

# Artist Thread In Focus

Krista Belle  
Stewart

Carnegie  
Museum of Art

# Land

# Introduction

---

Krista Belle Stewart is an artist who is a member of the Syilx/Okanagan Nation. When her mother gifted her a piece of land within the Syilx Nation, the artist wondered what it meant to own land. Living nearby in Vancouver at the time, Stewart took a suitcase full of this earth and carried it with her when driving or walking around the city, reflecting on how one might “carry the land.” The 1987 Okanagan Nation Declaration, signed by the Syilx, states:

We are the unconquered aboriginal people of this land, our mother; The creator has given us our mother, to enjoy, to manage and to protect; we, the first inhabitants, have lived with our mother from time immemorial; our Okanagan governments have allowed us to share equally in the resources of our mother; we have never given up our rights to our mother, our mother’s resources, our governments and our religion; we will survive and continue to govern our mother and her resources for the good of all for all time.

This section invites you to explore the theme of land as it relates to Indigeneity, the history of settler colonialism, language, environmental justice, and identity.

“For years I would carry the land with me in a suitcase.” —Krista Belle Stewart

# Terms

---

**Decolonization** The political work of freeing an area or people from colonial rule. In relation to Indigenous people, the goal of decolonization is Indigenous Sovereignty—the right of Indigenous Peoples to govern themselves, and experience cultural, psychological, and economic freedom.

**Dispossession** A term that refers to the way colonial forces seized land and forcibly removed its Indigenous inhabitants.

**Indigeneity** Indigenous recognizes a connection of being from and belonging to the land. Indigeneity, as a term to describe Native populations, is created as an identity when there is a second group that enters the space, such as colonialists occupying already occupied land.

**Indigenous Peoples** Also referred to as First Nations or Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, or Native Americans in the United States, people who are directly descended from the inhabitants of a particular geographic region before these places were occupied by foreign governments and populated by settlers. In many cases, they maintain the language and culture of the peoples who were present before settlement, and at the same time, are active and full members of contemporary culture.

Though all the above terms may be used, it is always preferable to use the name of the specific Native Nation or Tribe. The US government officially recognizes 574 Indian Tribes in the contiguous 48 states and Alaska, but it is important to remember that there are many unrecognized tribes as well. These tribes presently include approximately 2.5 million people, descendants of the 15 million Indigenous people who once lived here.

**Indigenous Sovereignty** The right and ability of Indigenous people to govern themselves and control their own land, cultures, and political and economic systems.

**Land** In Indigenous cultures, rather than something to be occupied, owned, or controlled, land is a living entity as important as humans, and humans, rather than separate from the land, are deeply integrated with it.

**Land Acknowledgment** A statement made by settlers, orally and in writing, to acknowledge the history of how they came to occupy land through genocide and forced displacement of Native populations. Land acknowledgments seek to honor the history and ongoing presence of Indigenous Peoples on the land.

# Terms

---

**Reservation** An area of land held and governed by a federally recognized tribal nation, whose government is accountable to the US Bureau of Indian Affairs and not to the state government in which it is located. There are 326 reservations in the United States, which together comprise about 2.3% of land in the United States. Reservations were established by the US government while the government was dispossessing Indigenous people from the land that they ancestrally inhabited through laws such as the Indian Removal Act in the mid-19th century. (Though dispossession of Indigenous land happened as early as 1605.) Illness, starvation, depression, murder, and genocide remained constant. Today, reservations are home to high rates of poverty, are disproportionately low in natural resources and quality soil, and are increasingly located in areas contaminated with toxic runoff from industries run by private corporations and the federal government. Reservations are also important centers of sovereignty, community, and culture.

**Settler Colonialism** The continued occupation, exploitation, and destruction of land and its resources (traditionally stewarded by Indigenous Peoples) by settlers. In the United States, settler colonialism began in the 17th century

and has taken place through hundreds of years of oppression, genocide, and forced cultural assimilation and erasure. Settler colonialism is perpetuated by structures of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, racism, and capitalism, and can appear in various ways in each of our lives.

**Settler** Someone who moves onto land that is not theirs, claiming it as their own, or part of their own nation. Settlers often use violence and come with the goal of establishing their own nation (in the case of the United States) or extending the reach of their nation.

