Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
2023 Fall Sitting

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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help me give a warm welcome to a number of leaders in the innovation sector here in the Yukon. There are lots of visitors with us today. I would like to have us welcome: Ziad Sahid, executive director of Tech Yukon; Steve Mooney, CEO of Kluane Dana Shaw LP; Shayna Hammer and Erin Scott, leadership with YuKonstruct; Tiffany Eckert-Maret, with Yukon First Nations chamber, also with Da Daghay Development Corporation; as well as Ben Asquith, with Da Daghay; Dylan Soo, executive director with TIA Yukon; Barrett Horne, with Yukon Venture Angels; Caitlyn MacMaster, with the Yukon University Innovation and Entrepreneurship team; Aiden McRae; Colin Gervais, with Mitacs; and Ben Sanders, with HyperYou.

Let's give a big, warm welcome to everybody here supporting us for our tribute today.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, we are also doing a tribute today on the Yukon Prize. We have several guests. We have Julie Jai, a co-founder of the Yukon Prize, and two of our finalists — and I'm hoping we get a third — Alainnah Whachell and Omar Reyna. We also have Mary Bradshaw, from the Yukon Arts Centre and one of the Yukon Prize Committee members. We also have Deputy Minister Sierra Van der Meer here and also a constituent and councillor of the Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council, and I think the new vice-president of the Yukon Employees' Union, Lisa Vollans-Leduc, and if we could also please welcome Kaylyn Baker, the Yukon Prize winner.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Prize for visual arts

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Yukon Prize for visual arts and the 2023 recipient, Kaylyn Baker.

The Yukon is teeming with artistic talent. Julie Jai and David Trick wanted to celebrate the Yukon's visual artists and increase opportunities by showcasing their work to audiences across Canada and the world. In 2021, they founded the Yukon Prize for visual arts.

Working together with the Yukon Arts Foundation and the Yukon Arts Centre, this biennial award is a wonderful achievement for both those who create and experience art.

In 2023, approximately 60 Yukon artists applied for the prize. Applicants represented a diverse array of media: beadwork, illustration, sound, and sculptural installations. The intake showcased the breadth of Yukon's creativity.

From these applicants, a jury of esteemed Canadian arts professionals chose six finalists: Kaylyn Baker, Jeffrey Langille, Rebekah Miller, Cole Pauls, Omar Reyna, and Alainnah Whachell.

In September, I had the honour of attending the award gala announcing the winner of the 2023 Yukon Prize, Northern Tutchone and Tlingit artist Kaylyn Baker. Kaylyn's work is absolutely stunning. She creates innovative beaded designs using both traditional and contemporary materials. Whether it is jewellery, garments, accessories, or regalia, Kaylyn's beadwork is breathtaking.

Kaylyn is a Selkirk First Nation citizen. She says that beading is a way for her to connect with her ancestors and to tell stories through her creations. I spoke with her mother and her grandmother right after Kaylyn was awarded the Yukon Prize, and they were beaming with pride.

A reminder that the Yukon Arts Centre is exhibiting the Yukon Prize finalists' show until November 18 — new this year is the introduction of the Viewers' Choice Award where the public votes for their favourite. This award is sponsored by Casino Mining. Tomorrow evening at the Yukon Arts Centre, it will be awarded at a Business After Hours. Please come.

The pieces from all six artists are incredible. The creativity and dedication to their craft is remarkable. Best of luck to the six finalists with tomorrow night's award.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Kaylyn Baker and each of the incredibly talented finalists. We thank them for sharing their gifts. A big thank you to Julie and David for their passion in raising the profile of Yukon visual arts and artists. The diverse forms of art and vibrant culture found here in the Yukon help form our collective identity and are our Yukon story. The creative practices of our artists deserve to be seen on the world stage.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to this year's recipient of the Yukon Prize for visual arts and to recognize all of those responsible for organizing the prize and the first Yukon Prize celebration weekend held September 14 to 16.

The Yukon Prize for visual arts aims to help Yukon artists gain the national and international attention that they deserve. The prize was first offered in 2021 and is held every two years. The Yukon Arts Centre hosted the opening of a show of art by the six Yukon Prize finalists on September 14.

On September 15, there were 19 galleries and venues across downtown Whitehorse that opened their doors for the first Yukon Prize art crawl among the small businesses and not-for-profits that show and sell Yukon art.

During the day on Saturday, September 16, there were large turnouts for talks, tours, and workshops at Yukon University, the Yukon Archives, and the Yukon Arts Centre.

