



ARTWORK



INDIGENOUS INTERNATIONALISMS

SPECIAL SECTION

Artist Statement

When I designed this print, I was living in the Kootenays, feeling so far and lonesome from my family and my home. To make matters worse, I was preparing to travel even farther away as I was invited to the United Arab Emirates for three and a half weeks to accompany 28 other women artists from around the world.

We were to spend 10 days exhibiting work from our homelands together. This painting I did before leaving for my trip. I thought about one summer, long before I moved to Victoria, when I took a summer job with two other community members working with three archaeologists at the original village site of the Nimpkish River. We spent five days at our site working throughout the day and then boating back to Alert Bay for the weekends.

We did this for two glorious months. It was amazing to live by the river, hearing and seeing the Nimpkish sockeye returning. The energy at the old village site was very much alive. We would hear voices of children playing and conversations in our language while in a half-sleep during a noon nap. At night, to protect our makeshift kitchen from the bears, we created an alarm of hanging pots and pans to alert us to our visitors. Noises and voices of passengers in a canoe that wasn't there echoed in the night. The experience was unforgettable. Of the many experiences I have had throughout my life thus far, this was the experience I thought about the most while in the Kootenays. How I longed to be back home.

This painting is representative of that time in my life. The spirit of the ancestors are depicted in the painting of the bear, the great bear, and the salmon that returns to the river Gwani (Nimpkish River). This print honours that time, that place, and the people with whom I shared this extraordinary experience with.

Galadzi (Bear)

Francis Dick

About the Artist

Born in 1959 into the musqamakw Dzawadaenutw Band of Kingcome Inlet, Francis is a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation. Though she moved away to Victoria as a young adult, she has always maintained her ties to this village, and returned there in 1990-1992 to work as a social worker. After getting her Bachelor of Social Work from UVic. After two years of work, she moved back to Victoria and began to create art for a living. Over a decade later, her home is still paramount to her identity as an aboriginal woman and as a contemporary artist.

Her family is descended from the supernatural Wolf, Kawadelekala who became first of the Kingcome people. The image of this mythical being is prominent in much of Francis' art, acknowledging her contemporary ties to her cultural past. Francis says that "before anything else my work is about honouring my life process, my journey, through my fire, from places of pain and darkness to places that I might stand in my truth; my work is not a career, it is a way of life." This personal journey is reflected in her art, which is a product of her own emotional, spiritual and cultural awakening from her troubled past. Both Native and non-Native audiences have viewed Francis Dick's art as representative of human ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges through journeys of self-discovery.

Although her primary forms of artistic expression have always been through her paintings, prints, and singing, she also works with gold and silver and does some work with wood. She is also an integral member of the artistic community: she offers drum-making workshops and is frequently requested to speak for various community organizations, women's groups, and university classes. In the last decades she has exhibited in dozens of shows including Urban Thunderbirds, Ravens in a Material World in 2014 at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, and her work is a part of many private and public collections in Canada.



"Galadzi (Bear)" Serigraph. Copyright © Francis Dick 2003 (featured on cover)

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