

NEW INTERACTIVE WEBSITE SHARES THE ART OF CAPE DORSET (KINNGAIT)



Kenojuak Ashevak, Untitled, 1994–1995, graphite, coloured pencil and felt-tip pen, 50.9 × 66.3 cm, Collection of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative Ltd.

November 26, 2019, Kleinburg ON – The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is pleased to announce the creation of a major interactive resource for the study and sharing of Inuit art from the Cape Dorset Archive. Entitled Iningat Ilagiit (ᐃᓂᐱᓂᓂ ᐃᓕᓂᓂ, A Place for Family), the website (inatingilagiit.ca) is a partnership between the McMichael, the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative (WBEC) and Dorset Fine Arts. Iningat Ilagiit is supported by TD Bank Group as part of its global corporate citizenship platform, The Ready Commitment, which supports impactful projects that contribute to connected communities and a more vibrant planet. Additional support is provided by an investment from the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC); and One Ocean Expeditions.

The Cape Dorset Archive is a historical record of the art produced between the 1960s and 1980s by the residents of Cape Dorset (Kinngait). Since the late 1950s residents of Kinngait and other communities have produced thousands of drawings, only a fraction of which were published and distributed as limited-edition prints for Southern markets. In 1992, after a disastrous fire in Baker Lake destroyed the studio and its holdings, the Board of the West Baffin Eskimo Co-operative in Kinngait transferred their archive of almost 100,000 drawings to the McMichael to be preserved and made accessible through technology. However, most of this art has never been seen by the communities that produced it.

Now, with support from the VMC, TD Bank Group through The Ready Commitment, and One Ocean Expeditions, this content will be made available for the first time through the Iningat Ilagiit website, which will be previewed in December 2019 with a formal launch to follow. The website will provide public access to more than 3,700 images of prints and drawings as well as 250 photographs produced by Inuit artists that have been digitized to contemporary standards and that have not been accessible to the community since the 1990s.

But Iningat Ilagiit is more than just an online archive. Through the development of a unique web tool visitors to the interactive site will be able to create virtual exhibitions and share them through social media, fostering new dialogues about the artwork and creating community-generated connections. The site will also be a major new resource for students in Kinngait and other Inuit communities who will be able to have direct access to the art of their community at school and at home. Additionally, users, particularly those who are descendants, will be able to contribute biographical details on artists in the archive thereby actively participating in the research being generated on the site and ensuring that the body of knowledge continues to expand.

"The Cape Dorset Archive is an astonishing and beautiful resource that the McMichael is honoured and privileged to keep safe – but it has long been inaccessible to the very people to whom it means the most. This vital digitization project at long last addresses that anomaly. We couldn't be more pleased," says McMichael Executive Director Ian DeJardin. The website will be available in English, French and, thanks to TD, in Inuktitut as well. It has been consciously developed to accommodate Northern internet connections, low bandwidth and is fully accessible.

"Through The Ready Commitment, our global corporate citizenship platform, we are proud to sponsor *Iningat Ilagiit*, the Cape Dorset Archive, making it available to all online. Arts and culture can help amplify diverse voices and unveil previously untold stories. The opportunity to digitize and make this important Inuit cultural history accessible in English, French, and Inuktitut is something TD is excited about to foster learning and help open doors to a more inclusive tomorrow. " Said Andrea Barrack, Global Head, Sustainability and Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group.

Ultimately, the project will digitize the entire Cape Dorset Archive, creating an invaluable resource for generations to come. While Iningat Ilagiit was created to provide public access to an important archive of unique art, it is equally an active space for dialogue around history, language and cultural memory that deserves to be widely known, studied and shared.

Members of the media are invited to the launch and demonstration of this new major interactive resource for studying and sharing Inuit art from the Cape Dorset Archive on Thursday, December 12, 10 AM to 12 PM.

Please RSVP to Sam Cheung, Media Relations and Communications Coordinator, at scheung@mcmichael.com or 905.893.1121 ext. 2210.

About the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

The McMichael stands alone as the only public fine art gallery in the nation that focuses on Canadian art and the Indigenous art of our country, both historical and contemporary. The permanent collection consists of over 6,500 artworks by Tom Thomson, the Group of Seven, their contemporaries, and First Nations, Métis, Inuit and contemporary artists who have contributed to the development of Canadian art. The McMichael is also the gallery of record for works on paper from the Inuit community of Cape Dorset, as we are the custodians for the Cape Dorset archive, totalling more than 100,000 artworks.

About Dorset Fine Arts

Since its emergence in the 1950s as a creative hub and cultural incubator, Cape Dorset, Nunavut in Canada's Arctic Circle, has been a source of world class drawings, prints and sculpture. Under the stewardship of the West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative and its marketing division Dorset Fine Arts, Canadian Inuit art has found a place amongst the finest collections, exhibitions and publications worldwide. The unique contribution of Cape Dorset artists has enriched the general discourse around contemporary art and has helped to build a distinctive creative profile for Canada. In order to preserve the vitality of Inuit art, the milieu requires enhanced resources and renewed stimulus – maintenance of the Cape Dorset legacy requires continued investment in both the creation and promotion of Inuit art.

Throughout its history of activity, West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative has enjoyed financial success and remained sustainable almost entirely via self-generated revenues. However, some sixty years later, the business world has significantly changed with new models for success widely adopted in an increasingly competitive environment. Particularly within a commercial visual arts context, a rapidly growing international appetite for cultural product is an exciting opportunity on the one hand, and a situation of heightened challenge on the other. The Legacy Project is a targeted initiative intended to respond to this shifting territory – its design is both immediately vital in triggering an Inuit art renaissance while at the same time seeding future momentum.

About TD Group Corporate Citizenship

TD has a long-standing commitment to enriching the lives of its customers, colleagues and communities. As part of its corporate citizenship platform, The Ready Commitment, TD is targeting CDN \$1 billion (US \$775 million) in total by 2030 towards community giving in four areas critical to opening doors for a more inclusive and sustainable tomorrow – Financial Security, Vibrant Planet, Connected Communities and Better Health. Through The Ready Commitment, TD aspires to link its business, philanthropy and human capital to help people feel more confident - not just about their finances, but also in their ability to achieve their personal goals in a changing world. For further information, visit www.td.com/thereadycommitment.

About the Virtual Museum of Canada

The Virtual Museum of Canada, managed by the Canadian Museum of History with the financial support of the Government of Canada, is the largest digital source of stories and experiences shared by Canada's museums and heritage organizations. The Virtual Exhibits investment stream helps Canadian museums and heritage organizations develop dynamic medium- to large-scale online products exploring Canadian history, heritage and culture.

Media Contacts

Sam Cheung

Media Relations and Communications Coordinator
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905-893-1121 x2110
scheung@mcmichael.com

Grace Johnstone

Director, Communications, Marketing & Sales
McMichael Canadian Art Collection
905-893-1121 x2265
gjohnstone@mcmichael.com

Cape Dorset Archive

In Partnership With



Supported By



THE
READY
COMMITMENT

