

call	response
Christi Isaac	Belcourt Murdoch
Maria IV Esther	Hupfield Castellanos Neff
Ursula Cheryl	Johnson L'Hirondelle
Tania Marcia	Willard Crosby
Laakkuluk Tanya	Williamson-Bathory Tagaq





Catalogue of the exhibition *#callresponse* by Christi Belcourt,  
IV Castellanos, Marcia Crosby, Maria Hupfield, Ursula Johnson,  
Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Isaac Murdoch, Esther Neff, Tanya Tagaq,  
Tania Willard, and Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory

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*grunt*



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LE CERCLE SUR LA PHILANTHROPIE ET LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA

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## CALL

To support the work of Indigenous women from across Turtle Island through art commissions that drive dialogue and mobilize action on the topic of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.  
To stand together as accomplices<sup>1</sup> in awakened solidarity with all our relations both human and non.

## RESPONSE

To ground art in accountability, value lived experience and build upon systems of support. To enact strategies of resurgence, resilience and refusal against the ongoing multiple articulations of power and structural colonial violence of nation states.

Glossary: for readers *from elsewhere*, who don’t deal very well with unknown words or who want to understand everything. But, perhaps to establish for ourselves, ourselves as well, the long list of words within us whose sense escapes or, taking this farther, to fix the syntax of this language we are babbling. The readers of here are future.  
—Edouard Glissant, *Malemort*, 231

This is not a project of merely telling history differently, but one of returning to the past its gaps, uncertainties, impasses, and elisions; it is tracing those moments of eclipse when obscure, unknown, or unperceived elements are lost, those significant moments in which transformations have begun to take place, but have not yet been inserted into historical time.  
—Lisa Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 175

Visitations reinforce connections, create new ones, disrupt expectations. Visitations are not settling, they are not colonial exploration. Visitation rites. Visitation rights. Visitation writes.  
—Morrill, Tuck & The Super Futures Haunt Collective, *Beyond Dispossession or Surviving It*, 17

**Aching uncanny**  
I expect that you have been expecting me. I don’t care to do all the bending to announce myself, to make you remember me and in some ways I don’t have to, because you are better at unforgetting. We keep each other haunted in the spots between our messages. I speak as two sisters now, sisters who keep language for each other in bundles—here, these are the words you may want to use next time, my love. I am able to build things into the everyday parts of our encounters that make your hairs rise on your shoulders, the parts that dip down to stretch to your ribs. “How did she know to say that?” So many times I have been listening while looking in another direction. How many times I have arrived at the end of something that carried the power of what just happened, enough for me to know it all. I find ways to bring these back to you. Offerings to let you know I have been paying attention.

**Attention**  
You cannot grab it, you cannot take it, you cannot keep it. You need my consent for my attention. It takes more than just putting yourself into my sightline. Attention is something that I offer, that I design myself to do. I give my attention, you hold it, turn it around your fingers and knees, we pass it back and forth, we can give a few seconds of it but they are fully yours and mine. We

can give hours of it, because it is like giving attention to ourselves.

My attention and intention are for land and water. And sky. And stars. And underground territories. And even deeper pathways.

**Call :: response**  
When you come to call, when you call to me, when you called into that tunnel and nothing came back. When you carefully rearranged your schedule so that you could keep me on the other line, keep me from being uncalled. When you call and I pick up too soon, before it has even rung, and we laugh about whether the other one is really there. “Oh, it didn’t even ring.” “Oh, it did on my side.” “Oh.” When you call across a room and realize that my name doesn’t carry well with volume, but with the intensity that air gives to sound—a whisper-shout that betrays another register of affect. One unintended, but still true, somehow.

When you respond to a touch that you have been longing for, when you respond to a touch that you have been avoiding, when you respond to a touch that hovers just above the skin but close enough to detect the warmth of what was going to happen, but not anymore.

**Survival toolkit :: survivance toolkit**  
really sharp knife  
bones  
rock  
mars bar  
salmon skin subway map  
Tara Williamson playlist  
piece of felt  
fish scales  
cedar leaves  
her first lost tooth  
cell phone  
trail mix  
deep red lipstick  
clay and deer hide for maps to tomorrow  
that picture of us at the beach  
pepper spray  
fishing net  
seaweed snacks for our little ones  
ipad  
your visa card  
dried salmon berries  
lemon juice  
beaded condoms  
oversized headphones to avoid eye contact  
Leanne’s *Accident of Being Lost* book  
small copper vessel

⌘ I assemble these objects so that I can return. A cedar bow here, a rock, her first lost tooth...

**Cedar elder**

Consumed by light and claimed by fire I have woven tiny baskets to place in the bundles that I buried underneath your condos. Love notes revealed as though written in lemon juice-sunlight permeates thin salmon scales revealing code. I am alone in cedar, weaving these baskets to visibilize textures and forms—mined from sunlight and sweet smell to let you know I am here. When it’s time, I pack up my belongings, my little baskets, a weathered handkerchief, the bundles wrapped in salmon skin using hands creased into maps to tomorrow. I evaporate as you inhale, for this reveal is always on my terms in case you haven’t noticed by now—always on the tip of your tongue. I think I am somewhere in between this place and that, did you know that cedar is one of the first time travelling plants?

**Feasting the future**

Felt moccasins and salmon skin maps, I dance on this edge, the frayed endings and beginnings of shared future time travels. All of the sounds and feelings that we try to bury, to silence—furtively leaking in between scales of the maps buried in my pocket. With

felt moccasins on pavement, I text this code in digital copper flecks, revealing to you that I am waiting for you in this glitch—you remember this coffee shop on Spadina—our ceremony. You ordered that hot pink cake pop and I, a banana loaf slice with cream cheese icing. We smudge this feast with our happiness and attention. Our ancestors love it when we feast here on Ishpadinna. Kinstillatory as we mimic patterns of stars coming together—organizing, making lists, budgeting materials, trying not leave anyone out. Love, hold space here.

**Readers of elsewhere**

Sure, you’re welcome to take a look. Come closer if you need to, but notice if you are blocking someone else from looking too.

**Readers of elsewhere, part II**

I have been hoping that you would stop by.

**Readers of here**

Your travels have taken you around in circles, and circles can be very, very good. I didn’t forget our plans. I wanted it to be this way, for you to be here, even if on your way to another swelling. Swellings of places so that they grow closer, to almost touching. Yes, of course on the map they are in the same spot,

but they are really closer together because of all of that swelling. I am not going to try to convince you of anything different.

**Returning to the past its gaps**

Returning a library book, returning a phone call, returning a borrowed dress. My stories are not a rejoinder, not a correction on the way you have been thinking all along. My stories are evidence that your thinking has gaps, and worse, acts like it doesn’t. I am not trying to convince you of anything different.

**Returning to the past its gaps, part II**

I like it when you tell me that you’re not quite sure what happened next, or how it will go. In our tellings to each other, we don’t need to fill it all in. Except sometimes, we learn that our relatives were in the same room a long time ago, or that we came close to meeting before but didn’t because cabs wouldn’t stop for you that night in the rain. Sometimes, we learn that we could have been loving each other for much longer, and in those cases, I want to know every detail.

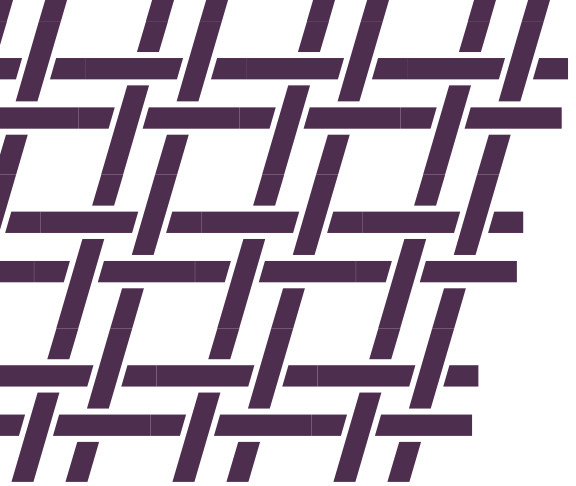
**Visitations**

A call and response can make a visitation. When I create a visitation, it is a remembrance of an old futuristic way of relating to place, non-human persons,

and each other. I have a sense of the sovereignty of a place before we arrive, a sense that it will continue long after I have left—so my presence is meant to play a good part. Practicing visitation in a good way can be overshadowed, overburdened by the habits of touring, of settlement, of occupation. Visitation is the way that we come together to comment on our togetherness, to attend to the changes afforded by time and our own agency. When I practice visitation, I am not visiting you. I am visiting our children’s future homelands. I am *their* guest, not yours.

=





Call and response is a form of rapid, spontaneous interactions of unity building between speaker and listener as demonstrated in the chants of social justice movements. In music, the song builds as a generative gesture that is reciprocated in-kind from musician to second player in a direct response or commentary offering a sound that is both innovative and collective. The co-conspirators of *#callresponse*—Tarah Hogue, Maria Hupfield, and Tania Willard—have adapted this technique as a curatorial structure to highlight Native women’s roles as leaders within their own communities and within current discussions of reconciliation, resurgence, resistance and refusal. As both title and hashtag, *#callresponse* draws from activist movements and campaigns such as *#IdleNoMore*, *#BlackLivesMatter*, *#MMIW* and *#ReMatriate* that utilize social media platforms to generate awareness, discussion and action around important cultural, economic, environmental, political and social justice issues facing marginalized communities. Indigenous languages, oral narratives, song, ceremony, and land-based knowledge become hashtags in how they recall and network embodied knowledge. These technologies move in ways that are intimate, attentive, specific, and responsible.<sup>2</sup>

This project began as five locally-sited commissions by artists working in the communities where they are based across Canada and in Brooklyn, New York. Each artist was asked to extend the invitation to a guest or guests to respond to their project. The pairings include Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch; Maria Hupfield, IV Castellanos and Esther Neff; Ursula Johnson and Cheryl L’Hirondelle; Tania Willard and Marcia Crosby; and Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory and Tanya Tagaq. The respondents’ contributions and collaborations both amplify and fan out in a network of connective support structures demonstrating a system grounded in respect, trust, and care. These networks create the conditions for work to emerge yet are too often obscured by the discrete display of artworks.

Maiko Tanaka describes this kind of work as a feminist practice of citation, which not only acknowledges sources, ideas and inspirations, “but also realizes the community it references, performatively bringing it into being.”<sup>3</sup> Discussing *FAGing it Forward* (2013), an art project by the Feminist Art Gallery (Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell), Tanaka notes the potential to “consider an ethical practice of exchange through citing unrecognized forms of sharing, labour and support. ... This kind of practice is not just a utopian exercise. The urgency is in articulating and

enacting the recognition of different values outside of deterministic relations and divisions of labour reproduced from this art world—an art world that parallels capitalist logic.”<sup>4</sup> The artist-respondent structure of *#callresponse* similarly works to recognize and activate alternate ways of being in the arts through progress in non-competition, expanded kinship ties, land-based practices, interventions into institutional spaces and colonial histories, and inhabiting cultural specificity as creative acts of sovereignty in dialogue with others.

