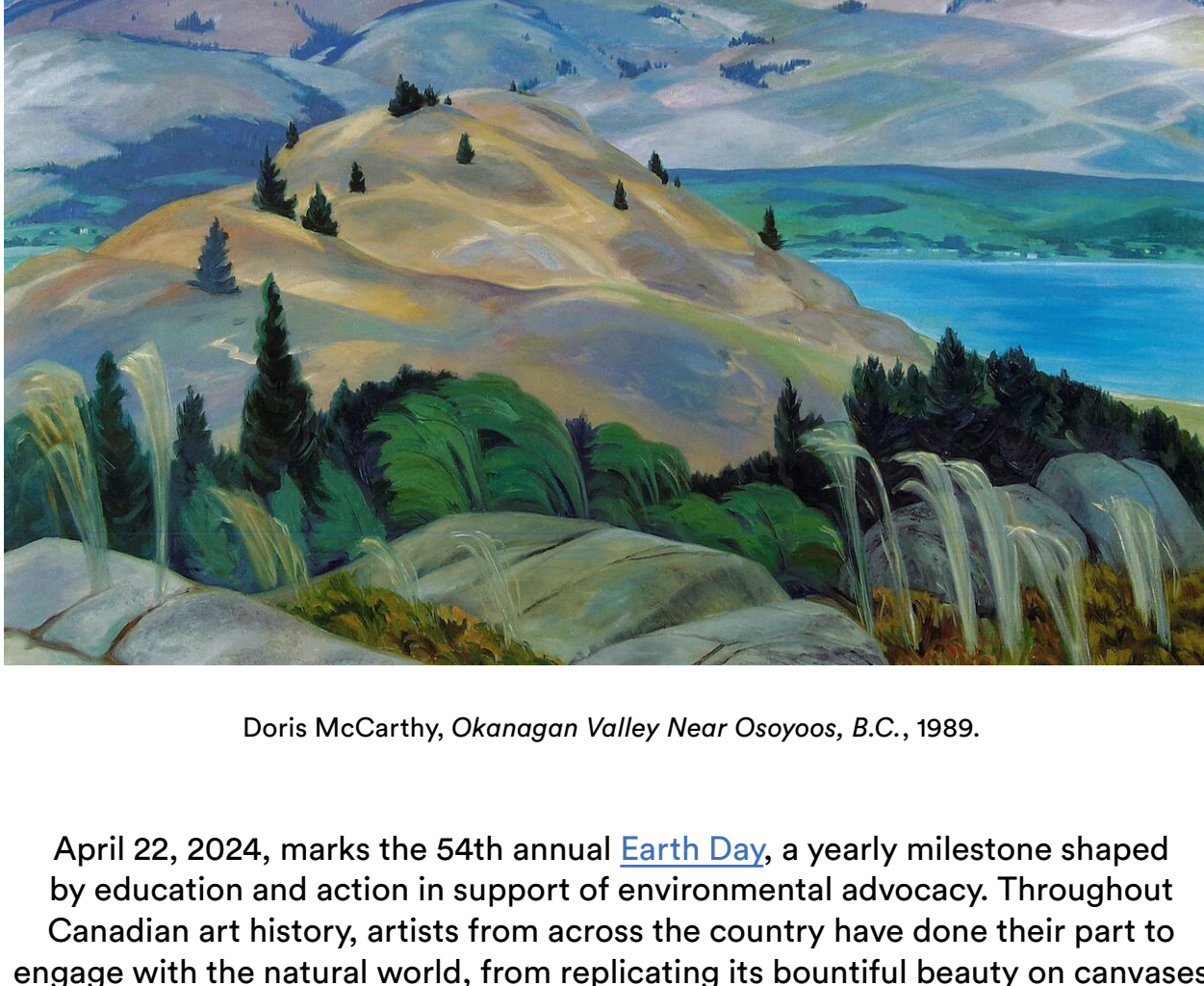


# INSPIRED BY OUR PLANET ACTIVITIES FOR EARTH DAY

Ignite your students' imaginations with nature-based learning highlights from the ACI digital library



Doris McCarthy, *Okanagan Valley Near Osoyoos, B.C.*, 1989.

