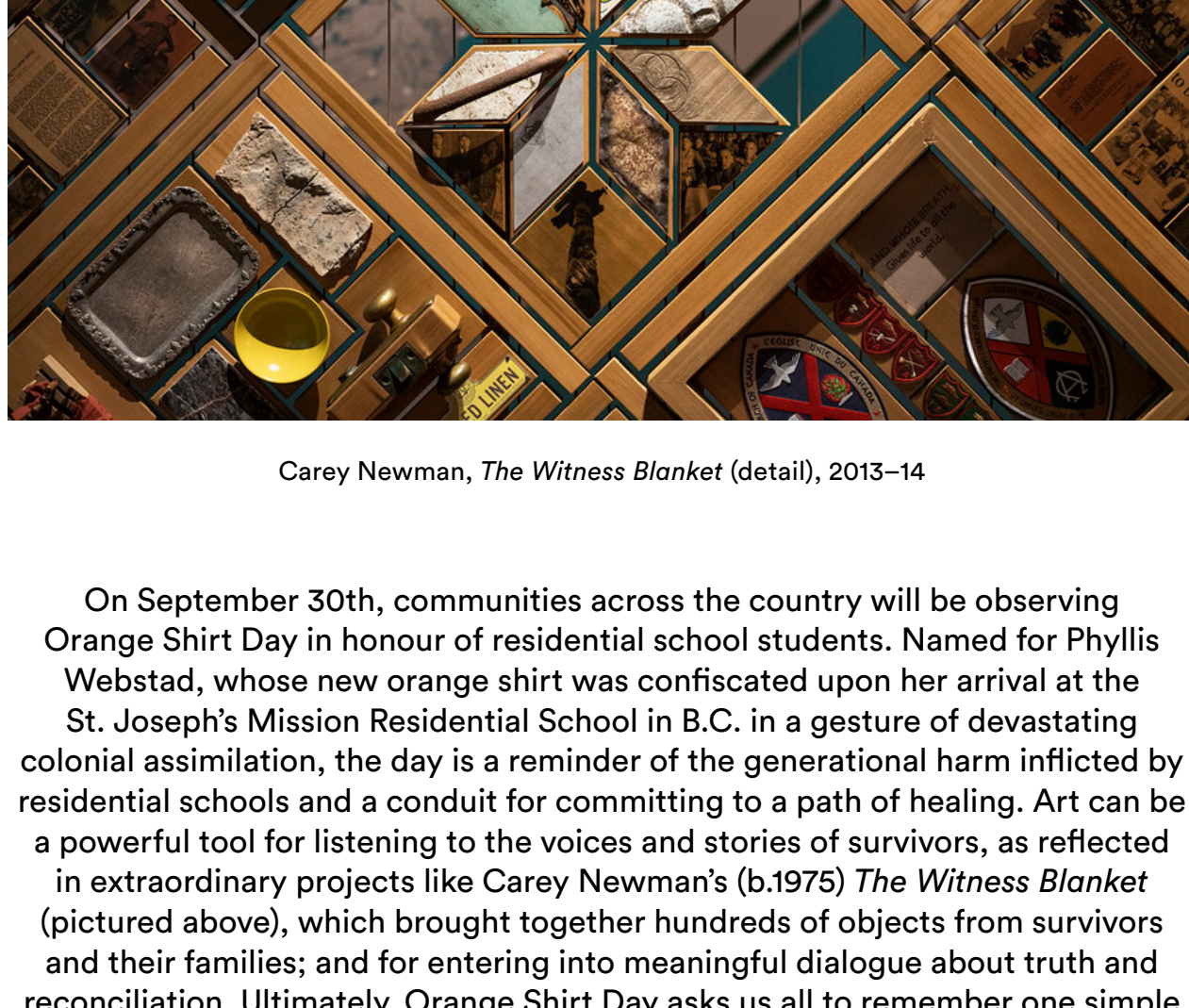


NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

A TIME FOR REFLECTION, DIALOGUE, AND ACTION

As Orange Shirt Day approaches on September 30th, we are sharing five powerful projects to inspire conversations about art and meaningful change



