

# OUR FATHERS, OUR ART

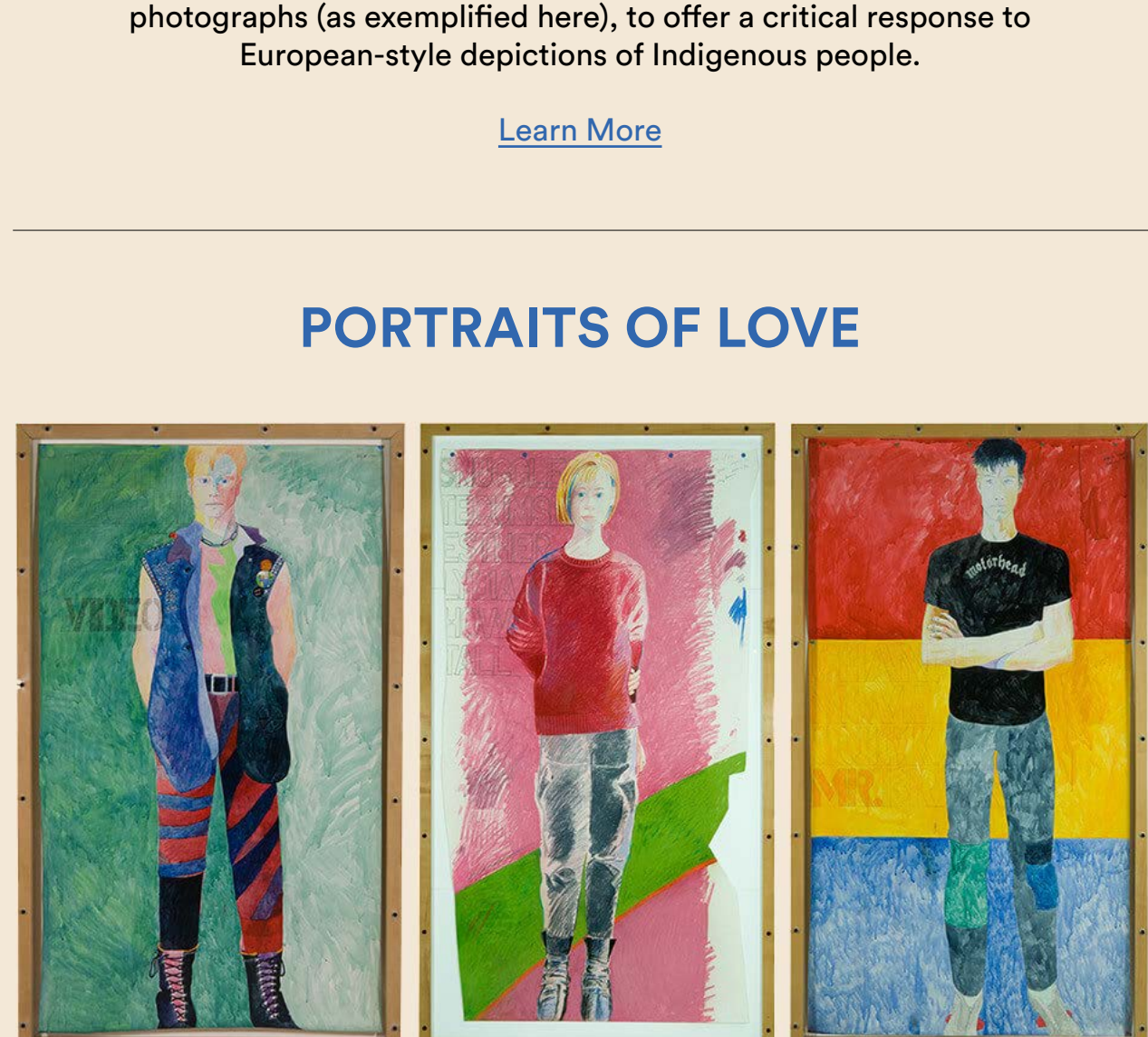
*Great Canadian works we love that celebrate all aspects of the paternal*



In honour of Father's Day this Sunday, we are presenting a selection of some of the countless dads—and their children—that are featured in Canadian art. Here are ten works that represent a rich variety of the experiences and emotions associated with fatherhood, including pride, respect, rebellion, worry, joy, wonder, and love. Whether you are a father, or whether you are celebrating or remembering one, we hope you enjoy this selection.

