



AYA Optical announces a new meaningful collaboration with celebrated Cree artist and storyteller Michael A. Koby Turtleheart. The woman-led, eyewear brand, a pioneer in the field of diverse designs, continues to celebrate Indigenous art, through eyewear design collaborations, and always with a charitable giveback.



News Release (Vancouver, BC) Spring 2023– AYA Optical, a conscious eyewear brand that has long supported First Nations artists and their communities, releases new styles [Strength, Pace and Freedom](#) featuring artwork by Cree artist and storyteller Michael A Koby Turtleheart. The new styles, wearable art at its very best, feature galloping painted horses, a sacred symbol in Native American culture that was meant to give strength and power to both the horse and rider. The capsule collection launches online at [AYAOptical.com](#) April 18th, with \$10 from the sale of each frame going to [Agape](#) a non-profit that offers life-changing experiences by bringing horses and people together.

These vibrant acetate frames are durable, lightweight, and complete with spring hinges. The high-quality materials used in the construction of these frames ensure durability and long-lasting wear, and the frames come with a two-year warranty.

Koby's inspiration for this series came from his own childhood connection to horses. Says Koby, "Focusing on horses was easy for me, wild horses, spotted horses, and the painted horses of my ancestors fill my dreams. Horses connect us to the land, and symbolize freedom of movement across the plains. I also wanted to touch on the spiritual connection a horse and rider share." The artwork focuses on a simple horse design in strong colours and a sense of movement, to give the colours chosen, and the markings on the horses more importance.



Pace



Pace is a fashion-forward, bold cat-eye style featuring a stunning Cree 'Horse in snow' design and is available in two rich and vibrant colors, purple and teal. The horses in the artwork feature handprints, which were originally placed on horses as a warning to enemies or a mark of protection. The red handprint has now come to represent the issue of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit in both Canada and the United States. Says Koby "These women are our

grandmothers, mothers, sisters, aunties, cousins, friends - to me the red handprint now means 'Bring Them All Home'. " \$185

Freedom



This bold unisex style features a vibrant blue horse design that adds an element of excitement to any outfit. Crafted from high-quality materials, the

Freedom frame is fabricated from handmade acetate and metal, making it both durable and lightweight.

Freedom features two majestic painted horses running, dust being kicked up between them. Koby wanted to portray two painted war ponies. Their keepers or riders cut them free before being captured. For a moment they are confused and stay still then something shifts - these horses realize they are unrestrained - they run full speed ahead, leaving only dry prairie dust behind. \$185

Strength



Strength is a classic and versatile unisex style featuring a stunning graphical Cree Horse Head / Eagle Feather design. This frame is perfect

for anyone who wants to make a statement with their eyewear while still maintaining a timeless look.

The Strength frame is available in two rich and vibrant colors - navy and green. The design features a red horse body that doubles as a simplified/abstract eagle feather. The horse and eagle feather are powerful together, they represent strength, and they are messengers. The spiritual and life energy of both animals is conveyed by the blue arrow extending out from both. \$185

Says AYA Optical creator Carla D'Angelo "AYA for me, is my contribution to reconciliation, looking to the past and the present to create new dialogue for both Indigenous people and settlers. I really enjoyed working closely with Michael to help bring his vision and stories to life, and then on to the marketplace, where I hope they will continue to start conversations about ways to move forward."



Two Cree in a Canoe



Michael A Kolby Turtleheart

About AYA Optical

AYA Optical was founded in 2003 with a vision to feature original artwork created by renowned First Nations artists, such as Corrine Hunt, Donald Chretien, Phil Gray and Kathy Marianito and now Michael A Koby Turtleheart.

AYA Optical successfully blends for-profit entrepreneurship with philanthropy. The brand has always invested back into indigenous communities and has contributed over \$200,000 to initiatives such as helping at-risk kids in Northern communities start their day with a healthy breakfast, scholarship programs for indigenous women and eyewear donations to elders and communities in need.

The brand is known for its great styling, focus on details, quality craftsmanship, and philanthropic efforts. AYA Optical has built a reputation for producing exceptional eyewear crafted from high-quality acetates and metals.

Celebrate Indigenous art with us! Please stay connected by following us on Instagram @ayaeyewear.