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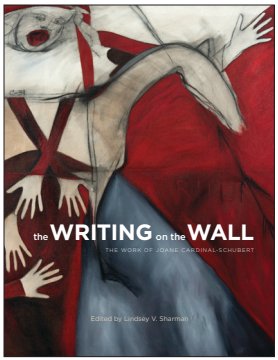

THE WRITING ON THE WALL: The Work of Joane Cardinal-Schubert

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STILL SEEING RED

by Alisdair MacRae

"When did the artifact become art, and the art become artifact?"

– Louise Profeit-Leblanc,
Dog Rib Symposium, 2007

In the fall of 2007, the Dog Rib Symposium at Carleton University brought together renowned figures in the Indigenous art world. During one of the panels, Gerald McMaster spoke of his experiences curating moccasins at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. In a similar vein, Louise Profeit-Leblanc discussed the opposing forces between preserving material culture through a Western method of collecting, cataloguing, and occasional exhibitions, and leaving it accessible to be touched, held, and used.

Joane Cardinal-Schubert shared similar concerns almost twenty years earlier when speaking with Michael Bell during an interview for *Seeing Red*, an exhibition held in the spring of 1990 at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre. She noted her appreciation of the flexibility granted to the artists while mounting their work within the space, and how that compared to installing exhibitions at other galleries. However, she expressed a general discomfort with the preciousness bestowed on objects once they were installed in any

given exhibition space. Cardinal-Schubert described the act of removing objects from their regular use as very gross, and a miserly task.[1] She alluded to how Native culture tends to get used or imposed upon in such a context, and how it is typical of museums to not return anything.[2]

One of the more widely known criticisms of Western culture's treatment of Indigenous people is how it tries to keep Indigeneity "locked in the past." This damaging notion has been widely circulated by portrayals in museums, but also through cultural appropriations and popular mediums such as movies, television, and art. Stereotypes of stoic, shirtless warriors and Indian princesses are not only inaccurate, but also disavow an existence in the present – as though Native people were extinct. That fantasy, sadly, has real parallels in Canada for many who were denied their culture, opportunity to vote, recognition for military service, or identity due to their gender or ancestry.[3] Such hegemonic cultural practices were first established through assimilation under the residential school system in the late nineteenth century.

Although recognized widely for her accomplishments in the arts, Cardinal-Schubert's conflict with the colonial preservation of Indigenous culture involves much larger issues than gallery and museum collection and exhibition practices. Her struggle was central to who she was as a person, not just as an artist. Throughout her life, she fought for the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings. Whether working as an artist, curator, writer, advocate, or mother with a family, Cardinal-Schubert's art, politics, activism, and personal life offer testimony to those efforts.

As a young person, Cardinal-Schubert did not directly set out to become an artist. She had also trained as a nurse and worked as a curator before turning to art full-time. The artistic opportunity to incorporate a wide variety of mediums while addressing her many interests certainly had its appeal, while her sensibilities could range from playful or humorous, to contemplative, or caustic. But it was with her art that she fought for the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings: by working against colonial cultural distinctions, through her approach to art making, and with her choice of subjects.

In Loretta Todd's film *Hands of History*, Doreen Jensen relates how Native people had no word for art, as their lives were "replete with it."[4] She goes on to describe

how work by Indigenous women artists was dismissed, under imposed colonial notions of anthropological artifact, as women's work or craft.[5] Similarly, colonialism introduced the sense of traditional Native art and culture in opposition to what is seen as contemporary, with the former carrying a greater sense of authenticity. Cardinal-Schubert struggled against these classifications through her creative endeavours.

As with her artist peers also working in the 1980s, including James Luna, Edward Poitras, and Gerald McMaster, Cardinal-Schubert criticized the classification and display systems of Western museums, particularly their associations with anthropology. She deployed these systems against themselves through the subversive use of didactic text, labels, and exhibition methods. Drawing on her experience as a curator, she deliberately used non-precious materials, not only to contravene the expectations of viewers, but also to stymie conservators.[6]

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Cardinal-Schubert's artistic career began in earnest, the cultural voice of Indigenous people within mainstream North America was not well established. In spite of the supposed plurality introduced by postmodern art during that same time, it is naïve to think that merely associating Native culture with anthropology or craft misleads Western audiences. As with many woman artists, a lack of accessibility to contemporary art networks meant that Western audiences simply would not understand contemporary Aboriginal art, or be exposed to it.