**Survivance** A term coined by Gerald Vizenor, a writer and literary theorist from the White Earth Anishinaabe Nation, to describe the active presence of Indigenous Peoples, and the way they have not only survived genocide under settler colonialism, but have actively thrived and resisted in the face of oppression. In Vizenor's words, "Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion...Survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry." Survivance—the opposite of victimhood—is a state of flourishing.

# Connect

---

The following is a Land Acknowledgment from the Office of Sustainability at the University of Pittsburgh. We invite you to read it and reflect on Indigeneity in your region and in the United States, as you engage with the prompts below.

“We recognize that the University of Pittsburgh occupies the ancestral land of the Adena culture, Hopewell culture, and Monongahela peoples, who were later joined by refugees of other tribes (including the Delaware, Shawnee, and Haudenosaunee), driven here from their homelands by colonizers. We honor these traditional Native inhabitants of this place and uplift their historic, unique, and enduring relationship with this land, which is their ancestral territory. We pay our respects to their Elders and their past, present, and future people, community, and culture. While we cannot change the past, we commit to continued gratitude for the gifts of nature, along with ongoing respect, care, and stewardship of the land, each other, and future generations.”

- What might you know about the Indigenous people of Pittsburgh? What can you find out?
- Land acknowledgments are for settlers. Indigenous Peoples know where they are from, and the history of dispossession wrought upon the land. Why might an institution want to create a Land Acknowledgment?
- What do you think of when you hear the term “Indigeneity”?
- What do you think of when you hear the term “settler colonialism”?
- Where might you see the influence of settler colonialism in your day-to-day life?
- Who controls narratives about Indigenous people in the United States?
- How might Indigeneity intersect with the history of slavery and racism in the United States? How might it intersect with other forms of oppression?
- How might Indigeneity intersect with climate change?

# A Tribute to the Land

# Create #1

Create a tribute to the land, reflecting on what “land” means to you.

**Please note** We are not asking you to create a formal Land Acknowledgment, as those can require more serious research and reflection, but we do hope that through this exercise, you will form a deeper awareness of the land you live on or the land where you are from, including potentially painful histories.

## Materials

---

Poster board, pens, markers.

**Optional** Old maps, collage materials, images printed from the internet. Access to information about the history and presence of Indigenous Peoples in your region. Access to information about plants and animals in your region.

Helpful links may be found in Further Resources.

## Goals for this Create

---

- To learn more about Indigenous people in your region or another region with which you are familiar, including where they were displaced
- To learn more about plants and animals in your region or another region with which you are familiar, including where they were displaced
- To think about ways you use the land
- To think about the history and future of the land
- To reflect on sustainability and environmental justice

## Terms

---

**Environmental Justice** A social movement that addresses the unfair exposure of underserved communities to harms associated with resource extraction, hazardous waste, and other land uses.

**Sustainability** The process of living within the limits of available physical, natural, and social resources in ways that allow the living systems in which humans are embedded to thrive in perpetuity.

**Tribute** An act, statement, or gift that is intended to show gratitude, respect, or admiration.

## Connect

---

- What do you think of when you hear the term “land”?
- Can “land” include water? Can “land” signify where you are from?
- What do you know about the land where you live?
- Who lived here before you? Specifically, which Indigenous Peoples first occupied the region and where did they go when they were displaced?
- Who owns the land you live on?
- In your opinion, should land be owned? Why or why not?

- What plants and animals live in this region? Have they always lived here?
- How might the land where you live have changed over time? How might it change in the future?
- How might you interact with the land on a regular basis?
- Do you feel connected to the land where you live? Why or why not?
- What is the relationship between the land where you live and industry? For example, are there factories on the land? Do industries extract resources from the land?
- What might be the relationship between exploitation of the land and exploitation of people?
- In what ways might the land sustain you?
- In what ways might you work to sustain the land?

## Create

---

- 1 Spend time thinking about land that is meaningful for you in some way.**
  - This might be where you live now, a place where you have lived in the past, or a place you have visited.
  - Feel free to approach the definition of “land” broadly. Land might include anything from a patch of grass in a park to a favorite city stoop, though try to keep nature in mind (whether it is present or absent) as you reflect.
- 2 Make a list of words or phrases that come to mind when you think about this particular “land.”**
  - Consider all five senses. What does the land smell look, look like, sound like? What tastes do you associate with it? What textures?
  - How might the land make you feel?
  - What people, animals, or plants live on or use the land here? What people, animal, and plants used to live here?
  - What industry exists here?
  - What languages are spoken here? What languages have been spoken here in the past?
- 3 Think about what images might help you represent this land.** Feel free to use old maps or pictures from the internet. Alternatively, you may choose to draw your own images.
- 4 Combining images and words, create a poster that honors the land in some way.**
  - Be creative! You might cut the poster into a shape that resembles the land you have chosen to honor.
  - You might combine maps of the land with handwritten words that you associate with it.
  - You might turn your words into sentences or even a poem that reflects the way the land makes you feel.
  - You might offer suggestions for how to nurture the land moving forward or draw attention to an issue related to environmental justice.

