took from his birch bark box a small vial containing an amber-like fluid, and he removed the wax seal and drank the substance. He turned to me and handed me the empty vial and said,

“Now you put this in that box too.” I remember thinking, at the time, how clearly Norval understood his now legendary role, and how any extraneous ephemera he was wearing, handling or carrying was somehow connected to the validation of his shaman persona.

After Norval left, I began leafing through an old copy of *Tawow* magazine published in 1974. I came across a film review by Tom Hill of the National Film Board of Canada’s ‘The Paradox of Norval Morrisseau’. Hill noted that the film was “an intelligent and sensitive viewpoint developed on an artist so complex that any attempt at an analysis of his art and personality would ultimately only skim the surface (*Tawow* 1974, p.4)”. Still, I thought, after almost twenty-two years, Hill’s statement couldn’t have been any closer to the truth. And it was on this late summer afternoon in 1995 that I too, realized that I had only begun to scratch the surface of this legendary and paradoxical figure. ✦

A complete version of this essay is available on the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective website at:

[www.aboriginalcuratorialcollective.org](http://www.aboriginalcuratorialcollective.org)

## NORVAL MORRISSEAU: WESTERKIRK WORKS OF ART COLLECTION





**Thunderbird, c.1960s (opposite)**  
 acrylic on birchbark  
 18.5 x 16 inches

Birchbark has been used to document the rituals and legends of the Midewiwin, otherwise known as the Grand Medicine Society, for many centuries. The sacred scrolls created by Midewiwin medicine men were an inspiration for Morriseau as a young painter, and their thematic and stylistic influence is referenced in his own painting. In *Thunderbird*, Morriseau uses birchbark as the medium on which he paints a simple thunderbird, an illustration of his own identity as 'Copper Thunderbird'.

**Turtle, c.1960s**  
 acrylic on birchbark  
 16 x 16 inches

*Turtle* is painted using acrylic on birchbark, in the same style and using the same colour palette as *Thunderbird*. The turtle is an important creature to the Ojibway and has special powers of communication. It takes on a significant role as the interpreter in ceremonies such as the shaking tent. When a conjurer is communicating with different gods and spirits in the shaking tent ceremony, each god speaks to him in the gods' own language. The interpreter, Mikkinnuk, is a "small turtle who is the Devil himself, who interprets for all these beings."<sup>3</sup>



**Totem Bear, c.1960s**  
acrylic on millboard  
56 x 29 inches

The Ojibway believe that the bear is a powerful being that has a special relationship with their people. Often referred to as 'grandfather to the Ojibway', the bear is thought to have strong curative and spiritual powers. This painting depicts a bear spirit, as is evidenced by the creature's golden eyes. Strong black lines encase the decorative abstract interior, showing the heart and bones of the bear. These heart and bone were believed by the Ojibway to be important properties of the creature's healing powers. Lines of communication link four divided circles and are symbolic of the dualities and paradoxes in the world: life and death, good and evil, day and night, and heaven and earth.







**Great Horned Medicine Snake, 1960-1964**  
acrylic on millboard  
54 x 38.5 inches

The painting *Great Horned Medicine Snake* depicts a subject that is often found in petroglyphs and Midewiwin scrolls that inspired Morrisseau as a young artist. The medicine snake is a powerful emblem to the Anishinabek and, according to legend, those who dream of the horned snake will possess knowledge of medicine. The snake's spiritual power is communicated through yellow lines, which emanate from its spikes.



**Spirit Power, c.1960s**  
acrylic on paper  
27 x 37 inches

In this painting Morrisseau depicts two creatures communicating with one another, one an Ojibway man and the other a horned creature. Morrisseau describes this image as an Ojibway Indian receiving supernatural powers: "small Horned being to Desrobed himself Complete Nude and bend his Seat so that the Horned being would blow into his Rectum by doing so the Indian Feels the power going through his body and out of his mouth thus becoming a full fledged Shaman among (sp) his peoples and the horns descending upon his head represent power."<sup>4</sup>



Three Loons I, c.1960s  
acrylic on paper  
25 x 22.5 inches



Three Loons II, c.1960s  
acrylic on paper  
25 x 22.5 inches

The loon is a recurring subject in Morrisseau's work, symbolizing family, home, and fidelity. According to legend, until the animal's teacher Nana'b'oozoo "stole away, loons used to travel together in great flocks like geese. After Nana'b'oozoo and his grandmother left and had not come back, the loons separated and went about in pairs searching for Nana'b'oozoo... They searched in pairs always within hearing distance of each other."<sup>5</sup> In this pair of paintings, the bodies of the loons are filled with designs reflecting their anatomical structures. The inherent power of the creatures is reflected through the lines emanating from their bodies.



**The Sacred Bear Ancestral Figure, c.1970s**  
acrylic on paper  
33 x 42 inches

According to Morrisseau, "The sacred bear and the Indian with the horns represent [the] medicine and sorcery given to the descendents of the bear totemic order."<sup>6</sup> Within Ojibway society, the bear and the penis are considered to be very sacred, both holding immense spiritual powers. Morrisseau connects the figures, and depicts them both radiating power lines while sharing energy. The X-ray technique reveals the hearts of the two figures, both moving as sacred energy is shared between the bear and the man.





**Interdependence of All Things, c.1970s**  
acrylic on canvas  
27 x 42 inches

*Interdependence of All Things* explores a common theme in Morrisseau's work: unity between all things. In this painting, Morrisseau depicts creatures and men of the earth, sky and water entwined and contained within an embryonic form. The colour palette is muted shades of brown, while the interior is painted in vibrant greens and blues, reflecting the energy and life created when all creatures come together.



**Sacred Fish Shaman Ride, c.1970s**  
acrylic on canvas  
25 x 17 inches

According to Ojibway mythology, the trout is a powerful fish that acts as a soul-carrier, transporting souls of the Ojibway to the realm of spirits. In this painting, Morrisseau paints a shaman on his spiritual journey within the sacred fish. The green and blue palette indicates the spiritual realm, pointing to the journey on which the shaman has embarked. Divided circles surrounding the fish signify the dualities present in the world.