**Sara Angel**  
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

## FATHER OF RESILIENCE

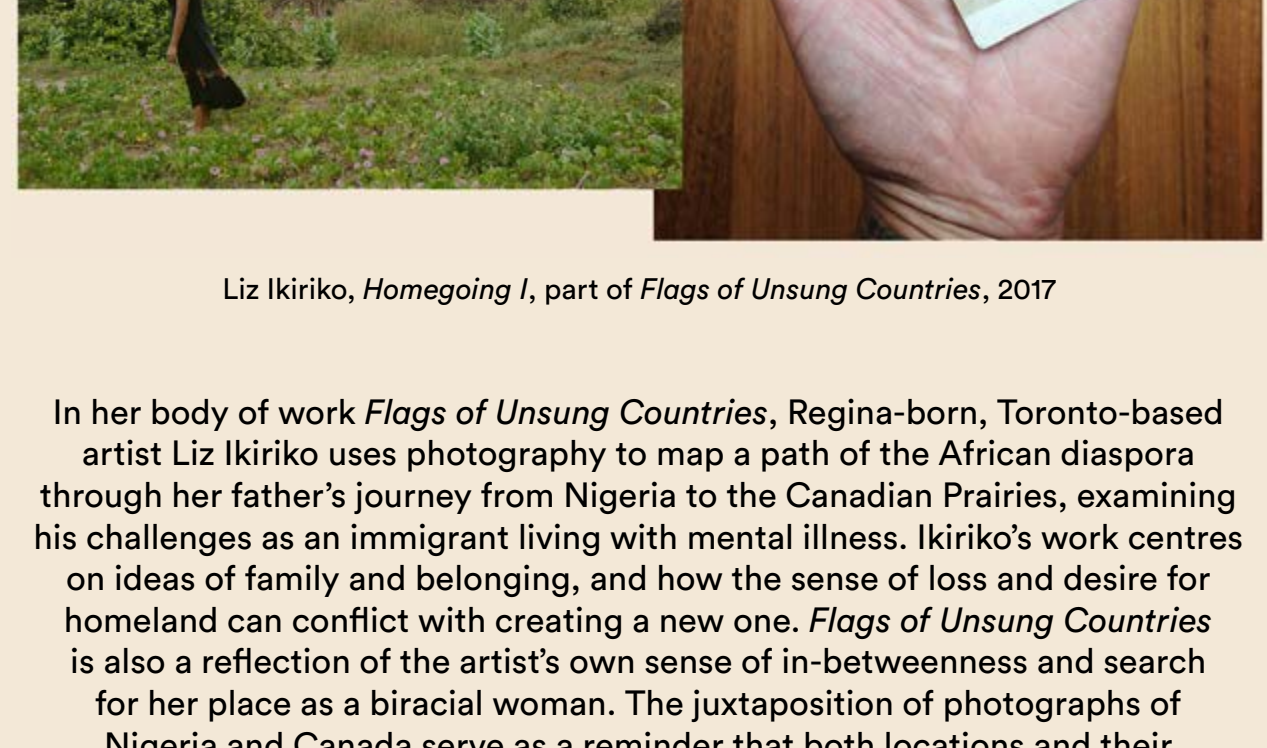


Zacharie Vincent, *Zacharie Vincent and His Son Cyprien*, c.1851, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec

In this self-portrait, Huron-Wendat painter Zacharie Vincent shows himself with his eldest son, Cyprien. Despite mid-nineteenth-century colonial beliefs that the Huron would die out, in this work Vincent asserts the contrary: his own family was evidence of a resilient and flourishing people. Known as “the last pure-blooded Huron,” Vincent, who lived in Jeune Lorette, Quebec, adopted Western pictorial techniques, such as perspective and drawing from photographs (as exemplified here), to offer a critical response to European-style depictions of Indigenous people.