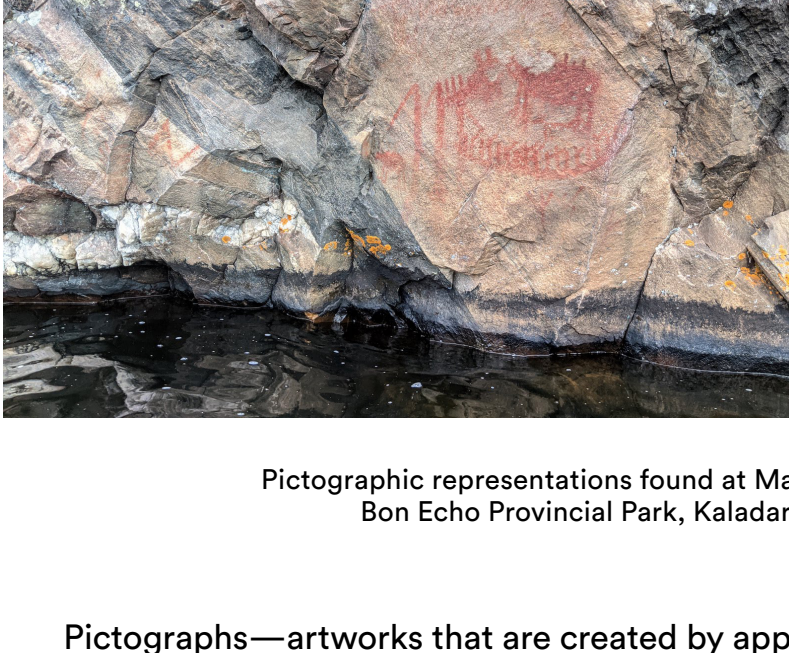
April 22, 2024, marks the 54th annual [Earth Day](#), a yearly milestone shaped by education and action in support of environmental advocacy. Throughout Canadian art history, artists from across the country have done their part to engage with the natural world, from replicating its bountiful beauty on canvases and in clay, to honouring the tools and materials it yields. For painter Doris McCarthy, works like *Okanagan Valley Near Osoyoos, B.C.*, 1989 (above) are a tribute to the peaks and valleys, crystal clear water, and luscious green foliage that characterize the western terrain in British Columbia—in many ways an urgent reminder of what is at stake in our shared responsibility to protect our environments and ecosystems. This Earth Day, we share the work of artists from coast to coast who have looked to the natural world for inspiration. From regional heritage to seasonal changes, and from ways of knowing to working with abstraction, we hope the themes and topics shared here will animate your classrooms this month.

Discover over [15 Teacher Resource Guides](#) on themes of land, environmentalism, climate change, and more.

— The Art Canada Institute Education Team

## AVENUES TO EXPLORE

### Nature's Canvas



Pictographic representations found at Mazinaw Lake, n.d., Bon Echo Provincial Park, Kaladar, Ontario.

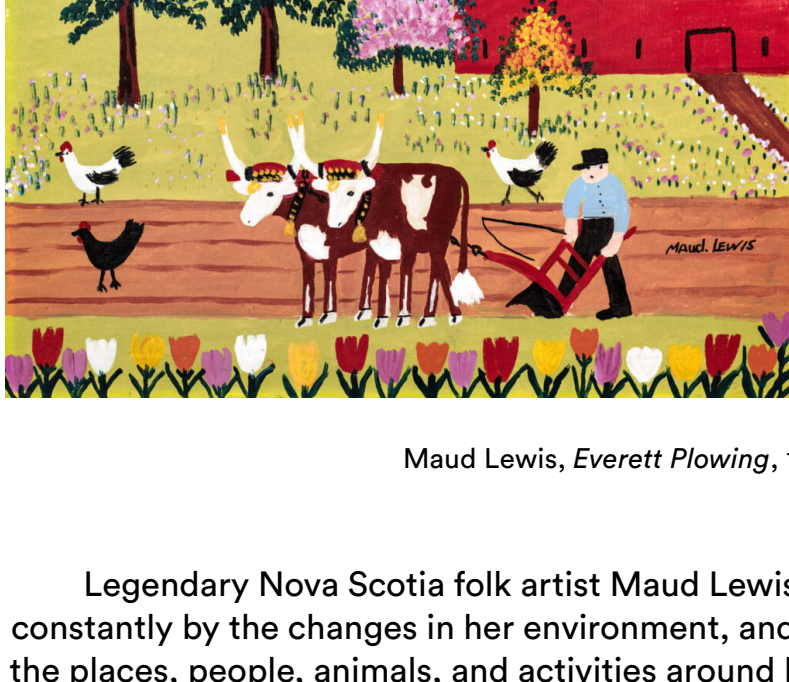


Pictographs—artworks that are created by applying paints or dyes to rock surfaces—have for centuries functioned as tangible, visual traces of Indigenous histories and cultural knowledge recorded and passed down through generations. The image pictured above is one of more than 260 pictographs that can be found at Bon Echo Provincial Park in the Ottawa region, which has been the ancestral territory of the Algonquin (Anishinaabe) peoples for millennia. Our Teacher Resource Guide exploring regional heritage through the art of Ottawa includes a learning activity designed to explore how these powerful visual documents function as a form of human knowledge-sharing based directly in nature.