Cardinal-Schubert rallied against the classifications of art and craft through her atypical use of mediums and materials. Similar to artists such as Jane Ash Poitras and Jim Logan, Cardinal-Schubert dismissed Western conventions of representation and fine art. As with Ron Noganosh, she blended what was seen as traditional Indigenous art with contemporary methods of art making, and intentionally incorporated craft and kitsch materials to confound, shock, and delight her viewers. Cardinal-Schubert could render subjects in a realistic, Western manner of representation. However, her avoidance of illusionistic methods of portrayal left room for jarring and expressive statements about her own circumstances as a contemporary Aboriginal person. By distorting scale, using strong, saturated colours, or incorporating stencils, the artist could communicate aspects of her experience more directly.

As a child, Cardinal-Schubert's family offered a supportive environment in which she could express herself. However, her experience with art school was less accommodating. She admitted she knew nothing about making art when she enrolled at the Alberta College of Art and Design, yet completed her studies at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary in spite of starting at a later age than most students, and having a family to care for. As many would see, the artist had a particular approach to art, and used it to fight for the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings.

Cardinal-Schubert seemed aware of a sense of responsibility she had as an artist. As she put it, she was not going to "take this lightly," and aspired to do more than make "pretty pictures."[7] The artist was humbly aware of those that had come before her, comparing the process of making a curvilinear line through printmaking to making one carved in stone. She recognized issues that she wanted to address through her art. Hence, her work includes references to residential schools, mental and physical health, substance abuse, environmental degradation, education, power, and racism. Her choice of subject matter may seem difficult or challenging to some audiences. Calling herself a non-elitist in an elitist profession, she made the most of her seemingly contradictory position.[8]

The artist always sought, with her work, to communicate or establish a dialogue,[9] and did not shrink away from communicating as directly as possible with her audience. She believed that those writing about art did not pay enough attention to the artist's process, and was incensed that some people did not think artists should speak about their work.[10] Accordingly, the artist produced her own text panel for the installation piece, *Art Tribe*,[11] eliminating any chance for misinterpretation. Through her understanding of colonialism, and the power that words could have over groups of people, it is no surprise that she became adept in their use. She also wrote essays (including those for artist catalogues), poems, and was an avid public speaker.

Although she worked as a curator both independently and at various institutions, Cardinal-Schubert grappled with the practice of conserving art objects. As mentioned previously, she enjoyed challenging those who curated her work into exhibitions, deliberately making some of her sculptural installations from non-precious

and ephemeral materials. At the same time, she used very permanent materials to create protective forms, such as a plaster warshirt, and plaster medicine bundles. The ultimate goal did not lie in creating a polished object that could be preserved in museum or gallery storage. Some of her first works were of a very large scale, simply because of her own creative ambitious, and not because she was receiving any sort of commissions.[12] For Cardinal-Schubert, the act of making an image or object was paramount, with everything else that followed being secondary.

Cardinal-Schubert approached art not only as a means of communication and self-expression, but also as a means to freedom. Although she had access to other career options she enjoyed the creative process, as it enabled her to cross boundaries.[13] And as she explained to young children, art allows us to imagine ourselves in many different roles that might not otherwise be immediately available – such as becoming an astronaut.[14] Her approach to work was neither linear nor straightforward. She appreciated the opportunity to work in a continuum, with other continuums emerging outwards from the initial activity.[15] In that way, she was always busy, whether it was with a painting, installation, drawing, poem, or sculpture.