Carey Newman, *The Witness Blanket* (detail), 2013–14

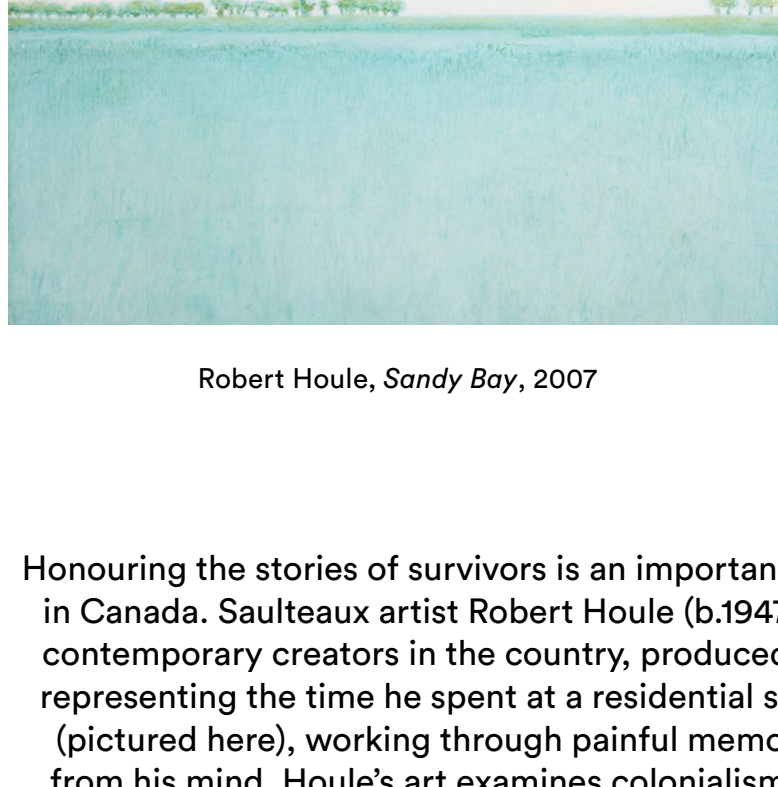
On September 30th, communities across the country will be observing Orange Shirt Day in honour of residential school students. Named for Phyllis Webstad, whose new orange shirt was confiscated upon her arrival at the St. Joseph's Mission Residential School in B.C. in a gesture of devastating colonial assimilation, the day is a reminder of the generational harm inflicted by residential schools and a conduit for committing to a path of healing. Art can be a powerful tool for listening to the voices and stories of survivors, as reflected in extraordinary projects like Carey Newman's (b.1975) *The Witness Blanket* (pictured above), which brought together hundreds of objects from survivors and their families; and for entering into meaningful dialogue about truth and reconciliation. Ultimately, Orange Shirt Day asks us all to remember one simple truth, reflected in the words of Webstad: "Every child that went to residential school, well, they all matter. Even the ones that didn't come home, they matter. And it wasn't until after we were using that slogan that I realized that it fits the past, the present and the future ... it's one of those divine things that fits in this day of reconciliation."

— The Art Canada Institute Education Team

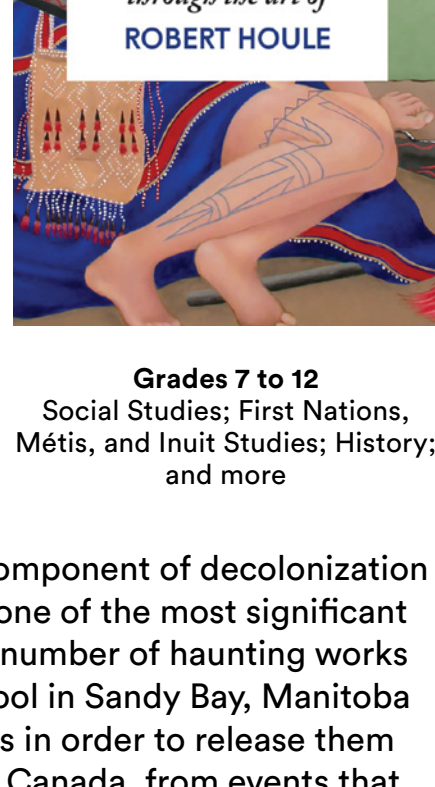
[Watch a documentary about *The Witness Blanket* here](#)