# Colors of the Land

# Create #2

Create a map of pigments inspired by the land where you live.

## Materials

Pencil and scratch paper, 4-foot-long piece of string or twine, watercolor paper, watercolor, watercolor brush, mixing palette

## Goals for this Create

- To become even more aware of your surroundings, particularly as related to nature
- To learn about the history of minimalism and the grid in art and relate it to the history of settler colonialism
- To experiment with watercolor
- To practice mixing color, including shades and hues
- To learn about natural pigment

## Terms

**Grid** A visual structure that rose to prominence in Europe and the West in early-20th century contemporary art. It was notably employed by abstract painters Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian, and later by Agnes Martin.

The “grid” has also been associated with settler colonialism in the United States, as it was settler colonialists who divided land that, in Indigenous cultures, no one “owned,” into property. Lines drawn on maps cut the land into smaller and smaller sections; these lines would come to define real space as fences that marked property borders and national borders.

For more on the concept of the “colonial grid” in relation to Krista Belle Stewart’s art, see Tania Willard’s “Orthogonal Heart Line” in Further Resources.

**Okanagan** A language spoken by Indigenous Peoples from the Okanagan River Basin and the Columbia River Basin in Canada and the United States. Following British, American, and Canadian colonization during the 1800s and after, use of the language declined drastically.

**Pigment** A substance that imparts color to other materials. Pigment may be used to make paint, and can be found in plants, rocks, and other natural materials.

**Site-Specific Installation** Art designed specifically for a particular location and has an interrelationship with that location.

“Krista Belle Stewart’s image suggests a speculative architecture, an archive of land laddered onto a contextualizing grid. Do these hexagonal lines and markings disrupt the colonial grid or assert their own structure amid it? If this story is in a slow-shifting stasis—in a chrysalis of narrative—then this narrative of historical (re-)mediation may be travelling to the edges of the universe, in this stasis chamber, to the futurity that was eclipsed by colonial constructs. This is an orthogonal heart line, reaching back in time to the ancestral and simultaneously forward into the unknown, and always intersecting with story. Archives of land are like that—existing in specks of dust and vast expanses at the same time, scaling story as it shifts.” —Tania Willard, “Orthogonal Heart Line: Intersecting the Colonial Grid”



Installation view of Krista Belle Stewart, *Eye Eye*, 2018, SFU Teck Gallery; photo: Blaine Campbell



## Look

These images on the left show Krista Belle Stewart's site-specific installation *Eye Eye*. For this work, Stewart made tiles and pigment using soil from land in Douglas Lake, British Columbia, that was passed down to her from her mother. *Eye Eye* references an Okanagan phrase signifying that one is present. This project connects to earlier works by Stewart in which her land was incorporated into installations and performances. In those projects, the land was held in buckets and other vessels and turned into audio with contact microphones. The land is seen by the artist as the oldest archive: traces of culture are inherent in the material.

- What do you notice in this artwork? Consider colors, texture, and scale.
- What associations might this work bring up for you? Does it remind you of anything?
- Why might Stewart choose to incorporate "land" into her artwork?
- Think about the form of the grid. What other grids might exist in the world around you?
- Why might Stewart have arranged the tiles in a grid?
- How might Stewart's grid compare or contrast to those in the world around you? For example, are her lines perfectly straight?
- Think about the relationship between grids and settler colonialism, described above. In what way might Stewart be commenting on, critiquing, or resisting the settler colonial grid?