A feminist methodology of citation recognizes and refuses the dehumanization, violence, rape and murder of Indigenous women, girls, trans, two-spirit and gender-variant identities that is systemic to the continuation of the current power dynamics of capitalist and colonial heteropatriarchy. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes of Anishnaabeg Nation intelligence as told by Elder Gidigaa Migizi Doug Williams from Washkigaamagki Curve Lake First Nation, encouraging Native women “to rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality and not just ‘dream alternative realities’ but to create them, on the ground in the physical world, in spite of being occupied.”<sup>5</sup> Adapting an Indigenous feminist approach opens spaces of intersectionality, presenting strength

in tangible alterities that resist occupation through work with other humans, nonhuman living beings, lands and waters. In her discussion of Indigenous feminisms in the arts, Nancy Marie Mithlo writes, “As Native women artists navigate intersections of access, assimilation and confrontation, they articulate unique identity claims based on simultaneous references to their individual, tribal and gendered statuses. These ‘social arenas’ enable women to make ‘political claims and initiate personal strategies.’”<sup>6</sup> In recognizing the radical presence of Indigenous women,<sup>7</sup> this citational and intersectional approach provides the toolkit to shift the centre of violence/state power that Indigenous and female bodies are defined in relation to. This standard calls into question the practice of appropriation, exploitative labour practices and questionable processes of consultation and collaboration within contemporary art markets that results in Indigenous women going unnamed historically, being infantilized, represented as a primitive other, and ultimately rendered invisible, worthless and stripped of power by merit of their ethnicity alone.

In positioning the vital involvement of Indigenous women—their work and their embodied experiences—as central, as defining, and as pre-existing current

<sup>10</sup> appeals for a reconcilable future, *#callresponse* presents a model of accountability. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang describe the drive to reconcile as one of a number of “settler moves to innocence,” which “problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity.”<sup>8</sup> They characterize Indigenous claims to land and nationhood as producing an anxiety in the dominant culture borne from the recognition “that the settler colonial project is incomplete.”<sup>9</sup> Audra Simpson usefully describes this anxiety and premature move to reconcile as a framework that “seeks to harmonize and balance a fundamental disjuncture: a sovereign state that was and is unwilling to rescind its false claims to Indigenous land and life, and Indigenous struggles for that land and life as *sovereignty*” (emphasis ours).<sup>10</sup> In contrast, the *#callresponse* artists and their respondents work to complicate and unsettle as described by Simpson’s assertion that our “day-to-day lives be critically engaged” with an “ongoing, active attention to what is before us and a continuing care and vigilance over each other.”<sup>11</sup> Their projects arise from what Leanne Simpson has described as “cultural generation and political resurgence,” an expanded/expansive consideration of re/conciliation that accounts for Indigenous ways of being in the world—language and orality, governance,

ceremony—that the settler colonial state attempted to destroy through policies such as the Indian Act and residential schools.<sup>12</sup> Jaskiran Dhillon recognizes how these powerful Indigenous claims for sovereignty and territory as tied to the land demand a rethinking of the one-sidedness of Indigenous-state relations and dominant structures of governance. Recognition of the power of these claims by the state, she argues, compelled settler jurisdiction over every aspect of Indigenous peoples’ lives through the “implementation of laws and social policies that institutionalized the forced assimilation of Indigenous peoples and elevated the cultural and social status of white settlers,”<sup>13</sup> which exposes a lack of accountability and fundamental commitment to the continued division of gender, race and class in the maintenance of power. The choice to center Indigenous women recognizes how they have been unequally impacted through gender and race by settler colonialism and how, as Leanne Simpson writes, “their very presence simultaneously shatters the disappearance of Indigenous women and girls from settler consciousness.”<sup>14</sup> Traversing places where they live and work in various roles and responsibilities, the artists of *#callresponse* ground their work within the communities of significance—urban and rural, online and in real life—through which they move. Presented in the space of the gallery the artists are valued in

the tradition of their respective Indigenous nations as sisters, mothers, daughters, family members, future ancestors of those yet to come and the descendants of a long line of women before them, as powerful, knowledgeable, innovative and cutting-edge creators.

The works in the *#callresponse* exhibition include a selected representation of each commission alongside contributions from the invited respondents. Dory Nason describes the dialogue created between works as representing “a much larger story of collaboration, grounded in ethical commitments to seek out and bring in those bodies, voices and kin marginalized by the colonial story and contemporary reconciliation efforts.”<sup>15</sup> Nason’s interpretation positions this work as resisting the imposition of colonial power structures and parallels Tanaka’s discussion of citation as an urgent alternative to capitalism. The works in *#callresponse* represent deep, rich and complex worldviews expressed across a range of artforms, yet are connected in their diversity through material and conceptual forms of citation. The exhibition space is evidence of strength in the face of unthinkable odds, making connections visible while pointing to the in-process nature and dedication to the work happening outside the gallery.

Christi  
Isaac

Belcourt  
Murdoch

#call

#response

Each *#callresponse* artist brings new perspectives on re/conciliation. Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch’s project, *Reconciliation with the Land and Waters* (2016-) opts for a team approach that challenges hierarchical power dynamics and questions who is in need of reconciling. Informed by their ongoing work as the Onaman Collective (founded by Belcourt, Murdoch and Erin Konsmo), the artists worked together in collaboration, positioning the land as the respondent to their activities and asking a more-than-human world to reciprocate their gestures. Belcourt and Murdoch led ceremony at multiple gatherings on Indigenous governance throughout Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan. These actions are ongoing and demonstrate a commitment to a relationship-building process with the land and waters, recognizing the way in which these relations and the everyday, normalized practice of making offerings—as direct embodied actions of respect, acknowledgement, connection, and balance of the human order with spirit and nature—have been interrupted by colonization. The relationship to territory thus exceeds the colonial concept of land as property, signalling the inter-relationship of all beings and positioning this as *the* relationship in need of reconciling above and before those between people. Importantly, the ceremonies prioritize revitalizing Indigenous ways of being and place-based knowledge as ongoing resistance against exploitative resource extraction industries and towards informing future possibilities. Belcourt explains, “In Indigenous ways of thinking and knowing and being, the concept of walking softly on the earth is not a quaint thought, it’s a practical thought about preserving life on earth.”<sup>16</sup>

Keeping in custom with traditional practice, Belcourt and Murdoch painted a record of their ceremonial activities on a buffalo robe that was gifted to them by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak, stretched on a frame and leant against the gallery wall. A central figure that can be read as a woman wearing a skirt—as a symbol of home, creation and the cyclical nature of life—is enclosed within a turtle surrounded by a number of animals, water creatures, landmarks, star maps and spirit forms. The central place of the feminine figure asserts the relationality of land and waters through the bodies of women—who are considered as keepers and protectors of water in many Indigenous cultures—and arguing for the urgency of water governance as culturally connected to women’s roles and responsibilities.<sup>17</sup>

The robe as an active teaching tool will be returned to the artists to be used in their work with youth, culture and language. As *#callresponse* tours, an outline as an approximation or shadow of the robe will be exhibited in its place, signalling the in-process nature of the project and the significant role that cultural items such as these play in maintaining community wellbeing when access is determined by the members of the communities they originate from.



Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch, *Reconciliation with the Land and Waters*, acrylic on buffalo robe, 2016. Buffalo robe gifted to Onaman Collective by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak. Photo: Christi Belcourt. Courtesy of the artists.



Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch, *Reconciliation with the Land and Waters*, acrylic on buffalo robe, 2016.  
Buffalo robe gifted to Onaman Collective by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak.  
Photo: Christi Belcourt. Courtesy of the artists.



Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch, *Reconciliation with the Land and Waters*, acrylic on buffalo robe, 2016.  
Buffalo robe gifted to Onaman Collective by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak.  
Photo: Christi Belcourt. Courtesy of the artists.



Maria  
IV  
Esther

Hupfield  
Castellanos  
Neff



Maria Hupfield, *Post Performance / Conversation Action*, FADO Performance Art Centre, 2016.  
Photo: Henry Chan. Courtesy of the artist.

## #call

Maria Hupfield began a series of conversations staged as performances with guest artists, entitled *Post Performance / Conversation Action* (2016-) in February 2016. In this work, Hupfield adapts the highly mediated format of the artist talk into one of community building and intergenerational solidarity between Indigenous women as minorities who are viewed as interchangeable and placed in competition for token opportunities within the arts. As cultural insiders, Hupfield, her invited guests and helpers prioritize these individual and collective voices to claim, mediate and negotiate institutional space on their own terms. Together they take advantage of a liberating performance art context to situate ownership of bodies and representations, and rewrite authority over discourses of Indigenous “authenticity.” These performances push against mainstream media and commercial expectations of cultural and gendered performance, which dehumanize, fetishize or sexualize, projecting positions of powerlessness onto the bodies of these women to justify violence, invisibility, disposability and disappearance.<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, *Post Performance / Conversation Action* emphasizes both the complex, multifaceted innovativeness and specificity of Indigenous nations, culture and community that currently persists in the arts. This work values the body as a relatable site of personal exchange and one that is grounded in lived experience. The performances seek to encourage and build on cooperative partnerships with performance art venues, inviting fellow *#callresponse* artists Ursula Johnson and Cheryl L’Hirondelle (in Toronto) and renowned Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin (in Montreal). Hupfield occupies, unveils and challenges multiple articulations of power and the structure of institutional spaces that inherit and, if left on their own, propagate the silencing and misrepresentation of Indigenous bodies, culture, and history. Hupfield’s helpers—Rosary Spence and Tsēma Igharas, in Toronto and Beric Manywounds, Émilie Monnet, Nahka and Swaneige Bertrand in Montreal—acted as transcribers and translator intermediaries between the performers and the audience, either restating the audience’s questions to the performers or transcribing the conversation. A certain number of steps were therefore involved: listening, interpreting, editing, and restating, as well as possible refusal based on the helpers’ decisions. Rather than a necessarily reconciliatory gesture in which Indigenous voices are “brought into” institutional space, Hupfield’s performance is a form of occupation that asserts Indigenous presence without excluding the possibility for cross-cultural dialogue.

At grunt gallery, Hupfield exhibited the industrial felt bag carried throughout many of her past performances, including *Post Performance / Conversation Action* and *Artist Tour Guide* (2013–14). The bag replicates Anishinaabe floral beadwork designs in industrial felt, a mass manufactured utilitarian material, signalling shifts in use and meaning that innovate upon tradition and equip the performer/wearer to navigate the complex contemporary terrain fluidly. As an object, sculpture and container, the bag is both passive and active, awaiting future activations while also marking a history of use and of cultural knowledge.

