



Wendy Johnson/Oliver Chronicle

The Vancouver Art Gallery's senior curator, Ian Thom, and Dr. Andrea Walsh of the University of Victoria discuss the unique artistry of the Inkameep Day School drawings. Thom selected pieces from the large collection housed at the Osoyoos Museum to be included in "Drawing the World", a major exhibit being held at the Vancouver Gallery in 2003.

## Inkameep Day School art work will be showcased in Vancouver

BY WENDY JOHNSON

Ian Thom, senior curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery, and anthropologist Andrea Walsh were in town recently choosing some 30 pieces of artwork from the Inkameep Day School collection.

Thom is organizing an international exhibition for the summer of 2003 entitled 'Drawing the World', which will feature works with a dominant theme: how each display reacts and incorporates their surrounding environment into a telling narrative image. He already has Italian 17th -18th Century drawings, East Indian miniatures and mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century Inuit drawings slated to be a part of the exhibition, but Thom revealed he was looking for some definitive work by First Nations people expressing their own cultural traditions and their relationship to the 'white' world.

Being informed of the documentation and cataloguing Walsh was doing on the fascinating images done by the students of Anthony Walsh at the Inkameep Day School during the years leading up to WWII, Thom says he checked out the material and was delighted by his findings. Calling the images charming, Thom notes they say a great deal about the people who did them.

"There is not a lot of art work from that period by First Nations in the Interior. The frieze elements are particularly interesting because they record a narrative that goes along and one can see a First Nations' take on the white world when these students go to Victoria to open Thunderbird Park."

He went on to say, "These young artists were influenced by things they saw like book illustrations, but they were also trying to create a form for their imagina-

tions. Take their human figures with animal faces for instance—they would take an animal mask and by putting it on they became that creature.

"Well there are a number of parallels of that in other cultures, but at the same time it gets pretty sophisticated when presented in terms of an 11-or-12-year-old child."

And the context of the exhibit intrigues him: the drawings and other artwork were done at a day school on a

reserve in a short time period due to the efforts of their perceptive teacher. This in itself was remarkable given the era, social climate and entrenched residential school system. Then when Walsh left to join the war, the work stopped, thereby relegating the beautiful images done in wash, pencil, ink and colouring pencils to a sharply delineated block of time.

"I am glad these important artifacts will be part of the exhibit here," Thom concluded.

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