## Create

- 1 **Choose a patch of "land" that you might be familiar with.** This might be part of a yard, a park, a garden, or a parking lot.
- 2 **Place your string somewhere on the ground in the shape of a square, so that you have an area of one square foot (1 ft x 1 ft) to focus on.**
- 3 **Notice as many objects as possible in this square and write down what you see.** For example, in one square foot of a park you might find an ant, a candy wrapper, blades of grass, a dandelion, an acorn, and dirt.
- 4 **Notice as many colors as possible in the square.** If you are looking at grass, how many types of green can you find? If dirt, how many shades of brown?
- 5 **Which colors look "natural," or made by nature? Which colors look "artificial"?**
- 6 **Either outside, back in the classroom, or at a workspace, try to replicate the colors you found.** Experiment with mixing brown with black to get dark brown, or brown with red to get ochre, for example.
- 7 **Apply your paint to the paper in the shape of a grid, so that each color is a square—or a wobbly square, or a circle!—in the grid.**

**Optional** In pencil, write the source of each color under the corresponding square. For example, you might write "grass" under each green that corresponds to grass, or "dirt" under each brown that corresponds to dirt.

- 8 **Reflect and compare**
  - Does seeing your grid of colors affect your experience of the land and if so, how?
  - Compare your grid to others. What similarities or differences do you notice?

Connect with the land through nature and language.

## Goals for this Create

---

- To think about differences among languages, including languages you might hear or speak at home
- To consider what happens to languages when they are lost
- To think about the difference between nouns and verbs
- To think about how different peoples and cultures talk about nature
- To write a short poem

## Materials

---

Pen and paper

## Terms

---

**Animacy** The state of being alive

**Noun** A word used to identify people, places, or things

**Verb** Words that show action or states of being

**Object** In English grammar, the object is the thing that something is done with or to

**Potawatomi** People native to the Western Great Lakes region, upper Mississippi River and Great Plains. They traditionally speak the Potawatomi language.

**Subject** In English grammar, the subject is usually the “do-er” or agent—who or what—that causes the action.

## Read

---

The following passage is an excerpt from “Speaking of Nature,” an article by Potawatomi scientist and writer Robin Wall Kimmerer. In the article, she describes English as the language of colonizers. Requiring Indigenous children to speak English in the Residential School System was one of the many ways settler colonialists inflicted their own culture on Indigenous Peoples, leading to the erasure of Indigenous culture and knowledge. Here, Kimmerer describes the difference between the verb-based grammar of her ancestors and the noun-based grammar of their oppressors, and the way English was used to manipulate people and nature alike.

“Bit by bit, I have been trying to learn my lost language. My house is spangled with Post-it notes labeling *wiisgaak*, *gokpenagen*, and *ishkodenhs*. It’s a very difficult language to learn, but what keeps me going is the pulse of animacy in every sentence. There are words for states of being that have no equivalent in English. The language that my grandfather was forbidden to speak is composed primarily of verbs, ways to describe the vital beingness of the world. Both nouns and verbs come in two forms, the animate and the inanimate. You hear a blue jay with a different verb than you hear an airplane, distinguishing that which possesses the quality of life from that which is merely an object. Birds, bugs, and berries are spoken of with the same respectful grammar as humans are, as if we were all members of the same family. Because we are. There is no *it* for nature. Living beings are referred to as subjects, never as objects, and personhood is extended to all who breathe and some who don’t. I greet the silent boulder people with the same respect as I do the talkative chickadees.”—Robin Wall Kimmerer, “Speaking of Nature,” from *Orion Magazine*, 2017.

- Why might Kimmerer be covering her wall with Potawatami words?
- What are some differences between Potawatami and English, according to Kimmerer?
- What might it mean for you to acknowledge that everything in the world around you and the world itself is alive?
- How might speaking of nature—for example, birds, bugs, and berries—with the same respect as humans affect your view of nature?
- What might be some consequences of losing or forgetting a language?

## Connect

- 
- What languages do you speak? What about your parents? Your grandparents?
  - If you know languages other than English, what are differences between English and those languages?
  - If English is not your first language, do you remember learning English? What was it like?
  - Is there anything you can say in one language that is difficult to say in another?
  - What are some words that describe things from nature—for example, birds, bugs, or berries—in another language? How do they compare to words for the same things in English?

## Create

**1 Write a list of verbs (in English).**

- Write in the “infinitive” form—that is, using “to.” For example: “To leap,” “to float,” “to hum,” “to smile,” “to cry.”
- Try to write at least 15 verbs.
- Don’t think too much, just write whatever comes to mind!

**2 Write down a list of nouns (also in English) that describe things in nature.**

- Try to write at least 15 nouns.
- Be as specific as possible. For example, instead of “flower,” write “dandelion” or “daisy.” Instead of bird, write “robin” or “dove.” You might also include nouns like “cloud” or “grass” or “river.”
- You might write down words for what you see in the environment around you, or words that happen come to mind.