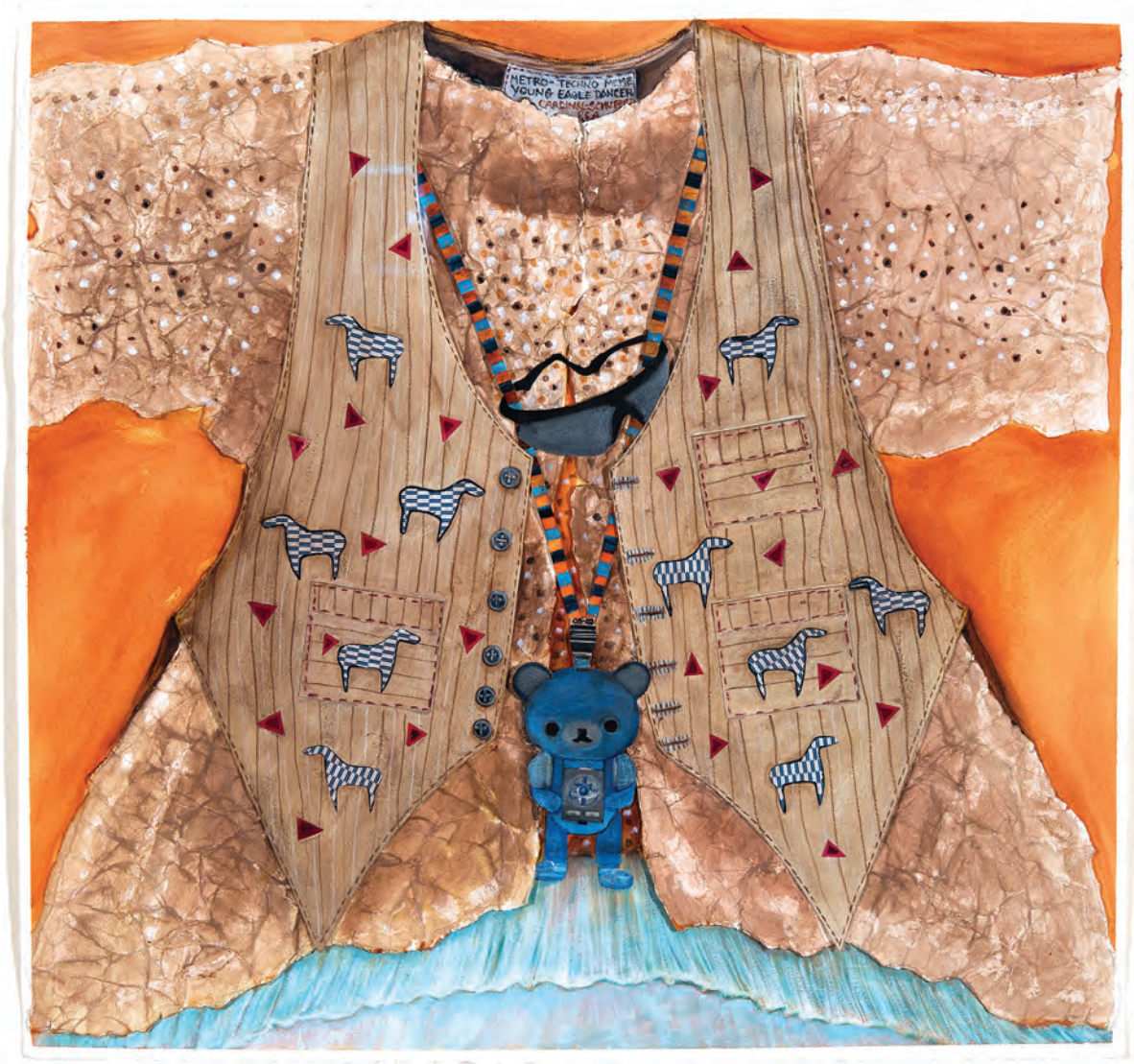
Recognizing the challenges facing Indigenous people and women, Cardinal-Schubert learned early in her career to be very strategic as an artist. Either because she was a woman, or Indigenous, or both, the artist's work was often seen as political. She disliked that label, seeing it as dismissive, and responded by saying she was doing what any other artists were doing, merely responding to what was happening in their lives.[16] It so happened that because of the person that Cardinal-Schubert was, she cared deeply about those affected by racism, colonialism, or those who were otherwise marginalized. Inevitably, her engagement with these issues surfaced in her work as a reflection of her reality, and the realities of others. But she did not want the impact of her artwork to be relegated to mere political statements.

The content of Cardinal-Schubert's art can be hard to confront at times. The audience may be unsettled, particularly by her black painted sculptures and installations that enter into the physical space of the viewer. Through such works, and the audience's engagement with the art, Cardinal-Schubert sought to change how people

thought – no matter how challenging that might be for either party. Nonetheless, her creations can just as often be visually appealing as they are ominous, and continue to be sought out through commercial galleries. In either case, the goal seems to be the same, as she considered the work she sold to private collections a means to sneak into people's homes, and take over their minds.[17] Through her art Cardinal-Schubert covered a broad range of subjects, all of which sought recognition for Native people as contemporary beings.

