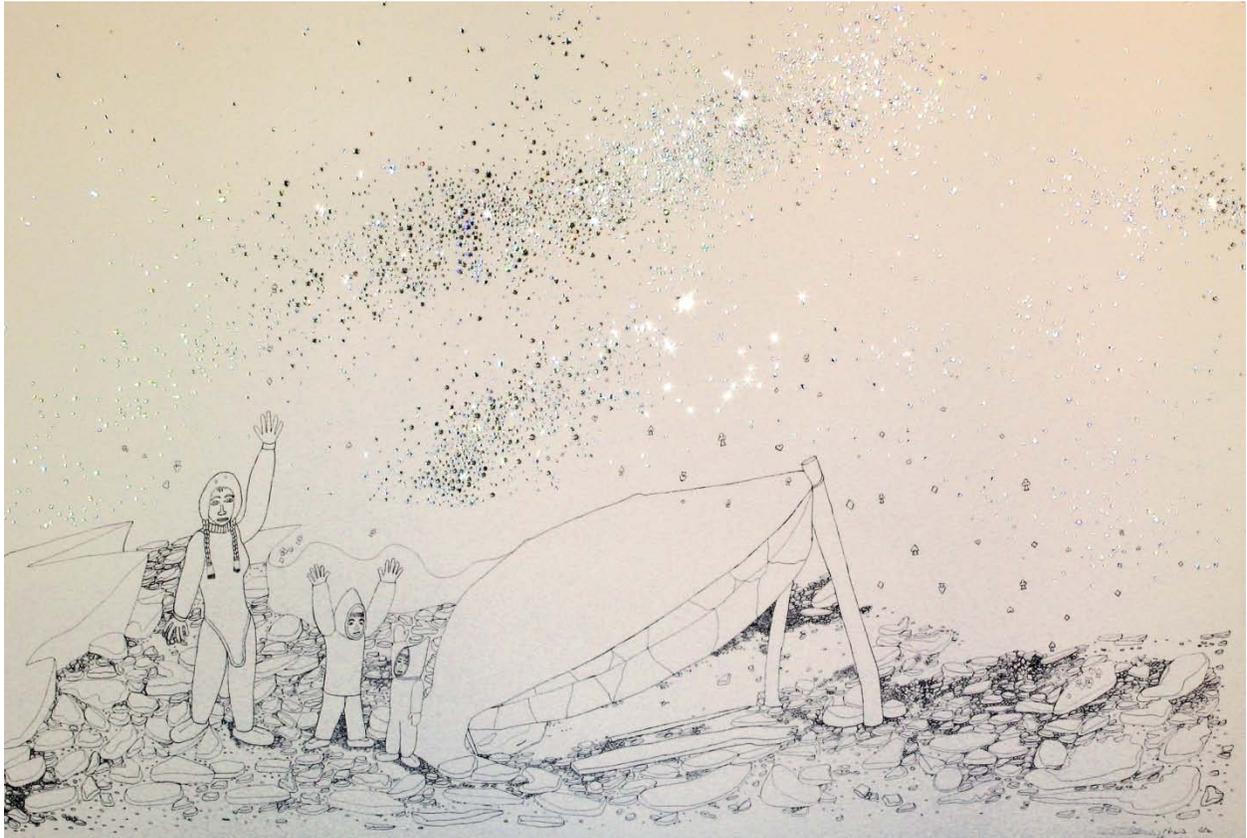


**Teacher Resource**  
**John Noestheden: Sky**  
**Shuvenai Ashoona: Earth**  
**Spiraling Forces**

**May 7 – June 22, 2012**



**SHUVINAI ASHOONA AND JOHN NOESTHEDEN**  
**Collaboration #2, 2008**  
Swarovski crystals, glue and ink on paper  
96.5 x 154.9 cm

**John Noestheden: Sky**  
**Shuvenai Ashoona: Earth**

On the surface, John Noestheden and Shuvenai Ashoona represent an unlikely pairing for joint solo shows at the MacKenzie Art Gallery. Noestheden, who has recently moved from Regina to Hamilton, is widely admired for his crystalline visions of the cosmos. Ashoona, a much sought after Inuit artist, is the creator of startlingly original images of the land inspired by her Cape Dorset home.

