



# DEBATES OF THE SENATE

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## **ARTWORK AND HERITAGE ADVISORY WORKING GROUP**

Statement by:  
The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

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### ARTWORK AND HERITAGE ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

**Hon. Patricia Bovey:** Honourable senators, today I rise as Chair of the Senate Artwork and Heritage Advisory Working Group, and I celebrate the poignant, truly meaningful artists' work installed in this Senate building over the past few months.

The Indigenous peoples room has been rehung, expanding Indigenous representation across Canada. The first museums at the Senate, with Inuit art from the Winnipeg Art Gallery and Nunavut in room B30 of the Senate of Canada Building, represents art from across the Arctic. Both of these initiatives reflect the Senate's reconciliation goals.

The second, honouring Canada's Black artists, celebrates Toronto artists Denyse Thomasos and Tim Whiten, both with widely acclaimed international careers. Trinidadian Canadian Ms. Thomasos, who died young, taught in the U.S. The Art Gallery of Ontario is presenting her retrospective exhibition. Her energy-filled art captures a vibrant urban centre and past and future Black sensibilities. Tim Whiten, Professor Emeritus of York University, has worked in many major collections. He, too, links past and present realities, overlaid with a depth of spirituality.

These small projects have immense impact. I was particularly moved by the response to our Inuit installation from a security person who worked here from 1988 to 1998. Yisa Akinbolaji, using his traditional Nigerian colours in *Stolen Identities*, seen

here last year, depicted Louis Riel's image in Manitoba's poplar woods. It inspired Métis poet and teacher, Ginette Fournier-Richer's poem, *Pour Ton Nom*:

[*Translation*]

Your name. . .  
I said it again and again  
but the red silence stole all its letters  
I screamed it again and again  
but the greedy wind muted my heart  
I pleaded with it again and again  
but the trees' blue limbs let it slip to the ground  
I murmured it again and again  
but your frayed silhouette pitilessly escaped me  
I carved it again and again  
but the stone absorbed my blows without a trace  
Your name. . .  
pain upon pain  
loss upon loss  
discarded, imprisoned, erased  
Your name. . .  
I walk through the dust of your smiles,  
your tears, your dreams,  
your words. . .  
Your name. . .  
trembles on the ferns  
that bend to the light  
hanging on the promise of scant hope. . .

I would like to thank Ginette Fournier-Richer, all the artists, the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Nunavut, the Olga Korper Gallery, our Senate subcommittee, our curator, Tamara Dolan, and the team that installed these works.