Starting in the early 1980s, Cardinal-Schubert developed an interest in warshirts. A distinctive aspect of Plains Native culture, these objects typically recount histories through illustration and adornment on buffalo hides. Often a person's entire history, and hence their identity, could be recognized from a single warshirt. Cardinal-Schubert's interest in warshirts was also traumatic at times, for example when she viewed them within the collection of the Canadian Museum of History, which was then the Canadian Museum of Civilization. The objects were isolated from their original context, severing the historical lineage that they carried. She found their packaging within plastic and handling by staff very disrespectful as well.[18] Her work with the warshirts illustrates her effort to make the past part of the present.

Cardinal-Schubert made her own contemporary warshirts to protest the collection, storage, and treatment of these objects by museums. She used readily available materials, not only to disavow their archival quality, but also to underscore the fact that these objects were owned by people who had made them for their very own particular use. She incorporated personal mementos, such as a pair of scissors from her grandmother, attempting to have viewers understand what it would mean to have deeply personal items removed from their own lives and kept elsewhere, in a museum collection. Cardinal-Schubert also flaunted the conflation of tradition and modern life, with creations such as *Urban Warshirt – Metro Techno* (fig. 42), which blends analogue and digital technologies. *Self Portrait, Warshirt: The Americas Canopy* features a pink lacrosse mask and tambourine situated beyond the picture frame. Many of her warshirts were portrayed hanging on coat hangers, once again underscoring their contemporary nature, and the fact that these items belonged to someone, and were actively used.



42. *Urban Warshirt, Metro – Techno*, 2007
83.82 x 78.74 cm
33" x 31"
Mixed media collage on paper
From the Estate of Joane Cardinal-Schubert

Cardinal-Schubert created several "modern" warshirts. Many are humorous but also reflect the protective covering everyone must don to face their everyday life. Warshirts, in Cardinal-Schubert's culture, are signifiers of prestige and power worn traditionally only by men. Many of Cardinal-Schubert's works are warshirts she creates and bestows upon herself.

43. *Four Directions – Keepers of the Vision – Warshirts: This is the Spirit of the West, This is the Spirit of the East, This is the Spirit of the North, This is the Spirit of the South*, 1986
121.9 x 91.4 cm (each panel)
48″ x 36″ (each panel)
Oil, oil pastel, chalk, graphite, and collage on rag paper
From the Estate of Joane Cardinal-Schubert

Cardinal-Schubert created several Four Direction quadratychs and other works following Chernobyl. They encourage a coming together through disaster and references our collective responsibility to protect the earth.

A poem related to this work can be found on page 117.


prompt boycott cry
KEEPER


Hidden Creek
KEEPER

Medicine bundles typically store sacred items related to the health and well-being of those that carry them. Seeing these objects in museum collections, taken apart and tagged for classification, made Cardinal-Schubert equally distraught as when seeing the warshirts.[19] The bundles carried a tremendous significance for her, and by keeping them stored in museums, the culture of Native people had once again been taken away and denied its use, heritage, and contemporary existence. Again the artist reacted by creating her own bundles, with titles such as *Contemporary Artifact – Medicine Bundles: The Spirits Are Forever Within*, introducing modern materials, motifs, and themes. She wryly made these objects out of plaster, making it impossible for them to be taken apart and examined. However, their glossy exterior surfaces still entice the viewer. The colourful imagery includes a silhouette of a handprint, which can be seen as a symbol of protection. Her interest in the provenance of both the warshirts and the medicine bundles emerged at a time when repatriation was gathering momentum as a contentious issue in Canada, with her concerns culminating perhaps during the Winter Olympics in Calgary with "The Spirit Sings," an exhibition at the Glenbow Museum of Indigenous culture sponsored by an oil company.[20]

Cardinal-Schubert made other aspects of traditional Indigenous culture a part of the contemporary realm by incorporating them into her work. Images found carved into stone by Native people in southern Alberta had been documented, but not widely understood. The artist knew these motifs as pictographs, a combination of petroglyphs, or images cut into the rock, and pictographs, whereby images are painted on the surface of rock.[21] Drawing attention to their presence could raise awareness around their protection and broader understanding, especially for the history of Native people in that area. The artist took the same approach with the sweatlodge, incorporating it as a symbol into her works on paper. Like many aspects of Indigenous culture in Canada, ceremonies such as the sweatlodge and sundance had been outlawed during the twentieth century.[22] Cardinal-Schubert's use of the domed lodge motif not only draws attention to the oppression of Native people, but also revives its circulation in the present day.