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## PORTRAITS OF LOVE

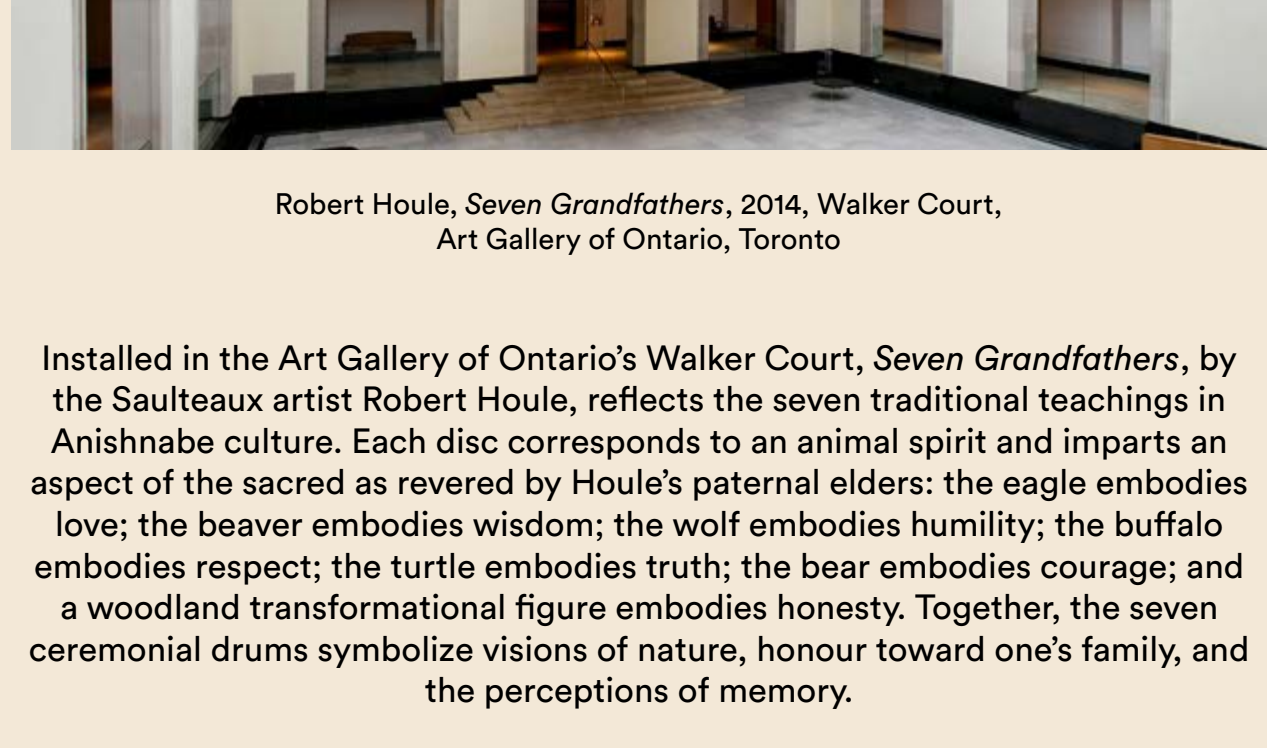


Greg Curnoe, Owen, June 21, 1983–February 15, 1984; Zoë, December 6, 1984–May 12, 1986; Galen, February 12–November 26, 1984, Museum London

Here Greg Curnoe captures the joy of his three teenage children: Owen, Zoë, and Galen. Curnoe's exuberantly colourful art was inspired by his everyday life and local culture. He became the driving force behind Regionalism, a London, Ontario-based movement that rejected metropolis cities, such as Toronto and New York, as the centres of artistic production. Instead he emphasized the importance of one's own locale, which in the early eighties included a focus on what he was most passionate about—his family, his wife, his children, and even the family dog—rendered in life-sized portraits.

