

## **DAILY ROUTINE**

**Speaker:** We will proceed at this time with the Order Paper.

Introduction of visitors.

## **INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would like to ask my colleagues in the Assembly today to welcome four individuals who are with us today for our tribute to the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. With us today is Joseph Tisiga, as well as Marie Pier, Julie Jai, and David Trick.

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## **TRIBUTES**

### **In recognition of Yukon Prize for Visual Arts**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. As Yukoners, we know how incredibly rich in artistic talent and creative energy our territory is. At any time of the year, our arts venues and creative spaces teem with a variety of exhibitions, performances, and programming. The abundance and diversity of artistic experiences available in the Yukon is truly extraordinary. This isn't just in a subjective sense of homegrown pride; there is statistical data to prove it.

The Yukon has the highest per capita number of visual artists in all of Canada. Moved by the artistic creation and talent here in the territory, Julie Jai and David Trick sought to raise its stature throughout Canada and beyond. They envisioned a means to celebrate the skill and unique perspectives of Yukon artists and provide opportunities to enhance artists' creative ability and further their careers. They also wanted to stimulate wider public interest and appreciation of the already thriving arts community in the territory. From this vision came the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. Working together with the Yukon Arts Foundation and the Yukon Arts Centre, this biannual award will help to shine a spotlight on Yukon's visual artists. This inaugural rendition of the Yukon prize received submissions from over 100 artists from a diverse array of artistic disciplines.

From these, a jury of esteemed Canadian curators chose six finalists: Ken Anderson; Amy Ball; Krystle Silverfox; Sho Sho Esquiro; Joseph Tisiga; and Veronica Verkley. A selection of their works has been exhibited at the Yukon Arts Centre over the last couple of months. This past Saturday, the winner of the inaugural Yukon Prize for Visual Arts was announced — Kaska Dena artist Joseph Tisiga. A multidisciplinary mix of the dreamlike and the profane, Joseph's explorations of contemporary First Nation identity are incredible prescient in this cultural moment.

Join me in congratulating Joseph Tisiga and each of the incredible artists selected as finalists. Through their work, these artists process a complex and intensely personal range of

feelings and experiences, honour traditions, and indulge imagination.

We thank you for sharing your gifts, and I would like to acknowledge the founders, partners, organizers, and volunteers. Julie Jai and David Trick, thank you for your vision, passion, and dedication to the development and broader exposure of Yukon's immense pool of artistic talent. We look forward to the creativity and partnerships that lay ahead.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition in recognition of the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. The Yukon Prize for Visual Arts recognizes excellence in visual artists. Co-founders are Julie Jai and Dr. David Trick, a couple who live both in Whitehorse and Toronto and have a vast appreciation for the differences of each place. One of the many things that has impressed them about the Yukon is the quality and diversity of the visual arts. Unfortunately, not many Canadians know anything about Yukon artists or Yukon art, and this important part of Canada's cultural narrative is being overlooked.

This was how it all started. The Yukon Prize for Visual Arts brings artists into the national dialogue and allows them to gain the recognition that they deserve.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Julie Jai and Dr. David Trick as friends for years. I know how much they both appreciate and support visual arts in the Yukon, so it gives me particular pleasure today to introduce them and to pay tribute to the work that they have done in co-founding the Yukon prize. Julie first came to the Yukon 25 years ago to provide legal support to the Yukon's negotiating team and has been involved in the successful land claim negotiations. Seeing self-government become a reality has been a highlight of Julie's career. David is a successful consultant specializing in post-secondary education and has had a distinguished career in the Ontario government as well as in the university sector.

I join in congratulating Joseph Tisiga, who is the 2021 winner of the \$20,000 Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. I also congratulate the other five finalists: Ken Anderson, Amy Ball, Sho Sho Esquiro, Krystle Silverfox, and Veronica Verkley, who each receive a prize of \$2,000.

The Yukon prize featured three internationally respected arts professionals as jurors for this competition and who came to Whitehorse this past weekend to see the art in person: Ryan Doherty, chief curator of the Contemporary Calgary gallery; Candice Hopkins, an independent curator, writer, and researcher who is a citizen of Carcross/Tagish First Nation and lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Gaëtane Verna, the director of The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery in Toronto.

The Yukon prize not only promotes Yukon art and Yukon artists nationally and internationally, but also allows for opportunities for Yukon artists to show their work in southern Canada.

So, thank you to Julie and David, and congratulations to all finalists and especially to our 2021 Yukon prize winner, Joseph Tisiga.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the amazing accomplishments of Joseph Tisiga.

So, Joseph and I first met years ago when we worked together at the Backerei on Main Street. I was baking and he was washing dishes. There were times when I would look over and he would be looking far into space. It was here that I got my first glimpse into his imagination. I remember when he started to open up and share what was in his mind. First it was with small sketches, and then it was with big ideas. So, I was blown away when I first saw his Indian Brand Corporation pieces — his ability to present concepts that are so hard to wrap your mind around, laid out with beautiful watercolour images that challenge you as a viewer.

So, I was a fan of Joseph before this show, but that was the show where I became a fan of his art. If one were to visit my office, they would notice a collage on the wall and, to be honest, it would be hard not to notice because it is a big piece. This collage just happens to be one of the very first collages that he made, so I feel so incredibly lucky to have it hanging on my wall.

Joseph has worked hard to develop a name for himself throughout the art world, and he has been able to do that without ever straying away from his beliefs. He is no stranger to awards and accolades, but I imagine that being recognized on home turf felt pretty good. On Saturday, during the first-ever gala for the Yukon Prize for Visual Arts, Joseph was awarded the top prize by a panel of internationally known judges.

This amazing prize would not be possible without the generous support of fellow Yukoners. As we heard, both Julie Jai and David Trick have been committed to the Yukon art scene. According to Julie, it was one small contribution that they could make to a community that has given them so much. This prize, Mr. Speaker, is not just a win for Joseph or the five other finalists, but for arts in the Yukon. There were 107 Yukoners who applied for the first-ever Yukon prize. That's 107 Yukoners ready to show their art on a national or international scale.

So, today I recognize and thank everyone who has been involved to ensure that the art scene we enjoy in the Yukon is thriving and more alive than ever.

*Applause*