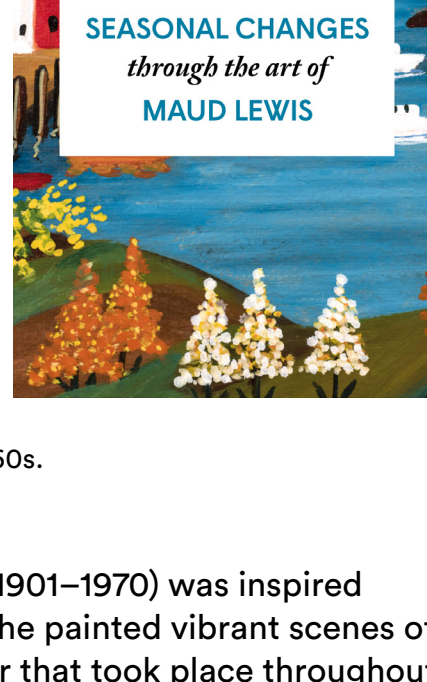
Explore the activity [here](#).

Read more about pictographs in [Ottawa Art & Artists: An Illustrated History](#) by Jim Burant.

### Cycles of Change



Maud Lewis, *Everett Plowing*, 1960s.

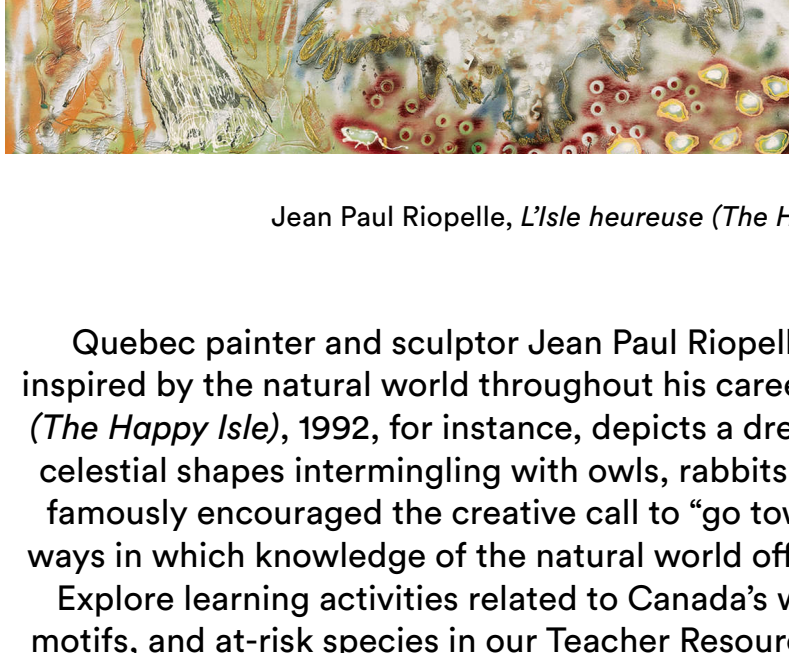


Legendary Nova Scotia folk artist Maud Lewis (1901–1970) was inspired constantly by the changes in her environment, and she painted vibrant scenes of the places, people, animals, and activities around her that took place throughout the year. A tribute to spring, the tranquil image *Everett Plowing*, 1960s, is typical of the care and creativity that Lewis put into her depictions of the great outdoors. Earth Day is a prime opportunity to collaborate with your students on a mural that depicts their local community at different times of year—a learning activity that is featured in our Teacher Resource Guide exploring seasonal changes through Lewis's vibrant canvases.

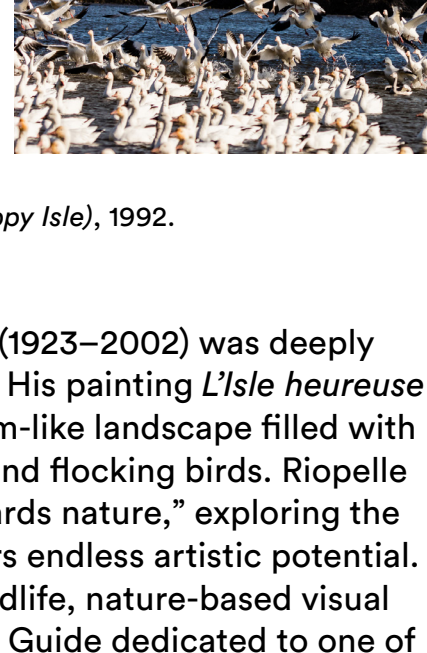
Download the activity [here](#).