**3 Now, connect verbs to nouns!**

- Without thinking too much, connect each noun from your list of nouns to a verb from your list of verbs. Change the verb to present tense, so that you form short sentences that look like this: “The grass hums.” “A dove smiles.” “A robin leaps.” “The river cries.”
- Don’t worry too much about what makes “sense,” and enjoy what happens when you experiment with new combinations of words.
- You should try to make at least 15 sentences.

**4 Choose your five favorite sentences and place one per line on a piece of paper.** You now have a short poem!

- Feel free to rearrange the lines or add or subtract words to edit your poem.

**5 Reflect**

- How might attaching the nouns from nature to verbs have affected the meaning of the nouns?
- Did any combinations of nouns and verbs particularly surprise you?

**Optional** Do the same exercise, but use a different language, or a combination of English and another language. How does changing the language affect the outcome?

# Archives

# Introduction

---

Throughout her work, Krista Belle Stewart engages with the concept of the archive. Specifically, she explores the way white settlers and Europeans have framed Indigenous and Aboriginal communities—through photographs, recordings, and other documents—without the communities’ own input or consent. This section invites you to explore archives as sites of organization, control, and potential resistance.

“How do we talk about these things? How do we move forward and think [about] and remember the past?”—Krista Belle Stewart

# Terms

---

**Anthropology** The study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture. In North America and elsewhere around the world, there is a harmful history of white anthropologists framing the practices and traditions of Native peoples through a colonial lens, a practice many anthropologists today are working to remedy.

**Archive** A place in which public records or historical materials (such as documents) are preserved, or a collection of historical documents or records. The etymology (or, history) of the word “archive” is as follows: from Late Latin *archivum* (plural *archiva*) meaning “written records,” also the place where they are kept, from Greek *ta arkheia* meaning “public records,” plural of *arkheion*, “town hall, public building,” from *arkhe* meaning “government,” literally “beginning, origin, first place” (verbal noun of *arkhein* meaning “to be the first”).

**Document** An original or official paper relied on as the basis, proof, or support of something. Documents might include photographs, sound recordings, and pieces of writing.

**Indigeneity\*** Indigeneity is tied to land and place. The term “indigenous” recognizes this connection of being from and belonging to the land. Indigeneity, as a term to describe Native populations, is created as an identity when there is a second group that enters the space, such as colonialists occupying already occupied land.

\*For more about Indigeneity, see the section titled Land.

**Indigenous Peoples** Also referred to as First Nations or Aboriginal Peoples in Canada, or Native Americans in the United States, people who are directly descended from the inhabitants of a particular geographic region before these places were occupied by foreign governments and populated by settlers. In many cases, they maintain the language and culture of the peoples who were present before settlement, and at the same time, are active and full members of contemporary culture. Though all the above terms may be used, it is always preferable to use the name of the specific Native Nation or Tribe. The US government officially recognizes 574 Indian Tribes in the contiguous 48 states and Alaska, but it is important to remember that there are many unrecognized tribes as well. These tribes presently include approximately 2.5 million people,

# Terms

---

descendants of the 15 million Indigenous people who once lived here.

**Settler Colonialism** The continued occupation, exploitation, and destruction of land and its resources (traditionally stewarded by Indigenous Peoples) by settlers. In the United States, settler colonialism began in the 17th century and has taken place through hundreds of years of oppression, genocide, and forced cultural assimilation and erasure. Settler colonialism is perpetuated by structures of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, racism, and capitalism, and can appear in various ways in each of our lives.

# Connect

---

- What do you think of when you hear the term “archive”?
- Why might a person or group of people want to create an archive?
- What might be included in or excluded from an archive?
- Who controls archives?
- What are some possible relationships between archives and power?
- What are some possible relationships between archives and settler colonialism?
- The word “archive” can be traced to the Greek *arkhein*, meaning “to be the first.” How might this understanding of “archive” intersect with the history of archives in relation to Indigenous people and the fact that they were here first?
- How might it feel to have an image of a family member in the archive of a scientist or anthropologist—and to have that image scrutinized?
- How might it feel to have assumptions made about that family member and your culture, which don’t acknowledge their personhood?
- What types of things might archives be composed of?
- What might be the relationship between museums and archives?
- Do you think an archive can be revised or transformed over time? If so, how?
- Do archives last? Should they last?
- Krista Belle Stewart believes the land is an archive. How might the land be like an archive? What does it contain?