Cardinal-Schubert also drew attention to Indigenous people as contemporary beings through her early representational

44. *Great Canadian Dream – Pray for Me, Louis Riel*, 1978
169 x 373 cm
66″ x 146.75″
Oil on canvas, triptych
Collection of Carleton University Art Gallery

Many of the works of Cardinal-Schubert commemorate historical individuals. They offer homage to those the artist felt were unrepresented or underrepresented in the accepted mainstream narratives of Canadian history.

The left panel of this work depicts the family of Louis Riel: his wife, Marguerite Monet; mother, Julie Lagimodière; son, John-Louis Riel, and father Louis Riel Sr. In the centre panel is Chief Poundmaker (Pîhtokahanapiwiyin), Louis Riel overseen by 12 members of the Conditional Council, a Métis couple in a Red River cart, and Big Bear (Mistahimaskwa) in the bottom right. The right panel features Michel Dumas, Gabriel Dumont, and Frederick Dobson Middleton.

45. *Great Canadian Dream – Treaty No. 7*, 1978
152.5 x 305 cm
60″ x 120″
Oil on canvas
Collection of the Red Deer Museum and Art Gallery

The subject of this work is the signing of Treaty 7, where Indigenous people of Southern Alberta gave up their hunting rights in return for food, reserve lands, and treaty money. In researching the treaty Cardinal-Schubert discovered that within one year of signing Treaty No. 7, people were reduced to killing their horses for food and eating gophers. On the top left edge of the left panel is Jerry Potts, Métis interpreter and guide, the large profile of Crowfoot (Isapo-Muxika) overshadows Sir John A. MacDonald below him and Colonel James MacLeod and Major Acheson Irvine are on the right. The foreground is dominated by a figure in full headdress holding a peace lance who the artist calls the "foreteller of the future."


CARDINAL-SCHUBERT

46. *Great Canadian Dream, No. 4, "Mountie Piece,"* 1978
81.3 x 243.8 cm
32" x 96"
Oil on canvas

Collection of Fort Calgary

works. *Great Canadian Dream – Pray for Me, Louis Riel* (fig. 44) is a large triptych that Cardinal-Schubert completed in the late 1970s, following a time of celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of Canada as a nation. It addresses the legacy of Louis Riel, the Métis people, and their conflict with the government of Canada. By depicting the historic events of Riel and his people, she brought them back into focus in the present. With the acknowledgement of that history comes the recognition that the Métis people are still largely unrecognized within Canada. *Great Canadian Dream – Treaty No. 7* (fig. 45) portrays some of the historical players involved in the treaty process, and the all too common legacy of broken promises, despair, and death that followed. As I write these words from unceded Algonquin Territory in the 150th anniversary year of Canada, the painting of the past serves as a metaphor for the present.

As part of preparations for Canada's sesquicentennial, 12,000 people participated in a poll between December 2013 and May 2014 to identify the top ten Canadian heroes. The resulting list included no women, and no Indigenous people.[23] In a similar fashion to her representational works, Cardinal-Schubert made art about figures that she considered unrecognized Canadian heroes. These portraits included Emily Carr, Big Bear, Crowfoot, Poundmaker, and Red Crow. *Homage to Smallboy* is a portrait that addresses the contemporary plight of Native people in two ways. The subject of the painting, Robert Smallboy, was a chief who sought to return to traditional lifestyles in the 1960s. He was widely regarded for his efforts, even earning the Order of Canada.[24] The portrait also denies the visual culture of Western portraiture by rendering Smallboy in an unromanticized manner. Cardinal-Schubert's related poem *There Is No Hercules (Homage to Robert Smallboy)* goes further to lament the loss of a leader, and condemn those that ignored him. Recognizing the frailty of the human condition in the moment in which Cardinal-Schubert depicted Smallboy, one is left with only the stark sense of contemporary existence.

There is No Hercules
(Homage to Robert Smallboy)

You
with your face of wisdom
your
comforting hands
your older age should
Demand
Respect

Yet
no one let you in
In Banff.

It was a cold night
you froze both legs
then,
they took you in
to the hospital
they took everything
away from you
including your legs.

They gave you
New things.

You could not burn
Sweetgrass
or have
Your food.

You went home
to die.
Finally.
Painfully.
Two years later.

Wasn't it you
Who had
special
audience
with the Pope.

Didn't you save
Your people
by example
on the Plains.

Didn't you receive
the Order of Canada.

