

사랑니 출산기  
Give Birth  
Love Tooth

*Art Action Earwig*



사랑니 출산기  
Give Birth  
Love Tooth

*Art Action Earwig*

APRIL 29 *to*  
JUNE 25

---

# *Introduction*

*Give Birth Love Tooth* is a collaborative multimedia exhibition by Nanaimo-based collective Art Action Earwig, composed of Minah Lee, Wryly Andherson, and Tadafumi Tamura. This project started with a story about wisdom teeth, 사랑니, meaning Love Tooth in Korean.

The artists begin the story, an autobiographical documentary-fiction, as follows:

“On That Woman’s 38<sup>th</sup> birthday, That Woman is reminded that her single mother was 38 when she gave birth to her. Her molars gain unusual abilities to express willfully forgotten and silenced memories of That Woman’s body; lost labour, language barriers, legal struggles, and longing for love.”

Expanding from this introduction *Give Birth Love Tooth* features a 4-channel video installation of story-tellers’ conversations with Art Action Earwig, integrated with animation. The exhibition also includes large print photos, sculptural installations, a projection with solar powered surround sound, interactive displays, and an artbook that combines shared stories of family, history, and lands. A series of performances and events in the community will complement the exhibition.

*Give Birth Love Tooth* is the fifth exhibition through which Nanaimo Art Gallery asks the question, *What stories do we tell?*

# *The Wisdom of Our Relations: in conversation with Art Action Earwig's Love Tooth*

—LISA COOKE RAVENSBERGEN

ANISHINAABEMOWIN LANGUAGE CONSULTANT:  
KIKEKOONS/ LEE BENSON NANIGISHKUNG

## **AYA DA MUN** *what we see*

I walk along the beach at Neck Point. The pebbles on the beach roil under each step; they chitter and clack like tiny teeth. They remind me that this land has always spoken for itself. They remind me that the land, the water, the sky don't need us and in fact, are probably better off without us. They remind me that we don't need to know a language to feel connection.

They say

*I*

*am*

*here*

As I walk, I hear echoes of the sound my father's teeth made when he'd take his dentures out and put them in his 'cleaning cup' every night before bed. I once asked him what happened, why he had almost no teeth. He joked about selling them and making a killing.

My mother later told me that no one took care of him after he got scooped up and by the time he learned how valuable his teeth were, it was too late and he didn't have the money to keep them so, he lost most of them. One by one.

We bury the things we don't want to remember, the stories of our shame, our hate, our fear, the smallness of our greed. We swallow the truth of our telling. But the land always knows and it always remembers.

**EZHA YA ING** *where it joins*

I was once asked by an Indigenous professor if I know my language and when I admitted I was not fluent and barely remember what I knew in childhood, I saw a mirror of my own disappointment in their face. I felt the burden of being less-than. All day. I spent the rest of the day in my colonized body, speaking from inside that bitter truth, all while secretly marvelling anew at how much loss weighs.

Weeks later, I spent hours listening to a room full of people speak Anishinaabemowin—my father's language. I witnessed my young child using our protocols correctly to introduce themselves in our language, doing it even better than me, to a room full of people

who mostly understood them and verbally acknowledged them in the way that only an Anishinaabe community does.

When they were asked where they learned to do that so well, they shrugged and started to say, “I don’t know” but then they looked at me and replied, “Just watching my mom and mishomis, I guess.” Later that night, someone asked me to decode the nuance of our language and the behaviour of our teacher as he spoke it, and without thinking, I did.

The giving nature of my culture humbles me. My child’s pride carves the word “Hope” inside my heart’s shadow. As I remember these moments and others like them, they link inside my bones, as part of my culture holds me exactly where I am and reminds me that as much as I am lacking and displaced and dispossessed and absorbed into the sounds and rhythms of my mother’s people and the O’siems of my Coast Salish relations, my belonging is a path I choose as much as I am chosen by.

## **GINOOMDIZEEN MIIGWETAA DOOMOOSHTOON**

*what we don’t see but feel*

We acknowledge land as a way to recognize the blood lines that tie us to a place. It is an older practice than most realize. It is not

about taking, it is about arrival; it is a way to acknowledge how we have arrived in another's territory and who we are representing during our stay. We speak our relations to demonstrate that we understand our responsibility to our families and our community—to be a good visitor, conducting ourselves in a Good Way. We acknowledge the bones of the ancestors that lie alongside the oldest bones of this place. We speak our names and our language bounces off the veneers of our lineage.