Although separated by geography and culture, this is not the first time Ashoona and Noestheden have been connected. In 2008, Calgary curator Wayne Baerwaldt invited the artists to collaborate on a monumental banner for the Stadthimmel (City Sky) project of the Basel Art Fair. The result was *Earth and Sky*, an image combining graphic notations of Arctic landscapes

and astronomical bodies. Transferred to an outdoor banner over 40 metres long, their drawing was suspended high above the heads of spectators on the street below. A second banner of slightly smaller dimensions was produced for Toronto's Nuit Blanche later that year.

The banner project demonstrated a unique affinity between the two artists. As Baerwaldt writes, "both Ashoona and Noestheden attempt to reconcile the disturbing contradiction between striving for order in nature and the principle of entropy, between the tendency toward greater organization and the general trend of the material universe toward death and disorder."

In recognition of this important international project, the five-metre-long preparatory drawing for *Earth and Sky* will be on display along with other collaborative drawings, linking the two exhibitions.

While never formally trained in the graphic arts, Shuvinai Ashoona grew up in a rich artistic environment: her father Kiugak, mother Sorosilooto, grandmother Pitseolak Ashoona, and aunt Napachie Pootoogook are all renowned Inuit artists. Rendered with meticulous detail and precision, Ashoona's drawings blend innovative compositions with objects and elements of everyday life in Cape Dorset. While earlier works featured complex landscapes and shifting perspectives, new works depict human figures, and utilize a wide spectrum of colours.

For the past twenty years, John Noestheden has produced large scale works on paper. The history of astronomical observation has inspired a good portion of that work, from the flaming tails of Halley's Comet embroidered into the Bayeux tapestry to the latest galactic revelations from the Hubble Space Telescope. Ironically, signal noise and loss of fidelity are as much a part of these images as the desire for true knowledge.

The exhibitions *Sky* and *Earth* offer a chance to consider the remarkable visions of two artists working from two different cultural perspectives. While the images differ, the questions are the same. How do we know what we know? What is the ground of our existence and the limits of our vision? Their artworks help articulate our place in the cosmic order, while acknowledging the boundaries of our comprehension.

Timothy Long, Head Curator  
Michelle LaVallee, Assistant Curator

### **Artist Information: Shuvinai Ashoona**

Shuvinai Ashoona was born in Cape Dorset, Nunavut, in 1961. She was born into a family of artists in a community that has been named Canada's most artistic municipality. Nearly one-quarter of the labour force of Cape Dorset is involved in art-making.

### **Map of Cape Dorset**

<http://www.athropolis.com/map-nunavut.htm>

### **History of Cape Dorset**

#### **Tourism information**

It was at Cape Dorset that the remains of an ancient Inuit people, who flourished between 1000 B.C. and 1100 A.D., were found. They were called the "Dorset Culture" after Cape Dorset. The Baffin Inuit of Cape Dorset are descendents of the later "Thule Culture" known by their legends as the "Tunlit".

The cape itself was named by Captain Luke Fox on September 24, 1631, after Edward Sackville, Earl of Dorset. Sackville, a Lord of the Admiralty, was one of Fox's sponsors in his unsuccessful attempt to find the Northwest Passage. The "cape" on Dorset Island is actually a 243 meter [798 feet] high mountain, part of the Kinngait Range. Kinngait means "high mountain" in Inuktitut, hence the name of the community.

The Hudson's Bay company established a trading post in 1913. A Roman Catholic mission was established in 1938 but closed in 1960 as the majority of the residents are of the Anglican faith.

In 1947, the well known Arctic supply ship, the RMS Nascopie, struck an uncharted reef at the harbour's entrance and sank. The ship and its cargo were lost, but the crew and passengers were saved: a cairn was built in memory of the disaster.

*(note: Shuvinai Ashoona has done several drawings of the RMS Nascopie. The wreck of the Nascopie was significant as a symbolic marker of the end of the "old way of life" for the Inuit of Cape Dorset.)*

[http://www.albers-inuit.com/print\\_s\\_03\\_dorset.html](http://www.albers-inuit.com/print_s_03_dorset.html)

In 1953, the Inuit of Cape Dorset built the Anglican Church on their own initiative. In the same year, the artist James Houston arrived in the community. Mr. Houston and his wife spent 10 years in Cape Dorset, finding gifted artists, encouraging carving and handicraft production and introducing print-making. The West Baffin Eskimo Cooperative was founded in 1959. In that year the first major exhibition of Cape Dorset Inuit sculpture was held at the Stratford Festival. It was a success and carving and graphic art have now become the economic mainstay of the community.

