

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Bill Reid Gallery Launches 10th Anniversary Series
with Premiere Exhibition
– BODY LANGUAGE: Reawakening Cultural Tattooing of the Northwest –

Contemporary Artists reclaim identity through resurgence of Northwest Indigenous tattooing, piercing and personal adornment

VANCOUVER, BC – Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art, celebrating its 10th anniversary, announces the leading-edge exhibition ***BODY LANGUAGE: Reawakening Cultural Tattooing of the Northwest***, running **June 8, 2018 – January 13, 2019**. Until the 1885 potlatch ban, tattooing and piercing were integral to Northwest Indigenous cultures as a way to mark identity and social status. This premiere exhibition, led by guest curator Dion Kaszas (Nlaka'pamux, Hungarian, Métis), traces the history and meaning of traditional tattooing and piercing practices, and explores their contemporary revival.

BODY LANGUAGE features five Northwest Indigenous cultural tattoo practitioners: Nakkita Trimble (Nisga'a), Nahaan (Tlingit), Corey Bulpitt (Haida), Dean Hunt (Heiltsuk), and guest curator Dion Kaszas (Nlaka'pamux). Each of these contemporary artists is researching and reclaiming the traditional techniques of their Nations, and building awareness of the significance and protocols around the tattooing traditions.

“Indigenous tattooing and piercing are deeply connected to the struggle and triumphs of Indigenous peoples,” says Kaszas. “The reclaiming of these practices is symbolic of our process of decolonization. Having a physical ancestral mark helps in communicating our identities and instills pride as we make ourselves visible as the original peoples of this land.”

For millennia, Indigenous tattooing and piercing have been central to ceremony and recognize special life events, potlatches, and social rank within Northwest Indigenous communities. After they were banned, these personal crests were transferred to clothing and jewellery. *BODY LANGUAGE* explores designs on skin, and their relationship to traditional clothing, rock art, jewellery, basketry, and weaving. This exhibition will also reveal how these traditions, as they re-emerge, transcend mere decoration to provide healing, protection, and a profound sense of belonging.

Since 2012, Kaszas has helped spearhead the revival of tattooing in the Northwest of North America. He recently received his Masters degree in Indigenous Studies at the University of British Columbia Okanagan and co-founded the Earthline Tattoo Collective with Jordan Bennett (Mi'kmaq) and Amy Malbeuf (Cree/Métis) to enhance, expand, and support the work of traditional and cultural Indigenous tattoo practices. Dion Kaszas has also travelled internationally to participate and present on his own practice within the global revival of Indigenous tattooing.

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Through this captivating exhibition, the following Northwest Indigenous cultural tattoo practitioners will examine the history, symbolism, oral traditions, songs, and artistry of Indigenous tattooing within their region:

Nakkita Trimble (Nisga'a): Born and raised in Prince Rupert, BC, Trimble began her tattoo career in 2012 and progressed into reviving traditional coastal *gihlee'e* as a means to reawakening the Nisga'a tattooing art form in her nation. Driven by her passion to learn more about Nisga'a art and culture, Trimble worked with Nisga'a Elders and undertook research to learn about and identify the significance of traditional Nisga'a tattoos.

Nahaan (Tlingit): Nahaan's work reflects his teachings and cultural background. Practicing as a tattoo artist for more than five years, he focuses exclusively on working within the spirit and design style of Northern formline. As a carver, painter and designer he emulates the visual storytelling crafts so dear to his people of Southeast Alaska. He is a spoken word poet and helped found "Woosh Kinaadeiyei" in Juneau Alaska, which has since grown into a thriving creative mainstay in the capital city. He focuses on the aspects of community empowerment and self-mastery through the methods of decolonization, indigenization and activism.

Corey Bulpitt (Haida): Bulpitt is the great-great-grandson of renowned artists Charles Edenshaaw and Louis Collison. He is known internationally for his fusion of hip-hop culture and Haida traditional style in large-scale spray painted pieces. He has created work for the National Gallery of Canada, Facebook Head Office in Seattle, and the Vancouver Mural Festival. Working with media as diverse as wood, argillite, gold, silver, glass, textiles, spray paint, and traditional *Kiida* (hand-poke) tattooing, Bulpitt has steeped himself in the traditional work of his ancestors, forming a foundation for his distinctive contemporary style.

Dean Hunt (Heiltsuk): Visual Artist, Traditional Tattoo Practitioner and Music Producer from Waglisla (Bella Bella), Hunt underwent a formal five-year apprenticeship with his father Bradley Hunt and older brother Shawn Hunt, where he learned the skills of Heiltsuk carving and design. He uses the tools his ancestors fought to hold onto through times of hardship and oppression, not only in his more traditional art practices, but also in his contemporary use of sound. Hunt studied Studio Engineering and Music Production at Columbia Academy in Vancouver. He also completed a four-week artist intensive at Earthline Tattoo Residency.

The contemporary artists represented in *BODY LANGUAGE* are at the forefront of the revival of Indigenous tattooing in British Columbia. Visitors will have the rare opportunity to learn the significance of and protocol around tattooing traditions, and explore the rich history and artistry of Indigenous tattooing, piercing and personal adornment on the Northwest coast.

To complement the exhibition, the Bill Reid Gallery is pleased to offer the following public programs:

Stitching Ourselves Back Together Symposium | Friday, June 8, 2018 | 9:30am – 4pm

Join us for a full day symposium exploring the history, revival and contemporary concerns around cultural tattooing. Registration required. Lunch included.

Live Tattooing in the Gallery | Saturday, June 9, 2018 | 11am – 4pm

Artists from the exhibition will demonstrate their techniques and chat about their process.

For more information about *BODY LANGUAGE* and special programs in support of this exhibition, visit: <https://www.billreidgallery.ca/blogs/exhibitions-page/body-language-reawakening-cultural-tattooing-of-the-northwest>

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About Bill Reid Gallery (billreidgallery.ca)

The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art is a public gallery nestled in the heart of downtown Vancouver. It is named after acclaimed Haida artist Bill Reid (1920 – 1998), a master goldsmith, carver, sculptor, writer, broadcaster and spokesman.

Since opening its doors in May 2008, the Bill Reid Gallery has remained the only public gallery in Canada devoted to contemporary Indigenous Art of the Northwest Coast, and is home to the Simon Fraser University Bill Reid Collection, as well as special exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous Art of the Northwest Coast of North America. Through his art, Bill Reid continues to inspire emerging and established contemporary Indigenous artists of the Northwest Coast. His legacies include infusing the art traditions of the Haida with modern forms of expression, influencing the next generation of artists, and building lasting bridges between First Nations and other peoples.

The Bill Reid Gallery offers numerous educational programs for students of all ages, providing greater awareness and appreciation of Indigenous values and cultures, coupled with an understanding of how ancient knowledge can inform and impact their lives today.

The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art is an initiative of the Bill Reid Foundation. Established in 1999 as a non-profit charitable organization, the Foundation's mission is to preserve the art and perpetuate the legacies of Bill Reid.

LISTING INFORMATION

Bill Reid Gallery presents

BODY LANGUAGE: Reawakening Cultural Tattooing of the Northwest

Dates: June 8, 2018 – January 13, 2019

Address: Bill Reid Gallery
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Vancouver, BC, V6C 2G3

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