[Learn more about Orange Shirt Day here](#)

Listening and Learning



Robert Houle, *Sandy Bay*, 2007



Grades 7 to 12
Social Studies; First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies; History; and more

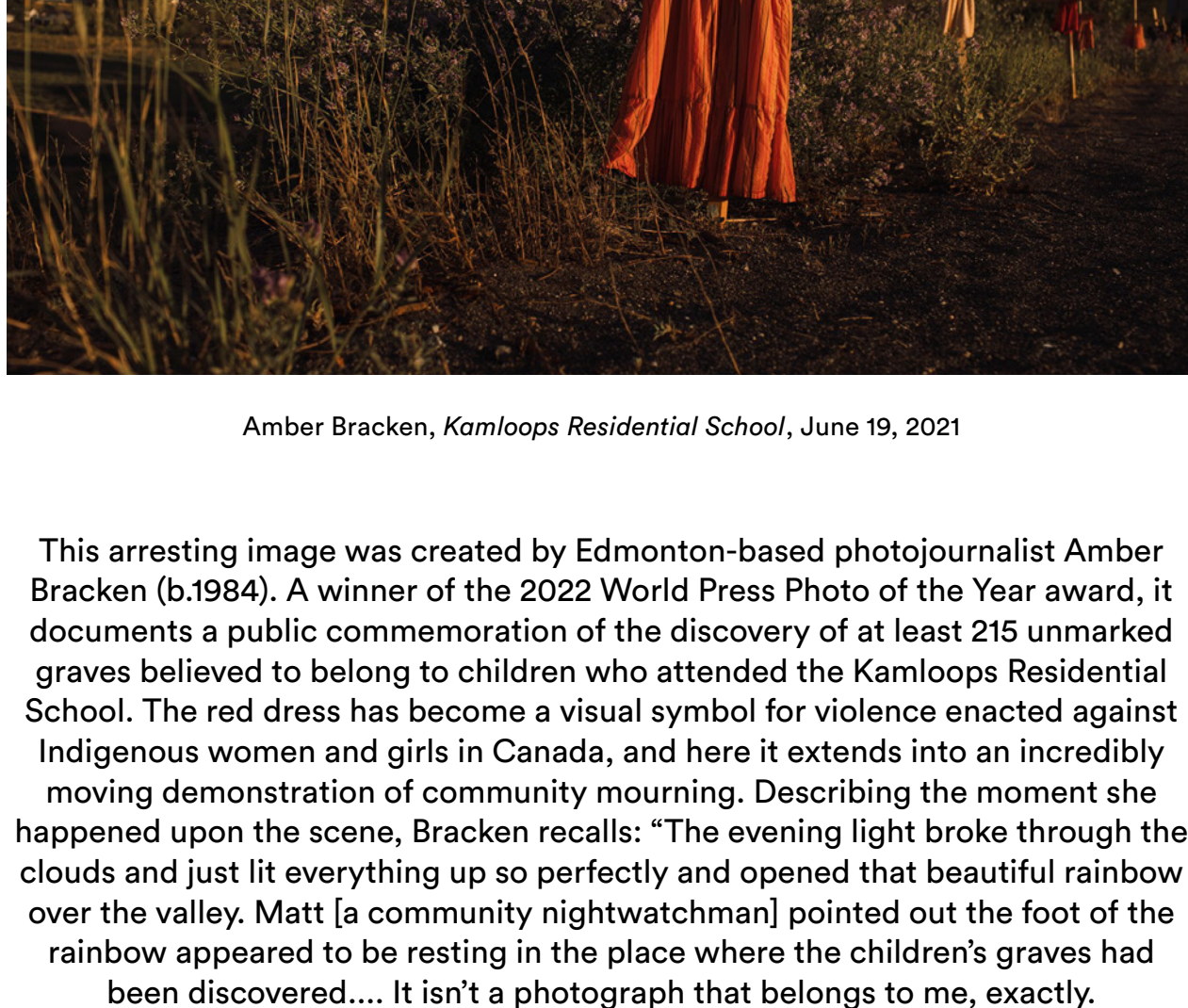
Honouring the stories of survivors is an important component of decolonization in Canada. Sauteaux artist Robert Houle (b.1947), one of the most significant contemporary creators in the country, produced a number of haunting works representing the time he spent at a residential school in Sandy Bay, Manitoba (pictured here), working through painful memories in order to release them from his mind. Houle's art examines colonialism in Canada, from events that took place decades ago to ongoing practices, and a consideration of his images invites deep contemplation about the many facets of meaningful change.