## #response

Hupfield invited IV Castellanos and Esther Neff, two artists working in the Brooklyn performance art community that she is a part of, as respondents. Working collaboratively in a demonstration of solidarity between politically minded individuals across gender and as women allies, they developed *Feet On the Ground* (2016-), a participatory group performance that raises the question of how to begin the work to decolonize, featuring a custom-made tool box designed by IV with content contributions by all three. A series of evolving workshop-style performances were presented at Bullet Space and MAW Gallery in New York, as well as in Vancouver at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design for the opening of the grunt gallery exhibition. During the performances, the artists demonstrated and invited collective actions that empower the absurd and the irrational, including building structures from foam core with miniature handmade tools, marking the space with surveyor’s tape (which was then collected in the mouth of the artist), and using a long plastic tube as a spyglass or hearing aid. Black banners with phrases like “DO YOU KNOW HOW TO USE TOOLS?” and “WORKING THROUGH WAYS OF WORKING” spoke to material processes of learning and the embodied kinetics of theory.<sup>19</sup> Audience members were given white flags and asked “do you want to surrender or take action?” If they chose to take action, they were instructed to write or draw their strongest tool on the flag. Following this, all of the materials used during the performance, including the artists themselves, were gathered up and covered by a large black banner with the word “DECOLONIZE” painted in white upon it. This moment was itself a call to action as the artists laid beneath the banner until, after a time, someone moved to place their flag upon the mound. The performance ended when Castellanos and Neff carried Hupfield out of the room.

Can art be in service to others? Is art a tool? Whose responsibility and perhaps whose burden is it to decolonize? What might it mean to surrender? Reflecting on her experience of *Feet On the Ground* at MAW in Brooklyn, Patricia Silva writes, “This performance emphasized the sheer labor not just of art making but the labor it takes to strip away social conditioning, the work it takes to undo the parameters we’re told and taught.”<sup>20</sup> Thinking through the implications of such work within the context of the gallery she suggests that it is “not a matter of provoking social results but a question of how to sustain the commitment that individual decolonizing acts require.”<sup>21</sup> Across ongoing multiple performances, the artists’ collective work positions bodily and artistic labour as a site of potential decolonization, implicating the audience within their actions, including them and inviting them to respond.



IV Castellanos, Maria Hupfield and Esther Neff, *Feet On the Ground*, 2016. MAW Gallery, Brooklyn.  
Photo: Moch Hahn. Courtesy of the artists.



IV Castellanos, Maria Hupfield and Esther Neff, *Feet On the Ground*, 2016. MAW Gallery, Brooklyn.  
Photo: Moch Hahn. Courtesy of the artists.

Ursula  
Cheryl

Johnson  
L'Hirondelle



Ursula Johnson and Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *Nikamon Ohci Askiy (Ke'tapekiaq Ma'qimikew): The Land Sings*, FADO Performance Art Centre, 2016.  
Photo: Henry Chan. Courtesy of the artists.

#### #response

A collaborative audio-based endurance work performed in multiple locations, *Ke'tapekiaq Ma'qimikew: The Land Sings* (2013-) is serial, in process, and durational, signaling the artist's sustained commitment to thinking and acting with the land. *Nikamon Ohci Askiy (Ke'tapekiaq Ma'qimikew): The Land Sings* was created in collaboration with Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Johnson's invited respondent, for FADO Performance Art Centre's *MONOMYTHS* program, curated by Shannon Cochrane and Jess Dobkin. This was the fourth iteration or "visitation" of the project and for the performance, Johnson mapped the distance from Georgina Island First Nation south to the performance venue in downtown Toronto, using graph paper to plot a line based on the distance, peaks, and valleys of the line traversing the landscape. Johnson gave this composition to L'Hirondelle to interpret, who wrote a song in nêhiyawin (Cree) with Joseph Naytowhow. Together they repeated the song over four hours.

The artist-respondent collaboration between Johnson and L'Hirondelle served as an acknowledgement of continuity to honour L'Hirondelle's extensive history as a songwriter and performer. Her 2008 project, *nikamon ohci askiy: songs because of the land*, "took as a starting point the Australian Aboriginal idea of songlines, in which Aboriginal people believe the landscape has been 'sung' into existence and the songs allow them to traverse the territory."<sup>22</sup> In mapping a line from the customary land territory of the local Indigenous community to the site of the performance, Johnson creates a songline that enacts this navigational and relational practice.

Through the durational performance and song, the artists make tangible their own relation to one another, the land and how they traverse it, calling up the ways in which, as David Garneau describes, territory is "negotiated—in both senses of the term: of negotiating boundaries through discussion and treaty; and in the personal, embodied sense of negotiating space, finding one's way through, over, or around. This sense of domain is not a fixed place, but spaces and pathways animated by mobile, sovereign bodies that know their territory."<sup>23</sup> Indigenous populations in urban centers have grown substantially, representing the fastest growing segment of Canadian society, and made up of many diverse nations.<sup>24</sup> Circulating in the urban environment of Toronto—where L'Hirondelle is currently based—and outside of their home

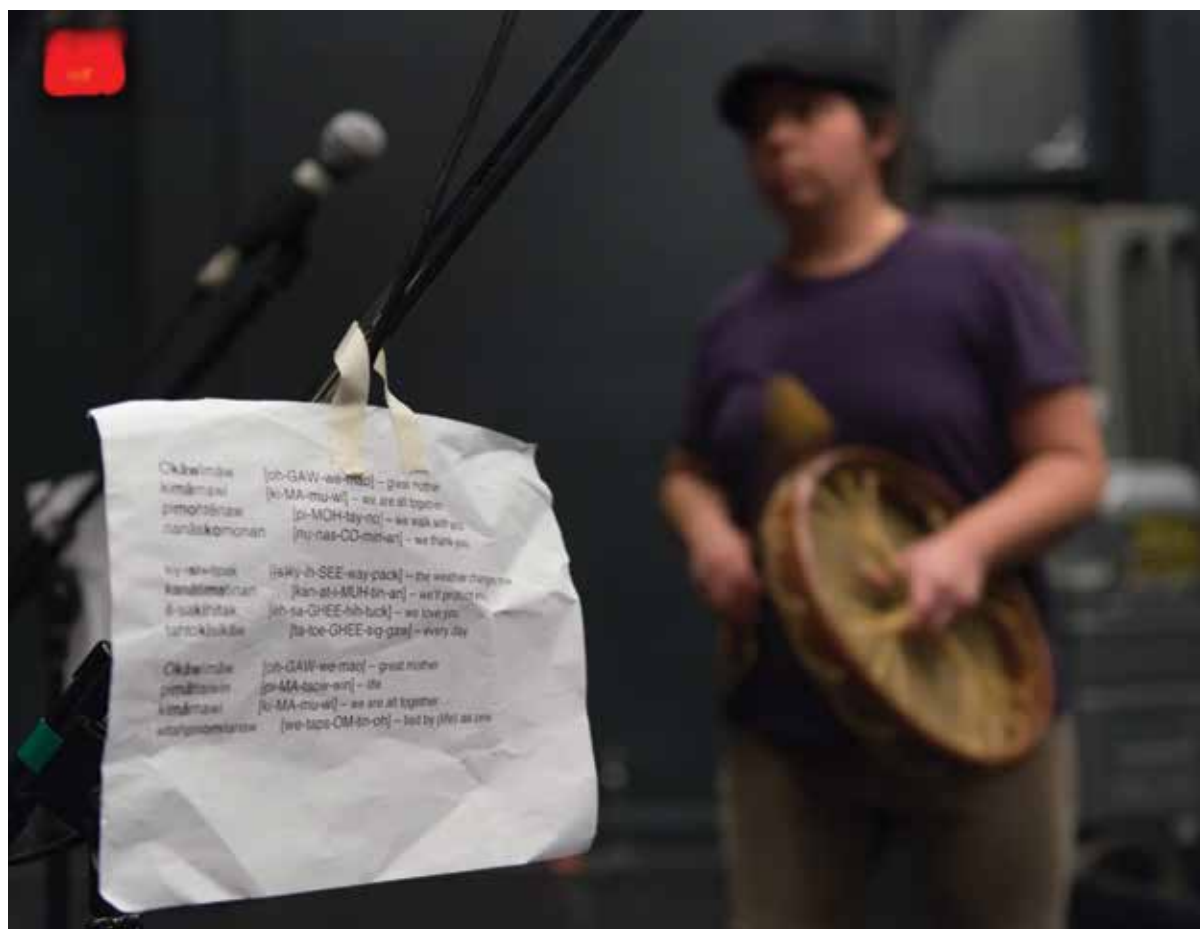
territories, the work also bridges these spaces, signalling the complexity of belonging, of visiting, and the urgency of response.

#### #call

The fifth visitation of *Ke'tapekiaq Ma'qimikew: The Land Sings* took place at the opening of *#callresponse* at grunt gallery. Johnson worked with singers and language speakers Cease Wyss and Cassandra Smith, representing the local Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, respectively. Along with the Musqueam, these nations have overlapping territories in what is now known as Vancouver—territories that remain unceded (as most of British Columbia is without treaties) and on whose land Vancouver was built. In 2014, the City of Vancouver officially recognized its location on unceded Coast Salish territories, following the previous year's declaration as a "Year of Reconciliation."<sup>25</sup> Johnson's collaboration builds upon hundreds of years of Indigenous resistance to displacement—both physically and visually<sup>26</sup>—from their ancestral and traditional territories, and asserts Indigenous sovereignty as exceeding state sovereignty<sup>27</sup> as well as disavowing any discussion of reconciliation that does not begin with the land.

Using topographical maps, Johnson plotted lines from the reserve communities of all three nations to a small park located directly behind the gallery where the performance took place. This iteration was a meditation or mantra on the life-giving work of the hummingbird, butterfly and bee, or *chish chish nace*, *keyleyla*, and *seseymayt* as sung in the Squamish language and translated by Cease Wyss. The collaboration enacted intergenerational and nation-to-nation knowledge sharing through its call to care for the earth. During open hours of the exhibition a speaker was mounted outside grunt gallery's front door with the recorded song playing back toward the land that engendered it and welcoming visitors in the languages of the Indigenous territories they walk upon.





Ursula Johnson and Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *Nikamon Ohci Askiy (Ke'tapekiaq Ma'qimikew): The Land Sings*, FADO Performance Art Centre, 2016.  
 Photo: Henry Chan. Courtesy of the artists.



Ursula Johnson, Cassandra Smith and Cease Wyss, *Ke'tapekiaq Ma'qimikew: The Land Sings*, grunt gallery, 2016.  
 Photo: Merle Addison. Courtesy of the artists.

Tania  
Marcia

Willard  
Crosby



*Only Available Light* (detail), from the series *Only Available Light*, 2016. Archival film (Harlan I. Smith, *The Shuswap Indians of British Columbia*, 1928), projector, selenite crystals and photons. Film 8:44. Original composition by Leela Gilday. Photo: Dennis Ha. Courtesy of the artist.