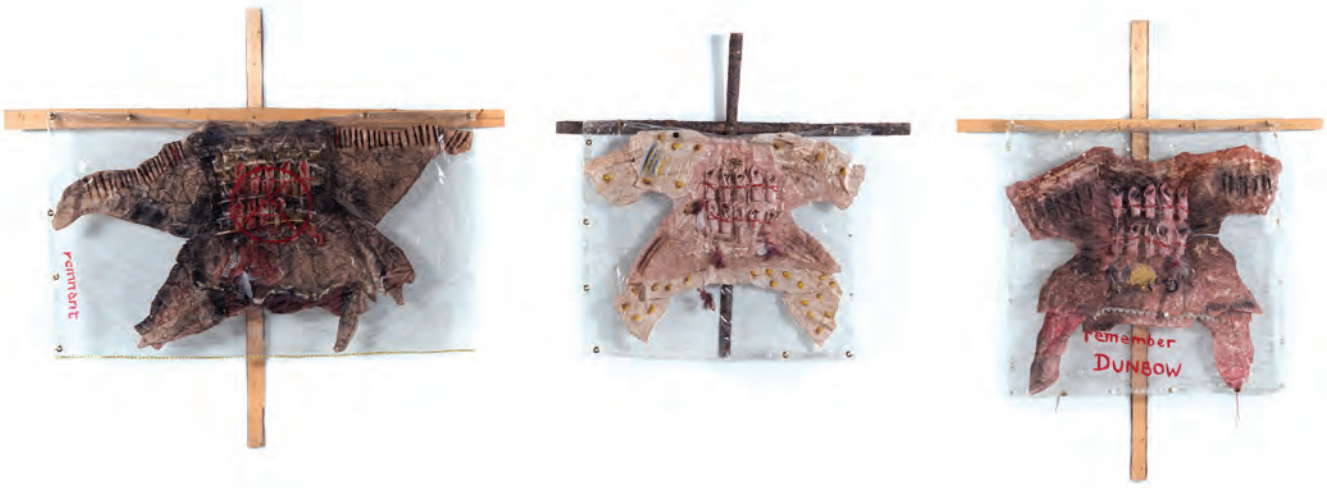
Too bad
There is no Hercules

In Banff
For an Old Indian
Out of Ceremonial Dress

– Joane Cardinal-Schubert, 1987

47. *Homage to Smallboy: Where Were You In July Hercules*, 1985
192.4 x 163.83 cm
76″ x 64.5″
Oil and acrylic on canvas
From the University of Lethbridge Art Collection; purchased 1988 with funds from the Alberta Advanced Education Endowment and Incentive Fund as a result of a gift by the Crosby family, Banff

Chief of the Ermineskin Band and recipient of the Order of Canada, Robert Smallboy rejected reserve life, which he saw as the cause of drug abuse, alcoholism, violence, and suicide in his community and established the Mountain Cree Camp (Smallboy Camp) east of Jasper on the Kootenay Plains where his people could start a new way of life free from what he saw as civilization's evils. On a visit to Banff he was refused a room at several hotels, which forced him to spend the night on the street. He suffered frostbite in his feet that night, which eventually led to gangrene, a lengthy hospital stay, and contributed to Smallboy's death on July 8, 1984.



48. *Remnant Birthright; Museum II; Remember Dunbow; Is This My Grandmothers'; Remnant; Then There Were None*, 1988
102 x 91 cm each
40" x 36" each
Oil, conté, charcoal on rag paper, found objects, clear vinyl, wood
For installation: Preservation of a Species: Deep Freeze, 1989
From the Estate of Joane Cardinal-Schubert

Plastic wrappings in many of the artist's works reference Cardinal-Schubert's experience of seeing sacred objects with ceremonial significance catalogued, tagged, wrapped in plastic, and stored improperly within museum collections. These works became a part of a larger installation titled *Preservation of a Species: Deep Freeze*, referencing frozen stereotypes while alluding partly to cold storage areas in museums for human remains that are almost always Indigenous.


is this
my Grand
mothers
remnant
Then there
were none

Through a broad range of works that incorporated recurring motifs in a variety of formats, Cardinal-Schubert addressed the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings. *Preservation of the Species: Deep Freeze* is an installation consisting of several smaller works. It considers the history of Indigenous people within Canada, from the introduction of residential schools up to the present, using information drawn from news headlines and detritus from modern life. The title makes reference to not only the preservation of culture, but also the greater challenge of survival – in spite of stereotypes that can leave one frozen, and prevent one from participating in daily life.[25]

Preservation of a Species: DECONSTRUCTIVISTS (This Is the House That Joe Built) is an installation that engages the viewer on several levels. Referencing Cardinal-Schubert's father, Joseph Cardinal, it forces viewers to consider different mental and physical states than what they are used to. Vast areas of the space are painted black, displaying Cardinal-Schubert's characteristic chalkboard writing. Viewing windows are set into constructed walls, some of which are tinted red. The experience of looking through the red tinted window alludes to the contemporary existence of Native people. At the same time, the windows are deliberately placed at heights that are uncomfortable to look through.

