

## VISUAL ART AND CULTURAL WISDOM CELEBRATING INDIGENOUS ARTISTS

Resources to inspire connection, conversation, and creation in National Indigenous History Month

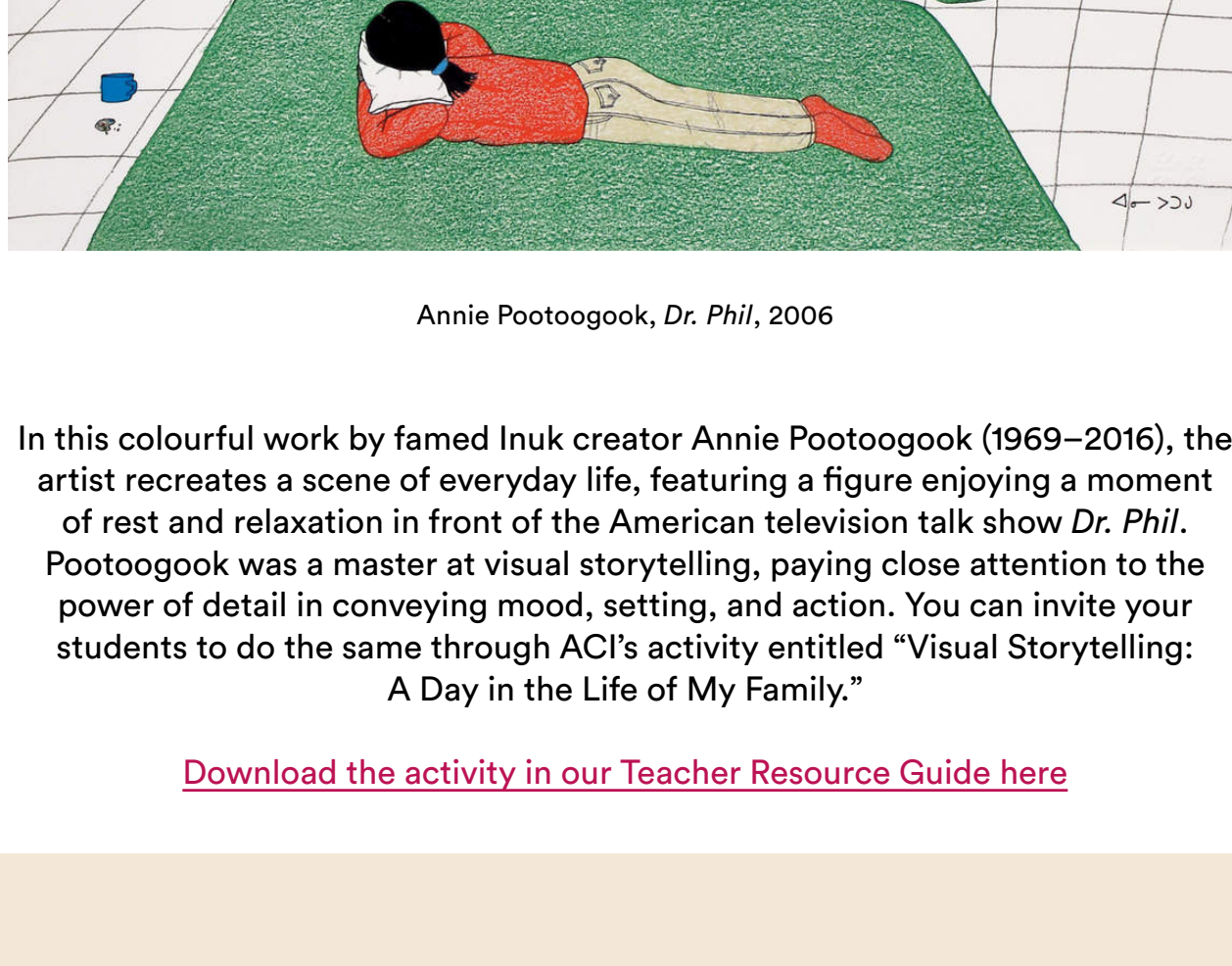


Meryl McMaster, *Anima*, 2012

June 21st is National Indigenous Peoples Day in Canada, and it is an occasion to celebrate the knowledge, practices, and cultural contributions of First Peoples from an extraordinary diversity of communities across the country. This exquisite work was created by contemporary photo-based artist Meryl McMaster (b.1988), whose engagement with natural landscapes has informed her connection with generational wisdom and personal transformation. As McMaster explains, her art engages with her bi-cultural heritage (Plains Cree / British and Dutch): "I belong to two heritages, existing betwixt and between. My work explores ways of mixing and transforming these histories. Through working on this series, I intended to transform the way I view the past from the perspective of the present." McMaster's words are a profound starting point for learning and reflection, and this week we are looking into ACI's digital library to share resources that we hope will facilitate meaningful exchange in the classroom.

