

Engaging Authenticity: A few thoughts to ponder

What constitutes "authenticity" in contemporary Aboriginal art is a matter of frequent discussion and heated debate. Like "tradition," authenticity is open to varied interpretation, stubbornly resisting fixed and easy definition. This is not necessarily a bad thing, and may merely reflect an ever-shifting spirit of cultural vitality. Cultures and languages constantly evolve, but our thinking about them does not always keep pace with the rate of change and transformation.

But what is it about the notion of authenticity that engages us in critical reflection? Why do we care if a taste, song, image, story or film is considered "authentic," or certified "genuine?" Moreover, who are the gatekeepers of Aboriginal artistic legitimacy, and how does their endorsement, or disapproval, affect our understanding and experience of indigenous aesthetic phenomena?

Does concern for authenticity merely reinforce a belief in cultural purity and idealized stereotypes? Not necessarily. In an age of cultural mis-representation and institutional non-representation, Aboriginal artists in all areas of the expressive arts share a deep commitment to personal and communal self-representation. Through their voices and visual images they seek to present a more accurate, and more "authentic" reflection of indigenous experience in Canada.

At the same time, both Native and non-Native consumers of Aboriginal cultural products - whether art, music, literature, film or fine food - want assurance of authenticity in a media-saturated marketplace that celebrates the superficial, and applauds the latest forms of technological imitation. The consumer is wise to be wary.

Today, you are invited to engage with the presenters in this ongoing discussion on artistic authenticity. Enjoy!

A followup discussion (minus presenters) will take place on Monday, March 7, 6:00-7:30 pm, in Room 1216, Dunton Tower. All are welcome.

Dr. Allan J. Ryan was appointed as the New Sun Chair in Aboriginal Art and Culture in July, 2001. The first of its kind in Canada, the Chair is situated in the School of Canadian Studies at Carleton University. It is made possible through the support of the New Sun Fund, administered by the Community Foundation of Ottawa.

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PROGRAM

**Saturday, March 5, 2004
9 am to 4:30 pm
Room 5050, 5th floor, Minto Centre
Carleton University**

A presentation of the New Sun Chair in Aboriginal Art and Culture



PROGRAM

- 8:30 - 9:15 Registration
Coffee/juice/muffins
- 9:15 - 9:30 Welcome, Dr. Allan J. Ryan
New Sun Chair in Aboriginal Art and Culture
- Opening prayer, Elder Angaangaq "Uncle" Lyberth
www.icewisdom.com
- 9:30 - 10:20 **Visual Arts: Ron Noganosh**, multi-media sculptor
- 10:25 - 11:15 **Literary Arts: Maria Campbell**, author and educator
- 11:15 - 11:30 Nutrition Break
- 11:30 - 12:20 **Culinary Arts: Phoebe & Warren Sutherland**, proprietors, Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro
- 12:30 - 1:30 Buffet luncheon of Native cuisine, Fenn Lounge
Saskatoon berry bannock bread with whipped butter
Salmon gravalox salad wih green beans, rapini, peppers and tomatoes
Duo of pickerel and red snapper with a curry coconut lobster broth
Oven roasted duck with game jus
Sweet and white potato mash
Wild mushroom and root vegetable ragout
Pumpkin cheesecake with maple caramel sauce
- 1:30 - 2 pm Vocal performance by **Jani Lauzon**, accompanied by Arthur Renwick on guitar and Matthew Shawn Flemming on percussion.
- 2:15 - 3:05 **Media Arts: Jason Ryle**, Chair, Board of Directors, imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival
- 3:10 - 4:00 **Performing Arts: Jani Lauzon**, singer/songwriter/actress/puppeteer
- 4:00 - 4:30 Presenters forum, concluding remarks



Culinary Arts: Phoebe and Warren Sutherland

Phoebe and Warren Sutherland are the chef/owners of Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro, Ottawa's first Aboriginal fine dining establishment.

Phoebe (née Blacksmith) was born and raised in Mistissini Lake on James Bay. She is a graduate of Algonquin College's Hotel and Restaurant Management Program as well as the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont. While studying at NECI she met her future husband, Warren, who is from Jamaica and found his true calling in the culinary arts after exploring Electrical Engineering.



The idea for Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro began as an assigned project at Algonquin. What Phoebe envisioned then was a relaxed atmosphere, native art and artifacts on display, native music playing in the background, and of course wonderful Aboriginal cuisine. It came to fruition when Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro opened its doors in Ottawa's Byward Market in November 2003.

Their careful attention to detail and changing seasonal menus set a high standard from the outset. This past year Sweetgrass Aboriginal Bistro was named Best New Business of the Year by the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce, and Best New Restaurant of 2004 by Ottawa City magazine.