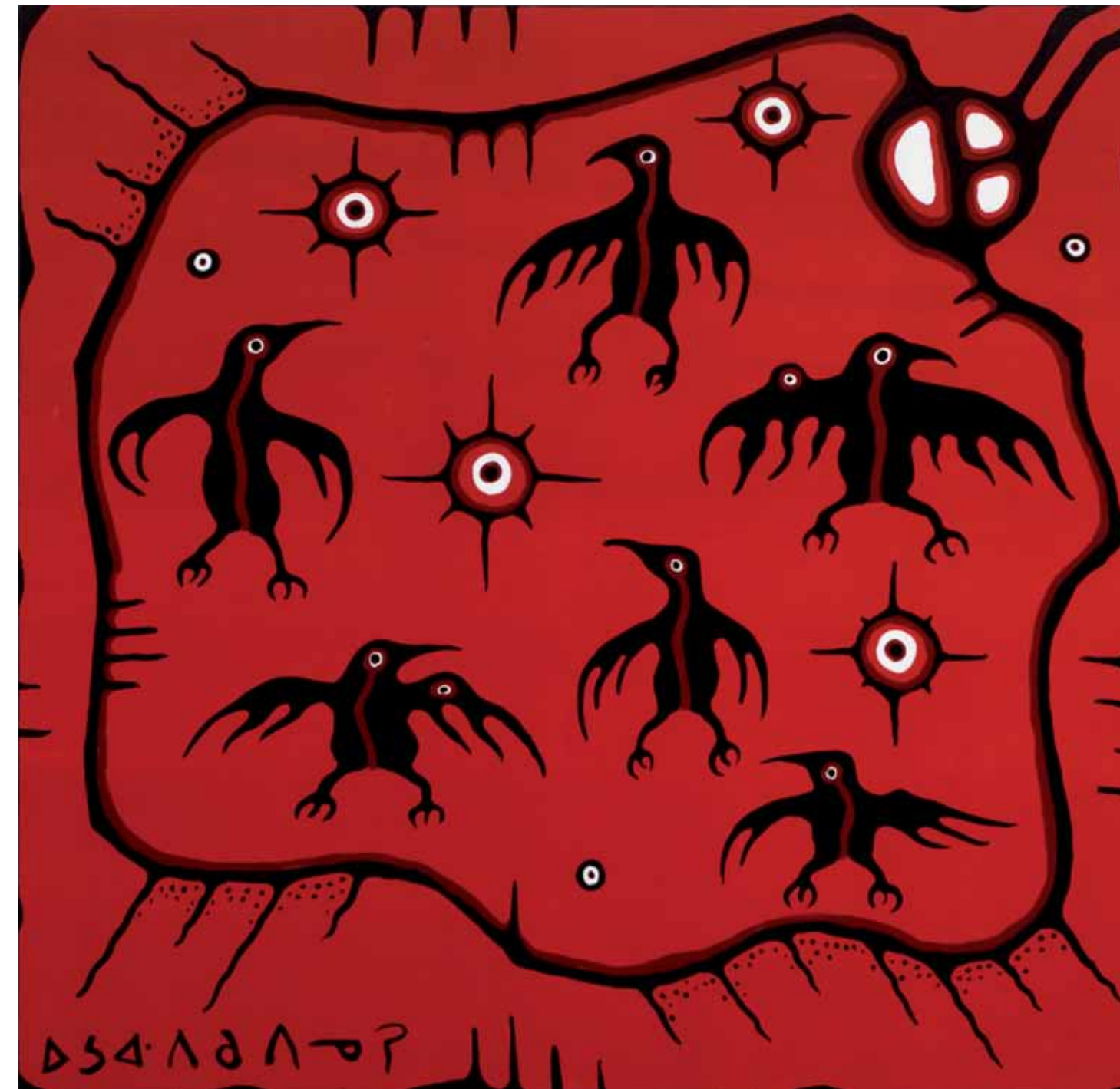
**Artist Speaks to Moose Spirit, c.1970s**  
Acrylic on canvas  
51 x 56.5 inches

Morrisseau based this painting on a story told by an Ojibway man named Luke Onanakongos, also known as Jo-Go Way. According to Jo-Go Way, “in dreams of my youth, my spirit dwelled inside a huge moose, and I was protected from hardships of this earth. In middle life, the moose discharged my spirit from his body and it became one with my earthly self.”<sup>7</sup> Morrisseau paints himself into the story communicating with the moose spirit while surrounded by spirit creatures.



**Petroglyph Thunderbirds, c.1970s**  
acrylic on canvas  
57 x 52 inches

As a young man, Morrisseau explored and interpreted the ancient petroglyph drawings found in Northern Ontario caves with his friend Selwyn Dewdney, a researcher at the Royal Ontario Museum, with whom he collaborated on the book *Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway*. The petroglyph drawings were a great source of inspiration for Morrisseau, and many of the subjects that he saw in the caves were reinterpreted in his artworks. *Petroglyph Thunderbirds* is a decorative painting that celebrates form over meaning. However, Morrisseau's symbolic conventions, such as the divided circle representing the relationship between body, mind and spirit, and the lines of power emanating from the form surrounding the thunderbirds, lend meaning to the form.





**The Legend Becomes Real for the Child, c.1970s**  
acrylic on canvas  
41 x 54 inches

This painting illustrates the importance of storytelling and the passing on of tradition in Ojibway culture. In *The Legend Becomes Real for the Child*, Morrisseau depicts himself as a child sitting with his grandfather, learning about the legends of his people. This colourful painting is a tender image of the relationship between Morrisseau and his grandfather, and simultaneously illustrates the bond between nature and man. Loons surround the pair as they sit facing each other, representing loyalty, home, and the bond of family. Two divided circles, each with three dots on either side, are placed in the center of the painting to represent the duality of life, as well as the body, mind, and spirit. A serpent biting its own tail encircles the composition and forms the circle of life.





**Man in Nature/ Day and Night, n.d**  
acrylic on canvas  
24 x 48 inches

In this painting, Morrisseau creates an abstract composition in which he includes a shaman surrounded by birds and fish. As is typical of so many of Morrisseau's works, all the figures are intertwined and depicted as interconnected and existing in harmony together. Bright colours are enclosed within dark outlines, highlighting the decorative nature of the painting. Morrisseau's colour palette developed as his career progressed. The muted earth tones that he painted with in his early career, encouraged by Selwyn Dewdney because they reflected the colours used by his Anishinaabe ancestors, were exchanged for bright colours that reflected Morrisseau's own ideas about spirituality.

**Shaman, c.1970s**  
acrylic on canvas  
25 x 31 inches

*Shaman* depicts the symbolic transformation of a shaman into a thunderbird. The hands and feet of this intermediary between the spiritual and physical world are painted to resemble those of a bird, and the interior of the figure is made up of abstracted birds. This transformation would enable the powers of the thunderbird to protect the shaman in the realm of the supernatural. Shamans were typically healers within their communities, and *Shaman* references the medicinal powers of these men by highlighting an egg— an object believed to be sacred, and often used to produce medicine.







**Flowers of Life, 1972**  
acrylic on canvas  
30 x 19 inches

*Flowers of Life* is a decorative painting in which Morrisseau attempts to capture the beauty of nature. The Ojibway believe that to create a natural balance, all creatures must exist in unity. Morrisseau paints butterflies feeding from flowers, which illustrates a sharing of life. The Ojibway respect the earth as a living being, and believe when there is harmony in nature, all forms of life can flourish.