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## A DAUGHTER'S DOCUMENT

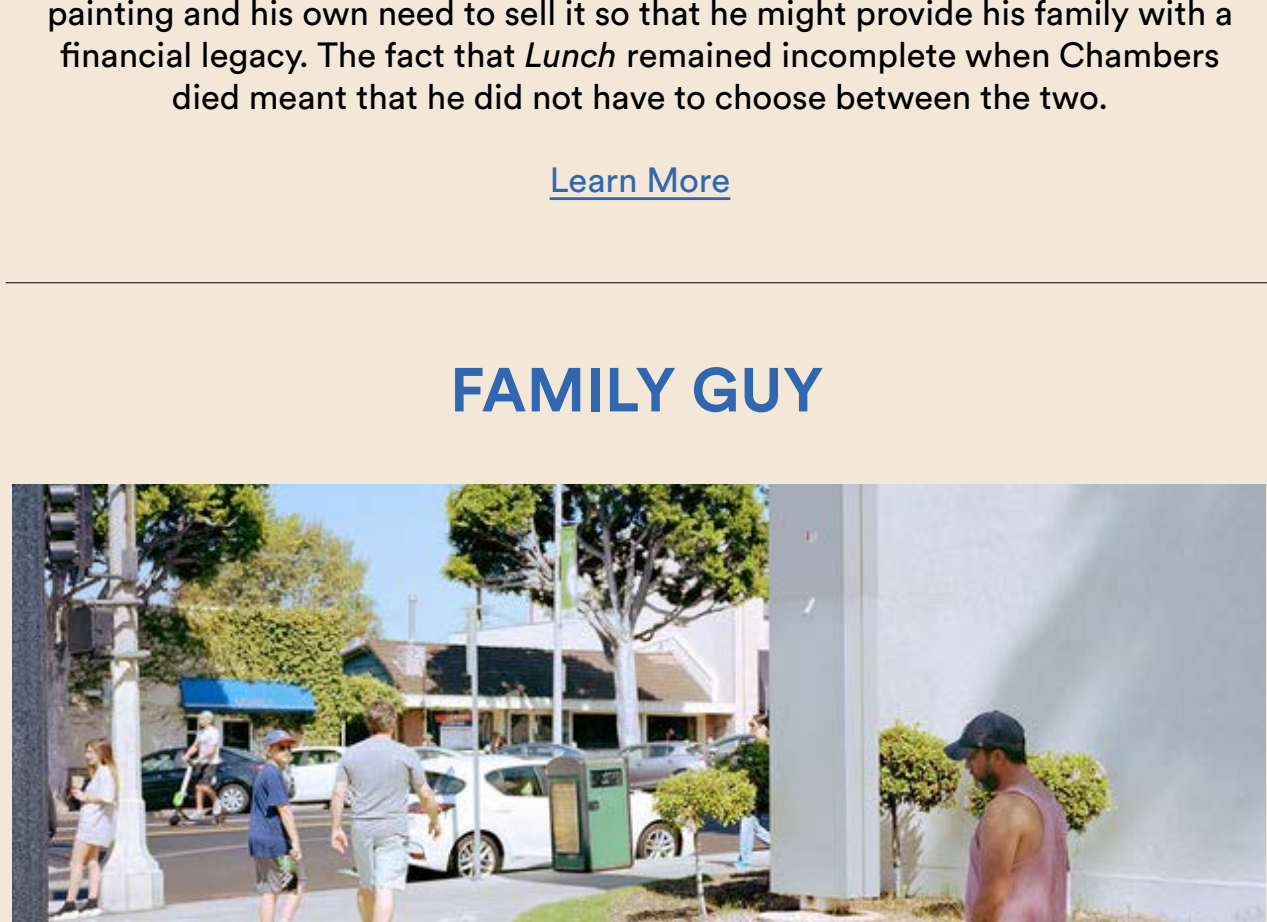


Liz Ikiriko, *Homegoing I*, part of *Flags of Unsung Countries*, 2017

In her body of work *Flags of Unsung Countries*, Regina-born, Toronto-based artist Liz Ikiriko uses photography to map a path of the African diaspora through her father's journey from Nigeria to the Canadian Prairies, examining his challenges as an immigrant living with mental illness. Ikiriko's work centres on ideas of family and belonging, and how the sense of loss and desire for homeland can conflict with creating a new one. *Flags of Unsung Countries* is also a reflection of the artist's own sense of in-betweenness and search for her place as a biracial woman. The juxtaposition of photographs of Nigeria and Canada serve as a reminder that both locations and their histories are a part of her person.

