

The Right Honorable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

6 April 2009

cc: National Chief Phil Fontaine
Assembly of First Nations

cc: The Honorable James Moore
Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages

cc: The Honorable Robert Nicholson
Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

cc: The Honorable Chuck Strahl
Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Dear Right Honorable Stephen Harper,

The works of renowned Ojibway artist Norval Morrisseau, member of The Order of Canada, are Canadian cultural treasures. Yet today, art historians and other experts widely recognize that there are thousands of counterfeits fraudulently attributed to Morrisseau on the art market and in museums today. This is potentially the most significant art fraud in Canada's history and for First Nations, Canada and the world, a cultural tragedy.

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the Governor General of Canada and the newly sworn in Cabinet posed in front of Morrisseau's masterpiece *Androgyny*, now hanging in Rideau Hall. Counterfeits are so pervasive, however, that one example, *Circle of Four*, today hangs in the Senate of Canada. Others have found their way into museums and art markets around the world.

The prevalence of counterfeits was of deep concern to Morrisseau and during the final years of his life he actively sought to remove these from the marketplace through notarized declarations directed at those responsible, a sample of which are attached. These efforts were dismissed by the offending dealers and galleries.

Municipal, provincial and federal authorities were also made aware of the issue, yet these criminal acts, in part sustained by organized crime, continue unchallenged.

In his statement on the December 2007 passing of Norval Morrisseau, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine acknowledged this great Canadian artist as instrumental in encouraging First Nations people to embrace their spirituality, history and culture in order to better understand themselves, and to be proud of their heritage. His legacy is an inspiration for all Canadians, and it is critical that it be protected.

We are writing to you on behalf of friends, apprentices and admirers of Morrisseau's art to advocate for an investigation at the national level that reflects the gravity of this issue. We are requesting a meeting with your staff to provide additional background information and to solicit your office's guidance and involvement.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,



Ritchie Sinclair
Norval Morrisseau's chosen protégé as
Leader of the Thunderbird School of Shamanistic Arts