**Fish and Loon, 1974**  
acrylic on Canvas  
20 x 32 inches

Many of Morrisseau's paintings explore the stories and legends of the Anishinabek. *Fish and Loon* is based on the tale of an old woman who asked a crane to carry her from the north to south shore of Sault St. Marie. The bird was very sick, but agreed to carry the woman on the condition that she did not touch its head. Halfway across the river, high in the sky, the woman touched the bird's head. Instantly, both fell into the rapids and the woman was killed. Her scattered remains turned into roe, which later grew to be fish. According to the story, the loon was teaching her young how to dive and stay under water for as long as possible by rewarding them with minnows for staying under the longest. When the loon was asked why it picked on the small fish, she replied: "Because your ancestor disregarded our kin's request not to touch its head. Besides, you would over-run our home if we didn't keep you in check."<sup>8</sup>





**Battle Between Thunder, 1975**  
acrylic on canvas  
19.5 x 35 inches

*Battle Between Thunder* depicts the thunderbird and the water spirit, Mishebishu, in battle with each other. The conflict between these two creatures is a recurring story in Ojibway mythology and reflects the constant struggle between good and evil. The thunderbird is believed to represent good, existing in the realm of the sky, whereas the water spirit Mishebishu represents evil, and exists in the realm of darkness. The Ojibway believe that qualities of both spirits exist in each of us and are in constant battle with one another. Morrisseau paints the spirits as though they are united, showing their interdependence even in conflict.





**Balance of Nature, 1975**  
acrylic on canvas  
39.5 x 62 inches

*Balance of Nature* illustrates Morrisseau's conception of the natural world. Loons, fish, crabs and the water snake are depicted existing in harmony with each other, each independent, yet together creating a balance of nature. The sun is included as the life source within the painting.



**Salmon Spawn, 1975**  
acrylic on canvas  
32 x 22.5 inches

Because a salmon's life ends with the birth of its young, *Salmon Spawn* is symbolic of the cyclical nature of life. Morrisseau often uses the fish to reference fertility, and in this painting, he depicts two salmon surrounded by their young, swimming close to the gravel nest on which the female has laid her eggs.







**Salmon, 1976**  
acrylic on canvas  
18.5 x 25.5 inches

According to the Anishinaabe, the salmon possesses qualities of determination, instinct, and dependability. It also symbolizes the cyclical flow of life between the earth and the water, which is highlighted further by the incorporation of a divided circle, and a repetition of circular shapes throughout the composition. In this painting, bold black lines encase bright colours and highlight the X-ray view of the salmon's interior.





**Tales of the Story Tree, 1978**  
acrylic on canvas  
78.5 x 52 inches

In *Tales of the Story Tree*, Morrisseau depicts a tree filled with the prayers of a community. Traditionally, before a shaking tent ceremony, members of a community would tie offerings to a nearby tree, each representing a prayer. In this work, a man and woman are painted offering their prayers to the tree; both are naked and ready to be purified in the shaking tent ceremony. Morrisseau's story tree suggests the power of prayer. Within the tree, he has painted prayers that have come to fruition. Small, abstract faces represent answered prayers, and as lines of prophecy emanate from their mouths, the tales of the story tree are shared.





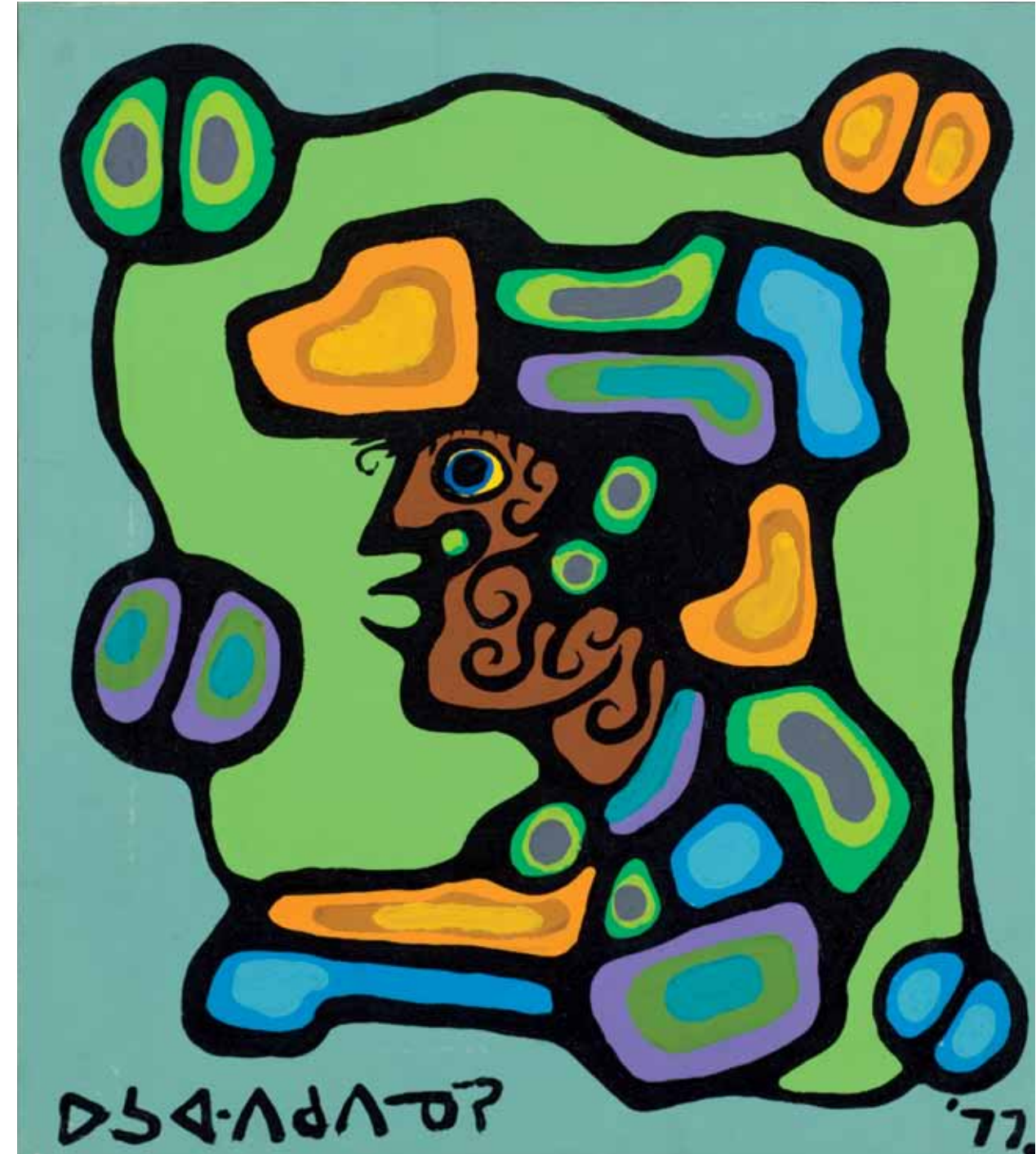
**Spirits Within, 1976**  
acrylic on canvas  
46.5 x 43 inches

*Spirits Within* illustrates the relationship between spirit and man. A thunderbird and bear are painted with human figures emerging from their bodies. These chimerical creatures refer to spirit guides and personal totems that every Ojibway holds. The duality of the spirit world and the physical world is represented in the divided circles that appear within the composition. This painting explores individual spirituality and the role of the totem within Anishinaabe culture.