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## GIFT OF THE GRANDFATHERS

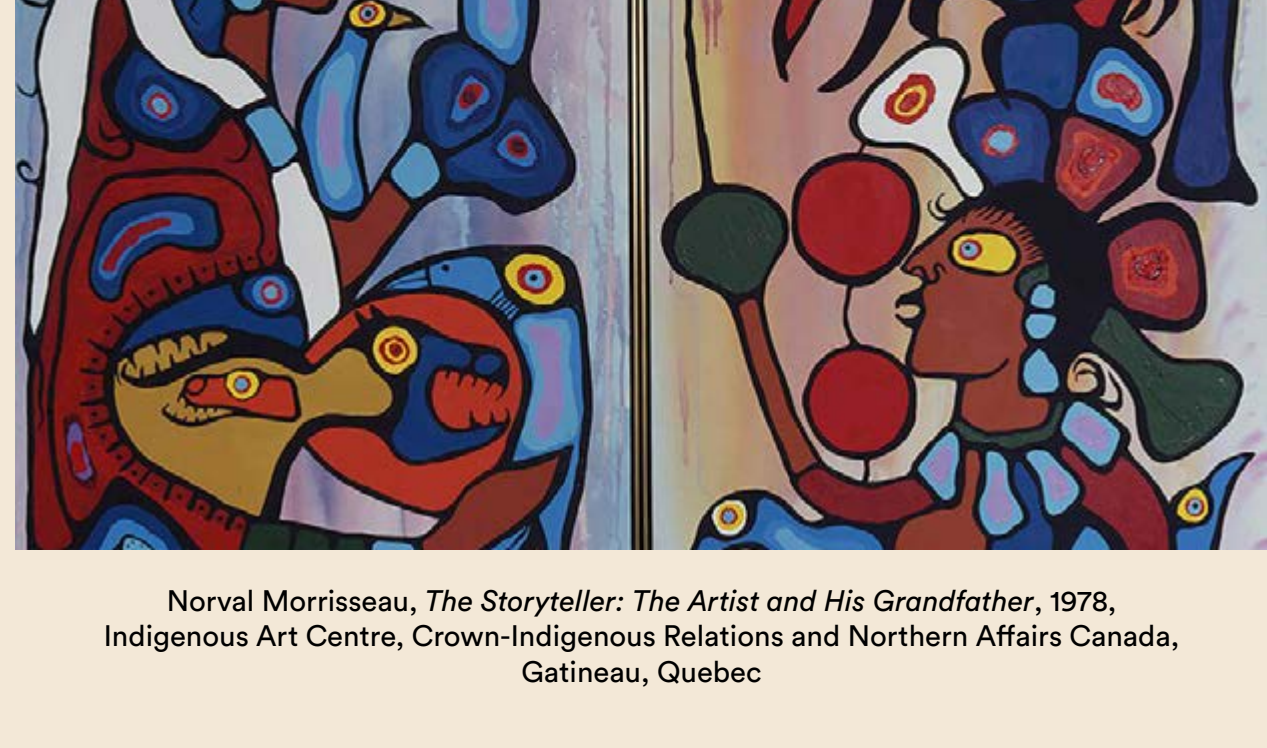


Robert Houle, *Seven Grandfathers*, 2014, Walker Court, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

Installed in the Art Gallery of Ontario's Walker Court, *Seven Grandfathers*, by the Saulteaux artist Robert Houle, reflects the seven traditional teachings in Anishnaabe culture. Each disc corresponds to an animal spirit and imparts an aspect of the sacred as revered by Houle's paternal elders: the eagle embodies love; the beaver embodies wisdom; the wolf embodies humility; the buffalo embodies respect; the turtle embodies truth; the bear embodies courage; and a woodland transformational figure embodies honesty. Together, the seven ceremonial drums symbolize visions of nature, honour toward one's family, and the perceptions of memory.

