APRIL 25, 2025



As Canadians prepare to cast their ballots on Monday, we stroll through past vote-worthy political art moments.



*Canada*, 1970, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.



Alootook Ipellie, *Nunavut Wants You*, 1987, Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa.



Artist unknown, *The Old Flag—The Old Policy—The Old Leader*, 1891, Library and Archives Canada,

Ottawa.



As Canadians prepare to vote on April 28, this newsletter reflects on how artists have documented, influenced, and depicted elections, politicians, and the democratic process. From photography and sculpture to painting and graphic design, the works featured here capture pivotal electoral moments and historical political imagery. They reveal how artistic expression has immortalized political figures,

commemorated historic breakthroughs, and advocated for change. As we consider Canada's political future, these works remind us of the power of art to witness, question, and transform our democratic traditions.

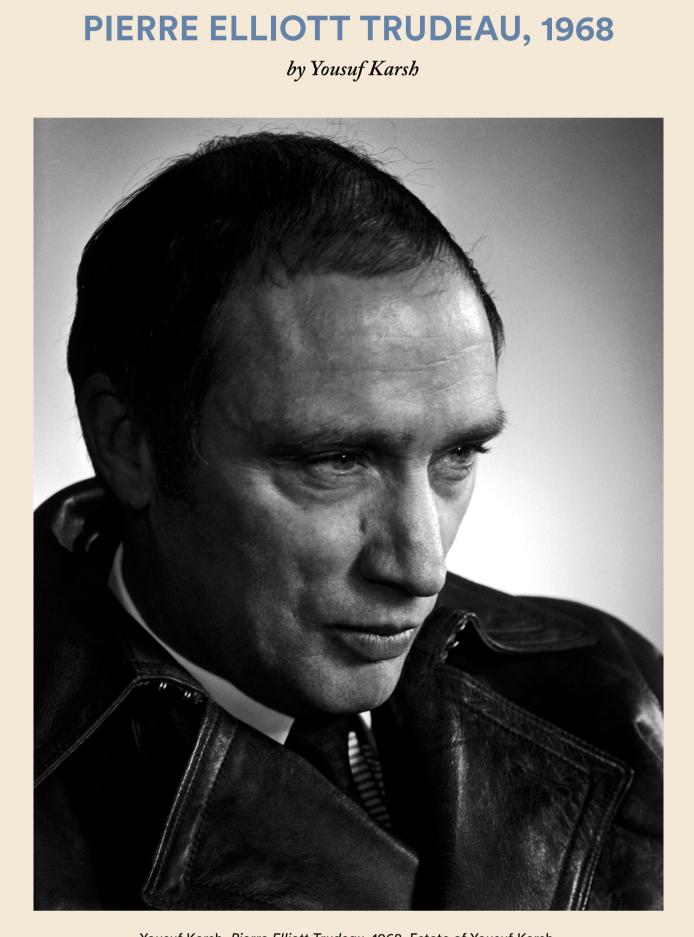
**Sara Angel** Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute





Artist unknown, *The Old Flag—The Old Policy—The Old Leader*, 1891, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Created during the contentious 1891 election, this campaign poster for Sir John A. Macdonald (1815–1891) highlighted the hot-button issue of free trade with the United States. While the Liberals supported free trade, Macdonald's Conservatives favoured protective tariffs, the foundation of the National Policy referred to in the poster. Running on the slogan "The old flag, the old policy, the old leader," Macdonald won the close election with his appeal to Canadian patriotism.



Yousuf Karsh, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 1968, Estate of Yousuf Karsh.

Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh (1908–2002) captured Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1919–2000) soon after his first election victory. Taken in 1968, at the height of Trudeaumania, this image reflects the power of political portraiture in shaping public perception. Karsh, renowned for photographing

world leaders, uses dramatic lighting to capture Trudeau's direct and focused gaze. He presents the prime minister, in his leather jacket, as both intellectual and charismatic—qualities that helped define his leadership. The portrait cemented Trudeau's public persona and reinforced his status as a modern, dynamic leader on the world stage.

Read more in ACI's *Photography in Canada, 1839–1989: An Illustrated History* by Sarah Bassnett and Sarah Parsons