Map a personal or family story onto an archived moment from history.

## Goals for this Create

---

- To learn about different types of archives
- To consider power and authority in relation to archives
- To consider objectivity and subjectivity in relation to archives
- To explore a specific moment of history
- To explore how your personal or family history might intersect with that historical moment
- To practice storytelling through images and words

## Materials

---

A piece of paper or small posterboard, scissors, glue, writing implements. A printer or photocopier, if possible. Access to *Historic Pittsburgh*, an online archive hosted by the University of Pittsburgh Library System, at [historicpittsburgh.org/collections](http://historicpittsburgh.org/collections) (preferable), or access to any other archive.

**Optional** photographs of family members, acquaintances, or yourself to compare to the historic photographs.

## Terms

---

**Documentary** A movie or a television or radio program that provides a factual record or report.

**Docu-Drama** A dramatized television program based on real events.

**Objectivity** Expressing or dealing with facts or conditions without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations.

**Residential School System** In Canada, the “Indian residential school system” was a network of boarding schools for Indigenous peoples. Attendance was mandatory from 1894 to 1947. Funded by the Canadian government’s Department of Indian Affairs and administered by Christian churches, the schools served to isolate Indigenous children from the influence of their own native culture and religion in order to assimilate them into the dominant Canadian culture. Over the course of the system’s more than hundred-year existence, around 150,000 children were placed in residential schools nationally. By the 1930s, about 30 percent of Indigenous children were believed to be attending residential schools, and it is believed that from 3,200 to over 30,000 children died in the system.

Similarly, in the United States, from the 1860s through the beginning of the 20th century, Indian boarding schools were created to indoctrinate Indigenous children into white American culture. On top of separating them from their families and communities for long periods of time, the schools forbade the children from speaking their tribal languages, required them to wear American-style dress and hairstyles, and encouraged them to abandon their native religions for Christianity.

**Subjectivity** Expressing or dealing with personal views, experiences, or feelings.

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada** A series of public and private hearings established to provide those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Canadian residential school system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences. The commission was active across Canada between 2008 and 2015.

## Look

---

Watch the excerpt from Stewart’s video *Seraphine: Her Own Story* (2014) on the artist’s website [kristabellestew.art/seraphine-seraphine](http://kristabellestew.art/seraphine-seraphine). The artist’s mother, the first Aboriginal public health nurse in British Columbia, was the subject of a docu-drama shown on Canadian network television in 1967 about the Residential School System. Almost 50 years later, in 2013, she gave personal testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Vancouver, Canada, speaking about her experience of the school system in her own words. In *Seraphine: Her Own Story*, Krista Belle Stewart juxtaposes these two accounts of the “same” experience, with the docu-drama on the left, and a video of her mother’s testimony on the right.

- Compare what is happening on the right screen to what is happening on the left screen.
- What are some similarities and differences?
- Who is telling the story on the left? Who is telling the story on the right?
- How might the speaker of the story affect its content?
- Why might Stewart have chosen to juxtapose these two documentaries?
- How does this work make you feel?

## Connect

---

What do you think of when you hear the term “documentary”? Is a documentary ever objective? Why or why not? What about a document, or an archive?

## Create

---

### 1 Spend time exploring the archive of Historic Pittsburgh (on the Historic Pittsburgh website, available in Further Resources) or another archive.

- Are you drawn to any specific archive? What about this archive particularly interests you?
- Choose a single archive to search and select a particular image, moment, or event.
- Write down notes about what you see, including:  
What do you notice about this image, moment, or event?  
What might you know about it already?  
Who might be included or excluded from this image, moment, or event?  
What questions do you have about it?  
What more can you find about it?

### 2 Explore how your own experience, or the experience of a family member or acquaintance, might compare or contrast with the historical moment or event as it is depicted or portrayed in the archive.

- For example, maybe someone you know experienced this moment in history, and has their own story to tell about it. If so, see if you can interview the person.
- Or maybe you want to compare and contrast an experience from your own present life to an event from the past. If you were to choose one of the “Pittsburgh Public Schools Photographs” on the Historic Pittsburgh website, for example, you might compare your own experience of school to what you notice happening in the image, exploring who is represented in the classroom, what they are wearing, what the room looks like, and other differences between “now” and “then.”