[Download our Teacher Resource Guide on Robert Houle and Decolonization here](#)

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

AVENUES TO EXPLORE

Raising Awareness



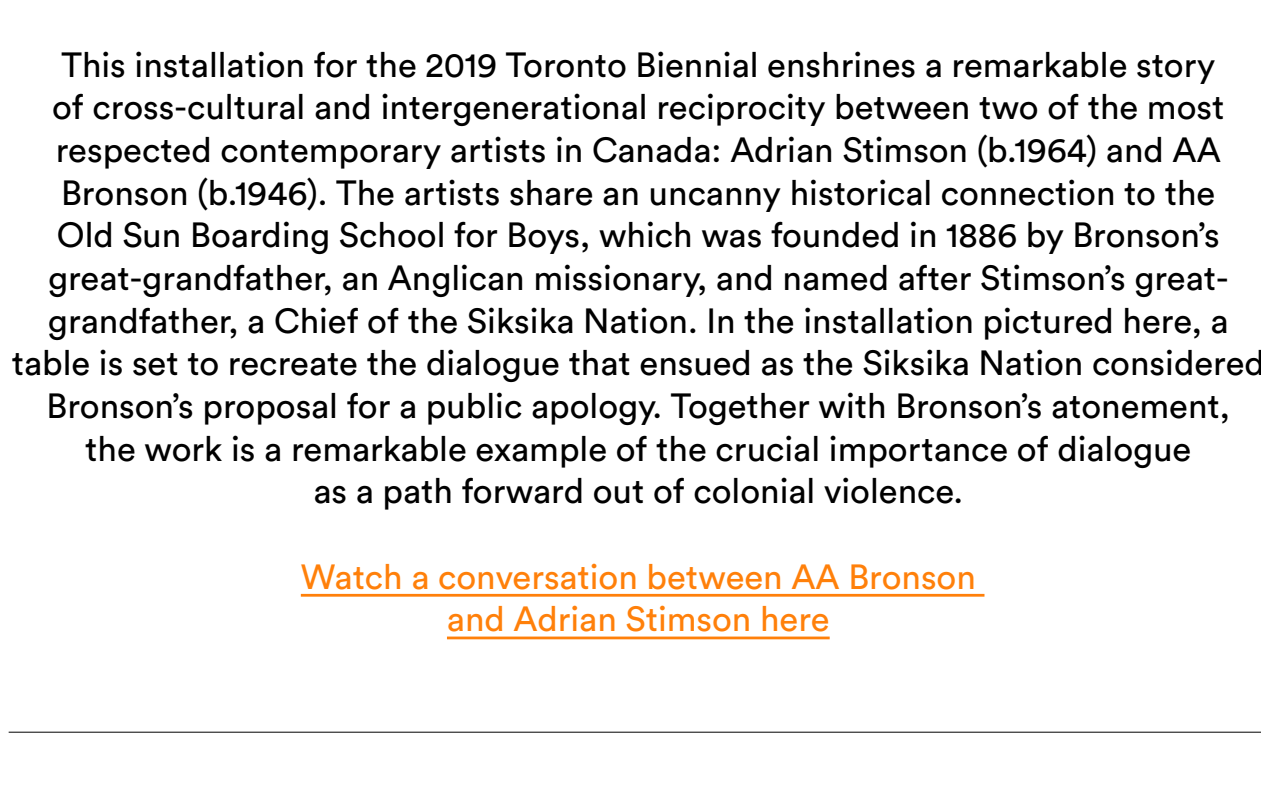
Amber Bracken, *Kamloops Residential School*, June 19, 2021

