
arts



Phyllis Grant, an artist from Pabineau First Nation, will have three of her watercolour paintings featured in Rome this spring during the International Watercolour Exhibition.

Photo: Submitted

N.B. First Nation artist to have work featured in Rome

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K. Bryannah James | The Northern Light

Phyllis Grant can't wait to be reunited with her paintings this spring when her pieces make a debut in one of the art capitals of the world.

A well-known artist from Pabineau First Nation, Grant will have three of her paintings featured alongside six other Canadian artists at the Palazzo Strozzi/Fondazione Marco Besso in Rome, Italy from May 28 to 31 during the International Watercolour Exhibition.

"I consider my art living art, and I'm part of the story, so being there will be special," said Grant, in an email interview with The Northern Light.

When patrons go to see the exhibit, she hopes her work, "will make their blood rush to the top of their being and inspire them to move, live, create. This is what creation does for me, and I think it's something burning inside everyone."

Grant created three 40.5 x 30.5 watercolour paintings titled *Mi'gmaq Eight Point Star - Rebirth*; *Grandmother Moon, Fireflies, Riverside*; and *Self-Love - Sunset, Starfish, Hearts, Sunrise, Bloom*, for the exhibit.

"The pieces represent the life force within the spheres of human experience interconnected with land and movement. It's about transformative learning and healing. I chose to create them because I wanted to share who we are as Mi'gmaq people," said Grant.

"And speak to the rebirth of cultural strength in our communities, to share my own relationship with the land in the second one, and to express how I navigate my life path in relation to the first two in the final piece."

Grant was contacted in early 2018 by Loreta Giannetti, Canadian representative of the Associazione Romana Acquerellisti, about submitting her work, which is part of the European Year of

Cultural Heritage, she said.

"They were interested in acquiring art that represented Indigenous art in Canada," she said.

The only New Brunswicker chosen for the exhibit, Grant said to her knowledge she's the only person from Pabineau First Nation to have her art work featured on such a large scale.

"I really feel that by going to Rome, my whole community will be there with me, because they shaped me," said Grant.

Grant is one of five Canadian Indigenous artists, including famed Alex Janvier, who will have their work displayed in Rome.

"When I saw Alex Janvier's name there, I gasped. He is an original member of the Professional Native Indian Artists Association, founded in 1973," said Grant.

Grant said this is the first time her paintings will be featured internationally, but throughout the more than two decades of her professional career she's had work of various mediums featured nationally and internationally in cities like New York City and Brazil.

Grant said she feels, "part of a cultural shift in how Indigenous art is represented globally."

"It's not altered through a non-indigenous lens. It's an exciting time to be living and sharing what it means to be Mi'gmaq on a world stage."

Her time in Rome will also bring her back to earlier days in her career.

"As an artist, being in a place where someone like Botticelli existed will bring me back to my life drawing studies of form and figure drawing. I started out doing that, and I feel like I've come full circle," she said.

"I'm only there for a week, but I know it will be the beginning of a lifelong endeavour, travelling abroad and creating. I feel like a whole new element of possibility has opened up in my life and I am so grateful for it."

Aside from meeting her fellow artists across the Atlantic, Grant's looking forward to sketching her way through one of the world's oldest cities.

"I started out so small, and to think that art creation has granted me this adventure, really blows me away. It's a dream coming true. And as a fully-grown woman, extremely fulfilling."

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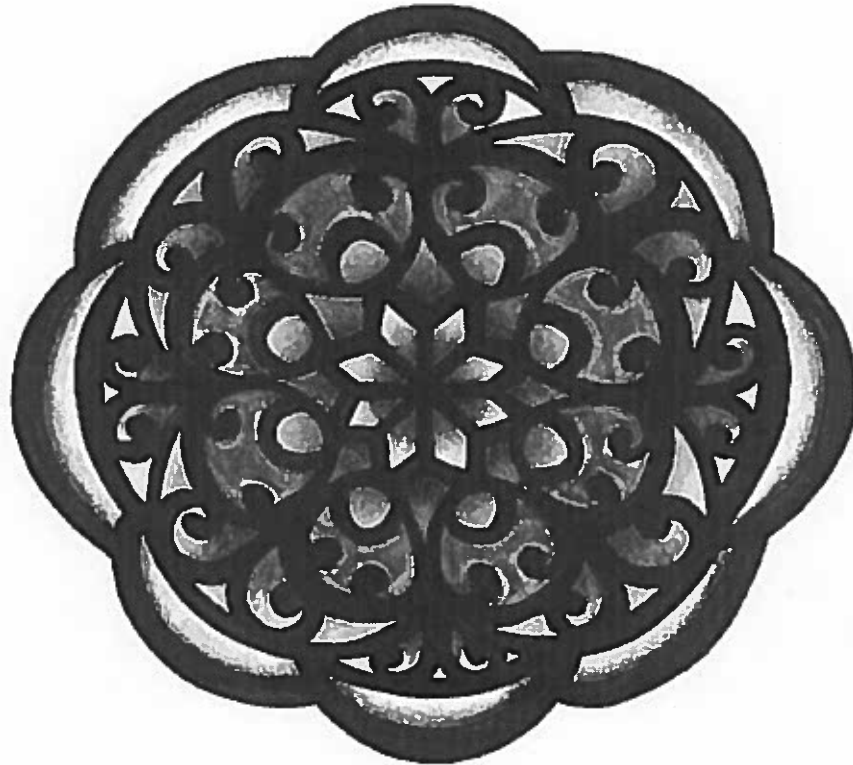
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COLLAPSE

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The 'All Of Creation' mandala was created by Pabineau First Nation artist Phyllis Grant. Grant created three watercolour paintings - two mandalas and an abstract landscape of Pabineau, which will be featured in the International Watercolour Exhibition in Rome this spring.

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