

November 10 - December 16

apparatus for
the circulation
of Indigenous
voices and ideas
into the air

Duane Linklater

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Exactly three years ago, more or less, Duane and I were eating at Sushiyama. Over lunch, we talked about our shared strategy for navigating a city while traveling – via its record stores. Duane had just come from a shop a few doors down from the sushi place on Broadway, Scrape Records, where he had scored not one, but two different copies of Iron Maiden’s “Run To The Hills.” A single from the band’s 1982 album *The Number of the Beast*, “Run to the Hills” is narrative about Settler Colonialism and the genocide it enacted upon the Indigenous people of this continent. It starts off:

*White man came across the sea
He brought us pain and misery
He killed our tribes he killed our creed
He took our game for his own need*

“Run To The Hills” is but one example of many songs that have a cultural fixation with Indigeneity by non-Indigenous musicians (specifically in heavy metal, there’s Anthrax’s “Indians” or, my personal favourite in the sub-genre of metal songs about Indigenous people, Manowar’s “Spirit Horse of the Cherokee”).

Though much can be said about the problematic nature of an English metal band penning an anthem decrying the European’s arrival on these lands, Iron Maiden’s song holds, at the very least, some good intentions, which is more than can be said of some of the other popular songs that traffic in this territory, like Cher’s 1973 “Half Breed.”

Duane had picked up these two records as a part of an ongoing collection he was making. When in a record store, he would try to buy anything he came across with Indigenous content, whether that be music made by Indigenous artists or records that in some way reference Indigenous people or histories. This could mean buying a Buffy Sainte-Marie record or the Iron Maiden singles mentioned above. There wasn’t really a plan for this collection, it was more of an impulse, an idea, something like a daily practice through which he wanted to think about what it meant for these records, with these images and songs and ideas, to be circulating in the world.

Some months later Duane wrote me an e-mail. He had been thinking about these records and our conversation and proposed the idea of building a radio station. One of the first things Duane talked about in reference to the radio station was Wawatay Radio, a network of radio stations in Northern Ontario that

describes itself as “Ontario’s First Nation Voice.” Wawatay Radio is but one arm of the Wawatay Native Communications Society that also publishes a newspaper, produces television content as well as a website all in the service of connecting the 49 First Nation communities spread across Treaty 9. The radio broadcasts in the Oji-Cree languages of these communities, providing news, community announcements and call-in shows. For Duane, the radio presented a way to listen to his native language and learn and practice it.

One particular thing that stood out to me was how the radio made space for people in the community; a call-in show could feature an elder calling up to just tell their story, and, unlike the brief bits of news and information we’re accustomed to with CBC and other commercial radio station, no one was there to interrupt those elders’ stories. On Wawatay, callers talked as long as they wished, as long as they needed. As I learned about Wawatay, I started to understand it as a radio that listened as much as it told.

Treaty 9 was signed in 1905, with some additional Nations signing in 1929 and 1930. The treaty covers a large swath of the province of Ontario and stretches into a small corner of Northeastern Manitoba. While it would not be possible to write in any effective or intelligent

way about the Numbered Treaties in the space of this text, it’s important to be reminded of their history, motives, and what effect they had on the First Nations communities. The 11 Numbered Treaties were signed between First Nations and the Crown between 1871 and 1921. These agreements served the purpose for the Crown of legitimizing (in a Colonial legal sense) land claims and use, primarily for the purposes of building railways and establishing rights for resource extraction. In return, the treaties set aside reserves, outlined hunting and fishing rights, and provided monetary compensation and tools to First Nations communities. It bears reinforcing that the list of items that follows “In return...” should in no way, shape, or form be considered equivalent to the things that they were exchanged for.

One can think about the Wawatay Radio network as existing because of the Treaties. Whereas the Numbered Treaties largely set about to disrupt, cut off and otherwise isolate First Nation communities, the Wawatay Native Communications Society makes it its mission to link those communities together. Wawatay’s broadcasts across the Treaty 9 area set out to “serve their communities by preserving, maintaining and enhancing Indigenous languages and culture.”¹ Using radio, Wawatay does this in spite of Crown land claims,

using FM and digital broadcast as a communication tool that can work across wide expanses of geographic territory. Wawatay recognizes that in the ability to communicate lies great power.