**Wasakajak, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
25 x 22 inches

In *Wasakajak*, Morrisseau depicts a portrait of the well-known character Nana'b'oozoo, a prominent symbol of Anishinaabe identity. Nana'b'oozoo is regarded by "some Anishinaabe as a Manitou, and by others as the all-man, all-woman archetypal human being."<sup>9</sup> Nana'b'oozoo has a "split personality, half good, half bad. In him all the dualities of life are incorporated."<sup>10</sup> In order to illustrate this idea of incorporation, Morrisseau surrounds the figure with divided circles, each representing the paradoxes found in life.





**Energy Shaman, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
21 x 30.5 inches

The painting *Energy Shaman* is primarily a study in shape and form. Norval Morrisseau paints the figures so that they are connected and intertwined through colour and line. *Energy Shaman* depicts a shaman deriving energy from the creatures around him. Lines of communication connect the figures so that energy can be shared. Morrisseau has used green, yellow, and blue in his palette to symbolize harmony, energy, and spirituality.



**Inorganics, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
26 x 29.5 inches

Throughout his life, Morrisseau explored spirituality in many different capacities. In the 1970s, Morrisseau joined Eckankar, a religion that believes followers can acquire a unique understanding of the self as soul, while developing an elevated “consciousness” in their relationship with God. Morrisseau’s interpretations of Eckankar are found in many of his paintings during the 1970s. He found the teachings of this religion paralleled his own spiritual ideas, which had been inspired by his native heritage. The belief that all nature has a single soul that is free to travel as light to seek spiritual enlightenment is reflected in the abstract figures that float freely within the canvas.



**Thunderbird, 1977**  
acrylic on canvas  
58 x 55.5 inches

Copper Thunderbird is the Ojibway name that Morrisseau took on as a young man after it was given to him by a medicine woman in a renaming ceremony. Characteristically, using this alias, his paintings were signed in Cree syllabics. The paintings that Morrisseau created of the thunderbird can be seen as spiritual self-portraits, a way in which he could affirm his spiritual identity and elicit protection and guidance from his guardian totem, the thunderbird.

In *Thunderbird*, Morrisseau portrays a thunderbird with spread wings, rendered against a flat green background and silhouetted against a bright yellow sun. The figure is painted with heavy black outlines encasing abstract patterns and designs that represent the inner features

of the bird. In addition to their decorative function within the composition, the bird's heart and bone are emphasized to symbolize the qualities and strengths attributed to the thunderbird.

Certain numbers, colours, and forms hold symbolism for Morrisseau and much of the meaning in his work can be uncovered by reading the formal characteristics within his paintings. The three small dots arranged in a triangular formation are representative of the body, mind and spirit. Although these are not conventions that would have been a part of the traditional iconography of the Anishinaabe, they reflect Morrisseau's own spiritual beliefs, which were also inspired by the Christian influences in his upbringing.



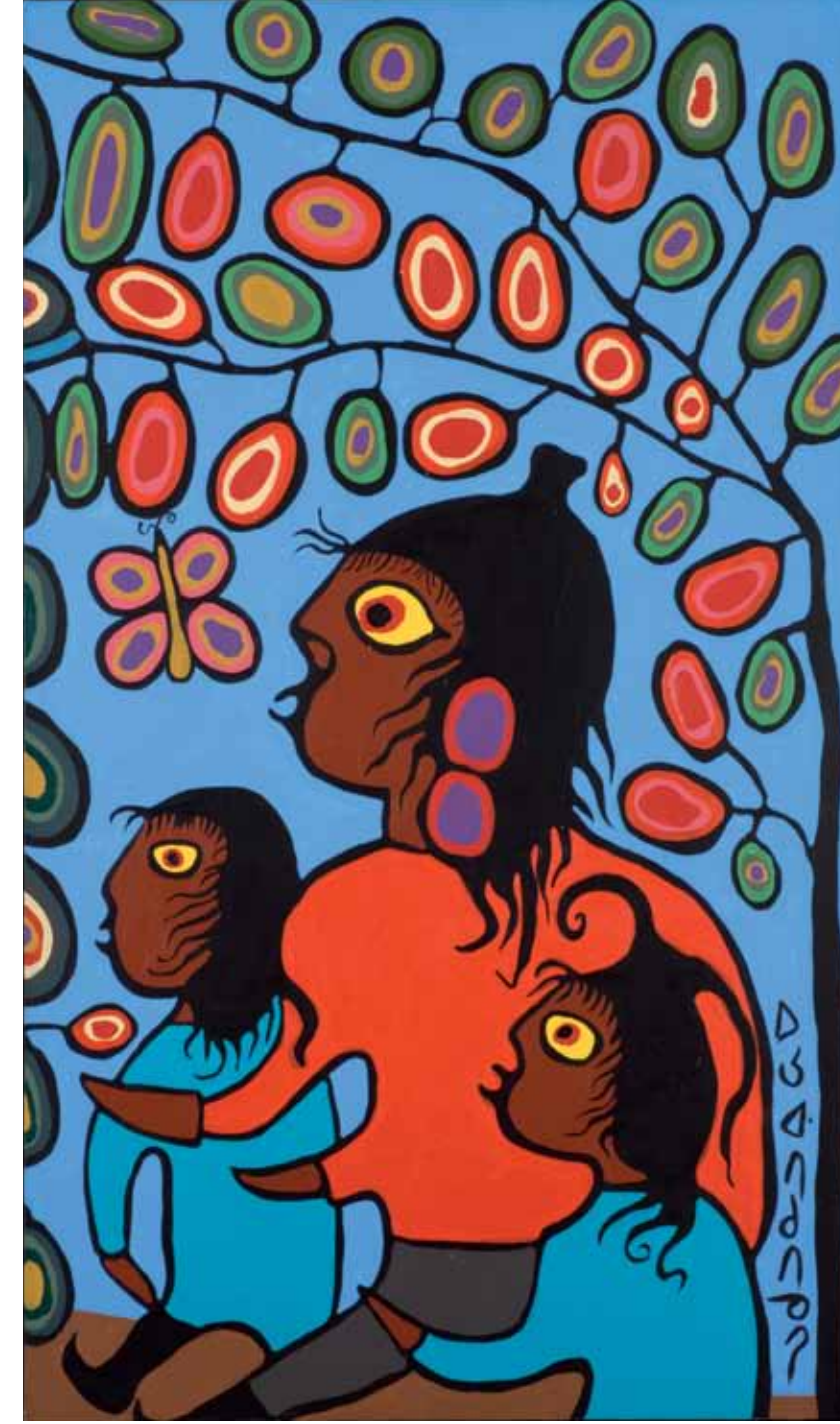


**Large Single Fish, n.d**  
acrylic on canvas  
26 x 34 inches

Norval Morriseau painted the fish many times throughout his career in order to reference the significance of the natural world. The fish has traditionally been an important source of sustenance for Canada's Native peoples, as well as being a symbol of strength and fertility. In *Large Single Fish*, Morriseau explores this theme whilst at the same time experimenting with the medium by dripping the paint onto the canvas.







