



Curatorial Premise

The *Storm Spirits* premise arises out of Aboriginal concepts of the intersecting animist relations that inhabit the realms stretching from astronomy to meteorology, geology and down into microbiology, and offers them as new rhetorical designations of the relations that are evolving in the multiple streams of contemporary Aboriginal media art production.

An animist spiritual perception of cosmological forces, major storms and the twitching of the earth's hide can also provide us with new methods of critical analysis and metaphorical understanding of the electronic media information weather patterns that sweep the ionosphere - touching down with often toxic effect on Indigenous cultures, languages, and relations to the land. *Storm Spirits* focuses on Aboriginal artists whose work inhabits and maps out these intersecting spheres of influence and who contribute unique forms of vitality to the dynamic and essential interplay between Indigenous traditional knowledge and contemporary Aboriginal culture.

Rosemary Kuptana described how southern broadcasting was like a neutron bomb.

"This is the bomb that kills the people but leaves the buildings standing. Neutron-bomb television is the kind of television that destroys the soul of a people, but leaves the shell of a people walking around. This is television in which the traditions, the skills, the culture, the language, -count for nothing. The pressure, especially on our children, to join the invading culture and language and leave behind the language and culture that count for nothing is explosively powerful."

Her analysis of the Inuit experience of the globalization effects of introducing southern, urban Canadian broadcasting into arctic cultures can be translated around the world for Indigenous peoples in the present, and will continue into the future. There are many focal points of research and analysis that examine the political, economic and cultural impact of globalized media but relatively few that originate from, and develop an analysis of the devastating impacts it has, and will continue to have on animist cultures.

An important component of Aboriginal cultural communication is self identification and location, a practice that anchors and credits the origin of statements but that also acknowledges and gives respect to the differences in values and perspective arising from the context (the identification and location) of the listener. This habit of accreditation is a factor of animist cultures that honours their relations to their particular geo-cultural ecology and values those of others. Animist expressions root themselves in an egalitarian and interconnected web of nature and seek its teachings in a zoomorphic negotiation rather than an anthropomorphic and speciocentric hegemony.

Artists are invited to explore the confrontation and negotiation with cultures that maintain an internalized and encased sense of place and identity versus those that value, identify through, and actively dialogue with environments, ecosystems, and cosmologies. *Storm Spirits* also seeks to question how the aesthetic tools of networked media can reveal these complex interactions from an Aboriginal perspective.

Storm Spirits: Aboriginal New Media Art is curated by Ahasiw Maskegon-Iskwew for Urban Shaman Gallery with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Virtual Museum of Canada.




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