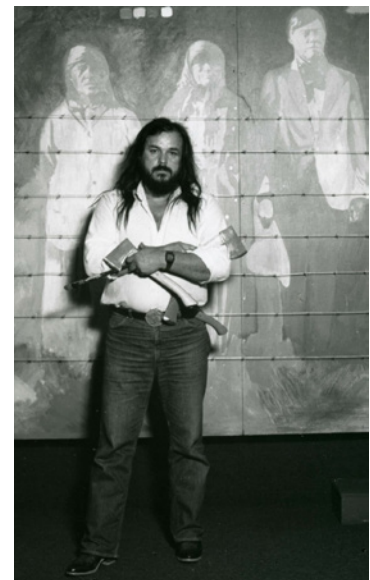
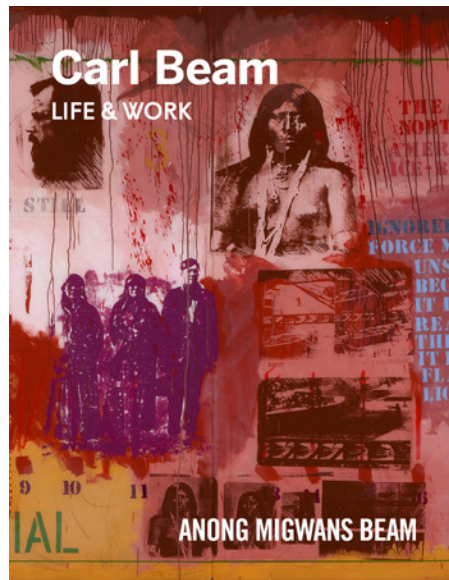


Overcoming the horrors of Canada's residential school system, Carl Beam became one of the world's most revered artists and forged an activist art career

Carl Beam: Life & Work, the new open-access online art book by his daughter, Anong Migwans Beam, is publishing on September 18, 2024, in the lead-up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. It tells the story of this trailblazing artist who helped bring national attention to the experiences of residential school survivors.

A selection of press images is available through the link at the bottom of this release.



LEFT: *Stellar Associations*, 1981. CENTRE: Cover of *Carl Beam: Life & Work*. RIGHT: Carl Beam in front of *Exorcism*, 1984.

September 18, 2024, FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—*Carl Beam: Life & Work*, a new free, open-access online art book, available in English and French at www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/, recounts the career of Ojibwe artist Carl Beam (1934–2005) and his fierce resolve to create art for “thinking people.” A survivor of the residential school system, Beam was one of the first artists in Canada to shine a light on the abuses endured by more than 150,000 children. Through his art and his activism, Beam broke down institutional barriers so that other Indigenous creators could follow in his footsteps.

Written by Beam’s daughter, artist and scholar Anong Migwans Beam, *Carl Beam: Life & Work*—the latest addition to the Art Canada Institute’s growing library of titles that are redefining Canadian art in a contemporary context—interweaves family stories with a critical reading of Beam’s groundbreaking mixed-media works. This timely book provides insight into one of the most important creative voices to fight against systemic violence and injustice. It is sure to inspire a deeper commitment to moving the world towards change.

Surviving residential school

Born in M’Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island, Carl Beam was sent at age 10 to Garnier High School, an all-boys boarding school operated by the Jesuits. It was there that he endured the

assimilative cultural and physical violence of Canada’s residential school system. As an act of rebellion, Beam left Garnier in grade 10 and finished high school through correspondence courses.

Beam’s experiences at Garnier would later drive his questioning of the status quo. While working a series of labour-intensive jobs in Ontario and British Columbia, he turned to painting to reclaim a sense of agency. In many of his works, such as *Survivor of Education*, Beam spoke out against the ways in which he and other residential school survivors were kept from knowing their languages and cultural practices.

Art and activism

“Carl Beam believed that being an artist made it morally imperative for him and his viewers to interact with and deconstruct national myths,” says author Anong Migwans Beam. “In his paintings, prints, and performance works, he tackled contemporary and historical themes that he felt had not been previously explored, making it possible for Indigenous creators to be recognized as contemporary artists in national dialogues.”

In 1977, after completing formal training at the University of Victoria, Beam decided to become a full-time artist. His monumental mixed-media work *The North American Iceberg*, 1985, was later acquired by the National Gallery of Canada for its contemporary art collection—a watershed moment that opened the door to building more equitable relationships between Indigenous creators and the nation’s art institutions.

Creative innovation

Beam’s early embrace of collage as an art-making strategy allowed him to forge a distinct creative identity and constantly experiment with different media—from painting and printmaking to ceramics and video. Beam took many conceptual and technical leaps throughout his career, developing new techniques (such as painting in reverse on Plexiglas) that aligned with his interest in understanding how art makes meaning.

“Beam’s entire creative output developed in step with his resolve to make contemporary Indigenous art a critical part of the national conversation,” says Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of the Art Canada Institute. “Shedding light on Beam’s singular vision, *Carl Beam: Life & Work* joins the ranks of Art Canada Institute books that offer insight into how art has been embraced by many Indigenous creators as a platform for speaking out against colonialism and affirming the resilience of Indigenous Peoples.”

Carl Beam: Life & Work advances ACI’s mission to create a central digital resource to share Canada’s most important artists, and works of art, with the world. To date, ACI has published sixty-two expert-authored digital books that are available free of charge. As well, ACI develops Canada’s only comprehensive art education guides for teachers and students from kindergarten to grade 12—content that is also free and available online, and that serves educators across the country.