#call

Tania Willard’s project, *Only Available Light* (2016-), is a material response to and intervention in the intertwined histories of salvage anthropology and the Indian residential school system. She looks to Harlan Ingersoll Smith, an anthropologist who produced a series of silent films profiling nine Indigenous communities throughout Alberta and British Columbia that were commissioned by the National Museum of Canada. These films were widely screened to Canadian students during the same years when attendance at the residential schools was compulsory for children between the ages of six to fifteen. Ingersoll Smith studied Interior Salish peoples taking ethnographic life casts and photographs as well as collecting human remains, material culture and belongings from gravesites as part of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897–1902).

Willard staged a public engagement with this material by screening the silent film *The Shuswap Indians of British Columbia* (1928), which focuses on Secwepemc peoples, to her home community at BUSH Gallery and later in Kamloops during the *Luminocity* festival organized by the Kamloops Art Gallery.<sup>28</sup> Willard re-territorializes the representation of her community that was taken of and from them but not produced for them, flipping the ethnographic gaze on its head and creating alternate possibilities for the community to see itself within the film. Willard’s work moves to redress the historical exclusion of Indigenous voices in representing Indigenous identities, culture, and history—a right that is pointed to in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.<sup>29</sup> Greg Younging similarly writes about the development of protocol to protect “...Indigenous rights in an area haunted by colonial pasts and practices – where Indigenous people featured as subjects of the archive rather than active participants in interpreting past and present cultural production.”<sup>30</sup> Willard invited Dene singer-songwriter Leela Gilday to develop an original composition to accompany her intervention into Smith’s silent film. Gilday’s composition and the sonic experience it engenders holds space for the voices of the peoples who are silenced by Smith’s film and gives presence to their lives on the land and in community.

At grunt gallery, Willard disrupted the public’s ability to readily consume the film by projecting it through a stack of selenite crystals, which refracted the images and prisms of coloured light around the room. Selenite crystals are a mineral form of gypsum, the main ingredient found in plaster, presenting a

material alternative to the physical plaster casts made of Secwepemc people, which now reside in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History. Willard placed selenite crystals in relation to her other works in the exhibition, including a birch bark basket the artist “rescued” from an antique store with the words “GIVE IT ALL AWAY AND START AGAIN” laser-etched into the bark, and a pair of glass Listerine bottles found by the artist on her reserve filled with sky blue seed beads and digital prints rolled like proverbial messages in bottles. The selenite crystals mark worldviews at odds with one another that are nevertheless intimately connected, materially mediating these histories through time and recalling the values of truth, honesty and healing.<sup>31</sup>

#response

Willard’s respondent, Haida and Tsimshian cultural historian, Marcia Crosby (Ph.D), acted in the capacity of a mentor in the development of Willard’s project. Willard’s interest in complicating the overly simplistic narratives of Indigenous peoples propagated by anthropologists like Smith and others benefits from the writings of Crosby. For the exhibition, Crosby’s text “New Cultural Understandings, 1900-1926: A Photo Essay,”<sup>32</sup> was chosen to bridge the academic with the studio. In the essay, Crosby gives a detailed account—accompanied by historical images—of the Indigenous “leaders, governments and organizations that had emerged in B.C. during the first half of the 20th century,” who “were made up of diverse intertribal and inter-First Nations political unions.” She describes how they “created ‘counter’ public spaces by whatever means were available,” including “reflexive responses to modern media forms.”<sup>35</sup> Crosby discusses a 1926 delegation to England to petition King George V for land rights in Secwepemc territory, which included Willard’s Neskonlith great-great-grandfather’s brother, William Pierrish. Crosby includes a photo of the delegation published in an Australian newspaper and notes the contrast between the delegation’s self-representation toward the seriousness of their petition and the newspaper’s characterization of them as “Red Indians.” Crosby writes,<sup>36</sup>

In the face of arguments that easily situate human subjects as part of, and constituted by, dominant structural frameworks, I have selected and presented images and commentary in this essay that are meant to establish that groups and individuals have the capacity to create their own forms of



subjectivity and agency. That is, any individual or group can be positioned as implicated in particular discursive regimes associated with systems of governmental power. However, the point of these considerations of leadership and of cultural practices and practitioners is to investigate the ways in which particular local and regional discourses and subjectivities emerge.<sup>37</sup>

It is worth quoting her at length here as Crosby’s strategy both informs and empowers Willard’s own intervention into state-sanctioned representations that literally silence her ancestors, creating a more complex account of specific Indigenous to Indigenous and Indigenous to non-Indigenous relations that, in turn, trouble narratives of reconciling Indigenous peoples with the state.



*Basket Rescue Operation* (talking to Peter Morin and remembering Dana Claxton’s talk for the BCMA in Whistler) (detail) from the series *Only Available Light*, 2016. Birch bark basket (reclaimed from antique store), cedar root, copper foil, laser cut text. Photo: Dennis Ha. Courtesy of the artist.



*Only Available Light* (detail), from the series *Only Available Light*, 2016. Archival film (Harlan I. Smith, *The Shuswap Indians of British Columbia*, 1928), projector, selenite crystals and photons. Film 8:44. Original composition by Leela Gilday. Courtesy of the artist.

Laakkuluk  
Tanya

Williamson-Bathory  
Tagaq



Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory, *Timiga nunalu, sikulu (My body, the land and the ice)*, 2016. Video (still), 6:28. Video by Jamie Griffiths. Music by Chris Coleman featuring vocals by Celina Kalluk. Courtesy of the artist.

#call

Assumptions about the female body and land are challenged by Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory seen sunbathing nude on the sea ice behind her home in Iqaluit, Nunavut. *Timiga nunalu, sikulu (My body, the land and the ice)* (2016) is a performance for video set in the landscape on the edge of winter as new growth begins to take hold. Animated by the vocals of Celina Kalluk with accompanying string instrumentation by Chris Coleman, the work is both sweeping and intimate. The artist’s reclining figure is first encountered with her back turned to the viewer, the curve of belly and breast shown from oblique angles. Her body, rubenesque, has been shaped by the joy of motherhood and her reclining pose invites the gaze to linger. Turning suddenly toward the camera reveals her face painted in uaajeernek: black with streaks made by scraping the paint away with the finger, a red inverted triangle on her forehead, foam balls distending the cheeks. She gnashes her teeth and stares out fiercely, forcing the viewer to confront their own gaze.

Uaajeernek, a Greenlandic mask dance that Williamson-Bathory was taught by her mother Karla Jessen Willlamson, involves a wild array of expressions that play with elements of fear, humour and sexuality. In being confronted by these often taboo or boundary-testing emotions, viewers of the dance—but especially younger people—are taught how to respond to these emotions as survival skills when faced with them in real life and the extremes of living in the Arctic. The black face paint is a symbol of our insignificance in the enormity of the universe, our awe and humility as humans. Red is a symbol of the vagina. Finally, the white streaks evoke bones and thus the ancestors as well as a clearness of the mind and purity of intention. Taken together, the streaks, inverted triangle and balls held in the cheeks also elicit both male and female sex organs, embracing a multiple and fluid gender identity that is culturally situated. Williamson-Bathory contextualizes uaajeernek with the Inuit belief of giving people control over their own decisions by showing an entire spectrum of expression. The dance is used as a strategy to prepare her community—the Inuit of Nunavut—to face difficult questions around governance and extremes of life in the North through creativity. In this way, uaajeernek is a story linking past, present and future. She states, “As Indigenous people we don’t own our stories unless we tell them ourselves because of the legacy of colonization. ... Stories have been ripped out of us in so many ways and unless we tell our stories, they are not ours.”<sup>38</sup> The dance is a powerful form of self expression and

sovereignty that is grounded within a bodily knowledge that draws upon a lineage of practice and connection to the land and spirit.

#response

Tanya Tagaq joined Williamson-Bathory for a collaborative and in-the-moment response to *Timiga nunalu, sikulu (My body, the land and the ice)* at the Native Education College in Vancouver, a cedar longhouse building with a central fireplace. While her video was playing, Williamson-Bathory lit a Coleman camp stove and set a kettle of water to boil upon it. The whistling steam came to mingle with the projected video, bridging her commonplace practice on the land with the space of performance. Tagaq, having witnessed the video for the first time, responded with a range of vocalizations informed by throat singing and evoking the land, animals and the more-than-human world. Her vocalizations animated Williamson-Bathory’s transformation into uaajeernek, an expression of the power of life in all its iterations. Comfortable in claiming their own and one another’s sexuality, they came together to sing as sisters, the rhythm and the gravel of their voices intermingling, pushing and pulling in balanced tension, in call and response, a shared animation between body and voice.

The audience was brought through moments of shared intensity and came out of the performance transformed. To experience those extremes within the comfort and warmth of the longhouse and within the intimacy of the artists’ connection with one another was a powerful enactment of Indigenous kinship, bodily sovereignty and ways of learning. The performance recalls Leanne Simpson’s discussion of theory as being “woven within kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, it is contextual and relational. It is intimate and personal, with individuals themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives.”<sup>39</sup> Simpson’s description of theory could similarly characterize the practice of uaajeernek and the nature of Williamson-Bathory and Tagaq’s collaboration, which was at once deeply personal and interconnected, while also public in its expression and call for the audience to actively experience, witness and remember.





Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory and Tanya Tagaq, *Timiga nunalu, sikulu* (My body, the land and the ice), Native Education College, 2016.  
Photo: Clare Yow. Courtesy of the artists.



Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory and Tanya Tagaq, *Timiga nunalu, sikulu* (My body, the land and the ice), Native Education College, 2016.  
Photo: Clare Yow. Courtesy of the artists.