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## UNFINISHED BUSINESS



Jack Chambers, *Lunch*, 1969 (unfinished), Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

London-regionalist artist Jack Chambers seldom painted himself. His preference was to depict the things that were most important to him—his family and his everyday surroundings. Shortly after starting *Lunch*, Chambers was diagnosed with terminal leukaemia. He became torn between his wife's desire to keep with the painting and his own need to sell it so that he might provide his family with a financial legacy. The fact that *Lunch* remained incomplete when Chambers died meant that he did not have to choose between the two.

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## FAMILY GUY

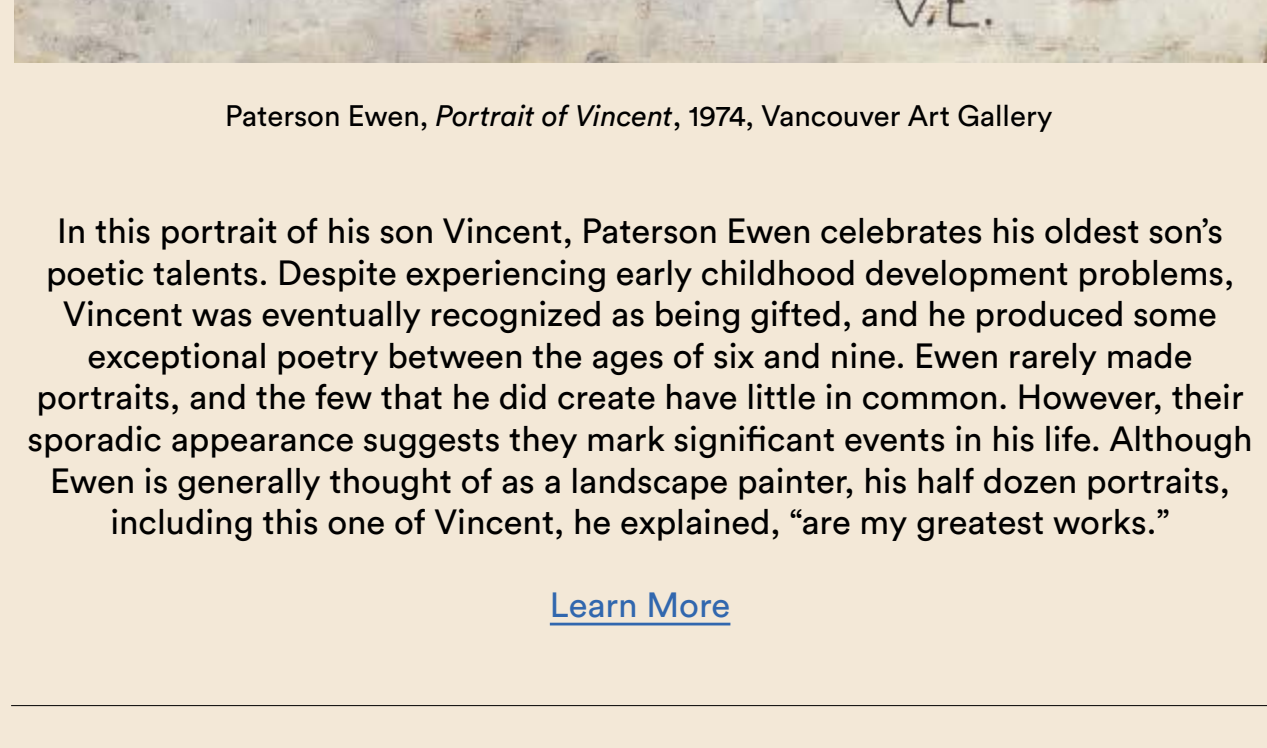


Jeff Wall, *Parent Child*, 2018, various collections

In *Parent Child*, the internationally acclaimed Vancouver-based photographer Jeff Wall presents a young girl lying on the sidewalk, ignoring her father's pleas to move. This moment of toddler rebellion is familiar to fathers (and anyone who remembers childhood). The work is typical of Wall's practice, which addresses the nature of images, representation, and memory by restructuring everyday moments in what the artist describes as a “near-documentary” mode—scenes he witnesses and then re-creates and photographs with elaborate setups and rehearsals.

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## THE ARTIST AND HIS GRANDFATHER



Norval Morrisseau, *The Storyteller: The Artist and His Grandfather*, 1978, Indigenous Art Centre, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Gatineau, Quebec

*The Storyteller* presents Anishnaabe artist Norval Morrisseau as a young boy, respectfully acknowledging his debt to his Mishomis, or grandfather. In the left panel of this diptych, Moses Potan Nanakonagos, the artist's maternal grandfather, appears regally enveloped in the spirits and colours of the natural and supernatural worlds, poised to convey his stories to the youngster in the right panel. The two components of the diptych connect but also diverge, signalling Morrisseau's shift away from his Anishnaabe roots and toward religious teachings of Eckankar.