**Ojibway Family Life, 1978**  
 acrylic on canvas  
 50 x 87 inches

A common theme in Morrisseau's work is the succession of knowledge and tradition. *Ojibway Family Life* depicts a scene in which the stories and legends of the Ojibway are passed down to younger members of the clan. In the left panel of the triptych, Morrisseau has painted a spirit bear, the family totem symbolizing spiritual protection, as well as the strength and power possessed by youth.





**Wasakajak, 1976**  
acrylic on canvas  
55.5 x 53 inches

In *Wasakajak*, Morrisseau depicts a creation scene featuring Nana'b'oozoo, the "folk hero of the Anishnabec."<sup>11</sup> According to legend, the Earth Mother gave birth to the first four animals of creation, one of which was Wasakajak, otherwise known as Nana'b'oozoo, who was able to take any form. Morrisseau paints *Wasakajak* in the X-ray style, and so reveals the inside of the bodies in order to highlight the spiritual qualities of the figures. Morrisseau has used line to further illustrate the interconnectedness of all creatures that come from Earth Mother.



**Catchers of the Universe,**  
1978  
acrylic on canvas  
51 x 70 inches

In *Catchers of the Universe*, Morrisseau interprets a story that he learned as a youth. According to Morrisseau, "A long time ago, maybe two or three hundred years ago, before white men were around, some people were worried about what was going to happen... so they went to talk to a shaman. They asked him if he could find out. The shaman went to a sacred place and started singing and drumming. He beat on his drum harder and harder until he jumped right out of his body and began to rise up in his consciousness. He went up to the third astral

plane where he could fly through time. He flew through time until he reached the year 2000 and then came down to look around. Below him he could see hundreds, thousands... more than he could count... millions of ants traveling down well traveled trails... and mountains sticking out of the plains like giant ice crystals, reflecting the sun back into his face. When he returned to his own time he told the people about what he had seen. He told them that what ever these creatures were, there was lots of them and they were coming."<sup>12</sup>





**Shamen Face Evil, 1979**  
acrylic on canvas  
23 x 30 inches

The shaman's role is to protect people by ensuring a balance between spirits and beings. A shaman has the power to travel to other worlds and to communicate with the spirits there. It is his role to confront evil spirits and to protect people from harm. In *Shamen Face Evil*, Morrisseau paints two shamans silhouetted against a red background, facing each other and encircled by a serpent, which is, according to Anishinaabe mythology, an adversary of Morrisseau's own spirit totem, the thunderbird.





**Family of Loons and Fish, 1979**  
acrylic on board  
31 x 23 inches

Morrisseau depicts a group of loons and fish gathered closely together. The relationship between the loon and the fish reflects the cyclical nature of life, as is highlighted by the floating circles and the series of circular forms that make up the creatures in the composition. The interdependence of nature is a common subject in Morrisseau's work, and this painting is a reflection on this theme.

**Shaman, c.1980s**  
acrylic on canvas  
52 x 44.5 inches

Although he was declared a Grand Shaman of the Ojibway in 1986, initially, Morrisseau's role as a shaman was self-declared. Morrisseau was among the first to share stories and legends of the Ojibway with those outside the community. By depicting these stories in this manner, Morrisseau was defying the traditions of his people, whereby history was passed from one generation to the next orally. The role of the shaman in Anishinaabe culture is that of a healer and visionary. Morrisseau believed that his art had the ability to heal people, and that the visions he had were divine. *Shaman* depicts a shaman painted in profile against a bright sun. The shaman's head-dress is filled with many creatures, symbolizing his relationship with nature and creatures of the earth.







**Astral Figures, 1980**  
acrylic on canvas  
19 x 35 inches

Morrisseau's conversion to the Eckankar religion in the 1970s inspired many of the artworks he went on to create. Eckankar encourages the development of a personal relationship with God in order to come to an understanding of the spiritual self. *Astral Figures* evokes Morrisseau's own ideas concerning Eckankar, specifically the concept of soul travel. The principal tenets of Eckankar are depicted in the painting as the divine life current, or 'Eck current', flows from the figures, connecting them to the light in the centre.

Morrisseau paints the figures as they are in communication with the spiritual realm, their earthly bodies symbolically omitted as their souls appear to rest on the astral plane. The birds along the top plain of the painting are symbols for the heavenly astral spirits. The blue and green colour scheme reflects the spiritual realm, and the divided circles represent the duality of earth and the spirit world. The symmetry of the painting is highlighted in the placement of the figures as well as in the subtle colour division.

**Ojibway Family Under the Tree of Life, 1987**  
acrylic on Canvas  
93 x 57 inches

As a child, Morrisseau, like many of his peers, was educated at a Catholic residential school. The St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Residential Boarding School in Fort William gave Morrisseau an education in Christianity, the influence of which can be seen in much of his work. *Ojibway Family Under the Tree of Life* depicts a man and woman seated under a tree with their child. Morrisseau's diverse upbringing enabled him to draw connections between his Ojibway heritage and his Catholic education. The tree of life is a universal symbol of life and the soul. In this painting, Morrisseau has employed a visual language that transcends cultural barriers.







**Alkaleids, n.d**  
**Acrylic on Canvas**  
**21 x 32 inches**

Communication with the spirit world is a significant aspect of Anishinaabe shamanism. The use of psychedelic plants by Ojibway shamans to induce hallucinations and invoke spiritual experiences is a common cultural practice. In this painting, Morrisseau depicts the passion flower and the mushroom, both ingredients used in the powerful “shamanic tea” drunk by shamans and those wanting to communicate with the spirit world.



**The Stories I Learned on my Travels, 1984**  
acrylic on canvas  
63 x 63 inches

*The Stories I Learned on my Travels* is a self-portrait in which Morrisseau depicts himself as a soul traveler and as a man. Sharing stories is an important part of Ojibway culture, and in *The Stories I Learned on my Travels*, Morrisseau paints his own personal experiences of learning the histories and legends of his people. A divided circle is painted at the top of the composition, connecting the two figures through lines of communication, signifying that both figures are the same man.



**Moose, n.d**  
acrylic on canvas  
30 x 44 inches

The moose, one of the five original Anishinaabe totems, is a powerful symbol in Anishinaabe culture. The moose is often associated with female power and is believed to symbolize integrity, endurance, strength, and determination. Morrisseau paints the moose and the bird connected in form as they dance together in the spiritual realm.



