

## New art on centuries-old maps opens Friday at Raven Makes Gallery

BY DAVID JASPER • The Bulletin

It's a fascinating idea: Take centuries-old maps and put them in the hands of contemporary Indigenous artists from across North America, and see what unfolds. Raven Makes Gallery owners Chris Morin and LaRita Chapman followed through on that idea, and the result is "The Homelands Collection: 1st Edition," a monthlong exhibit of more than 60 original Indigenous works created on antique Western world maps. Opening Friday, it is the first-ever compilation of its kind, they say.

"In terms of a collection of artwork on antique maps, it hasn't ever been done anywhere in the world," Morin said. "This is the first time it's ever been tried. We kind of saw that (and) think this might be a big thing."

The husband and wife opened the gallery in 2016 after decades of teaching. Morin taught special ed, and Chapman taught elementary school-age children.

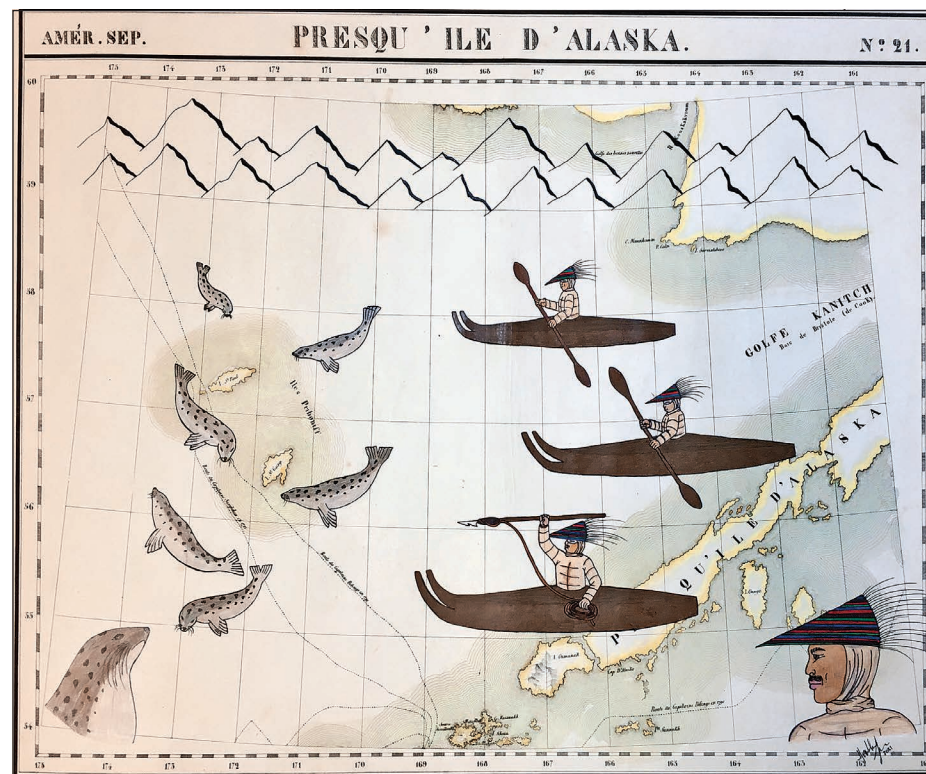
"My wife grew up in rural Alaska, and I went up there when I was young," Morin said. "We were teaching up in Alaska (and) quite involved with the Alaskan Native people up there in different ways."

In 2000, no longer able to tolerate the darkness of Alaska's winter months, the two left Alaska, moving to the Southwest, where they lived on the Navajo Reservation. Predominantly situated in northeast Arizona, it reaches into Utah to the north and New Mexico to the east.

"The Navajo Reservation, most people don't realize, is the size of South Carolina," Morin said. "We lived right in the middle of it. So you're living among the people. You're provided housing when you're there, but when the time comes that you retire, you have to leave. There's no staying. And it kind of felt strange, not a good thing, to break the connection that much."

Knowing they had to leave, and not wanting to retire entirely, the couple moved to Central Oregon and opened Raven Makes Gallery in Sisters.

"We came up with the idea of the Native American art gallery because so many — whether it was friends or family of our students — were artists, jewelers, weavers," Morin said. "By having this art gallery, because



Submitted photo

"Isuqwiq Pisuraa," or "Hunting Seals," by Alutiiq artist Heather Johnston, created on an 1825 map of the Alaska Peninsula from Belgian cartographer Philippe Vandermaelen's "Atlas Universel." The 18-by-25-inch piece will exhibit beginning Friday at Raven Makes Gallery in Sisters.

we only carry the works of contemporary artists, that's allowed us to stay connected to them."

When they opened Raven Makes Gallery, Morin and Chapman attempted to achieve a balance representing male and female artists

of the Indigenous art world.

"Even with this map project that we're doing, at least a quarter, and maybe a third of them, are women," Morin said. He began to conceive of the idea early in the pandemic.

"Our business was shut down, like ev-

### If You Go

**What:** "The Homelands Collection: 1st Edition," an exhibit of Indigenous art on antique maps

**When:** Opens Friday and displays through May during gallery hours (11 a.m. to 4 p.m., closed Wednesdays)

**Where:** Raven Makes Gallery, 182 E. Hood Ave., Sisters

**Cost:** Free

**Contact:** ravenmakesgallery.com or 541-719-1182

everybody else, so we were just sitting around wondering about the future of Native American artwork because it didn't seem too good at that time," he said. "In all that downtime, you're surfing the Internet, for one thing, quite a bit more maybe than usual."

He doesn't recall the website, but somewhere during his surfing, he came across an 1860s map of the upper Plains.

"You could enlarge it, and I saw the names of the tribes on there," he said. "I was like, 'Oh my gosh, this is incredible.'"

It called to his mind ledger art of the 1860s to 1910s, in which Native artists on reservations would be given pages from full ledgers.

"They'd tear out a ledger page and then give it to the artists, and they'd draw on it," he said. "Those works ... from the late-1800s, they're in museums now." There was even a ledger art revival that started in the 1990s using antique ledger pages.

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