

## Film Title: Living Archives: Lorilee Wastasecoot (and Krystal Hunt)

**Film Synopsis:** This film introduces Lorilee Wastasecoot and Krystal Hunt (Naxnagam) as they explore the concept of curation within an Indigenous context. Throughout the film, we witness Lorilee carefully handling objects that are referred to as belongings from Indigenous ancestors. For Lorilee, cultural knowledge is embedded within the objects that are found and placed on display in museums and galleries, “Indigenous knowledge is embedded in things like baskets that we don’t get to know or hear about”. Lorilee explains that Indigenous cultures are constantly evolving, and the belongings she cares for offer meaning for who Indigenous peoples are today. Essentially, at the heart of Indigenous curation is respect for the living and non-living relationships these belongings have with Indigenous communities.

Lorilee Wastasecoot is the Curator of Indigenous Art and Engagement at the University Art Collections. She is an Ininew iskwew (a Cree woman), with ancestral roots stemming from Peguis First Nation and York Factory in Northern Manitoba. She curated major exhibitions, such as *We Carry our Ancestors* (2019) and *On Beaded Ground* (2021) and *Walking Thru My Fires* (2023).

Krystal Hunt/Naxnagam is from Fort Rupert/Kwagu’l and Namgis. She is a Collections Manager of Indigenous Collections at the Royal BC Museum.

**Keywords/Topics:** Curation as Caring for Ancestors, Traditional Names, Rematriation, Indigenous Knowledge, Land-Based Art Practices, Reclaiming Culture

**Word Bank:** Curation, Dentalium, Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Context, Land-Based, Provenance, Rematriation

### Word Bank Definitions

Word	Definitions
Indigenous Curation	Indigenous curation is often expressed by Indigenous-informed and Indigenous-led approaches to curating and showcasing Indigenous art, culture and heritage, emphasizing Indigenous voices, knowledge and perspectives. It can often be tied to Indigenous cultural sovereignty and self-determination.
Cultural Reclamation	Cultural reclamation is a process through which Indigenous communities, groups and Nation members seek to revive, recover and assert their cultural heritage, traditions and identities that have been suppressed through colonization and assimilation policies.
Dentalium	Dentalium refers to a type of marine mollusk shell, often called "tooth shells" or "tusk shells" due to their long, tapering shape. These shells have been highly valued by many Indigenous peoples across North America, particularly along the Pacific Northwest Coast, including First Nations in British Columbia. For these communities, dentalium shells were used as a form of currency and in trade networks, and they held significant cultural, spiritual, and symbolic importance. They were often associated with wealth, prestige, and spiritual power, and used in regalia, adornment, and ceremonial practices. While the term "dentalium" specifically refers to this type of shell, it's true that a variety of seashells were and are used in First Nations art and ceremonial life, although not all would be called "dentalium."
Indigenous Knowledge	Indigenous knowledge refers to the unique understandings, perspectives, beliefs and ways that Indigenous peoples have been in relationship with each other and the world around them. It's often understood to be a collective wisdom that has evolved over time, and that has existed prior to the arrival of settlers.
Indigenous Context	Indigenous content is the inclusion of Indigenous values, beliefs, practices, knowledge, materials and art within mainstream institutions.
Land-Based Art Practices	Land-based art practices refer to Indigenous approaches of working with traditional land to harvest and use materials for the purpose of creating art. Land-based art practices may also be inclusive of performative arts, such as dance and theatre.

Provenance	Provenance refers to the original existence of something. In the case of museums and galleries, provenance refers to where objects (also referred to as belongings) initially came from.
Rematriation	Rematriation is like repatriation although it involves more than the return of objects to their original roots. It is often considered a movement informed and led by Indigenous women and involves the assertion of Indigenous knowledge within institutions.

### Defining Curation as Rematriation:

For Lorilee Wastasecoot, curation means caring for the belongings in collections and the people who made those belongings. By building relationships and caring about these belongings Lorilee says, “These objects are alive, and they continue to teach and it’s really important that we reclaim that knowledge”. Indigenous artists took materials from the land, the knowledge they had from the land and created something beautiful and functional. This sentiment is gaining popularity amongst many Indigenous women who are committed to reclaiming their ancestral cultural knowledge through understanding the history and meaning of cultural objects that have been rediscovered and reclaimed.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

The resources provided below offer some knowledge about the practice of rematriation and the Indigenous curation of cultural objects and belongings.