WE ARE PERSONS!, 1999 by Barbara Paterson



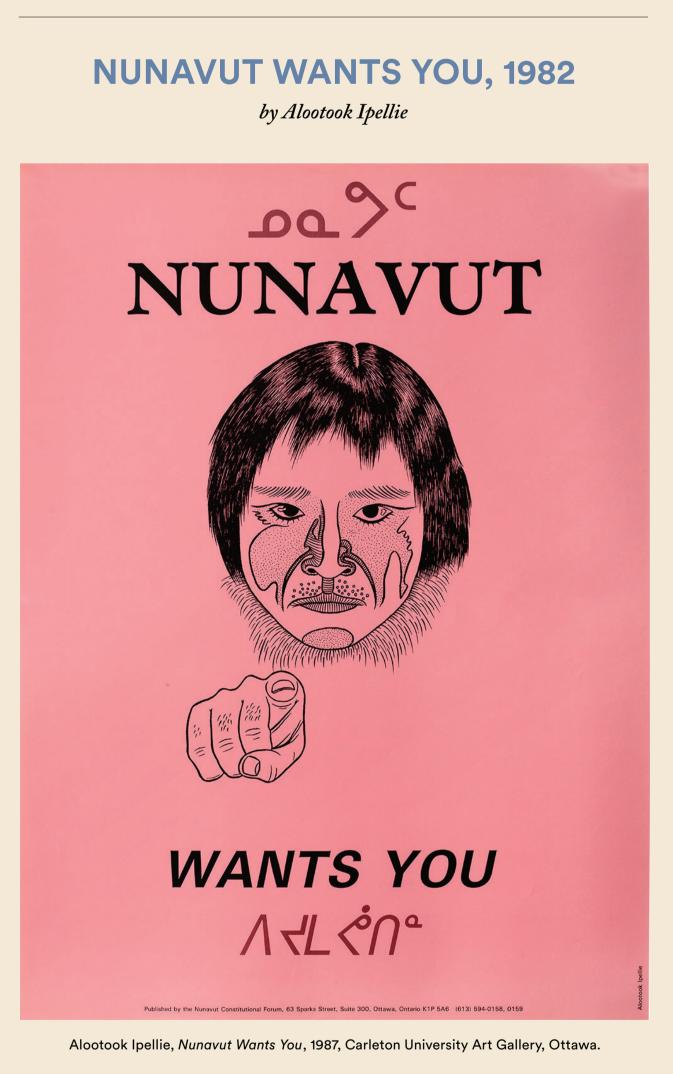


Barbara Paterson, *We Are Persons!* maquette, 1999, Famous 5 Foundation, Calgary.

Installation view of Barbara Paterson's We Are Persons! at the Plaza Bridge near the Senate of Canada, Ottawa, 2020, courtesy of Senate of Canada.

Sculptor Barbara Paterson captured the Famous Five—Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby—who fought to have women recognized as "persons" under the law in 1929. Their success allowed women to be appointed to the Senate, marking a major step in gender equality. One of the two completed sculptures stands at Plaza Bridge, near the Senate of Canada in Ottawa (*above right*), while the second is temporarily stored in Calgary and is expected to be moved to a new location before October 18, 2025, the ninety-sixth anniversary of the Persons Case, where it will continue to symbolize progress towards inclusion.

Learn more about Barbara Paterson



Inuk artist Alootook Ipellie (1951–2007) was known for his politically charged illustrations that assert Inuit agency and challenge exclusive notions of Canadian patriotism. In *Nunavut Wants You*, 1987, he reimagines the iconic Uncle Sam poster—used to recruit young American men to the US Army during the First World War—for the movement advocating for the creation of Nunavut, which would become a territory in 1999. By replacing Uncle Sam with a young Inuk man, Ipellie reclaims a colonial symbol, shifting the narrative from subjugation to self-determination. The work questions who is called to serve and belong, while highlighting the often-overlooked contributions of Indigenous peoples.

Learn more about Alootook Ipellie

**THE POLITICIAN, 1987** *by Joe Fafard* 



Joe Fafard, The Politician, 1987, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina.

The Politician presents John Diefenbaker (1895–1979), Canada's thirteenth prime minister, as he was often seen: with his hands on his hips. Known as a man of the people, Diefenbaker, a persuasive speaker and a prairie populist, prided himself on being able to remember the names of thousands of his constituents. He would often stand on a chair in a community hall to speak to voters.
Saskatchewan sculptor Joe Fafard (1942–2019) skillfully captures the politician's essence, as well as his will. Fafard is best known for his lifelike, playful, and often humorous depictions of animals, particularly his laser-cut sculptures of cows, horses, and bison.



Our Friday Newsletters Are Supported By You. Art Canada Institute is 100% donor funded. If you like our work, please consider helping us by making a donation.

### **PORTRAIT OF KIM CAMPBELL, 1990** *by Barbara Woodley*



Barbara Woodley, Portrait of Kim Campbell, 1990, courtesy of the artist.

Photographer Barbara Woodley (b.1961) captured Kim Campbell (b.1947), Canada's recently appointed justice minister, her bare shoulders visible behind her new ceremonial robe, in 1990, three years before she became the country's first female prime minister. The image, part of a book called *Portraits: Canadian Women in Focus*, 1992, sparked controversy by challenging traditional expectations of professionalism and decorum, particularly for women in politics. Campbell's leadership was brief but historic, marking a shift in representation within the highest levels of government and the slow but significant strides towards gender equality in Canadian politics.