Visit: www.sweetgrassbistro.com

Media Arts: Jason Ryle

The mandate of the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival is to promote and train Aboriginal media artists from across Canada and to support both established and emerging artists in an international context. Since its inception in 1998, The imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival has become one of the most important Aboriginal film and media arts festivals in the world.



The four-day festival and its annual tour (which takes selected programming to remote Aboriginal communities) fill a void in the artistic and cultural landscape where Aboriginal filmmakers and media artists are often under or misrepresented. imagineNATIVE focuses on film, video, radio, and new media works by emerging and established Aboriginal artists.

Programming includes annual retrospectives, curated programmes, and the showcasing of significant groundbreaking and legacy works. In maintaining a strict focus on new works by Aboriginal artists, imagineNATIVE has become an important feeder and exporter of Aboriginal works to other festivals, markets, and broadcasters nationally and internationally.

Jason Ryle is himself an award-winning freelance journalist and serves as Chair of the festival's Board of Directors. He works as a writer and researcher and is currently making his first short film. Visit: www.imagenative.org

Biographies of Presenters

Literary Arts: Maria Campbell

Maria Campbell is an author, playwright, educator, broadcaster, and theatre, film and television producer/director.

She first came to public attention in 1973 with the publication of *Half-breed*, her gripping memoir of the Metis experience. The book changed peoples perceptions profoundly and is still one of the most widely taught texts in Canadian literature. Other books followed, including several for children, as well as plays, poems and video.

In addition to her many publications and varied professional contributions, she has served for many years as a mentor and volunteer community worker, lending her expertise to community development projects, especially those involving women and children in crisis.

A sought-after speaker, Ms. Campbell is the recipient of several honorary degrees and numerous awards, including a National Aboriginal Achievement Award, a Dora Mavor Moore Award for playwrighting and most recently, the 2004 Molson Prize in the Arts, awarded by the Canada Council.

She is a faculty member at the University of Saskatchewan and lives in Saskatoon.



Performing Arts: Jani Lauzon

Jani Lauzon is a Dora nominated actress, three-time Juno nominated singer/songwriter, and the creator of several children's puppet characters.

She recently won a Gemini Award for her role as Seeka in the television series *Wumpa's World*, the first Metis puppeteer to garner the award.



She has released two independent recordings through her record company Ra Records and is a co-founder of Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble. They recently celebrated a successful run of their first full-length show *The Scrubbing Project*. Her play *On the Toad to Freedom* was a hit at Weesageechak Begins to Dance XVI, the annual showcase of new work presented by Native Earth Performing Arts of Toronto. The play is being further developed through The Barker Fairley Distinguished Writer-in-Residence Fellowship at the University of Toronto.

Her theatre credits include *Diva Ojibway* and *Son of Ayash* for Native Earth, and *Almighty Voice and His Wife* for the Great Canadian Theatre Company. Her television work includes appearances in *Destiny Ridge* and *Conspiracy of Silence*, and she has directed *The Vagina Monologues* for Native Earth and *Waiora* for the Centre for Indigenous Theatre.

She lives in Toronto with her partner, Arthur Renwick and their daughter Tara. Visit www.janilauzon.com.

Visual Arts: Ron Noganosh

Ron Noganosh is a multi-media sculptor and painter who uses found objects to create works of insightful humour and irony.

While his themes and materials reflect his Native ancestry, the pieces he creates comment on issues as varied as ecology, racism and socio-economic hierarchies that are common to all. His goal as an artist is that his audience will see with new eyes, hear with new ears, and resonate with new laughter. He says he likes to encourage people "to think, to cry, to laugh and to try to make a change."

Ron's work has been exhibited in galleries and museums across Canada and around the world, and has been featured in numerous publications. His solo retrospective, *It Takes Time: The Art of Ron Noganosh*, opened at the Ottawa Art Gallery and toured Canada for over two years. The accompanying catalogue by Lucy Lippard and Tom Hill, won the Canadian Museum Association award for best art catalogue of 2002.

Born on the Magnetawan Reserve on Georgian Bay, he lives and works in Ottawa with his wife, Maxine.

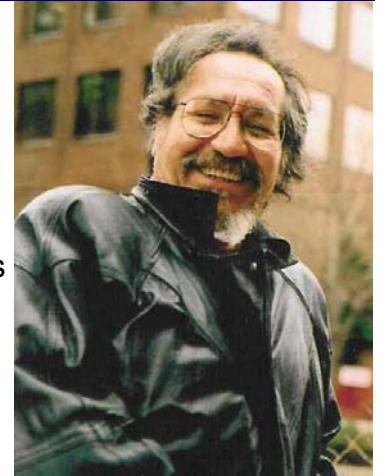


Photo: Jeff Thomas