This arresting image was created by Edmonton-based photojournalist Amber Bracken (b.1984). A winner of the 2022 World Press Photo of the Year award, it documents a public commemoration of the discovery of at least 215 unmarked graves believed to belong to children who attended the Kamloops Residential School. The red dress has become a visual symbol for violence enacted against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and here it extends into an incredibly moving demonstration of community mourning. Describing the moment she happened upon the scene, Bracken recalls: "The evening light broke through the clouds and just lit everything up so perfectly and opened that beautiful rainbow over the valley. Matt [a community nightwatchman] pointed out the foot of the rainbow appeared to be resting in the place where the children's graves had been discovered.... It isn't a photograph that belongs to me, exactly. There were just too many hands in bringing it to be."

[Read more about this photograph and download an education guide here](#)

[Watch a learning video about Amber Bracken here](#)

Facilitating Dialogue

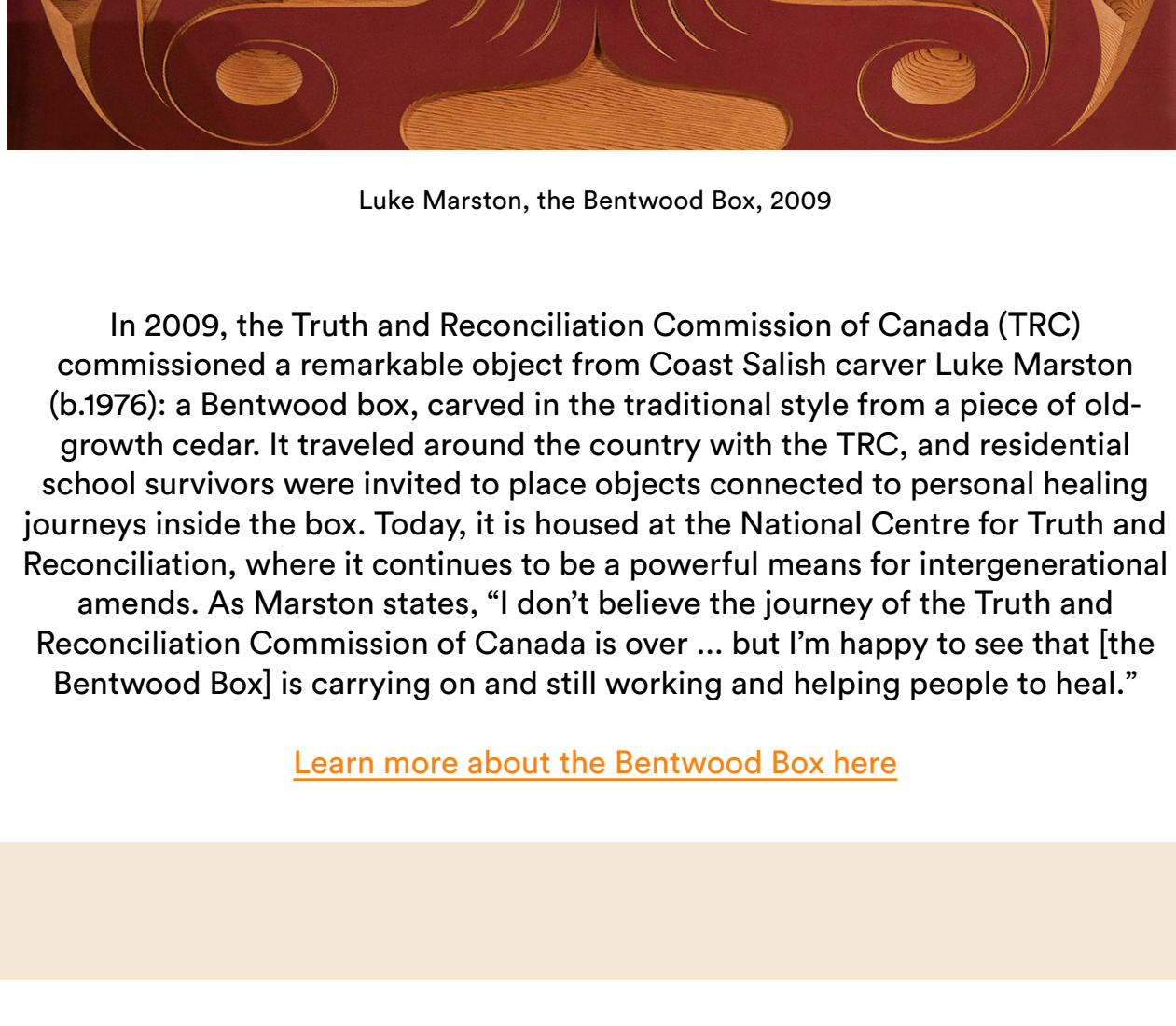


Adrian Stimson, *lini Sookumapii: Guess who's coming to dinner?*, 2019

This installation for the 2019 Toronto Biennial enshrines a remarkable story of cross-cultural and intergenerational reciprocity between two of the most respected contemporary artists in Canada: Adrian Stimson (b.1964) and AA Bronson (b.1946). The artists share an uncanny historical connection to the Old Sun Boarding School for Boys, which was founded in 1886 by Bronson's great-grandfather, an Anglican missionary, and named after Stimson's great-grandfather, a Chief of the Siksika Nation. In the installation pictured here, a table is set to recreate the dialogue that ensued as the Siksika Nation considered Bronson's proposal for a public apology. Together with Bronson's attendance, the work is a remarkable example of the crucial importance of dialogue as a path forward out of colonial violence.