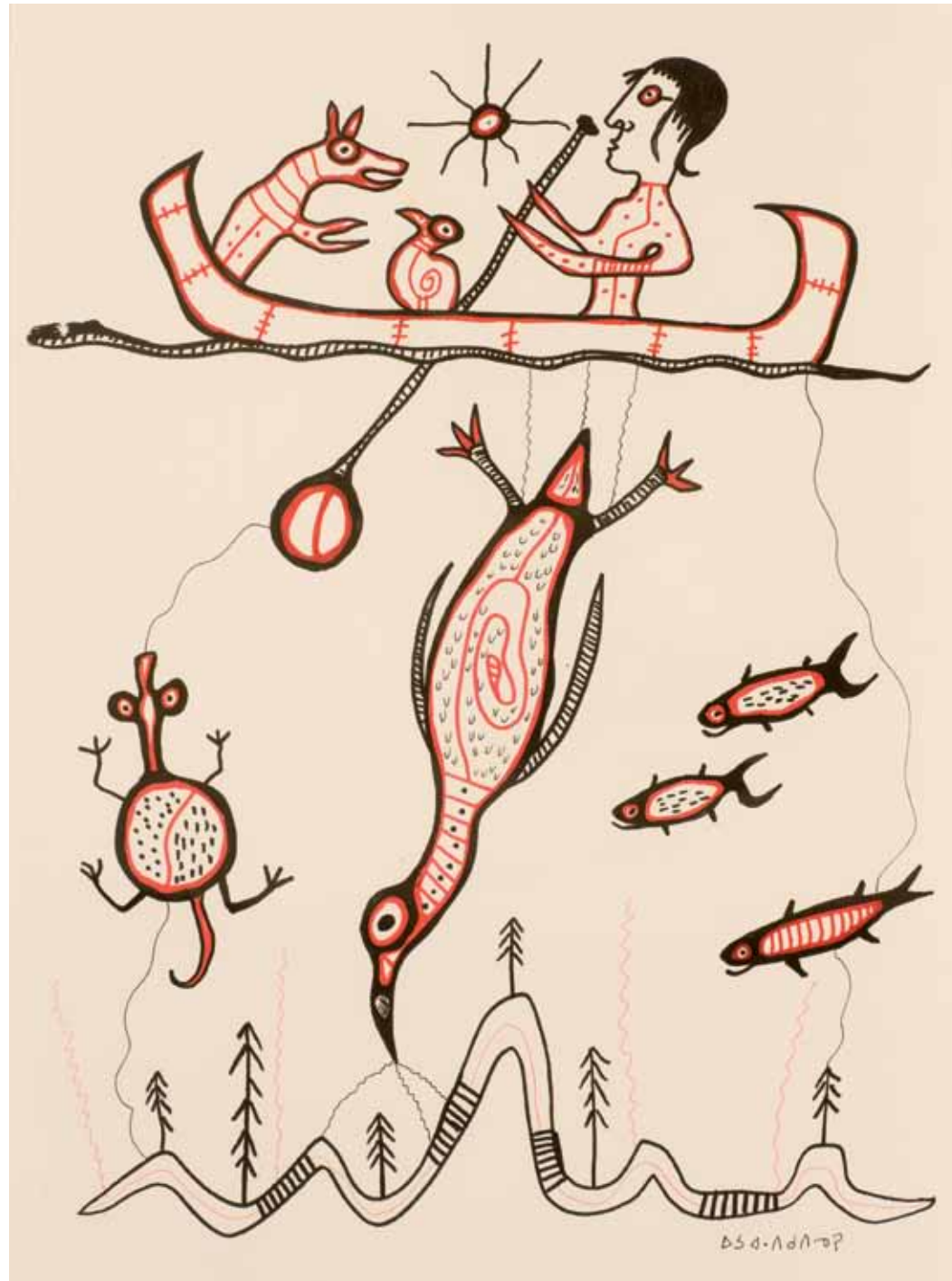


**In Honour of Ojibway Family, 1996**  
acrylic on canvas  
37.5 x 78 inches

*In Honor of Ojibway Family* is a four-panel painting showing separate figures standing in profile, dressed in ceremonial attire. The decorative thunderbird headpiece of the man on the left, and the transformation of his body into a bird, suggests that this is a Morrisseau self-portrait. The painting's imagery illustrates Morrisseau's deep love for, and sensitivity to his culture, children, and nature. This painting reflects the Ojibway custom of passing legends and stories from one generation to another.







**Loon Diving, 1993-1994**  
marker on paper  
40 x 31.5 inches

Although Morrisseau is well known for his vibrant colour palette, this painting employs only two colours to depict a loon diving into the water beneath a canoe. According to some myths, the loon is a messenger from the physical world to the spiritual world. “What the loon knows in our world he goes under to tell the water creatures – what’s going on – because he stays under for a long time.”<sup>13</sup> As with much of Morrisseau’s work, this painting does not reflect the traditional Western conventions in art, as the horizon of trees and hills has been placed along the bottom of the artwork. Lines of communication in this painting connect all creatures to each other and to their surroundings, symbolizing the interconnectedness of all things.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Lister Sinclair and Jack Pollock, *The Art of Norval Morrisseau* (Toronto: Methuen, 1979) 7

<sup>2</sup> Lister Sinclair and Jack Pollock, *The Art of Norval Morrisseau* (Toronto: Methuen, 1979) 7; Methuen, 1979) 7

<sup>3</sup> Norval Morrisseau, *Legends of My People The Great Ojibway* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1965) 71

<sup>4</sup> Norval Morrisseau “Personal Correspondence with Joseph McLeod”, in *Norval Morrisseau* (Toronto: Maslak McLeod, 2007) 16

<sup>5</sup> “The Art of Norval Morrisseau, The Writings of Basil H. Johnston”, Exhibition Catalogue (Calgary: Glenbow, 1999) 37

<sup>6</sup> Norval Morrisseau “Personal Correspondence with Joseph McLeod”, in *Norval Morrisseau* (Toronto: Maslak McLeod, 2007) 22

<sup>7</sup> Norval Morrisseau, *Jo-Go Way Moose Dream*, The Glenbow Museum <http://www.glenbow.org/collections/art/first.cfm>

<sup>8</sup> “The Art of Norval Morrisseau, The Writings of Basil H. Johnston”, Exhibition Catalogue (Calgary: Glenbow, 1999) 34

<sup>9</sup> Basil Johnston, *The Manitous: The Spiritual World of the Ojibway* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001) 244

<sup>10</sup> Mary E. (Beth) Southcott, *The Sound of the Drum – The Sacred Art of the Anishnabec* (Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1984) 16

<sup>11</sup> Mary E. (Beth) Southcott, *The Sound of the Drum – The Sacred Art of the Anishnabec* (Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1984) 16

<sup>12</sup> Norval Morrisseau, personal correspondence.