Source:

[http://www.capedorset.ca/en/tourism\\_town\\_history.asp](http://www.capedorset.ca/en/tourism_town_history.asp)

Shuvinai's father, Kiugak Ashoona, was just eleven years old when his father passed away from a sudden illness. That spring his mother, Pitseolak Ashoona, took her children and walked nearly 200 kilometres to the camps near Cape Dorset. This transition from semi-nomadic hunting lifestyle to relocation in camp settlements such as Cape Dorset, was indicative of the tremendous change and upheaval experienced by the Inuit in the mid-twentieth century.

Around this time Inuit sculpture began finding its way into the southern marketplace. The eagerness of collectors and consumers to purchase Inuit art encouraged art production at a time when the traditional way of life was no longer viable.

The Ashoona family includes several important and renowned artists and has certainly made a significant contribution to the artistic community. Kiugak Ashoona became one of the finest figurative sculptors of his generation. Kiugak's first wife, Punisti, was the daughter of a powerful Shaman, Kiakshuk. Kiakshuk also moved to Cape Dorset and became an artist. Pitseolak Ashoona recalled "I used to see him putting the shamans and spirits into his work on paper." Shamanism, transformation and the spirit world were attractive subjects in the growing marketplace, as were hunting, fishing and images of the traditional Inuit lifestyle.

When Kiugak's first wife died in childbirth he married Sorosiluto, who also became an artist. Shuvinai is their eldest daughter.

## **A Family of Artists:**

Kiugak (Kiawak) Ashoona, Shuvinai's father:

[http://www.inuitartalive.ca/index\\_e.php?p=137](http://www.inuitartalive.ca/index_e.php?p=137)

Pitseolak Ashoona, Shuvinai's grandmother:

<http://www.gevik.com/gallery-phillip/inuit-prints/by-artist/ashoona-pitseolak/cd75-birds-over-mallik.html>

Drawing of Pitseolak Ashoona by Annie Pootoogook (Granddaughter), Shuvinai's cousin:

<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/photoessay/pootoogook/index2.html>

**Article describing Shuvenai Ashoona's drawings:**

<http://www.straight.com/article-117357/shuvinai-ashoona-drawings-1993-2007>

## Confronting Stereotypes

Shuvenai Ashoona is representative of a new generation of Cape Dorset artists challenging conventions and confronting stereotypes. Many of these younger artists are children and grandchildren of the early pioneer artists of the region. Educated in a southern-styled education system, and fluent in two languages, few have experienced the tradition of semi-nomadism of their elders. Their artwork therefore reflects new forms of artistic expression. Instead of depictions of hunting, domestic life and shamanism they are more likely to draw airplanes, hockey players and interiors with televisions and appliances.

The market has generally been more conservative. Traditional ethnographic subject matter and decorative appeal remain popular with the print-buying public. However Shuvenai Ashoona refuses to offer exoticized or conventional ethnographic images for southern consumption.

Shuvenai is perhaps best known for her dense, obsessively drawn, cavernous landscapes, often possessing a psychological complexity and tension. In her contemporary representations of northern society she also employs inventive perspectives – aerial viewpoints, or magnified close-ups.

Regardless of these innovations Ashoona is still firmly connected to and rooted in Cape Dorset graphic tradition.

Condensed from:  
Robert Kardosh, *A Radical Defiance*,  
Inuit Art Quarterly, vol 23, no 4, winter 2008

## Artist Information: John Noestheden

Born in Amsterdam in 1945, Noestheden moved to Canada in 1951 and studied art at the University of Windsor (BFA 1973) and Tulane University in New Orleans (MFA 1975). He moved to Regina in 1990 where he taught for many years at the University of Regina. In his exhibition *Drafting Silence* (MacKenzie Art Gallery, 1997), he exhibited a series of large-scale drawings composed of 25,920 pencil lines, representing the average number of breaths taken in one day. The quasi-scientific obsessiveness of this body of work has been a constant feature of his artistic practice. Working on multiple series, he continues to produce drawings employing a variety of materials (Swarovski crystals, titanium ore) and methods (metal punch, vibration table).

