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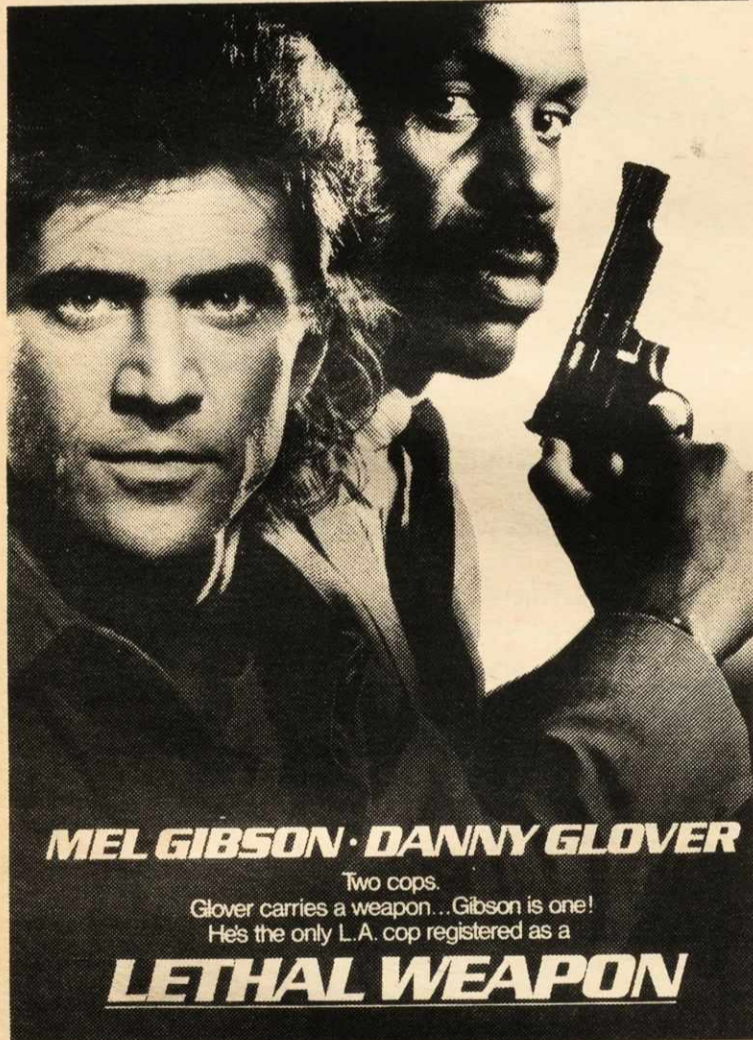
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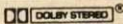
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Monday November 23, 8 pm.

Dal SUB



arts

Inuit sculptor

Carving out life

by Parker Robinson

David Tattrie is hunched over a small table in his one-room apartment next to the Indian Friendship Centre on Gottingen St. His weathered hands are brushing the fine soap-stone dust from a half-finished musk-ox carving.

Tattrie, one of Canada's leading Inuit sculptors, suddenly stops and looks up. "I'm doing this for my people," he says. "This is what I should be doing. This is what I love."

His people are native Indians (mother Mic Mac, father Cheyenne), and David Tattrie, born in Bear River, Nova Scotia,

says he has not forgotten this for a minute of his 46 years — not even the nine-year stretch in a BC penitentiary for manslaughter.

"I'm not ashamed of anything in my past," says Tattrie. "I have nothing to hide."

Tattrie, a full-blooded Indian, learned Inuit artistry from Happy Mingeriak, an Inuit doing time for murder.

"We met in Victoria while I was awaiting my trial. We got talking and he showed me how to do it," says Tattrie.

When Tattrie was released in 1967, he went to Frobisher Bay to further his carving studies under Mingeriak, who was by then out of prison.

While studying there, Tattrie was adopted by an Inuit family.

"I was given the name 'Pik', which means 'white son', he says.

Being adopted served a practical purpose for Tattrie. "That's how I got my carving number," he says. A carving number entitles one to be recognized as a genuine Inuit artist.

Although Tattrie spent nearly two years in the isolated tundra, the skills he learned have given him an international reputation.

"The largest piece I ever sold went to an auction in Switzerland a few years ago. It was of two

polar bears fighting and it went for \$22,500."

"His sculptures are very realistic," says Jean MacLeod, owner of Arctic Visions Gallery in Halifax, which specializes in the sale of Inuit art. "That's why it sells so well. People want a bear to look like a bear."

"Realistic" is also a word Pat Ratcliffe, owner of the Eskimo Gallery on the waterfront, uses to describe Tattrie's work.

"David attempts and succeeds in putting life into his carvings. They are always true to nature."

Tattrie agrees. "I will not carve out of the form," he says.

Rejecting suggestions to carve abstract shapes, Tattrie says, "The Creator made the animals the way I put them into stone."

Although Tattrie resists changing his style, he is eager to pass his skills on to a younger generation, if they are native Indian.

"This way," says Tattrie, while tracing a shape in soap-stone dust, "it... ahh..." He seems at a loss for words.

"Stays in the family?" I suggest.

"Yes," he says, obviously pleased with this choice of words. "This way it stays in the family."

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