<sup>13</sup> James Simon Mishibinjima, “Personal Communication with Theresa S, Smith, 1988”, in *The Island of the Anishnaabeg*, Theresa S. Smith (Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1995) 189



# ARTIST CV NORVAL MORRISSEAU:

## List of Solo Exhibitions

**1962** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1963** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1964** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1965** Hart House, University of Toronto, Toronto

Fleet Galleries, Winnipeg

**1966** Musée du Québec, Québec City

**1967** La Galerie Cartier, Montreal

Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1968** Art Gallery of Newport, Rhode Island

**1969** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

Gallerie Saint-Paul, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France

**1972** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

Damkjar-Burton Gallery, Hamilton, Ontario

**1974** Bau-Xi Gallery, Vancouver

Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1975** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

Shayne Gallery, Montreal

**1976** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

Gallery 115, Winnipeg

**1977** Graphic Gallery, Vancouver

Man Changing Into A Thunderbird, Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1978** First Canadian Place; Toronto

Norval Morrisseau Paintings, Wells Gallery, Ottawa

Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1979** *1st Canadians at 1st Canadian Place; An Exhibition of Recent Paintings by Norval Morrisseau*, presented by Pollock Gallery at First Canadian Place, Toronto

The Gallery Stratford, Stratford, Ontario

Cardigan-Milne Gallery, Winnipeg

*Norval Morrisseau*, Gairloch Galleries, Oakville, Ontario

**1980** Baynard Gallery, New York

Canadiana Galleries, Edmonton

Pollock Gallery, Toronto

**1981** Pollock Gallery, Toronto

Anthony's Gallery, Toronto and Vancouver

*The Work of Norval Morrisseau*, Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1982** Moore Gallery, Hamilton, Ontario

Robertson Gallery, Ottawa

Scarborough Public Library, Scarborough, Ontario

Legacy Art Gallery, Toronto

Newman Gallery, London, Ontario

Masters Gallery, Calgary

**1983** *Children of Mother Earth*, Gallery Soho, Toronto

Art Imperial Gallery, Toronto

Thunder Bay National Exhibition Center, Thunder Bay, Ontario

*Norval Morrisseau: Recent Work*, Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1984** Library AA Gallery, Brampton, Ontario

**1987** *O.M. Show*, La Casa de la Raza, Santa Barbara, California, USA

Manulife Center, Edmonton

Gulf Canada Gallery, Calgary

**1989** The Art Emporium, Vancouver

**1990** *Norval Morrisseau: Paintings from the Glenbow Museum*, Glenbow Art Gallery, Calgary

*The Shaman's Return*, Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

**1991** Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

Ufundi Gallery, Ottawa

*Norval Morrisseau: Works from the Permanent Collection*, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1992** Jenkins Showler Galleries, White Rock, British Columbia

**1994** Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

*Norval Morrisseau – The Gift*, MacLaren Art Center, Barrie, Ontario

**1995** Winchester Gallery, Victoria

**1997** Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

**1999** *Norval Morrisseau: Bridging the Past to the Future*, Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

**2000** Canada House Banff, Alberta

*Norval Morrisseau: The Red Lake Years*, Red Lake Museum, Thunder Bay, Ontario and Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

*Norval Morrisseau on Paper*, Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

*The Art of Norval Morrisseau: A Survey of Works from 1964 to the Present*, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver

**2001** *Draw and Tell: Lines of Transformation by Norval Morrisseau/Copper Thunderbird*. The Drawing Center, New York, New York

*The Red Lake Years*, The Red Lake Museum, Red Lake, Ontario and University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg

*The Evolution of Norval Morrisseau*, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Canada House, Banff, Alberta

**2002** *Norval Morrisseau on Paper*, Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

*The Red Lake Years*, Maslak McLeod Gallery, Toronto

**2004** *Norval Morrisseau: Wabino-wiin Shaman Artist*, Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

**2006** *Norval Morrisseau - Shaman Artist*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

**2007** American Museum of Indian Art, New York, New York

**2008** *Copper Thunderbird: Invention, Inspiration and Transformation*, Legacy Art Gallery and Café, University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia

**2010** *Copper Thunderbird – The Art of Norval Morrisseau*, Elmwood Spa, Toronto

# ARTIST CV NORVAL MORRISSEAU:

## List of Group Exhibitions

**1962** Indian and Metis Friendship Center, Winnipeg

**1963** *Canadian Contemporary Art*, Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, Kitchener, Ontario

Galerie Agnès Lefort, Montreal

**1964** Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario

Red Door Gallery, Winnipeg

**1965** University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario

Galerie Agnès Lefort, Montreal

**1966** Fleet Galleries, Winnipeg

**1967** *Indians of Canada Pavillion*, Expo 67, Montreal

*300 Years of Canadian Art*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

**1968** The Art Gallery, York University, Toronto

Art Gallery B216, Glendon Campus, University of Toronto, Toronto

Theater of the Arts Gallery, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario

*Contemporary Indian Artists*, University of Calgary, Calgary

Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto

*Eskimo Sculpture, Eskimo Prints and Paintings of Norval Morriseau*, Art Association of Newport, Rhode Island

**1970** McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario

**1971** Public Library, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

*Festival of Canada*, Robertson Art Center, Binghampton, NY

Grimaldi Chateau, Haut-des-Cagnes Biennale, Cagnes-Sur-Mer, France

K-Brothers Art Shop and Gallery, North Bay, Ontario

**1972** Art and Legend, Dominion Corinth Galleries Ltd., Ottawa

*Algoma College Collection*, Allied Arts Centre, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

**1973** *Prison Arts 73*, Saskatchewan Hotel, Regina; travels through Ontario and Quebec

*Canadian Indian Painting*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

*Canadian Contemporary Painting*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo, Ontario

**1974** *Contemporary Native Arts of Ontario*, Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Ontario

*Canadian Indian Art 74*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

*Canadian Guild of Crafts*, Québec City

*Three Contemporary Canadian Indian Affairs*, Glenbow Art Gallery, Calgary

**1975** Dominion Gallery, Montreal

*New Indian Prints*, Pollock Gallery, Toronto

*Indian Art*, Wallack Gallery, Ottawa

**1976** Bergens Kunstforening, Bergen, Norway

*Contemporary Native Art of Canada – The Woodland Indians*, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; travels to Canada House Art Gallery, London, and Aula Luisen Schule, Lahr, West Germany

Aggregation Gallery, Toronto

Wells Gallery, Ottawa

*Recent Works by the Seven Members at the Art Emporium*, Professional Native Indian Artists Inc., Vancouver

Woodland Indian Cultural-Education Centre, Brantford, Ontario

**1977** *Remains to be Seen*, National Museum of Man, Ottawa

McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinberg

*Painting Now*, Agnes Etherington Art Center, Kingston, Ontario

Hart House, University of Toronto, Toronto

*Modern Native Canadian Art: Tradition Inspiration*, Hart House, University of Toronto, Toronto

*Contemporary Indian Art – The Trail from the Past to the Future*, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina and Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario

*Links to a Tradition*, Trent University, Peterborough; Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa; travels to Brazil

Government of Ontario Art Collection, Queen's Park, Toronto

*Art to Go*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Dominion Corinth Galleries, Ottawa

*Woodland Indian Exhibition*, presented by the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario at the Algoma Fall Festival, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

