

Sask. First Nations skateboard designer collaborates with artist Kent Monkman on new series

Canadian Cree artist's painting *The Scream* translated into emotional board graphic

By Stephanie Taylor, CBC News Posted: Jun 19, 2017 5:00 AM CT Last Updated: Jun 19, 2017 5:00 AM CT



Micheal Langan says he browsed artist Kent Monkman's catalogue of paintings before choosing *The Scream* for his latest board design. He says he chose the image because of his family's history with residential schools. (Stephanie Taylor/CBC)

2297 shares

Facebook

Twitter

Reddit

Google

Share

Email

Micheal Langan has made a business out of educating people about colonialism in Canada.

Recently, the founder of Colonialism Skateboards, based in Regina, unveiled the seventh and latest graphic— just in time for Canada 150.

Titled the Colonialism x Kent Monkman Scream Series, a set of five boards depicts Canadian Cree artist Kent Monkman's painting, *The Scream*.

First Nations skateboard educates people on colonialism in Canada

The painting shows Indigenous children being ripped away from their parents, being forcibly taken to residential schools by the Catholic church and Mounties.

In the centre, a woman is held back by an RCMP officer as she desperately grasps for a child being hauled away by a priest — her mouth open, screaming.

Langan teared up when he first saw the work.

"The image hit home really hard 'cause a lot of my cousins, a lot of my family members are going through a lot of tough times just because of the residential school system," he said, standing in the Tiki Room board shop on Sunday.

"My mom and my dad went to residential school, a lot of my uncles went to residential schools, a lot of my aunties went to residential schools. I have some friends who went to residential schools."



The Scream portrays Indigenous children being taken away from their families by the Catholic church. (Courtesy of Kent Monkman)

'I never thought it would ever happen'

Langan, who is of Cree and Saulteaux descent, doesn't remember exactly when he reached out to Monkman, but said snow was still on the ground.

Since founding the company in 2015, Langan said he's always coming up with ideas for the next design and was hoping to collaborate with an Indigenous artist for his latest work.

That's when he recalls seeing media coverage of Monkman, who's currently in the spotlight for his latest exhibition, *Shame and Prejudice: The Story of Resilience*.

Shame and Prejudice art exhibit looks at '150 years of Indigenous experience in Canada'

Kent Monkman has sympathy for the Causalities of Modernity

The show features *The Scream* among other paintings that look at the 150-year experience from the perspective of Indigenous peoples and their history.

At first, Langan said he messaged Monkman to pay a compliment, then he got to thinking about a possible collaboration.

Eventually he asked his wife for advice, which proved to be the right move.

"She's like, 'All he can say is no, right?'" Langan recalled.

"The rest is history," he said. "I never thought it would ever happen."

At first, Langan said he tried to fit Monkman's image onto a single board, but the scene is too massive, so he decided to make multiple boards and package them together as a set.

Langan said he's yet to show the final product to Monkman, whose exhibition recently opened at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary.

150 years of violence

Langan said he planned for the board to be ready in anticipation of Canada 150, an anniversary he himself isn't going to celebrating.

"It's been very violent for Indigenous peoples in Canada, right? So this reflects that."

"They've been through genocide, they've been through cultural genocide, they've been ripped apart from their families, they've been starved, they've been forced onto First Nations reserves."



Micheal Langan, founder of Colonialism Skateboards in Regina, creates board graphics that depict the history of colonialism in Canada. (Stephanie Taylor/CBC)

Provoking conversation

Like the company's other board designs, the latest series will hopefully spark conversation about the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop in order to evoke a desire for people to learn more, Langan explained.

He said it already has within just a few days of arriving at the store.

"A residential school survivor was walking by as we're taking pictures of it and he's like, 'That's exactly what they did. That's what they did to us on my reserve.'"

Langan is also surprised by how well it's selling.

The company produced 48 sets of the five-piece board and is already half sold out in only a couple of days, with many of the orders coming from the U.S. and overseas.

Langan said there's a few more historical pieces in the works for future designs and hopes to one day be able to work with Monkman again.

"He's like my hero," he said with a laugh.