Astronomical lore and imagery has inspired a good number of Noestheden's works over the years. For the exhibition *Changing Times* (MacKenzie Art Gallery, 2000), Noestheden sculpted a number of geometrically shaped aluminum "stars," which transformed an entire wall of the gallery into the constellation Ursa Major (The Big Dipper) and were the inspiration for a collaborative performance with Robin Poitras of New Dance Horizons. Selections of his other astronomically themed works have been included in significant group exhibitions, including *Time and Space* (University of Lethbridge Art Gallery, 2006, toured nationally) and *Astronomy: the Celestial* (Central Booking, Brooklyn, New York, 2010).

For the exhibition *Sky*, selections were made from his *Milky Way Mirrors*, *Comet Drawings* and *Thinking Space* series. All three series draw on the history of representations of astronomical

phenomenon, from the flaming tail of Halley's Comet as it appeared 1066 on the Bayeux Tapestry to the latest galactic revelations from the Hubble Space Telescope. Ironically, signal noise and loss of image fidelity are as much a part of these images as the desire for accurate knowledge.

Noestheden moved to Hamilton, Ontario in 2011 where he now lives and works. His work may be found in the collections of the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada Council Art Bank, Glenbow Museum, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Mint Museum of Art (Charlotte, NC), National Gallery of Canada, and Saskatchewan Arts Board, among others. He is represented by JHB Gallery in New York, Winsor Gallery in Victoria, BC, and Nouveau Gallery in Regina.

- Michelle LaVallee

*We also recommend John Noestheden's website as an excellent source of information.*

<http://www.johnnoestheden.com/current/index.php?album=Comet+Drawings>

## **Themes and Activities: SKY**

### **Astronomy: Stars and Planets**

*The following procedure was provided by the artist and gives insight into the artist's own working style.*

1. Select a super-tiny image from the pages of a book on stars and planets.
2. Super-inflate the image using a photocopier.
3. Make a transparency of the final copy with high contrast and darkness.
4. Tape the transparency onto an overhead projector. Adjust the image to your preferred size.
5. Project it onto your paper pinned to the wall and carefully draw all the shapes with a sharp pencil (H or 2H).
6. Using acrylic ink, accurately draw (transcribe) all the shapes with a very small brush and a larger brush for filling in.
7. Small dots are "photocopier noise" and become part of your design.

The above activity is suggested as a follow-up to the gallery tour. A closer look at the works by Noestheden may inspire students in middle years, or high school to attempt a similar style of drawing.

## Illustrating Star Maps

Research star maps, both illustrated and non-illustrated. What is the earliest star map you can find? Look at some of the most familiar constellations. Draw the constellations, or make up new ones.

Here is a link to an interesting website for further research.

Cosmic Journey: A History of Scientific Cosmology  
<http://www.aip.org/history/cosmology/index.htm>

Here is a sample map from  
*The Great Sky Atlas* authored by Piotr Brych.

Enlarge the map and invite students to use their imagination to seek patterns in the stars and invent new constellations.

<http://www.greatskyatlas.com/sample001.GIF>

Invite the students to draw the new constellations they have invented.

Look at illustrated star maps from the *Comet Theatre*, 1666-1668, by Stanislaw Lubieneiki,

<http://bibliodyssey.blogspot.ca/2007/03/comet-book.html>

What other illustrated star maps can you find? Who did the illustrations, and in what years?

## Myths about the Sky

What is a myth? There is no satisfactory definition, since myths serve many different purposes. The first purpose was to explain the inexplicable. Since the beginning of humankind's existence, myths have functioned as rationalizations for the fundamental mysteries of life, questions such as: Who made the world? How will it end? Where do we come from? Who was the first human? What happens when we die? Why does the sun travel across the sky each day? Why does the moon wax and wane? Why do we have annual agricultural cycles and seasonal changes? Who controls our world, and how can we influence those beings so that our lives are easier?

