

Dana Claxton and Ezra Winton (eds.), *Indigenous Media Arts in Canada: Making Caring, Sharing*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2023. 45 pages. ISBN 978-1-77112-541-3. \$44.99 paperback.

Indigenous Media Arts in Canada: Making, Caring, Sharing, edited by Dana Claxton (Lakota) and Ezra Winton (Settler) is an intellectual winch out of “devolution, discord, and antipathy” (4) in the long century of post-colonial Indigenous visual art production, circulation, and commentary. How this abstract idea came to be stuck in the first place isn’t really the point—rocked back and forth by funding from UBC, wheels aligned by a tectonic shifting panel at imagineNATIVE, and an accelerator hit at the right time by cynicism regurgitated for the nauseous displays of Canadian Nationalism (*Canada 150*) or contrition (*MMIWG inquiry*)—*this book* seems at least, from the start, to be arriving right on time to pull the rest of us out of the fuzzy snowbank of Indigenous media art interpretation we’ve found ourselves in.

Indigenous Media Arts may feel from the outset like it is defied by its grander mission: it’s aiming to take stock of the surge in Indigenous media and art production and its byproduct criticisms and theorizations, while at the same time being a book, written mostly before the pandemic, released into a post-pandemic AI influenced world. One might call that a day late and a dollar short. The speed at which Indigenous visual art is moving today is certainly too fast for a book to capture while also trying to stay relevant. So, it may be more accurate to describe the volume as a satellite, passing by the swelling star of Indigenous visual culture as it burns to a supernova right before the global pandemic, snapping a picture and swirling back out into the starry abyss.

Indigenous Media Arts is broken into 4 parts or perhaps battlegrounds: Indigenous cinema, Indigenous visual culture, Indigenous Media Art practice, and Indigenous Media Art resurgence. Laced together by the thread of Indigenous media art creativity, hemmed in by the omnipresent “settler-Indigenous dynamic” (34) – a loose dialogic between Indigenous and settler Canadians of myth, story, relationship, and post-coloniality – and finally adorned with ribbons of spectacular Indigenous intellectual thought by about two dozen Indigenous and settler heavyweight theorists inside the industry and institution. *Indigenous Media Arts* is a kind of ribbon skirt stitched together for an important moment in time. Whether that time has passed is a different consideration, sitting with the collection is still worth the read.

The first part dives into Indigenous cinema, namely appropriation, ethics, and restoration using The North as its foil and film festivals as its setting. All film festivals, not just imagineNative but certainly it more than any other, that undertake the goal of showing Indigenous pictures do so fighting through the headwind of festival gatekeeping which has wrought so much damage on the intellectual property of Indigenous filmmakers for decades. *Indigenous Media Arts* drops the reader into the activated and potent politics of imagineNative like a sea-can off the coast of an Inuit hamlet. Foregrounded by an imagineNative panel from the fall of 2017 that dazzles like the northern lights, this panel stands on record as a tectonic shift in thinking on Indigenous film ownership, juxtaposing the harm of Dominic Gagnon’s monumental piece of floating garbage against the restorative sovereign power of Zacharias Kunuk’s artistic snow-bound masterpieces.

Part two is devoted to settler impressions of Indigenous visual culture. Bouncing from film critiques of Mi’kmaq contributions to Indigenous New Wave cinema, onto a dense discursive analysis of the trove of moving images of Residential School, swinging through Quebecois representations of Indigenous femininity on-screen and rounding it off with a deep-dive on thematic drives in the work of Alanis Obomsawin, part two swings at the pillars of

Indigenous visual artistic sovereignty. Of course, the land, and its representations, enunciations, and reverberations are a deeper-than-the-core baseline for deciphering all aspects of Indigenous visual artistry.

Parts three and four are a layered tourtiere of critique and commentary on Indigenous art production and its driving spirit of resurgence. While part three is fixated on speaking, or perhaps the spoken, of intersecting media art dialogues, part four is squarely oriented on the resurgent wellsprings of Indigenous art. It may follow that soliciting conversations by viewers of Indigenous art is in some ways the sole purpose of Indigenous art made, produced, or curated. However, the context of what and how things are spoken in Indigenous art is rarely studied. The thinkers in *Indigenous Media Arts* are here to remind us that, in Indigenous culture, most conversations take place across multitudes, time, place, and beyond worlds. They ought to be staged the same in Indigenous visual art. Meanwhile, in part four, resurgence appears as if it has been lingering in the background of these artistically staged conversations like an eavesdropper, gathering energy, absorbing, learning, and growing.

What if anything are the resurgent acts and echoes of artistic conversations in Indigenous art really trying to achieve? The intellectuals in *this book* might contest that the core of all art is to destabilize the net of the settler-colonial agenda and its cultural imperialism. At other points in the collection, the core imperial project of colonialism materializes as constant Extraction with a capital 'E'. Indigenous art, whether it is cinematic, visual, computational, mediated, or performative – and nearly any form in-between – exists to withstand the extractive compulsion of settler society and subvert if not ensnare it. Indeed, the emergent new media or Indigenous new wave may just be the artistic equivalent of a contemporary trapline set and baited for any and all viewers willing to take the bait.

Claxton and Winton enter this collection into the scholarly catalogue with scores of humility, modesty, generosity, and kindness in introductions and conclusions replete with aphorisms, salutations and acknowledgements. Nevertheless, it is hard not to see *Indigenous Media Arts* somewhat cynically as a tooting satellite sailing by the Indigenous visual art world capturing the odd rivet or rut and casting some light on the dark shadowy spaces of its surface. This is not the editors' fault. Indigenous visual art is a juggernaut, an expanding ecosystem, growing faster than the critics, intellectuals, historians, and theorists can move to keep up with it. Throw instant opinion making from social media into the mix, or even more prescient the rapidly evolving reputation – or Indigenous identity -- of artists and Indigenous public intellectuals who dare to weigh-in, and readers of this edited collection may pick up this book having already well-informed opinions of the veracity and suitability of the takes issued throughout. Crucially, *Indigenous Media Arts* gets important conversations on Indigenous media and visual art moving, making space for ongoing and vital conversations on Indigenous artistic sovereignty, Indigenous intellectual property, and the attending restorative power of the reconciliatory process.

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