The capstone of the weekend was the Yukon Prize gala on Saturday evening, September 16 — a spectacular show in the Yukon Arts Centre theatre with special performances by well-known Yukon musicians and dancers. It was such a beautiful event and I had a wonderful time chatting with a lot of old and new friends. The show culminated with the awarding of the $20,000 Yukon Prize for visual arts to Kaylyn Baker, a citizen of Selkirk First Nation, based in Whitehorse.

Kaylyn Baker is an avid beader, using a variety of traditional and contemporary materials and textiles. She draws on the principles of visual art to create her own designs. In addition to making jewellery, Kaylyn's beadwork adorns garments and accessories. Her work has walked the red carpet at the Emmy Awards. She was a featured designer at Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week 2022, as well as the Adäka art festival fashion show in Whitehorse in 2022.

For Kaylyn, beading is a way to connect with her ancestors through her spontaneous style of what she calls "beaded storytelling". The other five finalists — each who were awarded $3,000 — included Jeffrey Langille, Rebekah Miller, Cole Pauls, Omar Reyna, and Alainnah Whachell.

Six more artists made the long list for this year's prize, including Justin Apperley, Robyn McLeod, Meshell Melvin, Jackie Olson, Nicole Rayburn, and Rosemary Scanlon.

I would like to thank the Yukon Arts Foundation and the Yukon Arts Centre — essential partners for the Yukon Prize. I would also like to give special thanks to the co-founders of the Yukon Prize for visual arts, Julie Jai and David Trick, for what they do for our community.

My congratulations to Kaylyn, to all finalists, and thanks to all 64 artists who applied for this year's prize. It is not easy to put yourself out there, but your art enriches our lives and our communities.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Yukon NDP, it is a real honour to congratulate Kaylyn Baker, who has been named the recipient of the 2023 Yukon Prize for visual arts. Kaylyn is a young Northern Tutchone woman who is a citizen of the Selkirk First Nation and is also of Tlingit ancestry. Kaylyn is a mother to three beautiful children and an active member of the Selkirk Spirit Dancers.

It is so good to see the hard work and artistic talent of Kaylyn receive such esteemed recognition. Over the last number of years, the art, hard work, and beauty of First Nation beading is being recognized not only for its cultural significance, but is finally recognized as a true art form. Today, beading is found on both national and international fashion runways and on walls in high-profile art galleries while also being worn by folks such as actors, advocates, and allies.

Kaylyn's beading not only captures the beauty of colour, her creations capture so much imagery from her traditional territory, including landscapes, animals, fish, birds, and so much more. Kaylyn's creations are recognized globally for the stories that are brought to life while also shedding light on the power of beading and its cultural significance.

It has been a real privilege for me to witness the growth of Kaylyn and her beading. I can recall sitting in a sociology class with Kaylyn in 2015 and watching her learn her techniques of beading while listening to our instructor talk on sociological theories, and here we are today, honouring Kaylyn's hard work, dedication, and beading. The art of beading is held in high regard in Yukon First Nation cultures, as it unifies beaders from across generations, creates spaces for healing and creation, while also building relationships, connection, purpose, belonging, and identity.

In many cultures across Indigenous communities, it is our beading that can tell the story of what family we come from and who we are as a person. Beading creates space for traditional knowledge to be passed on across generations and creates stronger families and communities.

Congratulations to Kaylyn on an incredible accomplishment. Keep on beading and smashing your goals. You are a great example of the good that comes when dreams are achieved and you grow into your full potential. We are so proud of you.

We also want to recognize the other finalists and all the individuals who were nominated for this prize. Thank you so much for sharing your talent with us across the territory. Finally, thanks to Julie Jai and David Trick, the co-founders of the Yukon Prize for visual arts.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Innovation Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to Yukon Innovation Week 2023. Yukon Innovation Week began on November 6 and will run until November 10. This year's event centres around the theme of "Connecting Innovators".

Hosted by Tech Yukon, Yukonstruct, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, and Yukon University, Yukon Innovation Week offers a comprehensive schedule filled with a variety of events and workshops open to all Yukoners. These events provide venues for people to meet, make, and grow transformative ideas. There are engaging workshops where participants discover ways to change our future. There are panels to attend where listeners learn about available supports and where discussion thrives. Participants will develop capacity, skills, knowledge, and a mindset geared toward innovation and entrepreneurship. Whether you want to learn a new skill, cultivate your networks, or overcome your fear of heights through virtual reality, Yukon Innovation Week is a prime opportunity for Yukoners to get inspired.

Our territory is home to many inspirational entrepreneurs, leaders, and passionate community members who are dedicated to making the Yukon a better place to live, work, and play. Innovation has the capacity to create new opportunities, break down barriers, and provide boundless possibilities for our communities. For example, Yukon innovators are working on several practical ways to help mitigate and adapt to climate