— The Art Canada Institute Education Team

### Visual Storytelling



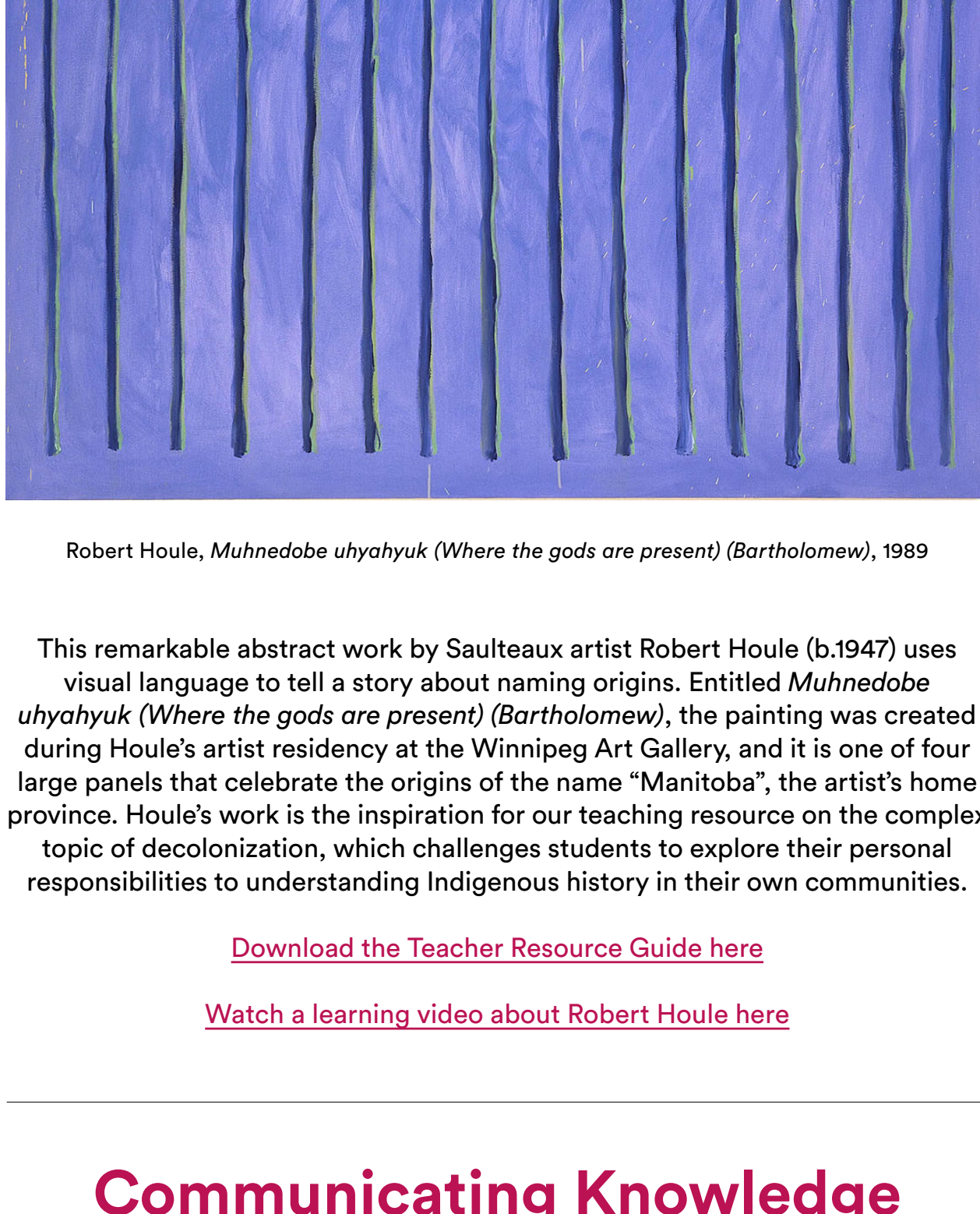
Annie Pootoogook, *Dr. Phil*, 2006

In this colourful work by famed Inuk creator Annie Pootoogook (1969–2016), the artist recreates a scene of everyday life, featuring a figure enjoying a moment of rest and relaxation in front of the American television talk show *Dr. Phil*. Pootoogook was a master at visual storytelling, paying