Aniin—Boozho. Gaawiin aapiji ninitaa-Anishinaabeosii. Ninga-gagwejitoon ji  
Anishinaabemowin: Gaamiinobimadizidikwe nindigoo Anishinaabemowin.  
Lisa Cooke Ravensbergen ndishnikaaz.  
Makwa nindoodem. Berens River nindoonjibaa. Vancouver nindaa.<sup>1</sup>

Among other things, I am an Anishinaabikwe, an Ojibwe woman. When I leave the coast to go home, I travel east. I source my bloodlines, feeling my way back to where I learned terror, resiliency, and how to survive. There, where I fell in love with ceremony, big skies, the wind, and learned to listen to trees. There, where I first spoke my language, where I watched stars fall and northern lights dance and the big drum claimed me. There, I left behind a future

---

1. Hello. I don't know how to speak my language—Anishinaabemowin—very Xwell but I am trying to speak it as best as I can. My spiritual name in Ojibwe is She Who Walks in a Good Way. (No pressure there.) My English name is Lisa Cooke Ravensbergen. I am Bear Clan. I am from Berens River. I live in Vancouver, BC.

that wasn't mine. Here, on this land beside the Salish Sea is where I start—become—again and again, my child at my side.

We are layers of listening

*falling*

*into*

*stories*

When I was 7 years old, I had 11 teeth surgically removed. My wisdom teeth were removed when I was a teen. My mother kept them and when she passed them on to me many years later, I asked, "What am I supposed to do with these?" She replied, "Keep them safe." My teen recently had eight teeth removed including all four wisdom teeth. Their uprooted teeth, like mine, were gigantic. Holding them in my hand, they remind me of itsy inverted mountains or hot icebergs. As I tended to the eight gaping, bloody, mangled holes in my child's mouth, we wondered how long it would take to heal. How long would the blood flow? How long until this suffering would end? Steven Charleston once said, "How do we stay on the road to justice? We do one good thing, one right thing, one fair thing at a time." I tell my child to remember that their body, like the land, knows what it's doing; we can trust our fear or we can trust our hearts. Back at Neck Point, I hear the land speak its own name and I remember another Teaching from my father. I tell my Beloved even though he's heard it many times. My father taught



me that the stones are our grandfathers. My elder and language teacher, Mishiikenh (Vernon Altman) explained that stones are grandmothers, too, depending on how one identifies. Both agree that they are Ancestors, holding ancestral knowledge. Anishinabek teachings understand that the earth is our mother, that she is alive and the wisdom of stones is ancient; they are the bones of Mother Earth. Stones are the oldest knowing; they have been here the longest and have seen it all. All this wisdom buried in the gummy flesh of our mother. The beach is quiet and my footsteps disrupt the natural order for the sake of a momentary hoped-for kinship. A glimmer of white catches my eye and I reach down to uproot a sliver of shell worn by stone. "Look, a tooth."

# *Biographies*

## ***Art Action Earwig***

Art Action Earwig seeks creative ways to honour the lands and waters they live on—the unceded Coast Salish territories. They live and work on the lands of the Snuneymuxw (Nanaimo) and Snaw-Naw-As (Nanoose) peoples of Vancouver Island and the x<sup>w</sup>məθkwəyom (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Solilwətaʔ/Səlilwiltulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations of the Lower Mainland. Their work is also situated in South Korea and Japan where their members' distant homes and families are. Formed in early 2020 by founding members Minah and Wryly during the early days of Covid-19, they pursue art practices through gestures that resist colonial legacies. After a series of creative exchanges and discussions throughout the pandemic, in 2022 Tadafumi joined the team.

## ***Lisa Cooke Ravensbergen***

A tawny mix of Ojibwe/Swampy Cree and English/Irish, Lisa resides on unceded Coast Salish territory (aka Vancouver, BC). She is an award-winning multi-hyphenate theatre artist and scholar working across Turtle Island as a performer, play-maker, dramaturge, director, writer, teacher, and space-holder. Her work is rooted in Indigenous protocol, ontologies, and anti-colonial methodologies and is recognized nationally and internationally for its rigour and artistic excellence. She supplements her eclectic theatre practice and research with the delights of motherhood

and the challenges of self-produced works. Lisa is an Associate Artist with Full Circle: First Nations Performance and most recently, she founded the Maada'oonidiwag Canadian Anti-Racist Theatre Exchange, an IBPOC-centred resistance and anti-racist mobilization that focuses on disrupting the colonial project called 'Canadian theatre'.

