

PAMA honours National Truth and Reconciliation Day with outdoor showcase of Indigenous artists

By Rob Paul

With National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30 and Culture Days at the Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives' (PAMA) beginning September 24, PAMA will be showcasing two Indigenous artists' work and their stories in two outdoor installations.

Part of PAMA's commitment and mandate is to be an accessible safe space for the diverse communities of Brampton, Caledon and Mississauga to come together and celebrate arts and culture. To strive for that, it wants to be the place where all communities in Peel see themselves reflected and actively contributing to the art world.

The first of the outdoor installations is called, 'One,' and is by Inuk photographer Katherine Takpannie. It will take centre stage on PAMA's outdoor banners until January 3.

Takpannie's work is described as evoking a sense of meditative calm in which the female figure becomes one with her surrounding. Takpannie is reflecting on the connection of the Inuit people to the sublime land, and the female body in its reproductive state as mother nature.

Takpannie, who is pregnant with her first child, signals the dawn of new life through her amautik (a mother's parka). Seen from behind, she is a solitary figure enveloped by the whiteness of a snow-covered, winter landscape.

Alongside Takpannie's work will be Tracey-Mae Chambers' installation called, 'Hope and Healing Canada.' It will be running from September 30 to October 3.

Chambers will be creating her site-specific piece on the front lawn at PAMA, and people are encouraged to stop by throughout the day or follow along on social media to see the process of the piece's creation.

Chambers grew up as a stranger to her own story; adopted and re-named, grafted into a family tree. The discovery in adulthood of her Ojibwa-Métis heritage was a revelation that set her on a path of discovery.

According to PAMA, her work is in the powerful tradition of the vessel as metaphor for individuals; we fill and re-fill ourselves throughout life to create our own story. It's also her reaction to COVID-19 and her hope for healing by reconnecting with other people and our environments and the installation speaks to the lack of meaningful connection between settler Canadians and Indigenous, Inuit and Métis people.

PAMA is continuing its ongoing commitment to the Indigenous communities in Peel Region and beyond by continuing to share, educate and showcase art and history of Indigenous Canadians through initiatives such as this one.

To show its commitment to the Indigenous community, in 2013, PAMA opened the 'Were Here: The Story of Aboriginal People in Peel' exhibition, developed in partnership with Indigenous community members and advisors. We Are Here aimed to give visitors an understanding of the rich, vibrant, and enduring cultures and experiences of Indigenous people who have called this land home for thousands of years ago and still do today.

PAMA will continue to engage and consult with Indigenous partners in the community going forward. Although it's still closed (indoors) due to the pandemic, it's in the process of upgrading its airflow system and plans to reopen in 2022.