### A Universal Need

In the absence of scientific information of any kind, long ago societies all over the world devised creation myths, resurrection myths, and complex systems of supernatural beings, each with specific powers, and stories about their actions. Since people were often isolated from each other, most myths evolved independently, but the various myths are surprisingly similar, in particular creation myths.

So, the need for myth is a universal need. Over time, one version of a myth would become the accepted standard that was passed down to succeeding generations, first through story-telling, and then, much later, set down in written form. Inevitably myths became part of systems of religion, and were integrated into rituals and ceremonies, which included music, dancing and magic.

The second function of myth is to justify an existing social system and to account for its rites and custom. One constant rule of mythology is that whatever happens among the gods reflects events on earth. In this way, events such as invasions and radical social changes became incorporated into myths. Some myths, especially those from the Greco- Roman and medieval periods, also serve to illustrate moral principles, frequently through feats of heroism performed by mortals.

#### Compelling Stories for Artists

But what concerns us most here are the visual interpretations of myths that artists through time have given us. Many myths are such compelling stories that artists turned to them again and again, reinterpreting them from the vantage point of their own experience and imagination. An artist's representation provides a concrete mental picture of a myth or mythological character...

Source:

<http://artsmia.org/world-myths/>

Windows to the Universe: National Science Teachers Association (American)

[http://www.windows2universe.org/mythology/sky\\_nav.html](http://www.windows2universe.org/mythology/sky_nav.html)

Activity: Illustrate a myth.

## **Activities: EARTH**

### **Geography: Closeness to the land**

#### Activity

Visit a special place in a natural setting several times. Invite students to pick a spot in the environment. It should be a place in which they enjoy sitting and exploring and one which makes them feel safe. Have the children go to their spots and sit quietly for five to ten minutes.

Include a facilitated meditation or mindfulness sequence.

#### Instruction for mindfulness in nature

1. Sit still and quietly, upright with eyes closed.
2. Tell students to be attentive to the sound they are about to hear and listen until the sound is completely gone.
3. Ring a mindfulness bell.
4. Students raise a hand when they can no longer hear the sound.
5. When most have raised their hands, invite them to feel their own breathing.
6. Open eyes and sit quietly experiencing the chosen environment with mindful attention.

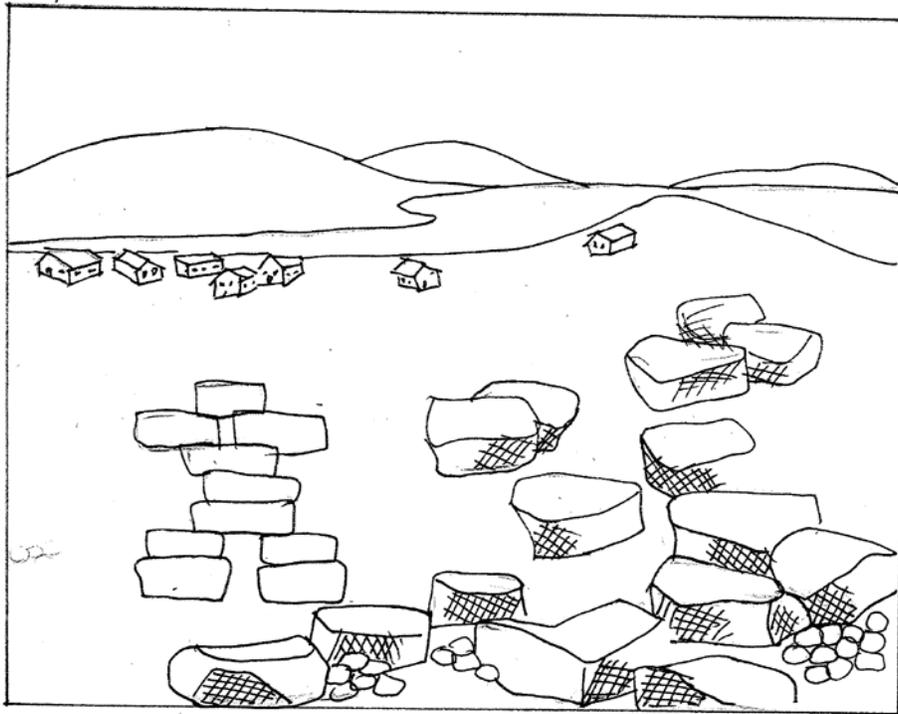
*Mindfulness includes the quality of awareness (paying attention to one's experience through the senses and the mind); of non-judgment (not labeling things "good" or "bad" but rather observing with a neutral attitude); and of stillness in heart and mind (though the body may be moving).*

Invite students to draw themselves sitting in this space.