### 3 Reframe the moment from the archive from a subjective point of view—either your own or someone else’s.

- For example, if you are focusing on the Pittsburgh Public Schools archive, you could write about how a family member or acquaintance experienced Pittsburgh public schools at the same time in history, or your own experience of Pittsburgh public schools today.

### 4 If possible, find an image of yourself or your family member or acquaintance to compare with the moment as depicted by the archive.

### 5 Create a visual map showing two versions of history:

- Gather documents from the archive (by printing them

out if possible) as well as your own (or family members’ or acquaintances’) documents. These might include photographs, handwritten or typed accounts, interview transcripts, or more. If you don’t want to use original documents, consider photocopying them.

- On a large piece of paper or posterboard, arrange and paste documents from the archive on the left and the more “personal” documents on the right.
- You might think about ways to visually distinguish the “historical” documents from the “personal” documents—for example, by presenting the left-side documents in black-and-white or in type, and by presenting the right-side documents in color and handwriting. How might visual cues affect the viewer’s interpretation of the works?

### 6 Reflect

- How does placing personal documents next to more “official” documents affect your understanding of a moment or event from history?

Create a zine in which you archive something important to you.

## Goals for this Create

---

- To understand how archives are created and how archivists decide what is included and excluded.
- To practice taking photographs, considering composition
- To create a “zine”

## Materials

---

Pieces of blank computer paper (at least two), camera (cell phone is fine) and a way to upload and print your photos, scissors, glue, pens, and stapler.

**Optional** Backdrop for your photos, such as a sheet or piece of posterboard; photocopier; old magazines.

## Terms

---

**Edition** The total number of copies of a book, newspaper, or other published material issued at one time.

**Publisher** A person or company that prepares and distributes books, journals, music, or other works. Zines are usually self-published by individuals or small groups.

**Zine** Short for “magazine,” a self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images, usually reproduced via a copy machine.

## Connect

---

- An archive is a collection of documents, often preserved for future use. What might be the relationship between collecting something—for example, stamps—and archiving your collection? Does creating an archive add value to the collection? Why or why not?
- If you were to archive something important to you, what might that be?

## Create

---

- 1 Choose something in your environment that you would like to archive.** It might be anything from photographs to shoes to plants to favorite recipes or books.
- 2 Think about how you might organize the archive.** What might you include and exclude? Why?
- 3 Take photos of the objects.**
  - Think about the way you photograph them. What backdrop will you use? Will they be in their “natural” surroundings? For example, you might photograph bits of trash that you find on the sidewalk and make an “archive” of human debris.

**4 Print the photos.**

**5 Stack your two-or-more pieces of paper together and fold them in half so that you have a “book” shape.**

**6 Staple them at the seam.** You should now have eight blank pages, including a front cover and back cover.

**7 Begin to arrange your photos within the pages.** Think about what order will you present them in and why? For example, if you are archiving shoes, you might have sneakers on one page and other leather shoes on another, etc.

**8 Feel free to add text and drawings.** What might you label your objects?

**9 Think about what you will put on the cover.** You might make a title using letters cut out from magazines.

**10 Think about how you would like to “sign” your zine.** Zines often have “publishers.” Do you have a “publisher” name?

**11 Optional**

Photocopy your zine so that you have multiple copies.

- Give each copy an “edition” number. For example, if you make 10 copies of your zine, you could edition copy as “#1 of 10,” “#2 of 10,” etc.
- Trade them with classmates and friends.

**12 Reflect**

How might archiving your collection have affected its importance to you? To others?

# Performance

# Introduction

---

Much of Stewart's work includes elements of performance. This section invites you to consider performance as an art form, including why an artist might choose to communicate this way and how it might be an act of offering, refusal, or something in between.

## Terms

---

**Performance Art** Artworks that are created through actions performed by the artist or other participants, which may be live or recorded, spontaneous or scripted.

## Connect

---

- What do you think of when you hear the term “performance”?
- What are some types of performance?
- Why might an artist choose performance as a medium?
- Does performance require an audience? Why or why not?
- Should a performance be documented or archived? Why or why not?

# Self-Expression through Performance

# Create #1

A performance around the theme of offering and refusal.

## Goals for this Create

- To consider different types of performance
- To consider the role of performer(s) in relation to audience
- To practice different forms of expression, including self-expression
- To think about the role of documentation, or its absence, in art

## Materials

None required, but you are welcome to use anything you might need to perform—including your own voice, a set of costumes, or a recording device such as a phone.