This Is My History is a title for both an exhibition and a single artwork. Through both, the artist draws attention to omissions and dark chapters within Canada's imposed historical narrative. In the artwork, which is similar to figures 6, 7, 8, and others related to pictographs and Writing-on-Stone in the artist's oeuvre, she takes ownership over what she recognizes as her narrative, incorporating pictographic figures using oil paints and canvas. The exhibition offered an important body of work, firmly established in the present and continuing to unfold. Appropriately, the notion of history's authorship, and how that can influence both the present and the future, does not seem lost on Cardinal-Schubert.[26]

Lastly, two of her works that recognize Indigenous people as contemporary beings include *The Lesson* and *Drum Dancer: The Messenger AKA Prairie Pony*, a public artwork at the Calgary International Airport. *The Lesson* (fig. 23) recreates the power dynamics of a contemporary classroom setting while exposing the experience of residential schools. The artist transformed the walls

of the space into large black chalkboards, using their implicit authority to write histories from an Indigenous perspective. The use of classroom desks provides objects that viewers can relate to their own experience of educational institutions, while situating themselves in relation to Cardinal-Schubert's wall text. In the same way, Cardinal-Schubert uses the shared public space of the Calgary International Airport to banish thoughts of Indigenous people as belonging in the past. *Drum Dancer* uses bright colours and the playfully balanced figure of a horse to draw people towards it. The sculpture also incorporates Indigenous motifs, such as the four directions, and is positioned in relation to the pictographs at Writing-on-Stone.[27] Serving as a reminder of the Native presence in that area, the piece situates Indigenous culture outside of the museum and in the public space of contemporary, international travel.

Cardinal-Schubert's artwork cannot be separated from other aspects of her life. Indeed, it was integral in helping establish an identity for herself, communicating ideas, and reaching a broad audience. However, it was not the only means for working through and drawing attention to what she cared about most deeply. While certainly no less important than her art, the following section will briefly discuss how her politics, activism, and personal life relate to gaining recognition for Native people as contemporary beings.

Cardinal-Schubert fought for the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings through her political stances. Many of her concerns manifest themselves in her artwork, as is the case with the work entitled *Rider* (fig. 1). Including the text "C-31" in the work references amendments to the Indian Act under Bill C-31 that would allow for gender equality and greater self-government by Aboriginal people.[28] Given the disjunctive and fractured nature of the composition, Cardinal-Schubert's feelings about the amendments may be seen as ambiguous, in that they were still metered out by the federal government. However, the work points to two other important political aspects of her life.

Cardinal-Schubert did not attempt to reclaim her Native status following the introduction of Bill C-31. She did not agree with the government definition of Métis, and so maintained her affiliations with the Kainai people.[29] Moreover, although she believed in the rights of women, she did not identify as a feminist, as she believed

her circumstances were largely determined by her race.[30] These two aspects of her life illustrate the importance of self-determination, not just for her, but for all Indigenous people who have experienced subjugation of any form by colonialism.

Cardinal-Schubert recognized how both racial and gender inequality diminished the contemporary experience of Native people. She fought against racism, participating in exhibitions such as *Racism in Canada*, and espoused the acceptance of others in spite of differences. She drew attention to her plight as an Indigenous woman artist by establishing a fictitious dialogue with Emily Carr. The resulting works took the form of both text and mixed media on paper, drawing attention to race and gender inequity. Becoming involved in theatre, in 2003 Cardinal-Schubert participated in bringing a production of *The Vagina Monologues* to Calgary.