Make a close-up drawing of nature within the space.

Write a poem or draw a picture on a rock. Place the rock face down as a gift to the earth.

## Nunavut Inspired Landscape Drawing



This is a step-by-step instructed drawing lesson that will introduce perspective, contour line, texture, shape and planes.

### Materials:

- Drawing paper (9"x 12")
- Drawing pencils
- Erasers

1. With the drawing paper in a horizontal position, make two marks, one on each side, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  distance from the bottom of the paper. Draw a line from one mark to the other creating a high horizon line.
2. On the horizon line draw a mountain as it would appear if viewed from a distance.
3. In the foreground make random gesture drawings using overlapping curvy, looping lines.
4. Look at the gestural lines and start to identify circles and ovals that can easily be outlined to make the appearance of large rocks and boulders.
5. Use contour drawing to highlight the outlines.
6. Make the rocks at the bottom of the paper (in the foreground) larger than the rocks that are higher up.
7. If you draw two rocks that overlap, put the lower rock in front of the higher rock.

8. Shape the rocks into planes to help with shadowing and texture.
9. Use your eraser to remove unnecessary lines.
10. Look at an image of a rocky landscape for comparison...

[http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.edwud.com/photos/rocky\\_landscape\\_derbyshire.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.edwud.com/2009/10/12/rocky-landscape-derbyshire/&h=531&w=800&sz=104&tbnid=e50vN2bd4mHRFM:&tbnh=92&tbnw=139&zoom=1&docid=HdXfGEi84kZpNM&hl=en-GB&sa=X&ei=PyWYT6amGMjiiALX9PT3DA&ved=0CDkQ9QEwBQ&dur=242](http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.edwud.com/photos/rocky_landscape_derbyshire.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.edwud.com/2009/10/12/rocky-landscape-derbyshire/&h=531&w=800&sz=104&tbnid=e50vN2bd4mHRFM:&tbnh=92&tbnw=139&zoom=1&docid=HdXfGEi84kZpNM&hl=en-GB&sa=X&ei=PyWYT6amGMjiiALX9PT3DA&ved=0CDkQ9QEwBQ&dur=242)

11. When several rocks have been identified, outlined and shaped, look at the following image of a Nunavut landscape.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/number10photoblog/4587424632/>

12. Add other details to the drawing such as buildings and the large body of water seen in the photograph.
13. Optional: Include an inukshuk in the landscape.

<http://www.inukshukgallery.com/inukshuk.html>

### **Everyone has their own Landscape**

Look at a landscape drawing by Shuvenai Ashoona.

[http://www.spiritwrestler.com/catalog/index.php?products\\_id=2748](http://www.spiritwrestler.com/catalog/index.php?products_id=2748)

How would you describe it? Why do you think Shuvenai depicted the landscape in this manner?

Does everyone have their own landscape?

What is your landscape? Is it a prairie wheat field? Rolling hills and a valley? Is it coastal, or mountainous?

