

New Dawn Staff of Place and Belonging

Artist Profiles

Alan Syliboy has been a practicing artist for nearly 40 years. His art and culture are one. While raising three children and for two decades running at-shirt and art print business, Alan has produced countless works of art, mounted touring exhibitions, written two books, and has a touring musical group. Alan has been commissioned by the Olympics, major corporate clients, individual collectors, and the Royal Mint. He was granted an honorary Doctorate by St. Francis Xavier University and has been short-listed twice for the Nova Scotia Masterworks Award. Still, among his many achievements, he counts being recognized by primary school children in Nova Scotia as one of the highest. The re-visioning of Dalhousie's convocation object was a welcomed project for Alan Syliboy as a vehicle for respect for Mi'kma'ki and the Mi'kmaq and as a way to embody a relationship of peace and friendship.

Mark Austin has had a varied career that has always included artistic pursuits of poetry, sculpture, film, and music as a dedicated side line. Mark has collaborated with Alan Syliboy for the past twenty years, often in a role of articulating project visions and executions. Mark was a teaching fellow in Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University. He also attended NSCAD for several semesters. In 1987, he exhibited his installation Infinity Viewer at the World Congress of Experimental Film. Mark worked in the film industry for 15 years and then moved into community development work. He holds a Masters in the International and Comparative Law of Human Rights from the University of Strasbourg. He was the Director of Research and Communications for the Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy (Ivany Commission), currently does policy and economic work for Colchester County, and farms wild blueberries. Mark was keen on developing a ceremonial object for Dalhousie University that would recognize the journey that not only students are on, but also that Dalhousie and Nova Scotia are on, toward a fuller understanding the diversity that has often been under-appreciated.

Wendie Poitras is an African Nova Scotian womanist artist. Her work is consciously feminine in nature. Wendie draws on West African Adinkra textile symbols to create mainly line drawings of relevance to her own expression and the cultural identity of African Nova Scotians. While not exhibiting and producing art works, Wendie teaches elementary school and is involved in community cultural activities. Perhaps Wendie's most prominent piece is her proposed flag of African Nova Scotia. It includes Poitras' version of a Sankofa symbol, which is a bird moving forward while reaching back to get what was taken or lost. She was recruited by Syliboy and Austin to design and select imagery to respect African Nova Scotian contributions and presence to both the Province and Dalhousie. Wendie's Sankofa is featured prominently on the new Dawn Staff of Place and Belonging.