## **COLLABORATORS BIOGRAPHIES**

### *Nancy Nguyen & Ntuthuko Mthombeni*, ANIMATORS

Nancy Nguyen is of Vietnamese descent, born and raised in Canada. She carries a Bachelor of Fine Art Honours from the University of Manitoba and is a freelance graphic designer. Nancy has strong interests in themes of Buddhism and currently practices ikebana (a Japanese art form of arranging flowers).

Ntuthuko Mthombeni was born and raised in South Africa. He studied audio & video production at Red River College in Manitoba and is a working carpenter. Ntuthuko has written, produced and performed live music as a way to navigate life as a story teller. Together they maintain a constant exploration of various mediums such as ink painting, photography, music & sound to express their shared values within this zeitgeist.

Nancy & Ntuthuko began their artistic journey in 2019 with their first collaboration on a music video called “Enter the Jungle”. They have produced songs, designed products and other forms of art together ever since.

***Deirdre Pinnock***, FIBER-ARTIST

Deirdre Pinnock is a talented Rug Hooker, passionate mental health advocate, aspiring entrepreneur, and self-identified ‘woman of colour’ based in Vancouver, BC. She is passionate about fusing different materials, vivid colors and therapeutic qualities into her work with a dash of playfulness. She is best known for her yarnbombing of positive and uplifting messages such as “be kind” and “you are enough” into public fences around the city as well as performs stand-up comedy about being Black in Vancouver. Her work also expands to hosting workshops, guest speaking on the issue of diversity through art, and her memorial pieces known as Hearts of Honour, which act as a living memory that allows families to grieve their loss. Courtesy of CTV, she is publicly known as the Vancouver Yarnbomber. The purpose behind Deirdre’s art revolves around self-healing and the empowering ability to battle through her grief, anxiety and pain. Deirdre also weaves the current political climate into her Fiberart and confronts the issues in a very whimsical and humorous way.

***Ayaka Yoshimizu***, RESEARCHER/PERFORMANCE-ETHNOGRAPHER

Ayaka Yoshimizu is an Assistant Professor of Teaching at the

Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia. Her research is concerned with the intersection of interracial sex, intimate labour, and transpacific migration. Currently, she looks at how the lives of Japanese sex workers involved in transnational sex trade from the turn of the twentieth century are (un)memorialized in archives and memorial sites in Canada and Japan. She also explores a decolonial and embodied way to remember their lives through performance ethnography. Ayaka teaches Japanese literature, films, and media; audiovisual translation; and transpacific histories and cultures.

### **STORYTELLER BIOGRAPHIES FROM LOVE TOOTH CONVERSATION WITH STORYTELLERS**

***Yi Chien Jade Ho*** 何宜謙 (she/they) is an immigrant settler who works as a teacher, researcher and PhD student in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University on the Unceded Territories of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Səlilwətaʔ/Səlilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) peoples. Before becoming a graduate student at SFU, Jade was a language teacher in various universities in Chetumal, Mexico. In her time as a grad student at SFU, Jade has been a community-based researcher at the Environmental School Project, which is a public outdoor elementary

school where learning happens entirely outdoors. Jade also teaches various courses including social and educational issues, curriculum theories and implementation, and philosophy of education. Outside of academia, she has been an organizer with Chinatown Concern Group, an anti-gentrification and anti-racism grassroots organization based in Vancouver's Chinatown, and the Vancouver Tenants Union. She also worked as the Solidarity & Social Justice Commissioner and Organizer at the Teaching Support Staff Union at SFU. Her doctoral work centers on developing a radical pedagogy of place through the lens of decolonization in cross-cultural contexts and the connection between place, land and identity in marginalized communities in Taiwan and in Vancouver. Growing up in coast of Taiwan and Belize, jade finds home in water and dancing her heart out.

**David Khang** is a visual, performance, and biological artist whose practice is informed by education in psychology, theology, dentistry, and law. David selectively imbeds these disciplinary codes into his work, to compose interdisciplinary languages that are communicated in visual, textual, and spoken forms. Through performance, David embodies these languages to interrogate social constructions—of gender, race, and interspecies relations—that are imbedded within dominant narratives of contemporary culture. By strategically employing non-native languages and code switching, David produces divergent and dissonant readings that re-imagine the poetic and the political.