**1978** *Art of the Woodland Indian*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario; Surrey, British Columbia; St. Thomas, Ontario; North Bay, Ontario

*Morriseau, Thomas, Odjig*, Pollock gallery, Toronto

*Images of Man in Canadian Painting 1878 – 1978*, McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario

Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary

Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver

Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, New Brunswick

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Pollock Gallery, Toronto

Gallery One, Toronto

St. Thomas Art Gallery, St. Thomas, Ontario

*Images of Man in Canadian Painting 1878 – 1978*, McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario

Galerie Michele de Kerdour, Québec City

**1979** Thunder Bay National Exhibition Center, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Timmins Museum, Timmins, Ontario

*Kinder des Nanabush*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection

Kleinberg, Ontario; Intersera Gallerie, Hamburg, West Germany; Thunder Bay Exhibition Center, Thunder Bay, Ontario; Timmins Museum, Timmins, Ontario

Aggregation Gallery, Toronto

Cardigan – Milne Gallery, Winnipeg

Bearclaw Gallery, Edmonton

*Native Indian Art*, Gallery One, Toronto

Centennial Gallery, Oakville, Ontario

Simon Fraser Art Gallery, Burnaby, British Columbia

Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta

The Studio, Oshawa, Ontario

Cassell Galleries, Ottawa

**1980** *A Selection of Canadian Paintings*, The Art Gallery of Harbour Front, Toronto

*Collectors Limited*, Bearclaw Gallery, Edmonton

Canadian Galleries, Edmonton

Philbrook Art Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lynwood Arts Centre, Simcoe, Ontario

La Cloche Country Art, Willisville, Ontario

*Prints of the Land*, Bayshore Inn, Vancouver

**1981** Anthony's Gallery, Toronto and Vancouver

*Shaman Vision Series*, Nicholas Gallery, Ottawa, ON

*American Indian Art in the 1980's*, Native American Center for the Living Arts, Niagara Falls, New York

**1982** *Renewal: Masterworks of Contemporary Indian Art from the National Museum of Man*, Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre and Centre for Indian Art, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Scarborough Public Library, Scarborough, Ontario

Legacy Art Centre, Toronto

Newman Gallery, London, Ontario

Gallery Quan, Toronto

Moore Gallery, Hamilton

Cedarbrae District Library, Toronto

**1983** *Contemporary Indian Art at Rideau Hall*, Ottawa

*Contemporary Indian and Inuit Art of Canada*, United Nations Art Gallery, New York

*New Growth from Ancestral Roots*, Koffler Gallery, Willowdale, Ontario

*Indian Art '83*, Woodland Indian Cultural Centre, Brantford, Ontario

Art Imperial Gallery, Toronto

**1984** *Norval Morriseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Thunder Bay National Exhibition Centre and Centre for Indian Art, Thunder Bay, Ontario; Chatham Cultural Centre, Chatham, Ontario; Art Gallery of Algoma, Sault Ste Marie, Ontario; Laurentian University Museum and Arts Centre, Sudbury, Ontario

*Contemporary Indian Art at Rideau Hall*, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

*The Native Loyalists*, Belleville, Ontario



**1985** *Two Worlds*, Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina  
*Of Dreams, Legends and Realities*, Scarborough, Ontario  
Manulife Center, Edmonton

**1986** *The Shaman Art of Norval Morrisseau and Marion*. First Canadian Place, Toronto

Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto

*The Birch Bark Sings: Ontario North Now*, Ontario Place Toronto

*Gifts to the Centre*, Woodlands Indian Cultural Education Center, Brantford, Ontario

New Beginnings, Native Business Summit, Toronto

**1987** *The Indian Serigraph Parade*, Westlands Gallery, Calgary

*A Celebration of Contemporary Canadian Native Art*, Southwest Museum, Los Angeles, California

*Paintings from the Algoma University College*, Algoma Art Gallery, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

Musée Amerindien de Pointe-Bleue, Chicoutimi, Quebec  
Manulife Building, Edmonton

**1988** Canadian Art Galleries, Calgary

Sinclair Centre, Vancouver

**1989** *In the Shadow of the Sun: Contemporary Canadian Indian and Inuit Art opens at the Canadian Museum of Civilization*, Gatineau, Quebec; Museum am Ostwall and Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, Dortmund West Germany

*Magiciens de la Terre/Magicians of the Earth*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

*Woodlands: Contemporary Art of the Anishnabe*, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1991** *In the Shadow of the Sun: Contemporary Canadian Indian and Inuit Art*, Museum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, Netherlands

Wallack Galleries, Ottawa

*Public/Private Gatherings*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, Quebec

Kenneth Gallery, Sarnia, Ontario

**1992** *Contemporary Art of Canada [Art Contemporain de Canada]*, Espace Chapon, Paris, France

*The Spirit Within*, Kinsman Robinson Galleries, Toronto

**1993** *Art of the Anishnabe: Works from the Permanent Collection*. Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1994** Meir Naef Gallery, Barrie, Ontario

Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1996** *The Helen E. Band Collection*, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**1997** *Claiming Ourselves*, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon

**1999** Winchester Galleries, Victoria

**2000** *Exposed: the Aesthetics of Aboriginal Erotic Art MacKenzie Art Gallery*, Regina; Ottawa Art Gallery, Ottawa

*Listening with the Heart*, Frank Weisman Art Museum, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

**2001** *Works by Norval Morrisseau and John Laford*, Art Gallery of Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

**2002** *Transforming First Nations Art from the Permanent Collection*, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

Creating Gallery, Thunder Bay, Ontario

**2003** Art Gallery of Algoma, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

**2004** *Young Spirits Rising*, Art Gallery of the South Okanagan, Penticton, British Columbia

**2005** *Chroma Zones*, London Museum, London, Ontario

**2010** *Woodland School*, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinberg, Ontario

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Dewdney, Selwyn. *Sacred Scrolls of the Southern Ojibway*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975

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McLuhan, Elizabeth and Hill, Tom. *Norval Morrisseau and the Emergence of the Image Makers*. Exhibition Catalogue. Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario and Methuen Publications, 1984

Mishibinijima, James Simon. "Personal Communication with Theresa S. Smith, 1988", in Theresa S. Smith ed. *The Island of the Anishnaabeg*. Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1995 pp. 189

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Morrisseau, Norval and Donald Robinson. Norval Morrisseau: *Travels to the House of Invention*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997

Norval Morrisseau. Exhibition Catalogue. Toronto: Maslak McLeod, 2007

Norval Morrisseau: *Honouring First Nations. Exhibition Catalogue*. Toronto: Kinsman Robinson Galleries, 1994

Robinson, Donald and Norval Morrisseau. Norval Morrisseau: *Travels to the House of Invention*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, Ltd., 1997

Southcott, Mary E. (Beth). *The Sound of the Drum – The Sacred Art of the Anishnabec*. Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills Press, 1984

*The Art of Norval Morrisseau, The Writings of Basil H. Johnston*. Exhibition Catalogue. Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1999