To explore the Art Canada Institute’s open-access digital book *Carl Beam: Life & Work* by Anong Migwans Beam, please visit: <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/carl-beam/>

For **media requests** or for an **interview** with **Anong Migwans Beam**, author of *Carl Beam: Life & Work*, please contact:

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About Anong Migwans Beam

Anong Migwans Beam is a painter, art historian, and arts administrator from M'Chigeeng First Nation on Manitoulin Island. She was born to artist parents Carl and Ann Beam, and was raised with a meaningful connection to her artistic familial roots and rich ancestral heritage. Beam attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Ontario College of Art and Design, the Institute of American Indian Arts, and York University. Alongside her art practice, Beam has been actively involved in curatorial work and teaching. She served as the Art Director and Executive Director of the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation from 2016 to 2018 and was a guest instructor in painting at Harvard Art Museums in June 2023. She launched BEAM Paints, her own line of watercolour and oil paints, in 2017.

About the Art Canada Institute

The Art Canada Institute is the only national institution whose mandate is to promote the study of an inclusive, multi-vocal Canadian art history to as broad an audience as possible, on a digital platform, and free of charge in both English and French, across Canada and internationally. To accomplish this, ACI works with Canada's leading cultural institutions, art historians, curators, and visual culture experts, and is dedicated to the creation of authoritative original content on the people, themes, and topics that have defined Canadian art history.

To learn more about ACI and to access our free digital library, please visit us!

aci-iac.ca

IMAGES

Download image files [here](#).

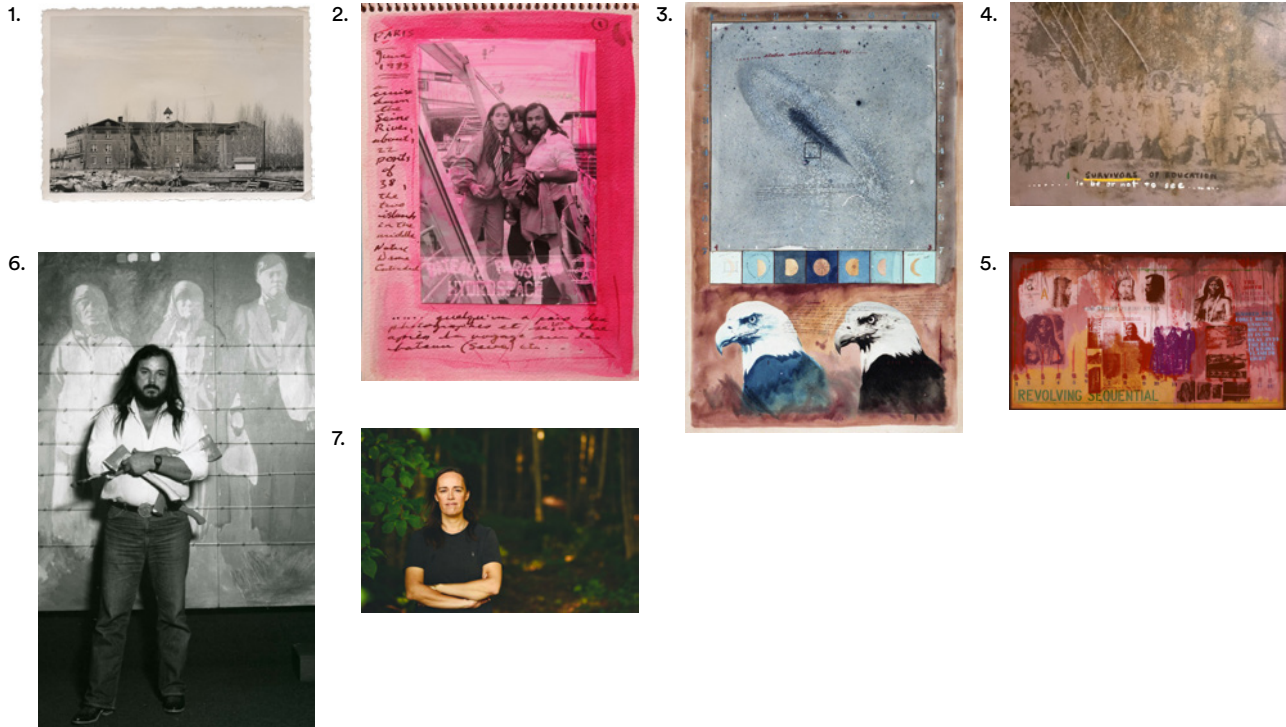


IMAGE CREDITS

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2. Page from Carl Beam's Paris sketchbook, 1985. Private collection. Courtesy of Anong Migwans Beam. © Estate of Carl and Ann Beam / CARCC Ottawa 2024.
3. Carl Beam, *Stellar Associations*, 1981, watercolour on paper, 152.4 × 101.6 cm. Indigenous Art Collection, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Gatineau. Courtesy of the Indigenous Art Centre, Gatineau. © Estate of Carl and Ann Beam / CARCC Ottawa 2024.
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5. Carl Beam, *The North American Iceberg*, 1985, acrylic, photo-serigraph, and graphite on Plexiglas, 213.6 × 374.1 cm. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Purchased 1986 (29515). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. Photo credit: NGC. © Estate of Carl and Ann Beam / CARCC Ottawa 2024.
6. Carl Beam in front of *Exorcism* in Thunder Bay, 1984. Photograph by Ann Beam. Private collection. Courtesy of Anong Migwans Beam. © Estate of Carl and Ann Beam / CARCC Ottawa 2024.
7. Anong Migwans Beam, author of *Carl Beam: Life & Work*.