

Artist's Statement

DAVID NEEL

This print is intended to serve as a reminder of an event in Canadian history. It points to a time when Canada was put on the international stage in the stand-off in Oka, Quebec. This image is NOT intended to serve as inspiration for armed resistance. It is meant rather to help the viewer to recall and reflect on the events of the summer of 1990. It was inspired by Picasso's "Guernica," painted in reaction to the bombing of Guernica, Spain during the Spanish Civil War. I wanted to do a print using my influence as a native artist. The result draws upon my heritage as a hereditary Kwagiutl artist and my training as a professional photographer. A silk screen photo-montage using graphics, news photography, and created photography combine in a print which is contemporary in execution and traditional in foundation. The central image comes from a Canadian Press photograph that ran on the cover of the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. The choice and use of colour, bilateral symmetry in composition, eagle feather and circle of life motif are stylistic of traditional graphics.

The Mohawk warrior symbolizes an individual pushed to his limit and having the will to stand his ground. How many of us can say we would have the strength to stand for what we believe, at all costs? The struggle of the Mohawk people is symbolic of the struggle of all First Nations people. The "10 little policemen" is a play on the nursery rhyme "1 little, 2 little, 3 little Indians," allowing the viewer to see the ethnocentric and racist roots of this children's nursery rhyme. They symbolize the Canadian government's inaction in dealing with the issues leading up to the Oka crisis, and the following militarization. The Circle is the circle of life, the arrows the four directions, four being the number of balance and completeness. The red dots represent the blood of man, one for each race: the red, the yellow, the black, and the white man. Jointly these remind us of the common bond of all men. The barriers between men and between races are erected, not inherent. Clearly it is up to individuals, not governments, to dismantle these barricades and work together to the benefit of all.