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## PATERNAL PRIDE

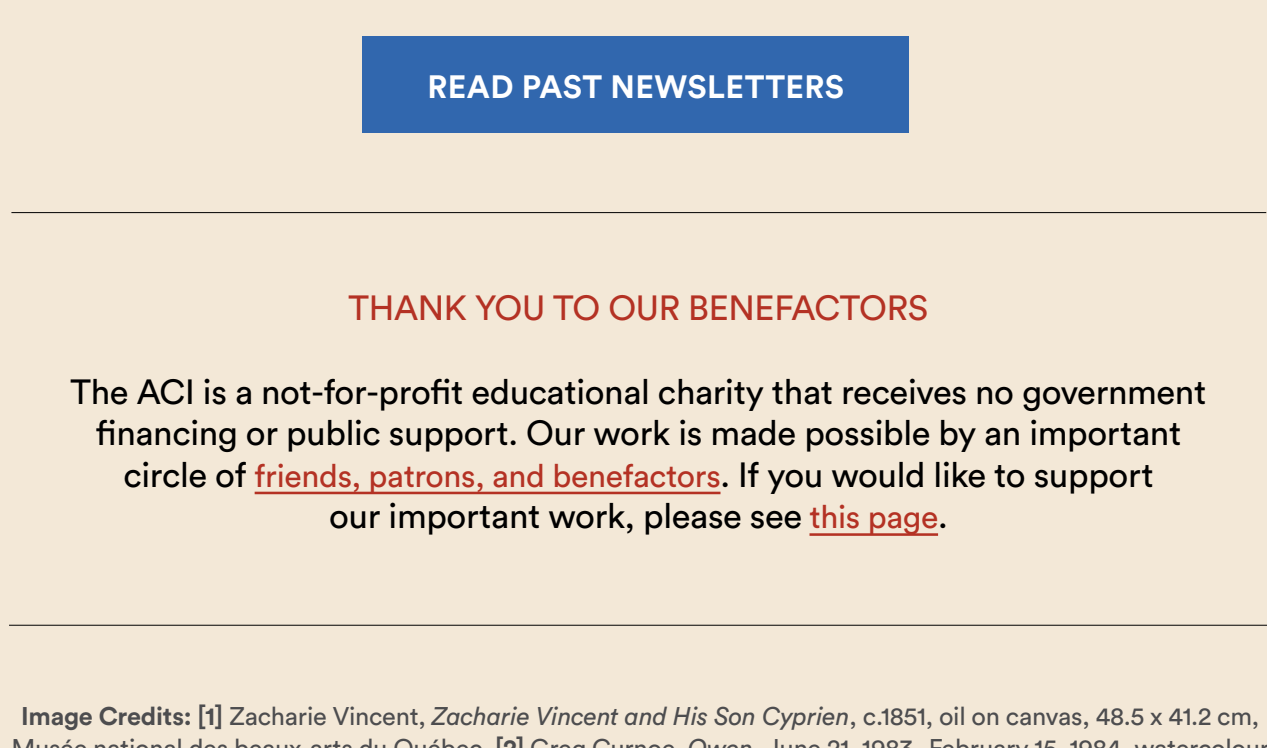


Paterson Ewen, *Portrait of Vincent*, 1974, Vancouver Art Gallery

In this portrait of his son Vincent, Paterson Ewen celebrates his oldest son's poetic talents. Despite experiencing early childhood development problems, Vincent was eventually recognized as being gifted, and he produced some exceptional poetry between the ages of six and nine. Ewen rarely made portraits, and the few that he did create have little in common. However, their sporadic appearance suggests they mark significant events in his life. Although Ewen is generally thought of as a landscape painter, his half dozen portraits, including this one of Vincent, he explained, “are my greatest works.”

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## THE DADDIES



Kent Monkman, *The Daddies*, 2016, private collection

Contemporary Cree painter and provocateur Kent Monkman created *The Daddies*, 2016, to subvert Robert Harris's famed work *The Fathers of Confederation*, which commemorates the Charlottetown Conference of September 1864. Monkman's time-travelling, shape-shifting, gender-fluid alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, sits naked in front of the delegates, imposing an Indigenous queer presence on the proceedings that largely omitted Canada's First Peoples from the record. The painting was made as part of a body of work by the artist that questioned the celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary.

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## FATHER OF INVENTION



Michael Snow, *Blind*, 1968, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In *Blind*—a work in which the great Canadian artist Michael Snow pays homage to his father—viewers experience the sculpture by walking through the tight corridors that run between its mesh screens. In doing so, their bodies become part of the encounter with the work. This disorienting but highly inventive sculpture acknowledges the artist's father, Bradley, who lost his sight after a work accident while still a young man. Snow would later attribute his engagement with sound to his mother's musical talent and his art addressing vision to his father's disability.