close attention to the power of detail in conveying mood, setting, and action. You can invite your students to do the same through ACI's activity entitled "Visual Storytelling: A Day in the Life of My Family."

[Download the activity, in our Teacher Resource Guide here](#)

### AVENUES TO EXPLORE

### Naming Origins



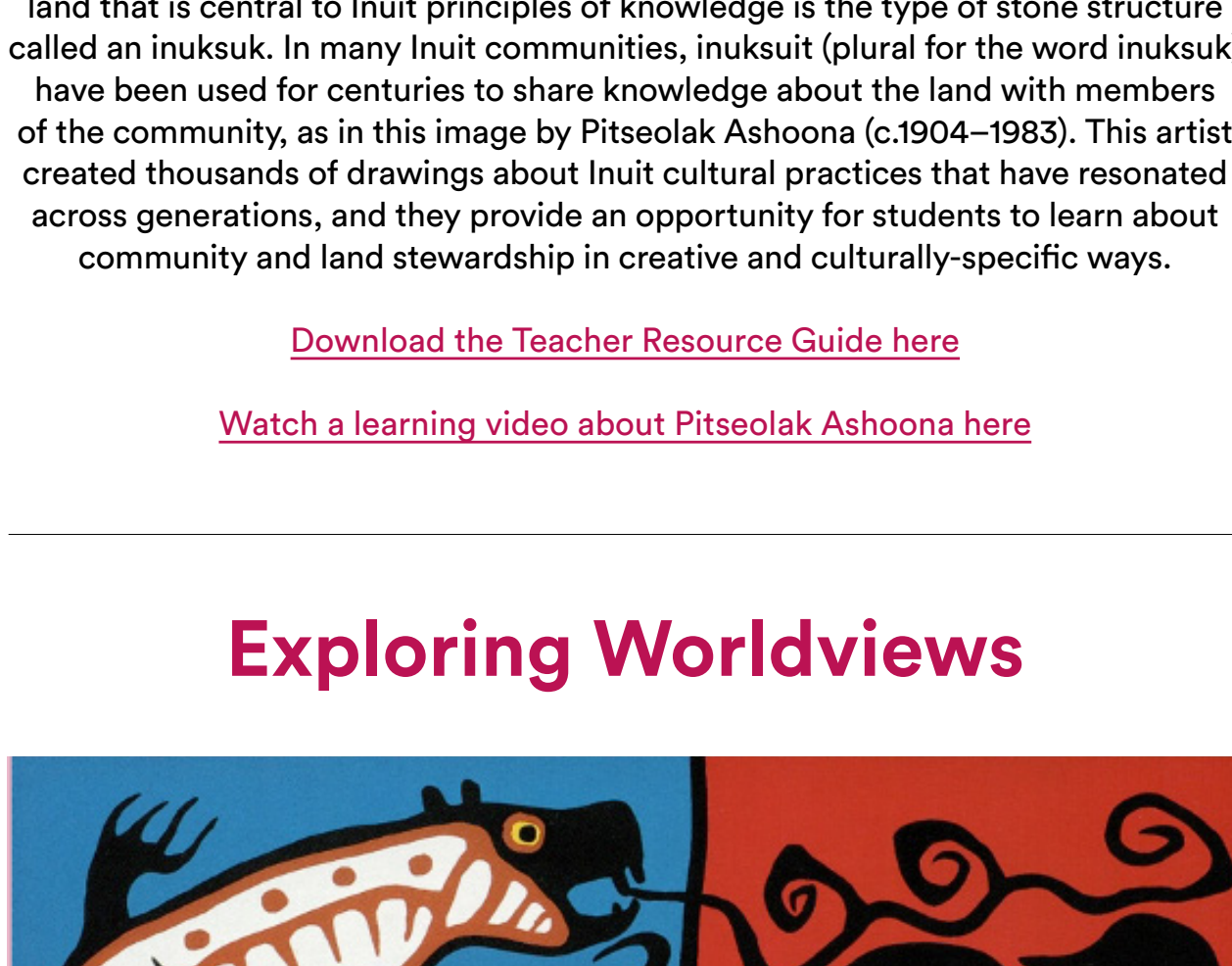
Robert Houle, *Muhnedobe uhyahyuk (Where the gods are present) (Bartholomew)*, 1989

