

SUPPORTING ARTISTS ONLINE

Shifting to Digital Programming During COVID-19

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As museums continue to shift focus to online programming, University of Victoria's Legacy Art Galleries (Legacy) continues to focus on projects to support local artists impacted by the physical isolation associated with the pandemic. With the objective of supporting emerging artists who lost exhibition and work opportunities early on in the pandemic, the Legacy's Education and Programming Intern, Amy Smith, collaborated with the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's Assistant Curator, Regan Shrumm, to develop an online workshop series titled *Collective Grief, Collective Futures*.

Amy noted, "We were inspired to support emerging artists after hearing about the experiences of Visual Arts students during the shutdown who lost their studio spaces, access to supplies, and exhibition and networking opportunities." The workshops, partially supported by BC Arts Council funding, connected emerging artists with mentors to explore how their artistic practices changed, and to discuss how to move forward during the pandemic. Three sessions were facilitated by artist K.P. Dennis in October. Twenty participants shared their experiences and engaged with mentoring artists Estraven Lupino-Smith, Kemi Craig, and Ghinwa Yassine.



Amy observed that, “Exploring the theme of grief was really powerful, and the online space that was created was really special. Participants felt able to share in ways that might not happen in person.” Hosting the programs online benefitted everyone: sessions were recorded for participants to review and screen sharing allowed participants to easily show their work. The success of this program inspired Legacy to make space for emerging artists in future exhibition-related programming.

The exhibition *To Fish as Formerly: A Story of Straits Salish Resurgence* provided another opportunity to amplify the voices of emerging artists. This exhibition examines the SXOLE, or Reef Net fishery, a Straits Salish cultural practice that is deeply rooted in place. *To Fish as Formerly* marks one of the first times that this knowledge has been shared with the general public. It brings together the research of XEMFOLTW Dr. Nicholas Claxton and co-curator Katie Hughes using contemporary art, video interviews, historical objects, and documentation.

Installation view of *To Fish as Formerly* exhibition, 2020. Photo credit: University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries.

Chasz Elliott describing the conservatory aspects of the Reef Net fishery, as shown in his piece *SHELIS – Life*, 2020.

Photo credit: University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries.

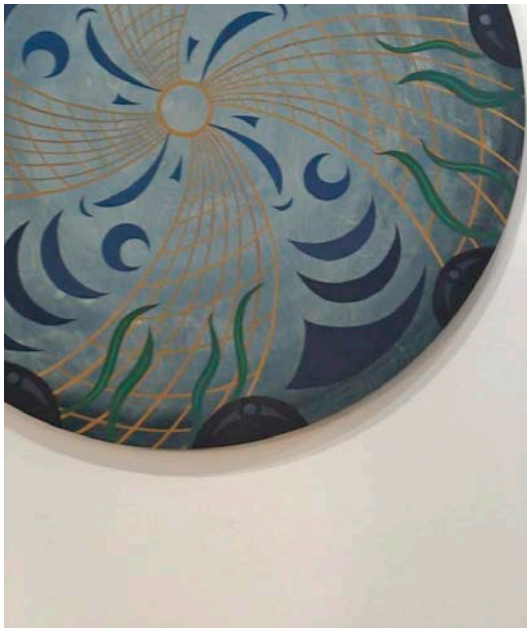


While this exhibition was intended to bring communities together to learn in person, Legacy staff knew that presenting the perspectives of emerging artists Sarah Jim and Chasz Elliott, both members of the W̱SÁNEĆ Nation, and settler artist Colton Hash, through video interviews was an effective alternative for reaching them. Videos could convey how the SXOLE and its teachings are carried forward into the present. The video series articulates that SXOLE revitalization and cultural resurgence is a Straits Salish story. Legacy provides space to hold this scared knowledge, but cannot co-opt the generations of work led by Straits Salish nations to revitalize their cultures.

Later this year, watch for an announcement of a new virtual tour of Indigenous art on the University of Victoria's campus, developed by Curatorial Intern Lorilee Wastasecoot. The tour allows participants to walk where the Chekonenin family of the Songhees people once cared for the land and to learn the stories and deeper meanings behind the Indigenous artworks. The website will also permit virtual tour bookings and a self-guided option.

Lorilee notes, "In a time when public monuments of colonialism are being removed and the colonial narratives they serve are being exposed and linked to racism, land theft, and genocide, this tour offers an Indigenous perspective to that history, told through art." Until we can meet again in person, the knowledge held in each piece of Indigenous art can inform perspectives of the land. Lorilee continues, "The website and Zoom tour will offer people an opportunity to keep learning about the Indigenous art on campus during COVID." This project also enabled Legacy to support the development of emerging professionals through internships funded by Canadian Heritage's Youth Employment Strategy and the BC Arts Council.





Sarah Jim shares about how making *ŁKÁLJ SDÁĆEN* (Moon Tide) connected her with her community, 2020. Photo credit: University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries.

Despite the losses associated with suspending in-person programming, Legacy staff have observed first-hand the value of online engagement opportunities. The pandemic has required us to identify and support the community groups most in need. Legacy staff look forward to strengthening relationships with emerging local artists and implementing additional online opportunities to captivate both familiar and new audiences.

Nicole Achtymichuk

Nicole Achtymichuk is the current Young Canada Works Curatorial Intern at the University of Victoria Legacy Art Galleries. She earned a B.Sc. in Anthropology with distinction from the University of Victoria in 2020 and lives and works on the territories of the Esquimalt, Songhees, and WSÁNEĆ Nations.

Audiences can learn the story behind pieces like the multi-artist Ceremonial Furniture collection during the tour, 1993. Photo credit: Bob Matheson.

Resources

uvic.ca/legacygalleries

To Fish as Formerly: Artist Interview Series, on [YouTube](#)

CBC Unreserved, Reviving an outlawed fishery: 'the backbone of our Nation,' 16 May, 2019, www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/

All Eyes On Mi'kma'ki: Respecting Treaty Rights, 23 October, 2020, www.uvic.ca/legacygalleries/home/news/current/statement-of-support-for-mikmaq-lobster-fishers.php

Territory Acknowledgement from Songhees Elder Frank Bangus George, 5 September, 2020, www.uvic.ca/legacygalleries/home/news/current/territory-acknowledgement.php

TUKTUUYAQTUUQ (Caribou Crossing), Maureen Gruben, legacy.uvic.ca/gallery/tuktuuyaqtuuq/gallery/