

Norval Morriseau's children sue over will

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CBC News



The adult children of artist Norval Morriseau, including Lisa Morriseau Meekis, left, and Victoria Morriseau Kakegamic, are challenging their father's will, alleging undue influence by his executor, Gabor Michael Vadas. (Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press)

The children of Norval Morriseau have filed a lawsuit challenging the last will and testament of the acclaimed Ojibway artist.

Lawyers representing the aboriginal artist's seven children filed the lawsuit in B.C. Supreme Court in Vancouver on Wednesday.

"We want to honour dad's legacy as one of the greatest Canadian and aboriginal artists. I believe dad wanted his estate to stay in the family. I know he wouldn't disinherit us on purpose," Victoria Morriseau Kakegamic, the artist's daughter, said in a statement.

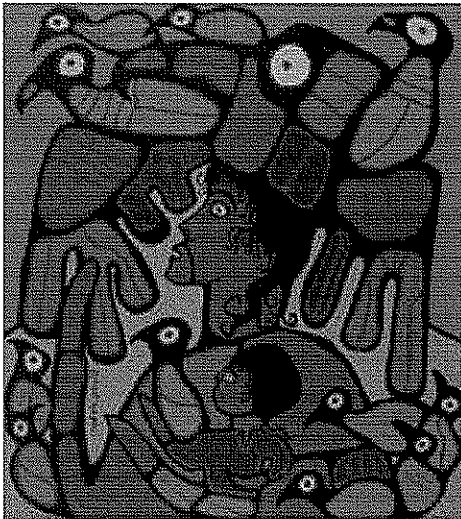
The lawsuit involves control over the right to use Morriseau's name and images, as well as the right to reproduce his colourful acclaimed artworks, which are held in galleries and collections across Canada and around the globe.

According to the statement of claim, Morriseau's children have requested the court declare his will invalid.

The documents allege undue influence by Gabor Michael Vadas, the artist's close friend who was named executor, trustee and sole beneficiary of the estate under the current will, which dates from July 1999.

The lawsuit alleges that the will was executed under suspicious circumstances, including while Morriseau was "physically, mentally and emotionally frail" from Parkinson's disease and "dependant on Vadas for all aspects of his day-to-day existence."

The filing also alleges that Vadas kept the artist away from his family, was verbally abusive towards him, controlled Morriseau's life and profited from his artwork.



Norval Morriseau painted *Transforming With Grandson* in 1990. Founder of the Woodland style of painting and one of Canada's most successful aboriginal artists internationally, he has inspired generations of artists after him. (Kinsman Robinson Galleries/Canadian Press)

Died in 2007

In December 2007, Morriseau died in Toronto at age the age of 75, following a long battle with Parkinson's. He was buried on a reserve in northwestern Ontario about a month later, following a protracted battle over his final wishes for his remains.

Morriseau's brother, Bernard, and Vadas contended that he had asked to be cremated.

However, the artist's children demanded that he be buried next to their mother, Harriet Kakegamic, whom he had married in 1957. The couple later separated.

Born and raised near Thunder Bay, Ont., Morriseau was the founder of what became known as the Woodland school of painting and inspired generations of aboriginal artists.

However, he also battled alcohol abuse and was homeless in Vancouver when he met Vadas in the late 1980s. Vadas, a former street kid, and his wife Michele Vadas became the artist's main caregivers for more than a decade.

Vadas has yet to return CBC requests for comment on the lawsuit.

With files from Margo Kelly

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dmariet wrote: Posted 2010/07/05

at 2:11 PM ET The work of Norval Morriseau is northwestern Ontario. He inspired and still does a wealth of indigenous artists who have adopted his woodlands style. These are his students, his greatest appreciators, and despite not being his actual blood children, his works should be with his family of Oji-Cree peoples in Nishnawbe Aski who draw so much from what he has gifted them