

Exhibit features aboriginal children's art

A rare group of 36 drawings, created by young Nk'Mip students who were taught by Anthony Walsh at the Inkameep Day School in the South Okanagan during the 1930s and 1940s, is now on display at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

The drawings, dating from 1936 to 1943, depict everyday realities and a sense of identity growing up as aboriginal students in mid-20th century B.C.

Walsh's approach to teaching and learning through the arts was very unusual for his time. "He really felt at the time that aboriginal people were misunderstood by their

neighbours and by the Canadian public," explains Dr. Andrea Walsh (anthropology), who co-curated the exhibit. "The drawings he asked the children to create were about who they were in everyday life. So what you see are little girls playing hoop games, running in fields with their dogs, and lots of pictures of the rodeo. The exhibit represents a huge picture, that doesn't exist anywhere else in Canada, of aboriginal children's everyday lives."

Much of the artwork was destroyed by Walsh's successor when he left the school in 1942 to join the war. A number of pieces

were saved by a friend of Walsh's and stored under a bed for 20 years until the Osoyoos Museum opened in 1963. It's those pieces that are being displayed today.

The drawings came to the attention of Andrea Walsh as she researched the collection for a Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) project at UVic.

The exhibition is co-curated by Ian Thom, senior curator at the Vancouver Art Gallery, where it's part of a larger exhibit entitled, "Drawing the World: Masters to Hipsters" until Sept. 21.