This remarkable abstract work by Saulteaux artist Robert Houle (b.1947) uses visual language to tell a story about naming origins. Entitled *Muhnedobe uhyahyuk (Where the gods are present) (Bartholomew)*, the painting was created during Houle's artist residency at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and it is one of four large panels that celebrate the origins of the name "Manitoba", the artist's home province. Houle's work is the inspiration for our teaching resource on the complex topic of decolonization, which challenges students to explore their personal responsibilities to understanding Indigenous history in their own communities.

[Download the Teacher Resource Guide here](#)

[Watch a learning video about Robert Houle here](#)

### Communicating Knowledge



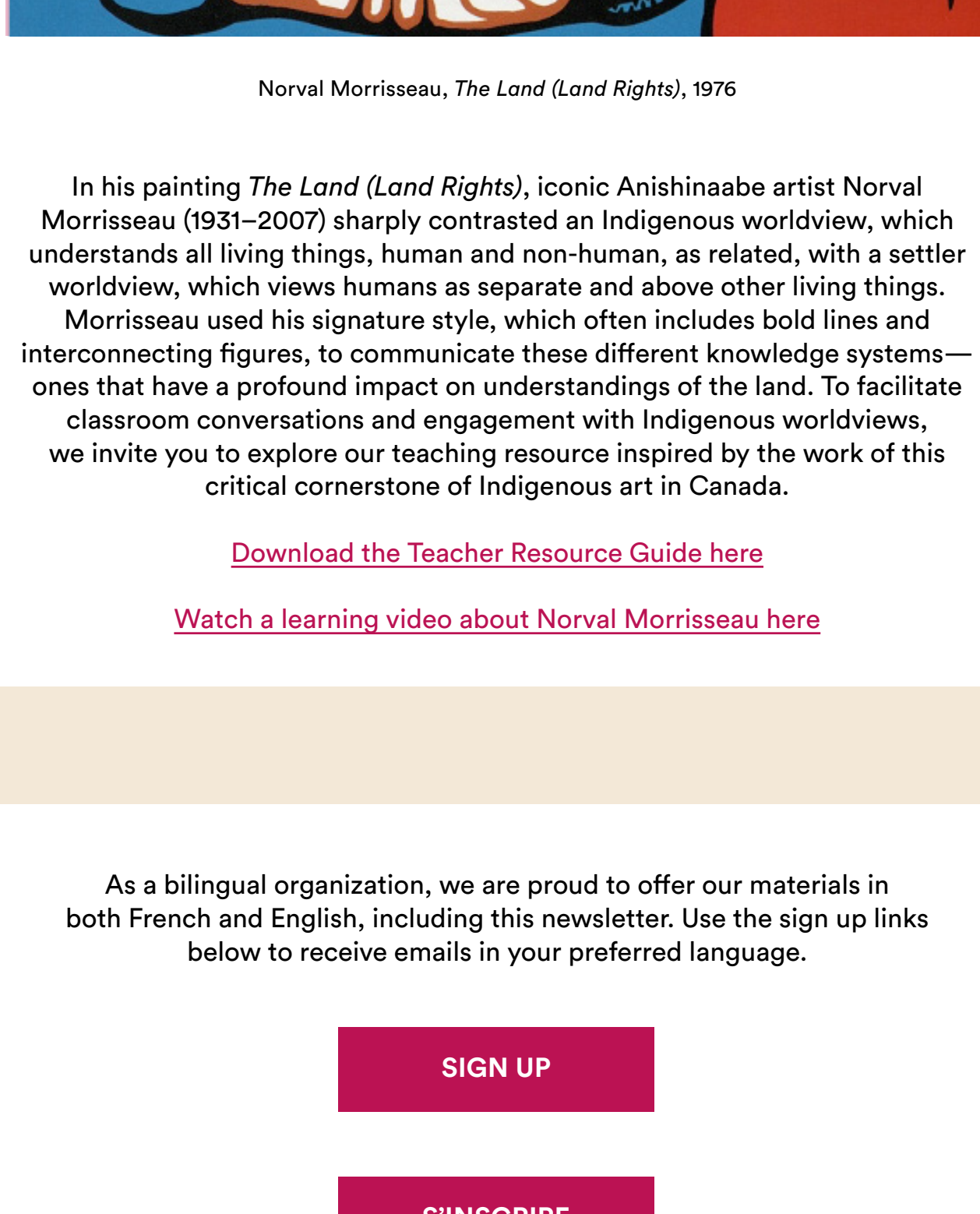
Pitseolak Ashoona, drawing for print *Innuksuk Builders*, c.1966–68

One expression of the relationship between individuals, communities, and the land that is central to Inuit communities of knowledge is the type of stone inuksuk called an inuksuk. In many Inuit communities, inuksuit (plural for the word inuksuk) have been used for centuries to share knowledge about the land with members of the community, as in this image by Pitseolak Ashoona (c.1904–1983). This artist created thousands of drawings about Inuit cultural practices that have resonated across generations, and they provide an opportunity for students to learn about community and land stewardship in creative and culturally-specific ways.

[Download the Teacher Resource Guide here](#)

[Watch a learning video about Pitseolak Ashoona here](#)

### Exploring Worldviews



Norval Morrisseau, *The Land (Land Rights)*, 1976

In his painting *The Land (Land Rights)*, iconic Anishinaabe artist Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007) sharply contrasted an Indigenous worldview, which understands all living things, human and non-human, as related, with a settler worldview, which views humans as separate and above other living things.

Morrisseau used his signature style, which often includes bold lines and interconnecting figures, to communicate these different knowledge systems—ones that have a profound impact on understandings of the land. To facilitate classroom conversations and engagement with Indigenous worldviews, we invite you to explore our teaching resource inspired by the work of this critical cornerstone of Indigenous art in Canada.

[Download the Teacher Resource Guide here](#)

[Watch a learning video about Norval Morrisseau here](#)

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Launched in 2013, the Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, in both English and French, within Canada and internationally. The ACI works with more than fifty of Canada's leading art historians, curators, and visual culture experts who are dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

We are creating a central digital resource to tell the world about Canada's most important works of art and where they are located. By functioning as an online art museum, a [digital library](#), and an interactive Canadian art encyclopedia, the ACI is an indispensable resource on Canada's visual heritage.

Visit us at [aci-iac.ca](http://aci-iac.ca)

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