<sup>38</sup> As a gathering of multiply-sited performative and socially engaged projects, a gallery exhibition and online platform, *#callresponse* centers work by Indigenous women across multiple platforms to reorient existing terms of engagement with and between Indigenous peoples and cultures in North America. The artists shift exploitive narratives of Indigenous cultural representation from survival strategies to one of “thrivance,” posed by Greg Hill<sup>40</sup> in response to Gerald Vizenor’s concept of “survivance,”<sup>41</sup> and described by Jaimie Lyn Isaac as a “term that celebrates contemporary Indigenous art and curatorial practice thriving in this environment; because of the resistance and survival actions of Indigenous scholars, curators, critics and knowledge keepers, are we in the moment of transcending survivance to thrive?...”<sup>42</sup>

Through the undeniable assertion of the body—both human and non—the artists and respondents of *#callresponse* define thrivance according to their own terms. As Eve Tuck and C. Ree write, “In telling you all of this in this way, I am resigning myself and you to the idea that parts of my telling are confounding. I care about you understanding, but I care more about concealing parts of myself from you. I don’t trust you very much. You are not always aware of how you can be dangerous to me, and this makes me dangerous

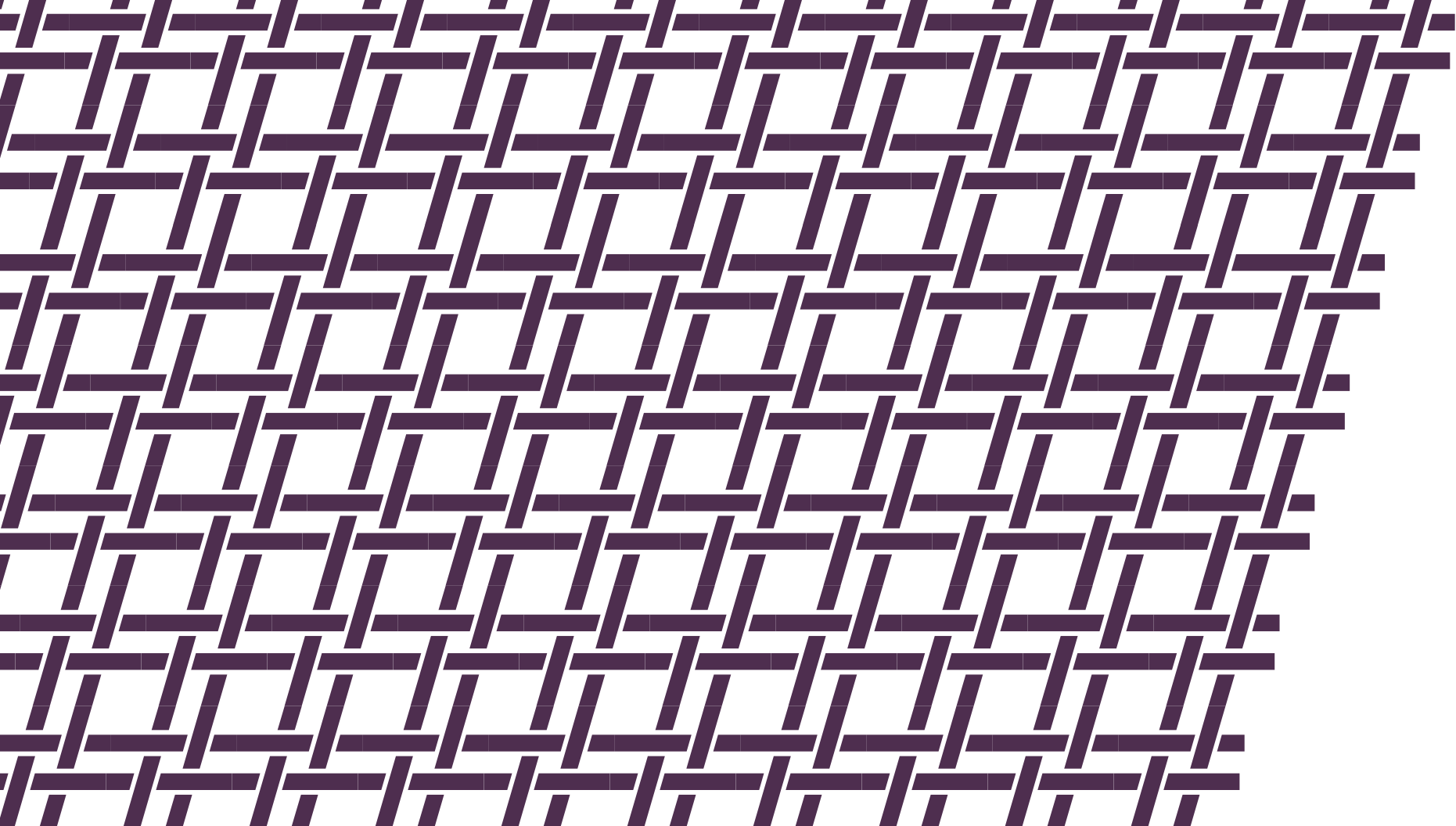
to you. *I am using my arm to determine the length of the gaze.*”<sup>43</sup> (emphasis ours). Against narratives of reconciliation and recognition that, according to Glen Coulthard, “reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend,”<sup>44</sup> *#callresponse* recognizes the fundamental shifts that can occur when the intersections of gender, race, and colonialism are considered seriously as the locus of systemic and symbolic violence. *#callresponse* thus uses the hashtag as a device to give voice to the importance of Indigenous North American women in creating a more equitable, just, and balanced future. The intention of *#callresponse* is to populate as many spaces and media with the hashtag as possible, in order to broadcast the message and trigger the receivers to carry these offerings into action.

- <sup>1</sup> We take up the term “accomplices” as a politicized alternative to “ally” following Jaskiran Dhillon’s “On Becoming an Accomplice.” Yale University, March 8, 2016. Presentation. *Accomplice & Art Practice - Indigenous Feminist Activism & Performance*. Co-sponsored by the Yale MacMillan Center Committee on Canadian Studies, Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies (WGSS), and the Native American Cultural Center (NACC). Organized by T.L. Cowan, Visiting Bicentennial Lecturer of Canadian Studies.
- <sup>2</sup> Some parts of this text have been previously published in Tarah Hogue, “#callresponse: presence across platforms,” *MICE Magazine* Iss 2. (Fall 2017), <http://micemagazine.ca/issue-two/callresponse>.
- <sup>3</sup> Maiko Tanaka, “Feminist Approaches to Citation,” *C Magazine* 126 (Summer 2015), <http://cmagazine.com/issues/126/feminist-approaches-to-citation>, accessed December 14, 2016.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2014), 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Nancy Marie Mithlo, “‘A Real Feminine Journey’: Locating Indigenous Feminisms in the Arts,” *Meridians*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2009), 19.
- <sup>7</sup> Simpson, 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wang Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2012), 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Audra Simpson, “Reconciliation and its Discontents: Settler Governance in an Age of Sorrow,” University of Saskatchewan, March 2016. Presentation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGl9HkzQsGg>
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Leanne Simpson, “Nishnaabeg’ Resurgence: Stories From Within,” in *Dancing on Our Turtle’s Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Publishing, 2011), 22.
- <sup>13</sup> Jaskiran Dhillon, *Prairie Rising: Indigenous Youth, Decolonization and the Politics of Intervention* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017): 16.
- <sup>14</sup> Simpson, “Land as pedagogy,” 8.
- <sup>15</sup> Dory Nason, “#callresponse,” *C Magazine* 133 (Spring 2017), 56.
- <sup>16</sup> Conversation with Christi Belcourt, March 13, 2017.
- <sup>17</sup> Kim Anderson, Barbara Clow and Margaret Haworth-Brockman, “Carriers of water: aboriginal women’s experiences, relationships, and reflections,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 60 (2013), 11.
- <sup>18</sup> Crystal Migwans, “The Violence of Cultural Appropriation,” *Canadian Art*, February 7, 2017. <http://canadianart.ca/features/violence-cultural-appropriation/>, accessed May 3, 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, “Land as pedagogy,” 7.
- <sup>20</sup> Patricia Silva, “Your Decolonizing Toolkit: Freeing Thought from Conditions

of Exploit,” *Cultbytes*, November 14, 2016, <http://cultbytes.com/all/decolonizing-toolkit-performance-art/>, accessed May 2, 2017.

- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Cheryl L’Hirondelle, *nikamon ohci askiy : songs because of the land*, 2008. grunt gallery, Vancouver BC. <http://artofengagement.gruntarchives.org/nikamon-ohci-askiy-songs-because-of-the-land-2008.html>
- <sup>23</sup> David Garneau, “Migration as Territory: Performing Domain with a Non-colonial Aesthetic Attitude,” *VOZ-À-VOZ* (Toronto: e-fagia, 2015), <http://www.vozavoz.ca/feature/david-garneau>, accessed May 2, 2017.
- <sup>24</sup> Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, “Urban Indigenous peoples,” <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100014265/1369225120949>, accessed May 11, 2017.
- <sup>25</sup> Peter Meiszner, “City of Vancouver formally declares city is on unceded Aboriginal territory,” June 25, 2014, *Global News*, <http://globalnews.ca/news/1416321/city-of-vancouver-formally-declares-city-is-on-unceded-aboriginal-territory/>, accessed October 17, 2016.
- <sup>26</sup> Jean Barman, “Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver,” *BC Studies* 155 (Autumn 2007), 3-30.
- <sup>27</sup> In a recent public presentation, Jordan Wilson noted that Susan Point’s *Musqueam Welcome Figures* (1996) precedes visitors’ arrival at Canadian Customs in the Vancouver International Airport. “Salish Footprints,” *The Influence and Legacy of Susan Point*, Vancouver Art Gallery, May 2, 2017. Presentation.
- <sup>28</sup> Kamloops Art Gallery, *Luminocity*, October 28 to November 5, 2016, <https://kagluminocity.wordpress.com/>. Accessed May 3, 2017.
- <sup>29</sup> Article 31.1 states: “Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.” [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf), accessed May 10, 2017.
- <sup>30</sup> Jane Anderson and Gregory Younging, “Renegotiated Relationships and New Understandings: Indigenous Protocols,” in *Free knowledge confronting the commodification of human discovery*, P. W. Elliott and D. H. Hepting Eds. (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015): 184.
- <sup>31</sup> In the practice of crystal healing, selenite is interpreted for its qualities of protection, as an aid to connect with the spiritual realm, to promote peace and tranquility. See <http://meanings.crystalsandjewelry.com/selenite/>, accessed May 3, 2017.

- <sup>32</sup> Marcia Crosby, “New Cultural Understandings, 1900-1926: A Photo Essay,” in *Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun: Unceded Territories*, Karen Duffek and Tania Willard eds. (Vancouver: Museum of Anthropology, 2016), 109-130.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 111.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., 122.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 125-6.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., 127.
- <sup>38</sup> Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory, “Episode 46. Interview with Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory,” Broken Boxes Podcast, April 16, 2016, <https://soundcloud.com/brokenboxes/interview-with-laakkuluk-williamson-bathory-episode-46?in=brokenboxes/sets/callresponse>, accessed May 9, 2017.
- <sup>39</sup> Simpson, 7.
- <sup>40</sup> Greg Hill “Afterword: Looking Back to Sakahan,” in Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013), 140.
- <sup>41</sup> Gerald Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Practice and Theory,” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press: 2008), 1-24.
- <sup>42</sup> Jaimie Lyn Isaac, “Decolonizing Curatorial Practice: Acknowledging Indigenous Curatorial Praxis, Mapping its Agency, Recognizing its Aesthetic within Contemporary Canadian Art” (MA Thesis, University of British Columbia Okanagan, 2016), 114.
- <sup>43</sup> Eve Tuck and C. Ree, “A Glossary of Haunting,” in *Handbook of Autoethnography* Stacey Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis eds. (Left Coast Press: 2013), 640.
- <sup>44</sup> Glen Coulthard quoted in *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Recognition*, eds. Gabrielle L’Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2015), VIV.





As a creative, interdisciplinary and community based project, *#callresponse* tends to defy the normative and still widely eurocentrist approach of the art world. It enhances the unconventional gray zones that many artists throughout the last century (and beyond) have approached, deepened and strengthened, but most importantly, it acts within the cultural and dialogical process-based frame of the Indigenous North American women and artist community.