Learn more about this artist in [Maud Lewis: Life & Work](#) by Ray Cronin.

### Creative Foundations



Jean Paul Riopelle, *L'Isle heureuse (The Happy Isle)*, 1992.



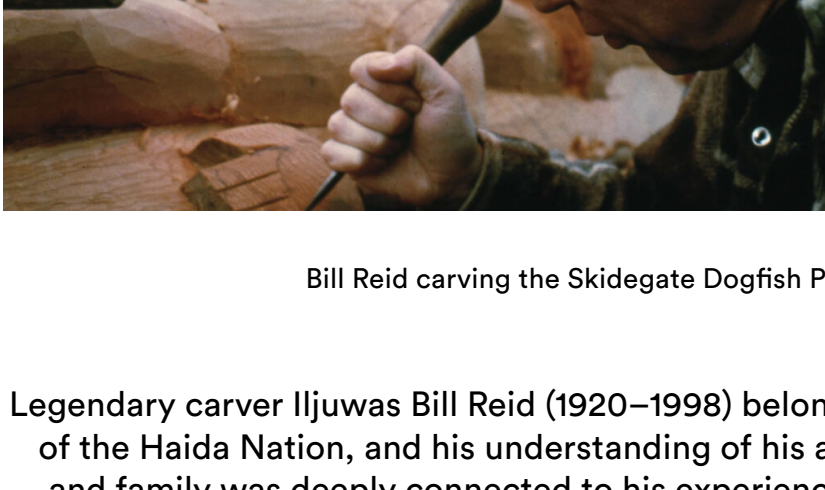
Quebec painter and sculptor Jean Paul Riopelle (1923–2002) was deeply inspired by the natural world throughout his career. His painting *L'Isle heureuse (The Happy Isle)*, 1992, for instance, depicts a dream-like landscape filled with celestial shapes intermingling with owls, rabbits, and flocking birds. Riopelle famously encouraged the creative call to “go towards nature,” exploring the ways in which knowledge of the natural world offers endless artistic potential. Explore learning activities related to Canada's wildlife, nature-based visual motifs, and at-risk species in our Teacher Resource Guide dedicated to one of the country's most iconic artists.

Download the Teacher Resource Guide [here](#).

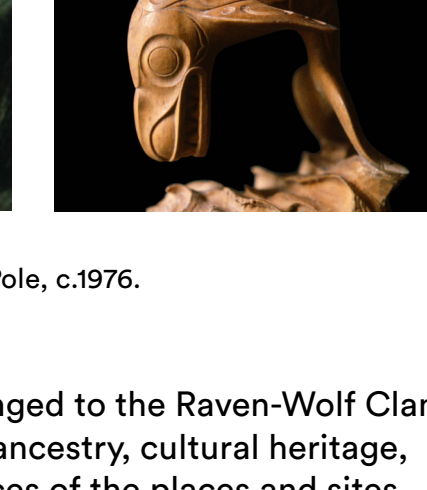
Discover [Riopelle Studio](#), a free virtual education platform developed by the Jean Paul Riopelle Foundation.

Learn more about this artist in [Jean Paul Riopelle: Life & Work](#) by François-Marc Gagnon.

### Learning from the Land



Bill Reid carving the Skidegate Dogfish Pole, c.1976.



Legendary carver Iljuwas Bill Reid (1920–1998) belonged to the Raven-Wolf Clan of the Haida Nation, and his understanding of his ancestry, cultural heritage, and family was deeply connected to his experiences of the places and sites that held sacred importance to the Haida. Central to his carving practice was a knowledge and reverence for the materials that were generated from the land, including the cedar tree, which he turned to time and again throughout his career. Reid's approach to carving is the inspiration for our culminating task on land and community—a stimulating Earth Day undertaking.

Download the Teacher Resource Guide [here](#).

Learn more about this artist in [Iljuwas Bill Reid: Life & Work](#) by Gerald McMaster.

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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](#)

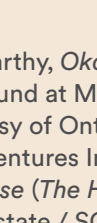
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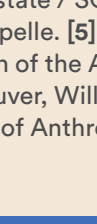
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