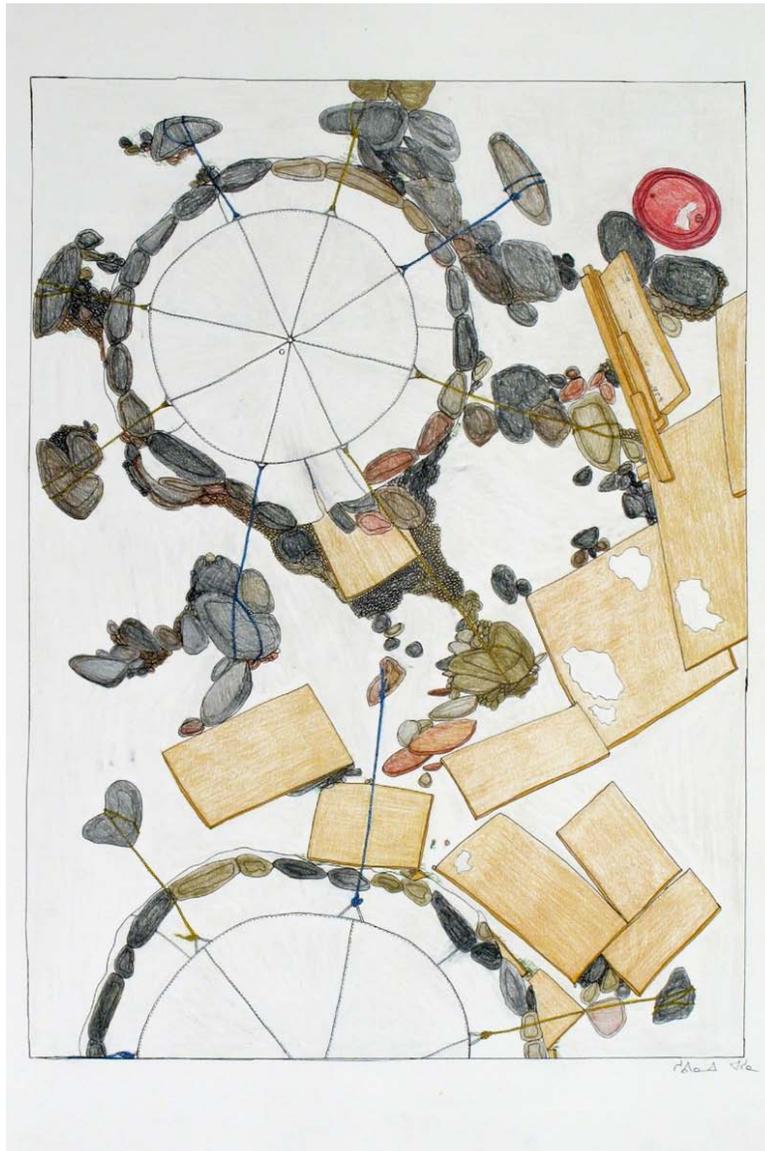
What determines a person's connection to a particular landscape?

Is it the place where you were born? Where you live? Where your family lives?

Consider your own personal feelings about the land. Draw **your** landscape.

**Activity: Bird's-Eye View**

Look at the image below. From what vantage point did the artist make this drawing?



**SHUVINAI ASHOONA**  
**Composition (Two Summer Tents)**, 2008  
pencil crayon and ink on paper  
76.2 x 48.3 cm

**vantage point**

*n*

a position or place that allows one a wide or favourable overall view of a scene or situation

Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003

Now, look at the work of artist Richard Diebenkorn

[http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/01/24/arts/0125-DIEB\\_8.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/01/24/arts/0125-DIEB_8.html)

Activity: Students will create an abstract composition, exploring colour and perspective.

Discuss perspective in drawing and painting.

Introduce concept of birds-eye view.

Go for a walk in a familiar space, such as the school ground or a landmark in the neighbourhood.

Imagine looking straight down at the space in which you are standing. What would it look like?

Make line drawings of a familiar scene from a birds-eye, or aerial perspective.

Allow exaggeration of most important features.

Use Google Earth to get a picture of a place from a birds-eye-view.

Now on your painting paper or on canvas, sketch the main shapes.

Select bold colours. Consider combinations of analogous and complimentary colours.

Paint large geometric shapes first.

Add detail.

### **Activity: Spiraling Forces**

The story of the MacKenzie Art Gallery's permanent collection properly begins in 1912, the year a savage tornado reduced much of Regina to rubble. Norman MacKenzie, a prosperous Regina lawyer and aspiring art collector, saw his entire collection of fine paintings destroyed in the tornado – save one, François Musin's *Marine Scene*, which, ironically, depicts a terrible storm.

Like the city around him, MacKenzie rebuilt – collecting Renaissance paintings, antiquities of Asia and the Middle East and contemporary works until his death in 1936.

The Spiraling Forces exhibition features works from the permanent collection that show themes -- forces of nature, wind sky, devastation and creation.

Draw your own Tornado

[http://www.drawingnow.com/videos/id\\_8720-title\\_how-to-draw-a-tornado/](http://www.drawingnow.com/videos/id_8720-title_how-to-draw-a-tornado/)