Over the course of a couple of years, Duane and I would chat every now and then about music and records, about the radio, and the various ideas that extended out from it—how certain records can contain in them expressions and declarations of freedom, of sovereignty, of power and strength. Like how in late era Coltrane, there's this overarching sense of being “aware of” and constantly striving towards a “force for unity in life;” this belief in music as a means to uplift a people, “to inspire them to realize more and more of their capacities for living meaningful lives.”² Or the 1990s hardcore band Los Crudos' fervent declaration of Chicano pride in their songs, like “That's Right We're That Spic Band!!!”³ from their 1996 album *Canciones Para Liberar Nuestras Fronteras*—

That's right mother fucker were that Spic band!

You call yourself a punk?

Bullshit!

You're just a closet fucking Nazi!

You are bullshit!

You just do not understand us

Bullshit!

You just fuckin fear us

Bullshit!

We're that SPIC BAND

We're that SPIC BAND

Last year we bought a radio transmitter that Duane set up at home in North Bay. The idea was to let this project ferment, to slowly come into shape, on its own terms. For a while he'd be working towards one vision of the radio station, then, a shift would turn it in another direction, and then another. Somewhere in these shifts came the idea of EHEPIK Records.

Circling back to those first conversations Duane and I had around records, and how a record, like radio, can circulate far and wide. A record, like the radio, is also an apparatus that can circulate Indigenous voices and ideas out into the world. In tandem with the radio station, Duane proposed that the exhibition also serve as the platform to launch a record label, EHEPIK records, a label that would focus solely on releasing records by Indigenous artists. For the exhibition, EHEPIK would launch its first four releases. The first three feature contributions by individual artists—Oglala Lakota poet Layli Long Soldier, White Mountain Apache violinist Laura Ortman, and Cherokee/Muscogee composer and artist Elisa Harkins. A fourth record contains two songs by the band grey plumes,

which features Duane along with Alutiiq artist and choreographer Tanya Lukin Linklater and Navajo composer Raven Chacon. In the gallery, these four records function as content for the radio, but as objects, they function to disseminate some of the ideas and content of this project beyond the radius of the AM transmitter in the gallery.

Throughout all of this, one of the core threads that seemed to keep coming back was the Wawatay Radio model of making space. Through many conversations about what was going to be on the radio, who was going to be on the radio, the idea that held the most significance in the end was this notion of the radio being a space for Indigenous voices, not solely the voice of the artist. So, for the duration of this exhibition, Duane offers the radio station as a space for the Indigenous community in Vancouver to use freely and to broadcast their own songs, ideas, voices, poems, noise, jokes, complaints, grievances, readings, ramblings, and conversations.

The power and weight of this aspect can't be overstated. What does it mean to give space to others? It's an act of generosity, an act that favors listening over telling. In the gesture of making space, one acknowledges themselves to be a part of a larger whole, not one, but a part of many, a part of a community. When one gives space, it also functions as

way to acknowledge where power and privilege lie. Opening up the radio is but one small way to give power to others, and to work against the power and privilege held by governments, institutions and individuals.

—Pablo de Ocampo, Exhibitions Curator

1. Wawatay Native Communications Society mandate from <http://www.wawataynews.ca/about-us>
2. John Coltrane as quoted by Nat Hentoff in the liner notes for *Meditations*
3. For a quick introduction to Los Crudos, see this video of the band playing this song live, which includes an introduction by the band's singer, Martin Sorrondeguy, which succinctly outlines the band's political position: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa8bcDq9kbQ>

Artist Biographies

Duane Linklater is Omaskêko Ininiwak from Moose Cree First Nation and was born in 1976. He is currently based in North Bay, Ontario. He attended the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College in upstate New York, USA, completing his Master of Fine Arts in Film and Video.

