

# HERE NOW : HERE BEFORE



*Offerings-Offrandes*, France Trépanier, 2012  
(detail from installation)

The Audain Aboriginal Curatorial Fellowship  
Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

France Trépanier & Chris Creighton-Kelly  
Co-recipients

March 2013

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## APPRECIATION

We would like to thank Jon Tupper, Executive Director of the AGGV for awarding us this fellowship. It has been a pleasure working with him and other staff members of the gallery.

We are grateful to Michael Audain for generously providing an endowment to the AGGV from which the funds for the Audain Aboriginal Curatorial Fellowship are drawn.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to summarize our project over the past year - December 2011 to November 2012 - as co-recipients of the first Audain Aboriginal Curatorial Fellowship. This fellowship covered the preliminary research of our overall curatorial project:

### *Here Now : Here Before*

The fundamental objective of this first phase - research - is to create an appropriate context for the three remaining phases of the overall project. The complete four phases are:

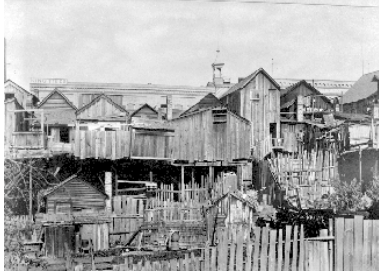
1. Research
2. Conference
3. Visual Art Exhibition
4. Publication of Catalogue & Conference Proceedings

## CONTENT

*Here Now : Here Before* is about discovering and emphasizing alternative narratives to the mainstream history of the territory from which the AGGV draws its local audience. This encompasses lower Vancouver Island including all of the CRD and the southern Gulf islands.

By re-tracing these histories, imagining the lives of those who lived them, it is possible to recall places, moments and events where Aboriginal peoples mingled with immigrants of colour. It is these junctures which can serve as rich source material for artists working today in a contemporary context.

Starting with the Aboriginal peoples who have been here for at least 12,000 years, we also looked at the history of three distinct immigrant groups: immigrants from China who settled in and around Victoria; Blacks, many who were slaves or descended from slaves who left the U.S.A. and came first to Victoria and then Saltspring Island; and South Asian immigrants, mostly Sikhs, who lived and worked in the Cowichan Valley.



Victoria Chinatown, 1886.



Sikh Women of Paldi, 1938.



Saanich people camping in Victoria, 1904.

## METHODOLOGY

We started by developing an Indigenous research methodology. Indigenous research methodology is about maintaining, transmitting and clarifying Indigenous ways of being and doing and making this inherent in the research process. In Australia, the United States and Canada, there is a growing number of Indigenous scholars, researchers and artists working at creating (re-creating) the basis of an Indigenous research paradigm. This work is equally important for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as it can nurture the understanding of Indigenous world views, cultures and values.

*“One major difference between (the) dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that those dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore, knowledge may be owned by an individual. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation.” (Evelyn Steinhauer in Thoughts on Indigenous Research Methodology).*

In an Indigenous research context there are three guiding principles:

- Respect
- Reciprocity
- Relationality

These principles honour Indigenous worldview with responsibility and sensitivity. For the ***Here Now : Here Before*** research project, we developed an Indigenous research methodology because it values cultural knowledge and challenges the *“notion of the superiority of empirical knowledge that leads to the idea that written text supersedes oral tradition”* (Shawn Wilson in Research is Ceremony).

We felt that this way of conducting research allows for multiple realities to emerge, for multiple stories to exist side by side and for multiple histories to be revealed. Indigenous epistemology values the relationship that one has with the truth, not thinking of the truth as something that is external. In this way of thinking, reality is not an object but a process of relationships. As Wilson states *“an object or thing is not as important as one’s relationship to it.”* It is precisely these relationships that form the basis of our research.

## ACTIVITIES

We undertook formal, academic research and created a bibliography. We conducted interviews with artists, academics, community members and elders.

This work also included research about our proposed conference which will bring artists and scholars from across Canada to Victoria. We have already found some willing institutional partners. The theme, beginning with the history and current reality of this region, will be expanded by noted practitioners who have been working with the junction of Aboriginal art history and where it intersects with the history of artists of colour.

This conference will take place in spring 2015.

We also gave numerous talks about Aboriginal art and culture, some with the assistance of the AGGV. In every case, our fellowship was publicly mentioned and appreciated.

Also, other activities that we undertook - although not strictly a part of the Audain Fellowship - were nevertheless linked to this work. Some of these are:

Understanding Aboriginal Arts in Canada Today - a Knowledge & Literature Review we co-authored for the Canada Council.

Mawita'jig - a 3 year project - launched by Artist-run Centre, *Vaste et Vague*, curated by France, presents interdisciplinary works created by a collaboration of Aboriginal contemporary artists and members of the Listuguj & Gespapegiag Mi'gmaq communities.

ReWorks in Progress - a symposium on art practices and 'reconciliation' (as in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) at the Shingwauk Residential School Centre, Algoma University in Sault Ste Marie at which both Chris and France gave presentations.

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For any further information or questions about *Here Now : Here Before* please contact:

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