

Field Law launches Aboriginal youth art contest

by John Copley



Jon Faulds at Field Law

There's new opportunity on the horizon for young and aspiring First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists attending junior and senior high schools throughout Alberta and the Northwest Territories. Aboriginal students 12 to 18 years of age are eligible to compete in a newly organized Aboriginal Youth Art Contest 2012, the brainchild of the legal and administrative staff of Field Law, one of Alberta's most prestigious and longest serving law firms.

"The plan was developed earlier this year," explained Field Law partner, P. Jonathan (Jon) Faulds, Q.C., "and we're very happy and proud to announce that March 31, 2012 has been chosen as the deadline

date for our first-ever event. This initiative not only provides an opportunity for young Native artists to have their creativity showcased, but also allows us the opportunity to give something back to a community that has put their trust and faith in us for so many years."

Field Law, with offices in Edmonton (since 1915), Calgary (1921) and Yellowknife (1976), has a team of more than 100 lawyers who work together to provide a wide variety of legal services to individuals, businesses and institutions on matters that include litigation and dispute resolution, labour and employment, insurance, occupational health and safety, privacy, professional regulatory, business and medical malpractice issues.

"We have been working with Aboriginal communities and individuals for many years and have been particularly busy and successful helping victims and survivors of the Indian Residential School (IRS) era," noted Faulds. "We became involved handling these claims in 1998 and were pursuing a number of test cases when the Government of Canada announced its intention to reach a national settlement. We now represent more than a thousand claimants in the claims process that was created. We're about to enter our 500th hearing involving claims for IRS survivors and to date we've been successful in about 95 per cent of these claims, some of which resulted in very significant amounts of compensation for our clients. It's been a very difficult process at times and many of our

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clients have been waiting for years to be heard; these hearing are ongoing and we remain very committed.”

Over the years that commitment has included the annual mailing of Christmas cards as a token of appreciation and good will. Faulds says that until now they’ve hired an individual to provide artist material suitable to incorporate on the cards. But last year the proverbial light bulb flickered on and the idea to include the Aboriginal community in the Christmas Card initiative was born.

“The first art contest is just getting underway,” assured Faulds, “and the first step in that process is to have Aboriginal students with artistic flair compete in our first theme: Traditional Winter Celebrations,” explained Faulds. “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians represent our largest group of clients. Over the years the law firm has been sending Christmas cards out to our Aboriginal clients in an effort to both recognize our large client base and show our appreciation to the Aboriginal community for allowing us to serve them and represent them in the court room process during the past decade and a half. Beginning next year we will be selecting the art work for our cards and other material from the winners of

what we hope will become an annual Aboriginal Youth Art Contest. Youth will have the opportunity to showcase their talents while they compete for one of the three prizes that will be offered to the winners. In our first contest the winner will receive a cash prize of \$500, with \$300 being awarded to the runner-up and \$100 to the entry that finishes in third place.”

Well known and celebrated Canadian artist Alex Janvier will head up the panel of judges who will have the task of choosing the winning entries. Christine Sokaymoh-Fredrick was recently named to the judging panel and other jurors will be named at a later date.

“We have no real idea of what to expect,” noted Faulds. “We are confident that we’ll get a good response and hopeful that students from across Alberta and the Northwest Territories will be eager to participate. We realize that there’s a lot of real superb talent out there and this is an opportunity for that talent to shine. Our website has all the information, including entry forms,

deadlines dates and eligibility requirements.”

Faulds says he’d like everyone to help spread the word.

“Tell your friends, your family, your teachers; we want to see and showcase the talents of our Aboriginal youth; the criteria is simple and the deadline allows time for students to prepare. We’re really excited about the theme and especially interested to see how participating students will incorporate traditional winter celebrations into their artwork.”

Paintings, drawings, charcoal, pen and ink, pencil and any other medium that can be utilized to create two-dimensional art will be eligible.

“The only other criteria has to do with the size of the entries,” noted Faulds. “Entries can be completed on a piece of paper, canvas or other medium

no smaller than 8.5 by 11 inches; the largest can measure up to 24 by 36 inches.”

More information can be found on the website at: www.fieldslaw.com/blogs/artcontest or by contacting Alison Lawlor via email to: alawlor@fieldlaw.com.

