

AGB to debut exclusive exhibit

The Art Gallery of Bancroft (AGB) is featuring one of the first ever arts shows exclusively for Algonquin artists.

AGB's Finding Critical Mass has been curated by Robin Tinney to develop a cultural base and record of Algonquin art and history.

‘Until recently, if you googled Algonquin and artist, virtually the only thing you could find was me,’ said Tinney, explaining how the idea for the gallery began. ‘There’s almost nothing out there available. That was only after 2013 when I did an exhibit in Nuit Blanche. Before that when you searched it, you found virtually nothing.’

Tinney, a member of the Algonquin First Nations, wanted to make sure that Algonquin heritage was not lost. He said between assimilation and a societal stigma against indigenous heritage, many Algonquin artists have been unable to express their creative beauty openly.

‘Part of that is that because we were among the first contact, we simply just got wiped out – disease, war and we were as a tribe we were used as intermediary with other native tribes,’ he said.

The gallery was an open call to any and all types of Algonquin artists. Artists were encouraged to bring forth their stories in any form from paintings to soap-stone carvings. It will feature a hand-crafted canoe.

The gallery will open with a drumming circle and smudging ceremony, welcoming Algonquin arts from all corners of their tribe to being a rebirth of its culture.

‘It was a family secret. You just didn’t tell people,’ said Tinney, looking back on how the Algonquin culture has been forgotten. ‘It was a way that your parents could be sort of ousted as being native and lose their jobs. It’s not that long ago that native people weren’t allowed to go to the Arlington because they served alcohol.’

Artists include Christine Luckasavitch, Emily Clairous, Dawson Welsh, Isaac Amikons, Erin Fitzgibbon, Sherry Crawford, Ada Tinney, Lynn Clouthier and Stephen Hunter. There will be between 15 to 20 artists in total.

Tinney said the artwork featured will share between traditional works and non-traditional works. It will be a collection of art from all walks of life from Algonquin culture.

‘It has great potential for the rebirth of a culture,’ said Tinney. ‘It’s going to show how we are artists, and where we go from here. [The idea is that] when I’m dead and gone, there’s enough people who are still active at sharing their artwork within the native Algonquin community and that somewhere three generations from now has access to that.’

Finding Critical Mass opens Aug. 5 at 7 p.m. Tinney recommends that guests come at the beginning of the show to participate in the drumming and smudging ceremony.