- 1) Gray, Robin R. R. "Rematriation: Ts'msyen Law, Rights of Relationality, and Protocols of Return." *Native American and Indigenous Studies*, vol. 9 no. 1, 2022, p. 1-27. *Project MUSE*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/nai.2022.0010>.
- 2) Igloliorte, H., & Taunton, C. (Eds.). (2022). *The Routledge Companion to Indigenous Art Histories in the United States and Canada* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/10.4324/9781003014256>
- 3) Parent, A., Robinson, B., Stephens, E., Robinson, A., Leeson, D., Schober, T., Filion, B., Giblin, J., & St Clair Inglis, C. (2023, April 27). Ni'isjoohl Memorial Pole Rematriation Panel Discussion 02 22 2023 [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/821845250?share=copy>
- 4) Supernant, Kisha, 'Archaeology of the Métis', *The Oxford Handbook of Topics in Archaeology* (online edn, Oxford Academic, 2 Oct. 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935413.013.70>, accessed 17 Mar. 2025.

**Overarching Questions:** In the film Lorilee poses a question: “How do we change our practices and ways of doing things to include Indigenous culture, knowledge, language into the work that we do?” How would you answer this question?

### Suggested Class Discussions/Questions/Activities:

1. How might the BC Royal Museum rediscover who made the belongings that can be found in their collections and archives?
2. How do the objects featured in the film demonstrate Indigenous history and cultural knowledge?
3. What do you think Lorilee Wastasecoot means when she says curation is about relationships? What relationships might she be referring to?
4. What do you think Lorilee Wastasecoot means when she says, “Indigenous cultures are constantly evolving?”
5. What are some examples of land-based art practices? What objects in the film are a result of land-based creations?
6. How are the reclamation of Indigenous belongings connected to cultural reclamation?
7. Why is the rematriation movement important to preserving Indigenous cultural knowledge?
8. What would you do if you found an object that looked like it held cultural significance?
9. What does Article 11, in BC’s Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Act, say about Indigenous peoples right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs?

**Teacher Resource Sheet**  
BC Curriculum Links – Kindergarten – Grade 5

<b>Kindergarten: Arts Education</b>	<b>Grade 1: Arts Education</b>
<p><b>Big Idea:</b> What sort of art can be created with the natural materials around us?</p> <p><b>Content:</b> What considerations should we have for the natural materials we find on the land?</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> <u>Reasoning and reflecting</u> Observe and share how the art we create from the land around us is part of a larger ecosystem that includes Indigenous caretakers of the land.</p>	<p><b>Big idea:</b> Objects and belongings that are displayed in museums and galleries tell stories about cultural knowledge.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> What stories do you think the objects/belongings you see tell us about Indigenous peoples.</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> <u>Communicating and documenting</u> Present your thoughts and ideas about the stories that these museum and gallery belongings hold.</p>
<b>Grade 2: Arts Education</b>	<b>Grade 3: Social Studies</b>
<p><b>Big Idea:</b> How might the materials (like shells and deer bone) used in Indigenous art tell us something about the cultural lives of Indigenous peoples.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Students explore how certain materials used in art tell us what the landscape was like before settlers arrived.</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> <u>Communicating and documenting</u> Look at what the land around greater Victoria may have looked like before settlers arrived. What sort of changes to the land might have impacted Indigenous art over time.</p>	<p><b>Big Idea:</b> Indigenous knowledge is passed down through oral history, traditions and collective memory.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Belongings/objects that are found on display at museums and galleries reflect the history of Indigenous peoples.</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> <u>Critical and reflective thinking</u> Compare the dates of the objects/belongings displayed with a historical timeline and consider what might have been happening with Indigenous peoples during this time.</p>
<b>Grade 4: Arts Education</b>	<b>Grade 5: Applied Design, Skills, and Technology</b>
<p><b>Big Idea:</b> How can institutions help Indigenous communities reclaim their cultural belongings/objects?</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Students explore the concepts of repatriation and rematriation.</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> <u>Communicating and documenting</u> Have students present their ideas on repatriation and repatriation.</p>	<p><b>Big Ideas:</b> Creating land-based art with the guidance of a traditional knowledge keeper.</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Working with a local knowledge keeper, students will become familiar with local protocols involving nature and natural items.</p> <p><b>Competencies:</b> <u>Applied design</u> Once students are familiar with local protocols, have them design and create their own land-based art based on their own understandings of relationship with land and personal stories.</p>

**Reading Material Suggestions:**

- Boreham, Brenda and Terri Mack. We Are a Community. From the Mountains to the Sea series. Strong Nations, 2015.
- Campbell, S. (2014). Cloudwalker by R.H. Vickers and R. Budd. *The Deakin Review of Children's Literature*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.20361/G2T898>

**Additional On-line Educational Resources:**

- [RBCM Indigenous Repatriation Handbook](#)
- <https://indigenousartscollective.org>
- [https://www.aci-iac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Norval-Morrisseau\\_Land-and-Indigenous-Worldviews\\_ACI-Teacher-Resource-Guide.pdf](https://www.aci-iac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Norval-Morrisseau_Land-and-Indigenous-Worldviews_ACI-Teacher-Resource-Guide.pdf)