## Terms

**Anthropology** The study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture. In North America and elsewhere around the world, there is a harmful history of white anthropologists framing the practices and traditions of Native peoples through a colonial lens, a practice many anthropologists today are working to remedy.

**Offering** Something presented as a gift or contribution

**Refusal** The act of showing unwillingness to do, give, or allow something. In the context of Indigeneity, and as a concept developed by scholar Audra Simpson, it means refusing to be a spectacle for anthropologists, researchers, or people outside of familial or cultural circles.

**Spectacle** Something exhibited to view as unusual, notable, or entertaining.

## Look

“It’s not for them, and that’s okay.” —Krista Belle Stewart

“Refusal, and stances of refusal...are attempts to place limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits, what is not up for grabs or discussion, what is sacred, and what can’t be known.” —Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang



Installation view of Krista Belle Stewart, *Potato Gardens Band*, 2022, Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim; photo: Roman Mensing

This picture shows an image from Stewart’s ongoing project *Potato Gardens Band*. For each version of the project, Stewart incorporates the voice of her great-grandmother as recorded in 1918 by anthropologist James Alexander Teit. On the recording, Stewart’s grandmother is accompanied by members of her band playing jaw harp and tin whistle. For a performance in 2018 at Vancouver’s 221A Gallery, Stewart played her grandmother’s voice back to her ancestral land through a speaker system, but only her family members were present on the land during the performance. The gallery visitors heard a distorted version of the original recording, transmitted via live feed. To Stewart, this act of distortion was intentional, a gesture of what she calls “refusal.” Given the long history of exploitation and appropriation of Indigenous culture, withholding becomes a form of power.

You can watch a video of the 2018 iteration of the performance, available in Further Resources or here: <https://vimeo.com/434042911>

- What do you notice about this work? What intrigues you about it? What questions do you have about it?
- While the “performance” was audible to Stewart’s family members, the audience, watching a live feed at a gallery, couldn’t hear it very well, and the image quality was low. Why might Stewart have chosen to transmit the performance in this way?

- Refusal, in the context of Indigeneity, is a concept developed by scholar Audra Simpson. It is a form of resistance, or refusing to give anthropologists, scholars, or anyone outside of familial or cultural circles access to knowledges that might be used to further exploit, fetishize, or claim ownership over Indigenous Peoples. In what ways might Stewart's performance be an act of refusal?
- How might you feel about not having access to an artwork that is not intended for you?
- How might it feel to be displaced from the center of focus or meaning?
- Who might Stewart's performance might have been "for"?
- In what ways might this work be like an offering?

## Connect

---

- What do you think of when you hear the term "offering"? What are some types of offering?
- What do you think of when you hear the term "refusal"? What are some types of refusal?
- In what contexts might offering something be powerful? In what contexts might refusing something be powerful?
- Given the way the lives and cultural traditions of Indigenous Peoples have been turned into spectacle by colonizers and people outside their communities, including anthropologists, why might Indigenous People's decision to keep aspects of their cultural and familial lives private be important?
- How might the themes of offering and refusal relate to performance?

## Create

---

- 1 Create a performance around the themes of offering and refusal.** Consider:
  - How will you incorporate these themes? For example, a performance around "offering" might include offering an expression of yourself or a gift to someone else. A performance around the theme "refusal" might include keeping something of yourself or your culture private.
- 2 Think about the form your performance will take.**
  - A dance? A song? A whisper? A play?
- 3 Think about who your performance is for.**
  - It might be just for you! Or maybe there is something or someone you wish to honor or call attention to.
- 4 Will you perform in front of an audience?**
  - Your audience might include a grandparent, a pet, or even the wind!
- 5 Consider where your performance will take place.**
  - You might perform in a physical location, like school or a backyard, or you might perform on video or over the phone.
- 6 Carry out your performance, in whichever way you see fit.**
  - Feel free to perform just once, or many times.
- 7 Optional**

Document the performance in some way—by taking photographs, recording sound or video, or writing about it.
- 8 Reflect**

Write about what it was like to perform your piece or share about your experience with classmates or friends.

  - How did performing make you feel?
  - What worked well for you? Is there anything you might have done differently?
  - If you chose to document your performance, what it was like to create a record of it? If you chose not to document your performance, how did this decision affect your experience?

Land

Archives

Performance