In a sociopolitical context where the notion of reconciliation between the dominant culture and the native resistance is at stake, and semantically questionable, the disparity between ways of seeing and sensing the world in one or the other cultural realm is far from trivial. We can observe this distinction through art practices, which hold in their form and content the basis of epistemological variations. In other words, the tools that are put forward for acquiring knowledge and even accepting a general definition of knowledge diverge in different cultural perspectives and are noticeably imbedded in art works.

**Adaptive tools**

The standpoint of Indigenous methodologies holds many keys for understanding those divergent axes.

One of the main concerns underlines the importance of a relational approach, for the communicative structure it upholds but also for its interpersonal extension. Already, the idea of strict categorizations is weakened: the interpretation of reality prioritizes multilayered links between subjects, objects, memory, language, connection to place, traditional knowledge and values.<sup>1</sup> In a broader sense, this form of methodology has a holistic and flexible nature, where qualitative investigations tend to bypass rigid quantitative records, where story can be a valid research method and in which the personal position of the author/researcher is taken in account. These supple strategies offer the benefit of being inclusive, in the sense that they do echo some specific Western academic principles, but they remain specific in the consistency of their communal nature. The works at the core of *#callresponse* demonstrate on various levels the relevance of such characteristics. Whether it is Maria Hupfield’s attention to intergenerational conversations, Ursula Johnson and Cheryl L’Hirondelle’s focus on land and territory, Tania Willard’s acts of memory toward community heritage or Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch’s enactments of traditional knowledge through ceremony, they all evoke an encompassing approach grounded in their respective communities.

The general structure of the project is in itself worthy of attention in this context. As the title suggests, each local commission implies a collaboration, discussion and negotiation of respect and trust between the artist and a respondent: it is a fundamentally relational entity, with a fluid arborescence that reaches the public and the community throughout a diverse set of participatory projects on multiple territories, including the editorial and virtual landscape. The latter is particularly interesting, not only because it allows the project to resonate on a wider scale, but also because it follows the strong affinity many young Indigenous artists have with the digital platform as a creative space.<sup>2</sup> Without reducing the web to a strictly positive media (we know how easily hate can forge its way through the net), it still stands as an open toolbox triggering exponential exchanges, engaging new forms of territory where everyone can hold and develop a place for individual or collective expression. As Louise Vigneault suggests, the structure of cyberspace offers a sense of familiarity with Indigenous principles and methodologies, which in turn offers a more accommodating space for resistance, equity and exposure of Indigenous artists in a context where their personal and cultural autonomy is far from being conceded.<sup>3</sup>

**Interrelational frames**

The notion of synaesthesia is plural in many ways. If today it broadly refers to a neurological condition where the subject involuntarily associates two or more senses (for example, perceiving a tactile sensation in a specific part of your body when hearing a specific sound or word), in human sciences the etymological meaning of the term is being observed under new light. The union (*syn*) of the senses (*aesthesis*) is notably studied by anthropologists questioning the rigidity of western-based methodologies.<sup>4</sup> It is being approached not only as a means to allow a better comprehension of specific cultural identities but as an epistemological outset for those unfamiliar to its inherent cross-modal structure. The words here may seem austere but they point to a conceptual landscape based on flexibility and plurality, rooted in the internal relations of the perceiving body, and which may be extended to the body’s relation to its historical and sociological context.

The methodological reach of the synaesthetic model goes far beyond philosophical approaches such as phenomenology or intertextuality. It calls for a liberation of established categories and a detachment from the tendency to look at relations as links between two or more objects: the body/mind/emotion/society

flux is in constant movement, and embodies a wilder modular topos that resists western categorizations to new extents. The conceptual structure of synaesthesia also asks for an engaged position against the reign of visibility to give back the deserved place of the body as whole, with its subjective and sensorial complexity accepted as such. This effective blur addresses a variety of elements at the same time and tends to a transdisciplinary mode of understanding. Put on a sociological scale, the open structure of synaesthesia could reflect individual or collective physical and emotional experience as much as the immediate territory (perceived or imagined), senses as much as language, memory as much as new forms of creations and sensibilities. Juxtaposed with the main axes of Indigenous methodologies as being written so far, this synaesthetic framework seems to have more than mere affinities. They are both relevant approaches to understanding the multisensorial affective individual and/or social body seen as a holistic scheme that resonates in reciprocity with its community, environment and history. Furthermore, they may both imply each other as knowledge tools in a permeable understanding of reality.

In the context of *#callresponse*, these ideas, here formulated as a thought-experiment, offer one of

the multiple avenues to grasp the importance of the female Indigenous body and community as performed by the artists and their respondents, as perceived by the public and participants, and as marked through the plural archives of the exhibition. The outcome here may not be as much about figuring how many senses were triggered in each work, but comprehending the whole project as a dense form of synergy.

<sup>1</sup> For a rich survey of these issues, see Margaret E. Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Context* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the digital realm is invested and activated by Indigenous communities as part of social organizing and connecting diverse nations across vast territories.

<sup>3</sup> Louise Vigneault, “L’exploitation du cyberspace dans l’art contemporain autochtone: levier de parole et d’occupation du territoire,” *Mémoire(s), identité(s), marginalité(s) dans le monde occidental contemporain*, n°15, 2015. <http://mimmoc.revues.org/2135>; DOI: 10.4000/mimmoc.2135 10.4000/mimmoc.213.

<sup>4</sup> See Constance Classen and David Howes, *Ways of sensing: understanding the senses in society* (London: Routledge, 2014).



Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch, *Reconciliation with the Land and Waters*, acrylic on buffalo robe, 2016. Buffalo robe gifted to Onaman Collective by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak. Courtesy of the artists.





Christi Belcourt and Isaac Murdoch, *Reconciliation with the Land and Waters*, acrylic on buffalo robe, 2016. Buffalo robe gifted to Onaman Collective by Grand Chief Derek Nepinak. Courtesy of the artists.

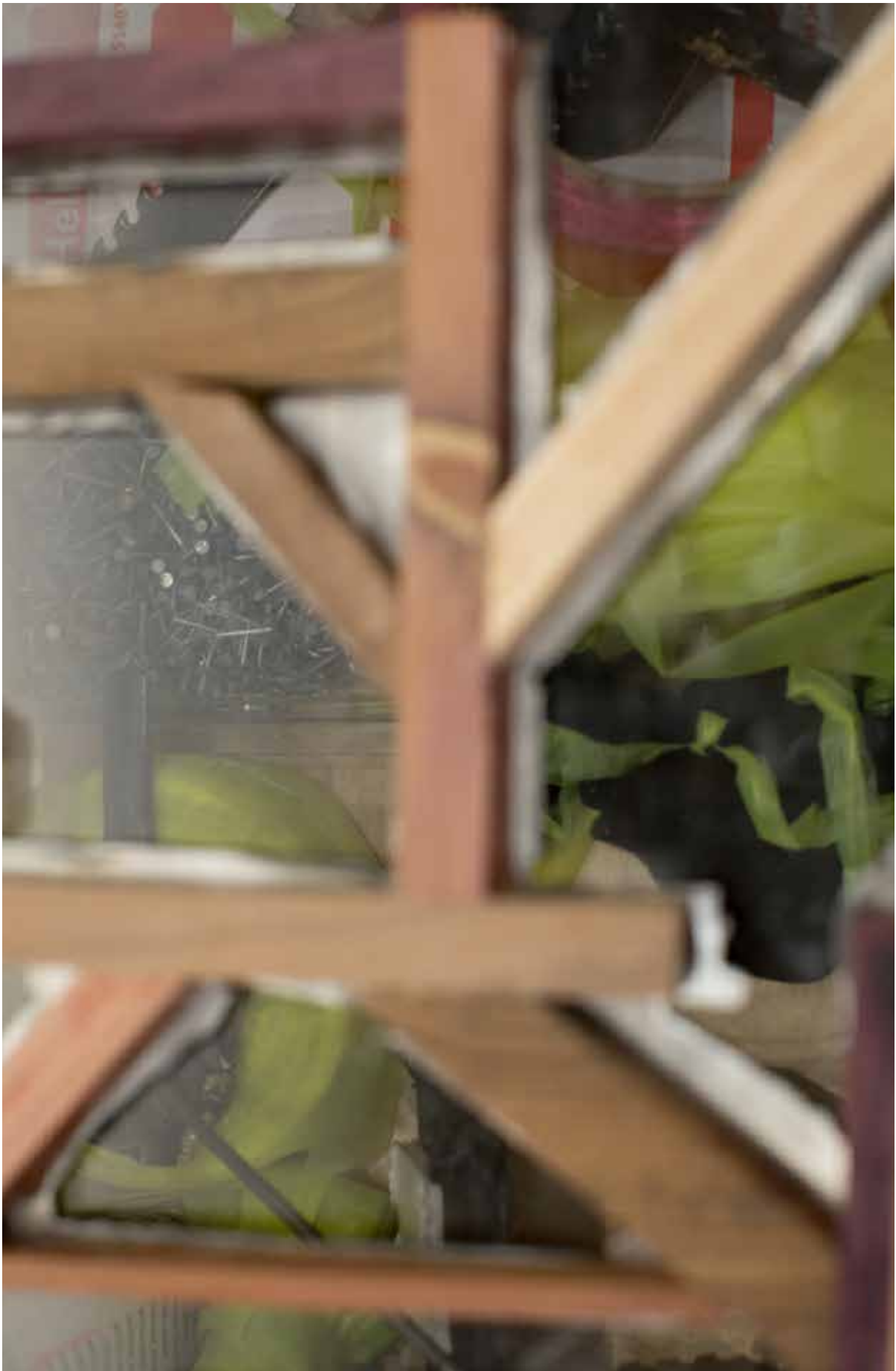




Tania Willard, *Intergenerational effects (I found these in the BUSH)* from the series *Only Available Light*, 2016. Vintage glass Listerine bottles, seed beads and digital prints. Photo: Dennis Ha. Courtesy of the artist.