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We hope that you liked this selection of works celebrating fathers and fatherhood in Canadian art. If you enjoyed this newsletter, please share it.

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Image Credits: [1] Zacharie Vincent, *Zacharie Vincent and His Son Cyprien*, c.1851, oil on canvas, 48.5 x 41.2 cm, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. [2] Greg Curnoe, *Owen*, June 21, 1983–February 15, 1984, watercolour and pencil on paper, 183 x 108.5 cm, Museum London; *Greg Curnoe, Zoë*, December 6, 1984–May 12, 1986, pastel and pencil on paper, 194 x 90 cm, Museum London; *Greg Curnoe, Galen*, February 12–November 26, 1984, watercolour and pencil on paper, 201 x 110 cm, Museum London. [3] Liz Ikiriko, *Homegoing I*, 2017, digital C-print, courtesy of the artist. [4] Robert Houle, *Seven Grandfathers*, 2014, oil on canvas, digital prints, Mylar, watercolour on paper, seven site-specific works, each 20.3 cm (diameter), Walker Court, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. [5] Jack Chambers, *Lunch*, 1969 (unfinished), oil and synthetic paint on wood, 197.9 x 182.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. [6] Jeff Wall, *Parent Child*, 2018, inkjet print, 223 x 253.5 cm. © Jeff Wall. [7] Norval Morrisseau, *The Storyteller: The Artist and His Grandfather*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, diptych: each panel 176.3 x 96.6 cm, Indigenous Art Centre, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Gatineau, QC. [8] Paterson Ewen, *Portrait of Vincent*, 1974, mixed media on plywood, 243.8 x 121.9 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. [9] Kent Monkman, *The Daddies*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 285.75 cm. [10] Michael Snow, *Blind*, 1968, steel end aluminium, 246.4 x 245.7 x 246.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.