Linklater's practice is concerned in part with the exploration of the physical and theoretical structures of the museum in relation to the current and historical conditions of Indigenous people and their objects and forms. These explorations are articulated in a myriad of forms including sculpture, photography, film and video, installation and text works. Additionally, Linklater initiated Wood Land School in 2011, a nomadic formless project that seeks, in each of its iterations, to center Indigenous forms and ideas in the institutional spaces that it inhabits. WLS currently inhabits the SBC Gallery in Montreal for the entire year of 2017 and will publish a new forthcoming collection of critical texts by various contributors emerging from an organized symposium in Vancouver 2016. WLS attended Under the Mango Tree in Athens and Kassel as a part of Documenta 14.

Linklater has exhibited his work nationally and internationally at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto (2015), Vancouver Art Gallery (2015), 80 WSE Gallery in New York City (2017), Institute of Contemporary Arts Philadelphia (2015), the Utah Museum of Fine Arts in Salt Lake City (2015), the SeMa Biennale in Seoul Korea (2016), and Documenta 13 to name a few. Forthcoming projects include a solo exhibition at the Eli And Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and new public art commission in Don Valley in Toronto Canada.

Duane has also received several prizes including the 2013 Sobey Art Award, a national annual prize given to an artist under 40 and more recently the Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award from the Canada Council for the Arts in 2016. Duane is currently represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver.

Layli Long Solider is an Oglala Lakota poet, writer and artist. Her writing has appeared in The American Poet, American Indian Journal of Culture and Research, PEN America, The Brooklyn Rail, and Mud City, among others. Her 2017 book WHEREAS was nominated for the National Book Award in the United States.

Laura Ortman (White Mountain Apache) is a Brooklyn composer, musician, visual artist, and hairstylist. Recently, she has completed her third solo album *My Soul Remainer*. She continually collaborates with artists, filmmakers, dancers and musicians from New York, New Mexico, Italy and Canada.

Elisa Harkins is a Native American (Cherokee/Muscogee) composer and artist whose work deals with the concept of “Performing Life”, in which the performance intersects with her actual lived experience. Tackling subjects such as adoption, enrollment, and the 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act, Harkins uses electronic music, sculpture, and the body as her tools.

Raven Chacon is an American composer and installation artist working in a variety of mediums. He is known as a composer of chamber music as well as a solo performer of experimental noise music. He is recognized as one of few Native Americans working in either genre.

Tanya Lukin-Linklater is an Alutiiq artist and choreographer, her performance collaborations, videos, and installations have been exhibited across Canada and internationally. She is compelled by relationships between bodies, histories, poetry, pedagogies, Indigenous conceptual spaces and Indigenous languages, and institutions.

Her work has been exhibited and performed at EFA Project Space + Performa, New York City, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Museum of Contemporary Art Santiago, Chile, SBC Gallery, Montreal, Western Front, Vancouver, Images Festival + Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, Remai Modern, Saskatoon, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, and elsewhere.

List of Works

1. *boys don't cry*

Digital print on hand dyed linen, 15' x 10',
2017.

2. *for grey plumes*

Framed digital print mounted to dibond,
16in x 16in, 2017.

3. *blues for the grasses*

Tarpulin, elastics, powder coated trap,
53in x 8in x 4in, 2017.

4. *apparatus for the dissemination of Indigenous ideas and sounds into the air*

Tripod, radio transmitter, hand dyed
snowshoes, tarpulin, fabric, string, stone,
tape, speaker, paint, wiring, dimensions
variable, 2017.

5. *for elisa harkins*

Framed digital print on dibond,
16in x 16in, 2017.

6. *for layli long soldier*

Framed digital print on dibond,
16in x 16in, 2017.

7. *for laura ortman*

Framed digital print on dibond,
16in x 16in, 2017.

8. *there's really only so much I can do and say*

4 framed digital prints mounted on
dibond, 28in x 38in.

All works courtesy of the artist and
Catriona Jeffries Gallery.



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