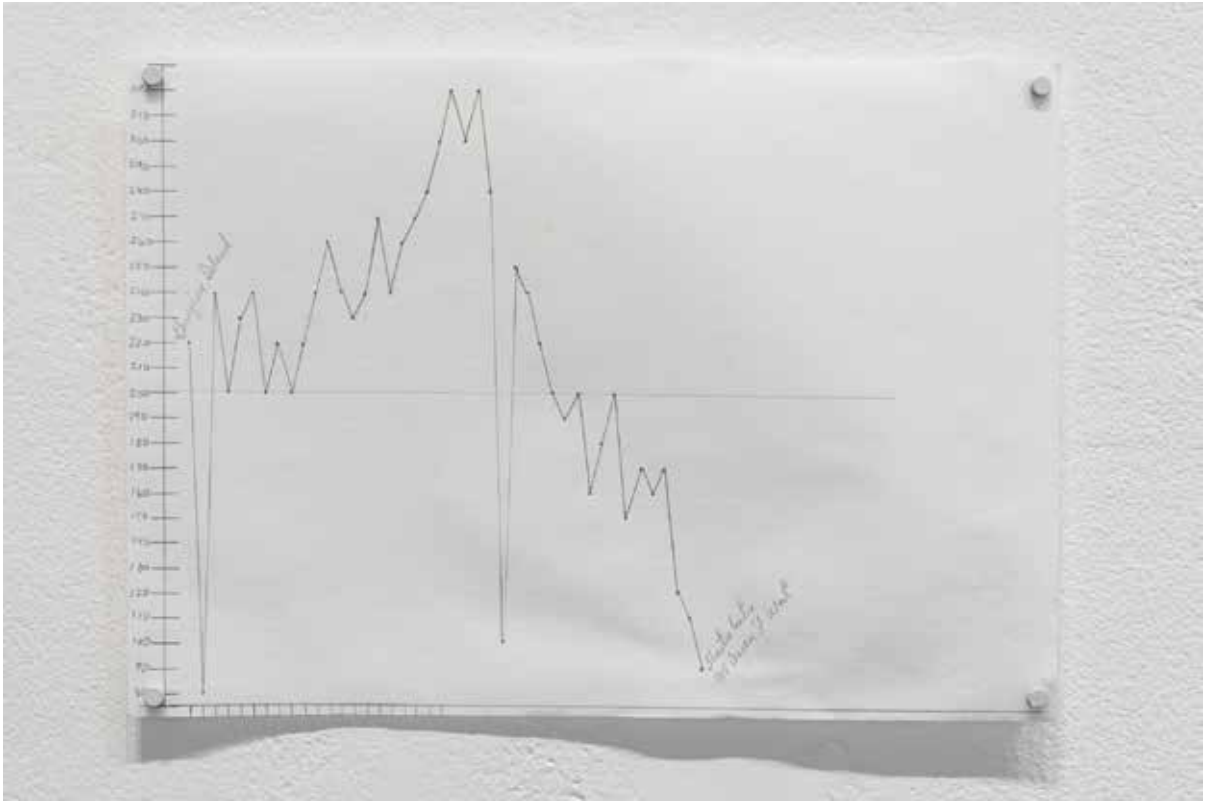
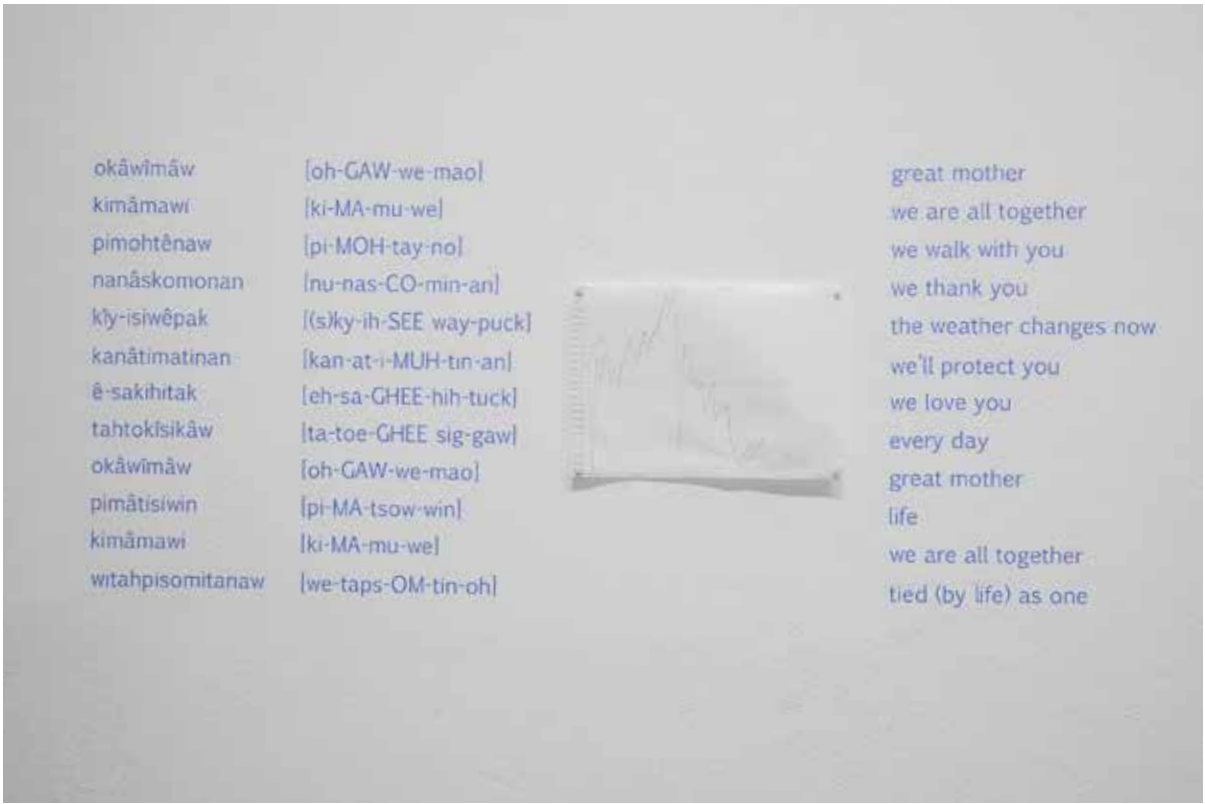


Tania Willard, *Basket Rescue Operation (talking to Peter Morin and remembering Dana Claxton's talk for the BCMA in Whistler)* from the series *Only Available Light*, 2016. Birch bark basket (reclaimed from antique store), cedar root, copper foil, laser cut text. Photo: Dennis Ha. Courtesy of the artist.



IV Castellanos, Maria Hupfield and Esther Neff, Toolbox. Wood, metal with an assortment of handmade and found items. From the performance *Feet on the Ground* (2016). Courtesy of the artists.





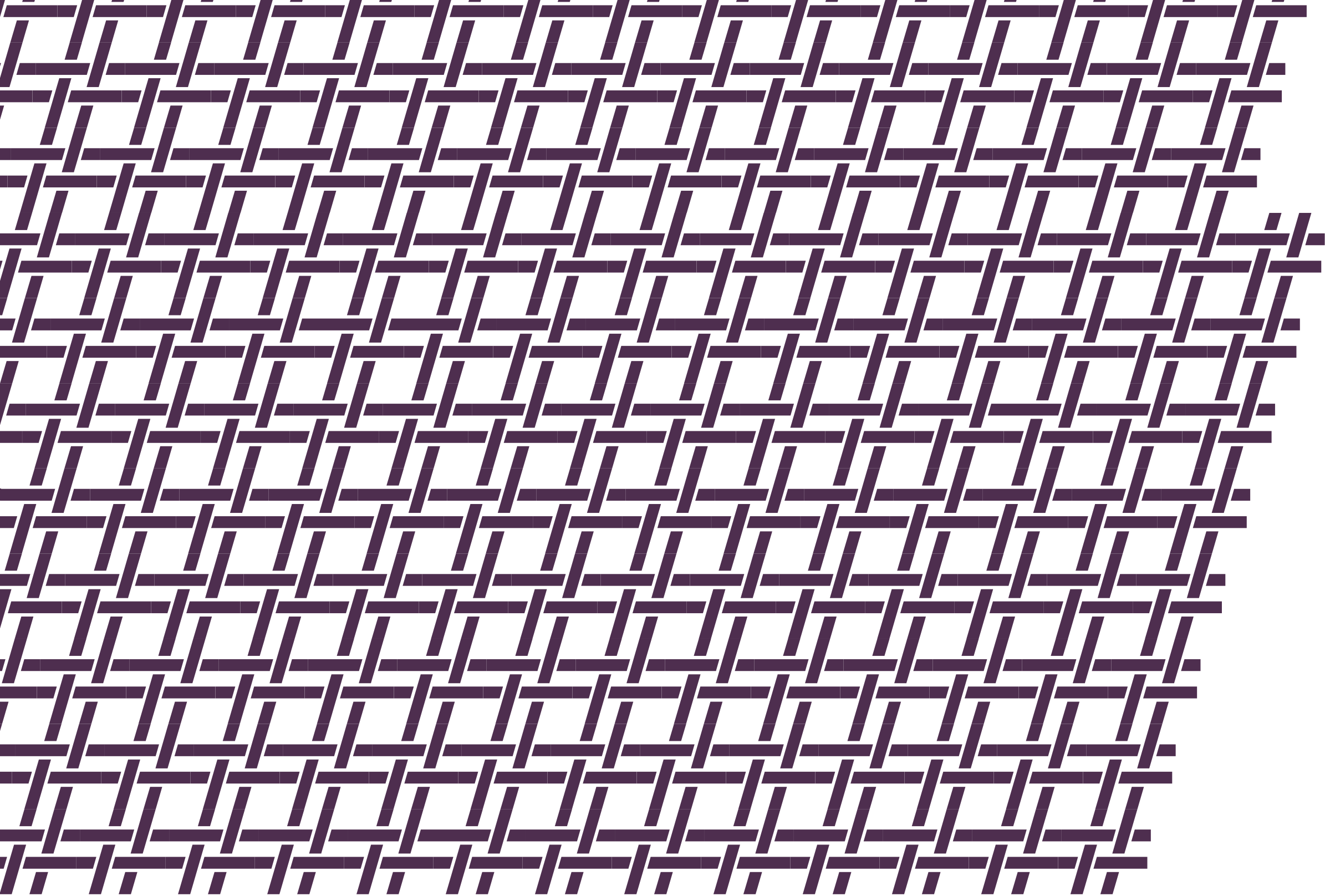




Tania Willard, *Only Available Light*, from the series *Only Available Light*, 2016. Archival film (Harlan I. Smith, *The Shuswap Indians of British Columbia*, 1928), projector, selenite crystals and photons. Film 8:44.

Original composition by Leela Gilday. Courtesy of the artist.





BIOGRAPHIES

**Christi Belcourt** is Michif from Manitou Sakahigan (Lac Ste. Anne, AB). With deep respect for the traditions and knowledge of her people, her work explores the beauty of the natural world and is grounded within her relationship with land, water, animals and Peoples of the North Shore of Lake Superior in Ontario. She is the author of *Medicines To Help Us* (2007) and *Beadwork* (2010). In 2016 she was acknowledged with the Governor General’s Innovation Award, named the winner of the Premier’s Award for Excellence in the Arts and in 2014 was named Aboriginal Arts Laureate by the Ontario Arts Council. She initiated *Walking With Our Sisters*, a project that honours the lives of missing and murdered native women. Together with Isaac Murdoch and Erin Konsmo, Belcourt founded the Onaman Collective.