David received his Bachelor of Science and DDS from the University of Toronto, Bachelor of Fine Arts from Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design, and MFA from UC Irvine, where he was the recipient of the University of California Chancellor's Fellowship. David concurrently completed UCI's Critical Theory Emphasis, for which he worked with Jacques Derrida, Fred Moten, and Gayatri Spivak. In 2004, Khang's thesis was chosen to represent UC Irvine at the Distinguished Master's Thesis Writing Competition (USA). Khang was a 2006–07 recipient of the Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance Art Award (Brooklyn, NY), and 2010 artist-in-residence at SymbioticA Centre for Excellence in Biological Arts (Perth, Australia). David has taught at Emily Carr University of Art & Design (2005–2016), and Goddard College (2009–2010). David was born in Seoul, grew up in Toronto, and currently resides in Vancouver, where he divides his time between art practice, dentistry, and finishing his studies at the Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia (2021).

***Emmanuel Moonchil Park*** is a filmmaker based in South Korea who was born in Toronto, Canada. His films *MY PLACE* (2013), *BLUE BUTTERFLY EFFET* (2017), and *QUEER 053* (2019) have covered wide-ranging topics with nuanced, thoughtful depictions of gender, social change, and power.

In 2013, he completed his first feature length documentary, *MY PLACE*, which documents his sister's single-motherhood and his family's

experience of reverse migration from Canada to Korea. MY PLACE (2013) has screened at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival (2014) and won multiple awards such as the Audience Critics' Prize from the Jeonju International Film Festival (2013), Jury Prize from the Seoul Independent Film Festival (2013), Audience Award from the Seoul Independent Documentary Film Festival (2013), among others. Blue Butterfly Effect (2017), another award-winning film was screened at Cinevolution Media Arts Society (Richmond, BC)'s DocuAsia Pop Up Screening 2017, curated by Minah Lee. His latest film COMFORT 보드랍게 (2020) is a richly layered, complex portrayal of KIM Soonak, a survivor of violence and so much more.

***Cecilia Point*** is a member of the Musqueam Nation and a political activist who stood for 200 plus days protecting her nation's ancestral burial site from development in 2012. Since then she has taken part in countless political actions advocating for human rights and the environment. Cecilia has also dedicated many years to cultural preservation in the field of Aboriginal cultural and eco tourism. She currently holds the position of Director of Finance and Administration for the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. She is a facilitator for reconciliation workshops with the Bright New Day organization, and has been designated a public speaker for her nation. She holds a Certificate in Business from UBC, supplemented with courses in First Nations studies, including ḥənqəmíñəm (the Musqueam language).



**Manuel Axel Strain** is a 2-Spirit artist from the lands and waters of the x̣ʷməθḳʷəỵəm (Musqueam), Simpcw and Syilx peoples, based in the sacred region of their q̣içəỵ (Katzie) and q̣ʷə:á:áʷə (Kwantlen) relatives. Manuel's mother is Tracey Strain and father is Eric Strain, Tracey's parents are Harold Eustache (from Chuchua) and Marie Louis (from nḳməp̣lq̣s), Eric's Parents are Helen Point (from x̣ʷməθḳʷəỵəm) and John Strain (from Ireland). Although they attended Emily Carr University of Art + Design they prioritize Indigenous epistemologies through the embodied knowledge of their mother, father, siblings, cousins, aunties, uncles, nieces, nephews, grandparents and ancestors.

Creating artwork in collaboration with and reference to their relatives, their shared experiences become a source of agency that resonates through their work with performance, land, painting, sculpture, photography, video, sound and installation. Their artworks often envelop subjects in relation with ancestral and community ties, Indigeneity, labour, resource extraction, gender, Indigenous medicine and life forces. Manuel often perceives their work to confront and undermine the imposed realities of colonialism. Proposing a new space beyond its oppressive systems of power. They have contributed work to the Vancouver Art Gallery, Surrey Art Gallery, the UBCO Fina gallery and were longlisted for 2022 Sobey Award.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. A very special thank you to knowledge-keepers: Dave Bodaly, Geraldine Manson, Patrick Aleck Jr., and Tami Hirasawa. We thank Nanaimo FoodShare, our community partner for the Toothsome Rice-balls event. The surround sound production for Root-In Routine was made possible with the support of Dolby Laboratories.

## **THANK YOU NANAIMO ART GALLERY**

Deep gratitude to Jesse Birch, Dana Gage, Aisha Hamis, Carolyn Holmes, Evan Hudson, Yvonne Vander Kooi, Mary Anne Molcan, Shane Phillipson, Aaramë Robillard, and Jennifer Stewart Pierce.

*What stories do we tell?*

© 2023

Nanaimo Art Gallery  
Snuneymuxw Territory  
150 Commercial St  
Nanaimo, British Columbia  
250.754.1750  
NanaimoArtGallery.ca