Learn more about Barbara Woodley

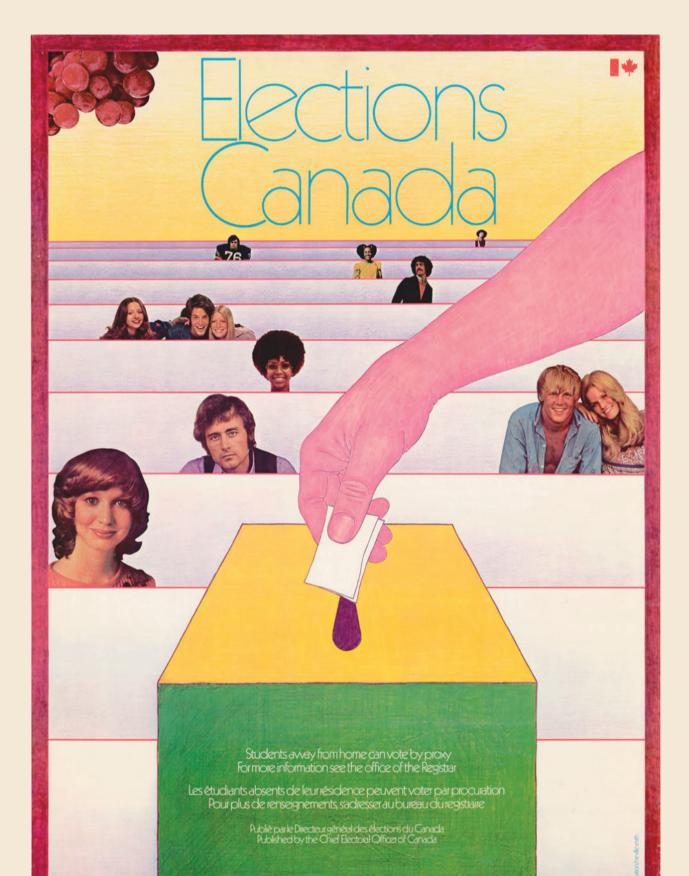
#### BROADCASTING THE NEWS, 1911 by John Boyd



John Boyd, Broadcasting the News, 1911, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

In the days before mass media, it took physical labour and public spaces to disseminate election information. Taken in Lambton County, Ontario, this image shows a worker pasting up election proclamations, documenting a time when campaign news spread at the pace of a brush and bucket. This historical snapshot reveals how democratic participation once depended on local, tangible interactions rather than instantaneous digital messaging. The photograph serves as a counterpoint to modern election campaigns conducted through social media and television, highlighting how technological evolution has transformed electioneering, even as the fundamental goal of spreading political messages remains unchanged.

**ELECTIONS CANADA POSTER, 1970** by Neville Smith



Neville Smith, *Elections Canada*, 1970, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

The 1970s saw major electoral changes, including the lowering of the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen in 1970. This poster's messaging reflects government efforts to make democracy more accessible and encourage participation, particularly among students. The poster demonstrates how government institutions have long recognized the importance of visual communication in fostering civic engagement. This practice continues today, but through increasingly diverse media channels as electoral authorities work to increase voter turnout.

THE DADDIES, 2016

by Kent Monkman

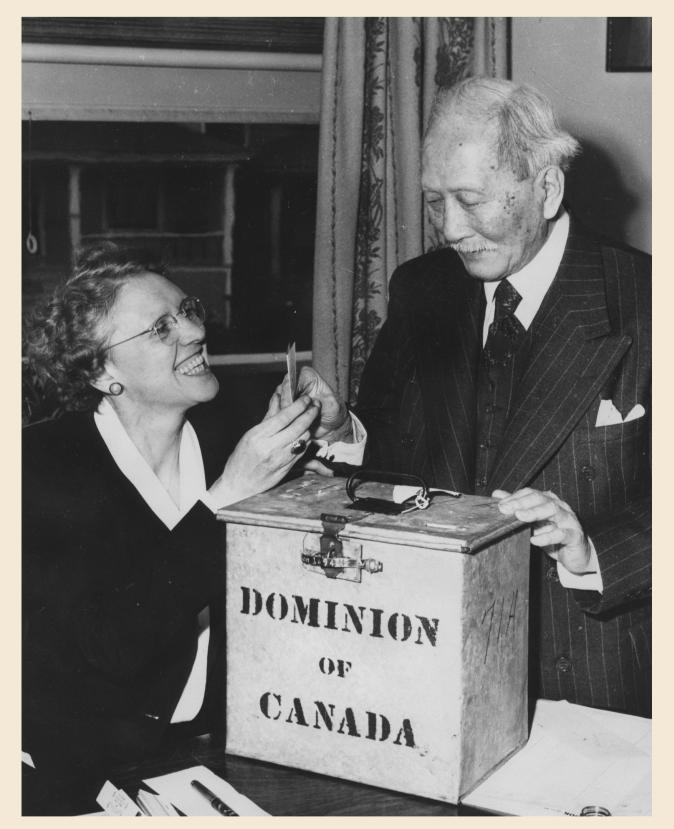


Kent Monkman, The Daddies, 2016, collection of Irfhan Rawji.