**Isaac Murdoch Bombgiizhik** is fish clan and Anishinaabe from Serpent River First Nation, Ontario. Isaac is a well respected storyteller, visual artist and traditional knowledge holder widely recognized for his research and expertise in traditional Anishinaabeg pictographs, symbolism, harvesting, cultural camps, Anishinaabeg oral history and storytelling, birchbark canoe making and knowledge on scrolls. He has committed his life to the preservation of Anishinaabe

cultural practices and has spent years learning from Elders of the North Shore, Saskatchewan and Alberta. His “Thunderbird Woman” banner has become one of the iconic symbols of the resistance movement and water protection movement of Indigenous Peoples in North America.

**Maria Hupfield (#callresponse** co-organizer) is martin clan, Anishinaabe and a member of Wasauksing First Nation, Ontario, based in Brooklyn NY. Her solo traveling exhibition *The One Who Keeps on Giving* premiered at The Power Plant in 2017. She received national recognition in the USA from the prestigious Joan Mitchell Foundation for her hand-sewn industrial felt sculptures and in 2016 exhibited at *Site Santa Fe Biennale*. Her nine-foot birchbark canoe made of industrial felt was performed in Venice, Italy for the premiere of *Jiimaan*, 2015. She is the founder of 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Image Makers, a native youth arts and mural program in Toronto, and co-owner of the Native Art Department International.

**IV Castellanos** is a sculptor and performance artist based in Brooklyn, NY. They are the founder of the IV Soldiers Gallery in 2014 and co-founder of Feminist Art Group. IV has created work with the No Wave

Performance Task Force, Social Health Performance Club and is in ongoing performance collaboration with Amanda Hunt.

**Esther Neff** is the founder and co-director of Panoply Performance Laboratory, a collective making operas-of-operations and a laboratory site for performance projects. She is a collaborative and solo performance artist, independent theorist and member of Feminist Art Group, Social Health Performance Club and Organizers Against Imperialist Culture. Her recent work and research in February 2017 included a dedicated month long series of operations entitled *Embarrassed of the Whole*.

**Ursula Johnson** is an interdisciplinary artist crossing performance art, language, place and reconsiders craft within the field of sculpture. She is an enrolled member of the Eskasoni First Nation Mi’kmaq Community on Cape Breton Island and is currently based out of Dartmouth NS. Active in Mi’kmaq language revitalization and descendent from a long line of esteemed basketmakers, her nationally touring solo show *Mi’kwite’tmn (Do You Remember)* considers the consumption of traditional knowledge within colonial institutions. Her performances are often

durational when she engages her body in repetitive strain actions. Johnson received The Hnatyshyn Foundation’s Reveal Indigenous Art Award 2017, was a finalist for the 2016 Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia Masterworks Award, the Salt Spring National Art Prize 2015 and long-listed for the Sobey Art Award in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. Johnson is a contributing artist with *LandMarks2017* placing art within national parks and historic sites.

**Cheryl L’Hirondelle** is an award winning and community-engaged interdisciplinary artist, singer/ songwriter and curator. She is Cree/Métis and German/Polish from Papaschase First Nation / amiskwacyi wâskahikan (Edmonton, AB) and works at the intersections of Cree nêhiyawin worldview and contemporary time-space. Her current projects include: *Why the Caged Bird Sings*, a collaborative songwriting project with incarcerated women, men and detained youth; *SingLandXSongMark*, a multi-iterative international songwriting/sonic mapping project where she ‘sings land’; and a new series of Cree language songs (with Moe Clark and Joseph Naytowhow). She is the sole proprietor of Miyoh Music, an Indigenous niche music publishing company and is currently a PhD candidate at SMARTlab/UCD in Dublin, Ireland.

☞ **Tania Willard** (*#callresponse* co-organizer), Secwepemc Nation, Interior British Columbia, works to connect the shifting ideas around contemporary and traditional with bodies of knowledge and skills between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. She worked in residence as an artist at Gallery Gachet in Vancouver, Banff Centre, and a curator with grunt gallery and Kamloops Art Gallery. Her co-curatorial projects include the nationally touring *Beat Nation: Art Hip Hop and Aboriginal Culture*, The Vancouver Art Gallery with Kathleen Ritter, and *Unceded Territories: Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun* at the Museum of Anthropology with Karen Duffek. She is the curator of *Nanitch: Historical BC photography, Landmarks 2017*, and *BUSH gallery*, a site of experimental and conceptual Indigenous art futurity.

**Dr. Marcia Crosby's** lived experiences with her Tsimshian and Haida, British Columbia, maternal and paternal grandparents, parents and communities, have informed her work as a writer of Indigenous histories. Crosby has examined the diverse ways that First Nations groups, historically, have incorporated external politico-economic forces into their existing patterns of cultural life. Dr. Crosby taught Native Studies, English and Literature at Vancouver Island University (formerly, Malaspina University) for

sixteen years. She is the author of the influential essay, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian." Her curatorial research and writing for *Nations in Urban Landscapes* (1994, 1996), examines the creation of public cultural practices as acts of social reproduction and contestation. Curatorial works include: "Aboriginal art in the city: Fine and Popular" in Vancouver Art in the 60's, 2008; and "The Paintings of Henry Speck: Udz'stalis," co-written and co-curated with Karen Duffek, Museum of Anthropology, UBC 2012.

**Laakkuluk Williamson-Bathory** is a performer of uaajeerneq, a contemporary Greenlandic mask dance, and recognized storyteller, poet, and actor. She is Inuk of Greenlandic origin, living in Iqaluit, Nunavut. Laakkuluk is a founding member and Programme Manager at Qaggiavuut - a non-profit society advocating for and supporting Nunavut performing artists. Qaggiavuut's Qaggiq Project was a laureate to the prestigious Arctic Inspiration Prize in 2016. Her intimate knowledge of Inuit experiences, language, and the expansive Arctic Archipelago informs her projects. Her curatorial work at Art Gallery of Ontario introduced dynamic methods of display to museum exhibition practices and included the shows *Ilitarivingaa? Do You Recognize Me?* (2004) and *Inuit Art in Motion* (2003). A published

poet, Laakkuluk's poetry was commissioned for the exhibit *Fifth World* (2015), Mendel Art Gallery Saskatoon and the Kitchener Art Gallery. She is a recipient of The Hnatyshyn Foundations' Reveal Indigenous Art Award (2017).

**Tanya Tagaq's** album *Animism* earned the 2014 Polaris Music Prize for the best full-length Canadian album. She is a multi-Juno award winning vocalist informed by Inuit throat singing and combining avant-garde improvisation, metal, and electronica influences. She delivers fearsome, elemental performances that are visceral and physical. Tagaq is from Cambridge Bay (Iqaluktuutiaq), Nunavut, Canada, on the south coast of Victoria Island. Tagaq is known for her work with Björk, the Kronos Quartet, and the recent production "Nanook of The North" in which she created a mesmerizing, improvisatory soundscape for the controversial silent film by Robert J. Flanerty from 1922. Her album *Retribution* was released in October 2016.

**WRITERS**  
**Tarah Hogue** (*#callresponse* co-organizer) is Curator/Communications Director at grunt gallery in Vancouver, and was the 2016 Audain Aboriginal Curatorial Fellow with the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. Her work with Indigenous People in Canada decenters institutional space and history using collaborative methodologies and a careful attentiveness to place. She prioritizes responsible research methodologies of Indigenous knowledge that are grounded in the intersectional practices of Indigenous feminisms, re/conciliation, and cultural resurgence. Recent curatorial projects include *Unsettled Sites*, SFU Gallery; *Cutting Copper: Indigenous Resurgent Practice*, a collaboration between grunt gallery and the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery UBC, co-organizer Shelly Rosenblum; and was writer-in-residence for *thirstDays* with VIVO Media Arts. Hogue is Métis/French Canadian and of Dutch Canadian ancestry. She grew up in Red Deer Alberta, on the border between Treaty 6 and 7 along the original trading route of the Métis. She identifies as an uninvited guest on the unceded Coast Salish territories of Vancouver BC.

**Karyn Recollet** is an assistant professor in the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. She is a Cree cultural theorist who writes about activations of land and space making through sonic and embodied Indigenous forms of cultural expression. Her arts practice is the creation of workshops and gatherings that focus on relationships with the land spaces in urban Indigenous territories such as ‘glyphing Decolonial love’ co-hosted at the Art Gallery of Ontario with Quill Christie. Residing in Tkaranto, Karyn is also a co-founder of the collective *the futurists* which explores Indigenous and Black futurities.

**Eve Tuck** is a writer and professor living in Tkaranto. She is the co-author of “A Glossary of Haunting” with C. Ree, and “Before Dispossession, or Surviving It” with Angie Morrill and The Super Futures Haunt Collective, two essays which precede this third installation of the glossary of haunting. Eve grew up in Pennsylvania and lived in New York for 18 years before moving to Toronto. She is Unangax, and is an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, in Alaska. Eve is the co-founder of the Land Relationships Super Collective with her collaborator K. Wayne Yang.

**Aseman Sabet** is an independent curator and sessional lecturer in contemporary art. Her research examines the emergence of a theory of tactile knowledge in eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse and art criticism. She has contributed to a number of contemporary art publications and collaborates as a researcher and writer for various cultural institutions in Quebec. In 2016 she worked as a curatorial advisor for La Biennale de Montréal. Since 2014, she is a member of the board of directors of Centre d’art et de diffusion CLARK. She lives and works in Montreal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*#callresponse* recognizes the numerous Indigenous territories on which this project takes place. We stand in solidarity with Indigenous Nations against the intervention in these territories through conquest, seizure and occupation by settler colonial nation states legitimized by the Indian Act of 1876 in Canada, the formation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1824 and the Indian Removal Act of 1830 in the United States of America.

We acknowledge the labour and time of all those who have made this project possible. We thank our co-producer and home institution, grunt gallery, which is located on the unceded Coast Salish territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. Thank you to Glenn Alteen, Karlene Harvey, Meagan Kus, Vanessa Kwan, Kari O’Donovan, Dan Pon and Rachael Stableford for your immense support. Thanks also to our grant writer, Mary Ann Anderson, our copy editor, Hillary Wood, and to Merle Addison, Rosalina Cerritos and Jaime Torres, Dennis Ha, Krista Lomax and Ryan McCann for documentation and editing. Special thanks to Amanda Strong for her work on many aspects of the project, Shalon Webber-Heffernan for tour coordination, and Ginger Dunnill of Broken Boxes Podcast for her ongoing dedication to recording the voices of Indigenous and activism based

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We dedicate this book to the many artists, warriors and trailblazers who have protected and made possible our work and whose work we benefit from and build upon. These are women whose work has personally impacted us as co-conspirators and artists of *#callresponse* and who have profoundly contributed to the formation of the complex discourse of Indigeneity within the arts. We hold to high esteem and honour the following: Madeleine Allakariallak, Elsie Basque, Shirley Bear, Rebecca Belmore, Lori Blondeau, Maria Campbell, Joane Cardinal Schubert, Dana Claxton, Sarah Denny, Ellen Gabriel, Tanya Gillis, Caroline Gould, Faye HeavyShield, Margriet Hogue, Peggy Hupfield, Lucie Idlout, Rita Joe, Tanya Kappo,

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