[Watch a conversation between AA Bronson and Adrian Stimson here](#)

Collective Healing



Luke Marston, *the Bentwood Box*, 2009

In 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) commissioned a remarkable object from Coast Salish carver Luke Marston (b.1976): a Bentwood box, carved in the traditional style from a piece of old-growth cedar. It traveled around the country with the TRC, and residential school survivors were invited to place objects connected to personal healing journeys inside the box. Today, it is housed at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, where it continues to be a powerful means for intergenerational amends. As Marston states, "I don't believe the journey of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is over ... but I'm happy to see that [the Bentwood Box] is carrying on and still working and helping people to heal."

[Learn more about the Bentwood Box 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.

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Image Credits: [1] Carey Newman, *The Witness Blanket* (detail), 2013–14. Shared stewardship of Carey Newman and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Image courtesy of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Photo credit: Aaron Cohen. [2] Robert Houle, *Sandy Bay*, 2007, oil on Masonite, 22.9 x 29.8 cm. Collection of the artist. Courtesy of Peterborough Art Gallery. © Robert Houle. Photo credit: Michael Cullen. [3] Amber Bracken, *Kamloops Residential School*, June 19, 2021. Image courtesy of World Press Photo Foundation, Amsterdam. [4] Adrian Stimson, *lini Sookumapii: Guess who's coming to dinner?*, 2019, mixed-media installation, dimensions variable. Collection Renai Modern, Saskatoon. Image courtesy of the Toronto Biennial of Art. Photo credit: Toni Hafkenscheid. [5] Luke Marston, *the Bentwood Box*, 2009, cedar. Collection of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Image courtesy of the University of Manitoba.