Cree artist Kent Monkman (b.1965) is known for his provocative works that challenge dominant narratives of history, colonialism, and Indigenous identity. Monkman often reimagines historical events, especially those related to colonialism, through a queer and Indigenous perspective, as seen in *The Daddies*, 2016. Here, Monkman incorporates his alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, into the painting *Meeting of the Delegates of British North America to Settle the Terms of Confederation, Quebec, October 1864*, 1884, by Robert Harris (1849–1919), to critique colonial power structures and the exclusion of Indigenous voices from Canada's founding and nation-building narratives. In this way, he questions who is represented in political history and how elections continue to shape national identity.

Read more in ACI's Kent Monkman: Life & Work by Shirley Madill

#### WON ALEXANDER CUMYOW VOTING FOR THE FIRST TIME, 1949 by an unknown photographer



Photographer unknown, *Won Alexander Cumyow Voting for the First Time*, 1949, University of British Columbia Libraries Special Collections, Vancouver.

Activist and community leader Won Alexander Cumyow (1861–1955) is the first Chinese Canadian known to have been born in Canada. For much of his life, Cumyow was barred from voting owing to discriminatory laws that excluded Chinese Canadian citizens from the electoral process. At the age of eighty-eight, he was finally able to vote for the first time in the 1949 federal election, a moment made possible by changes to restrictive laws. His story symbolizes the ongoing fight for equal rights and representation in Canadian democracy.

Learn more about Won Alexander Cumyow

# THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS

The ACI is a not-for-profit educational charity that receives no government financing or public support. Our work is made possible by an important circle of <u>friends, patrons, and benefactors</u>.

If you would like to support our important work, please see <u>this page</u>.

## **FOLLOW ACI ON INSTAGRAM** for more on great art in Canada

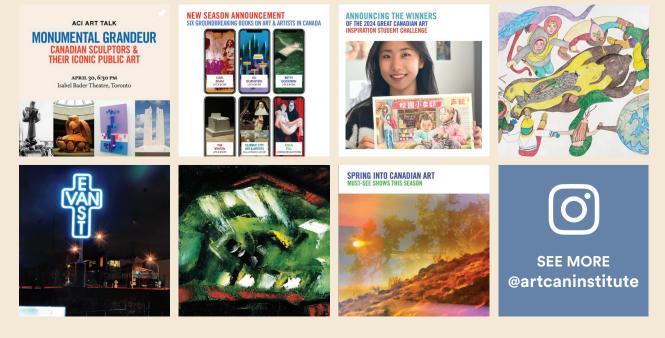


Image Credits: [1, 12] Neville Smith, Elections Canada, 1970, photomechanical print on wove paper, 84.9 x 59.9 cm. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3839884). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada. [2, 8] Alootook Ipellie, Nunavut Wants You, 1982. Collection of Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa. Courtesy of Carleton University Art Gallery. © Alootook Ipellie. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott. [3, 4] Artist unknown, The Old Flag—The Old Policy—The Old Leader, 1891, colour lithograph on paper, 106.3 x 69.4 cm. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (2834401). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada. [5] Yousuf Karsh, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, 1968. © Estate of Yousuf Karsh. [6] Barbara Paterson, We Are Persons! maquette, 1999. Courtesy of Famous 5 Foundation. Photo credit: Marc Mennie. [7] Installation view of Barbara Paterson's We Are Persons! at the Plaza Bridge near the Senate of Canada, Ottawa, 2020. Photo credit: Senate of Canada. [9] Joe Fafard, The Politician, 1987, bronze, patina, acrylic paint, edition 4/12. MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina Collection, Regina. [10] Barbara Woodley, Portrait of Kim Campbell, 1990, silver gelatin print, 39.4 x 39.2 cm. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (3518825). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada. © Barbara Woodley. [11] John Boyd, Broadcasting the News, 1911, glass plate negative, 12.7 x 17.8 cm. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (02682). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada. [13] Kent Monkman, The Daddies, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 285.6 cm. Collection of Irfhan Rawji. Courtesy of Kent Monkman. © Kent Monkman. [14] Won Alexander Cumyow Voting for the First Time, 1949. Photographer unknown. University of British Columbia Libraries Special Collections, Vancouver, Won Alexander Cumyow fonds (BC 1848, 9). Courtesy of University of British Columbia Libraries Special Collections.