Cardinal-Schubert's work as an activist also contributed to the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings. As an advocate for Native culture, she participated in conferences on Aboriginal art, and was an active member of the Society for Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA)[31] and the Calgary Aboriginal Arts Awareness Society (CAAAS).[32] Besides offering a mentorship role to other artists through these organizations, and an Indigenous art exhibition space through her work with CAAAS, she was also part of initial efforts to establish Indigenous arts programming at the Banff Centre for the Arts.[33]

Cardinal-Schubert's concern for the environment was also part of her struggle for the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings. Her father's career as a game warden likely helped to establish the importance of the natural world in her mind. Later, she would cite her own connections to the land (territory that had been stolen through colonialism), stating that it was in her DNA.[34] Many of her artworks draw attention to poor environmental conditions affecting health, including tuberculosis and substance abuse, while her use of black recalls pollution and oil spills. A work entitled *Dead River Scrolls* laments the damming of the Oldman River in Alberta. The installation incorporates empty water and liquor bottles as a visual metaphor for the dam, these disposable items often littering fresh water systems after they have been consumed. Her environmentalism can also be linked to her concern for

the pictograms,[35] innately connected to the land on which they were created.

Cardinal-Schubert's personal life reflects a struggle to be recognized as a contemporary being. She went back to school well into adulthood to follow her passion for art. She was not accustomed to formal art education, and did not feel at ease with the various mediums and materials she was exposed to.[36] Regardless, she began to create work prolifically soon after graduating. Cardinal-Schubert was also aware of how she was seen by others, and took ownership of her identity. From an early experience in art school, one of her classmates attempted to belittle and label her by asking what tribe she belonged to. Sensing that she was being challenged, she quickly responded, "Blood."[37] Prior to that experience, racism had caused her to often hide her identity.[38] However, upon leaving school, and participating in several exhibitions, she had no fear of letting people know who she was.

As the Indigenous curatorial field continues to develop, so too does the collection and exhibition of Native art. The repatriation of objects from museums and private collections remains unresolved, although the profile of contemporary Indigenous art has increased. Cardinal-Schubert's conflict with the collection and exhibition of Indigenous culture is central to who she was as a person, not just an artist. Given her career in the arts, many other issues can be traced back to that conflict. She fought throughout her life for the recognition of Indigenous people as contemporary beings. That struggle is firmly rooted in her art, politics, activism, and personal life.

However, Cardinal-Schubert's struggle is not limited to seeking a space for Indigenous culture outside of the museum where it may be observed frozen in time, as part of the past. It is also for those that are unrecognized or forgotten, limited to reservations, fighting for control over land and resources they are entitled to, who make up a larger percent of the prison population and who go missing or are murdered on a more frequent basis than others. In recognizing Cardinal-Schubert's struggles and achievements, there is an opportunity to finish her important work.

NOTES

1 *Seeing Red: Interview*, Michael Bell (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1990), VHS.

2 Ibid.

3 Traditional cultural practice was reinstated by an amendment to the Indian Act in 1954, but Canadian citizenship and the vote were granted to status Aboriginal people only in 1960. Lee-Ann Martin, "Contemporary First Nations Art Since 1970: Individual Practices and Collective Activism," in *The Visual Arts in Canada: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Anne Whitelaw et al. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2010), 371.

4 *Hands of History*, directed by Loretta Todd (Montreal, QC: National Film Board of Canada, 1994), VHS.

5 Ibid.

6 Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony In Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 143.

7 *Hands of History*.

8 *Seeing Red*.

9 Northwest Profiles Interview.

10 Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), xv.

11 Ibid., xv.

12 *Seeing Red*.

13 *Hands of History*.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 *Seeing Red*.

17 Allan J. Ryan, *Second Annual New Sun Symposium* (Ottawa, ON: Carleton University, 2003), VHS.

18 *Hands of History*.

19 Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Kathryn Burns, and Gerald McMaster, *Joane Cardinal-Schubert: Two Decades* (Calgary: Muttart Public Art Gallery, 1997), 41.

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22 Michael Bell, "Seeing Red," in *Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Exhibitions: 1989–1990*, ed. Steve Anderson (Kingston, ON: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1992), 79.

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35 Joane Cardinal-Schubert, Kathryn Burns, and Gerald McMaster, *Joane Cardinal-Schubert: Two Decades* (Calgary: Muttart Public Art Gallery, 1997), 27.

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49. *Nihle Signe L'Arbore*, 1994
120.5 x 80 cm
47.5″ x 31.5″
Mixed media on rag paper
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

50. *Looking for the Silver Bullet*, 1995
152.3 x 122 cm
60″ x 48″
Acrylic on canvas
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts