

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contemporary Indigenous Activists illustrate the power of Art to disrupt and challenge the status quo

Aerial Blockade Banners from the 2018 Green Peace Trans Mountain Pipeline Protest on display at MOV beginning February 5th

VANCOUVER, BC – The **Museum of Vancouver** (MOV) is pleased to announce its newest feature exhibition **Acts of Resistance**, showcasing the artwork of seven indigenous artist activists from the Pacific Northwest, whose designs flew from the Iron Workers Memorial bridge on July 3, 2018 to protest the Trans Mountain Expansion Pipeline project. **Swaysen, Will George**, a Tseil-Waututh grassroots leader not only designed one of the featured banners, but also rappelled from the Second Narrows bridge as part of the seven-person aerial blockade to prevent an oil tanker from leaving terminal. In this exhibition, Will George will share his firsthand experience as a member of the aerial blockade in a video created in collaboration with multi-media artist Ronnie Dean Harris, whose artwork also flew in the path of tanker traffic.

"For more than a century, British Columbia indigenous leaders have been voicing concerns over loss of biodiversity and damage to natural environments while demonstrating their title to the land with visual culture. Today, indigenous activism and contemporary expressions of culture remain indistinguishable," says Sharon Fortney, Curator of Indigenous Collections and Engagement, "within days of this action, MOV approached Greenpeace about the possibility of exhibiting these vibrant symbols of indigenous resistance. For many months, the banners lay crumpled in plastic bags while in police custody, but in August of 2019 the museum was pleased to receive a donation of six of the banners from Greenpeace with consent of the artists who designed them. We immediately revisited our exhibition schedule to create an opportunity to showcase them."

Acts of Resistance features all seven of the 40-foot-long streamers created for the aerial blockade. Featured artists include: Brandon Gabriel, Will George, Ronnie Dean Harris, Ocean Hyland, Jackie Fawn Mendez, Marissa Nahanee, and Ed Archie Noisecat. Six of the banners have been donated to MOV, while the seventh is on loan from Swaysen, Will George, who continues to use his banner for public outreach. All of the banners underwent several conservation treatments to make them ready for exhibition, as the wrinkles from their time in police custody have proven difficult to remove.

"I will remain the fierce opposition. It is in my blood to protect the water. Our Indigenous right are being completely ignored, the safety of our water is being ignored, and most of all my son's future is at stake, says Swaysen, Will George, "I will do whatever it takes to protect the water and my family and your family."

Other artist activists like Marissa Nahanee of the Squamish Nation add to George's statements. "When Green Peace asked if I would be interested, I was humbled, and I did not hesitate for the opportunity. The concept for the Many Moons banner came from my roots of being a traditional Coast-Salish weaver," says Marissa Nahanee, Squamish Nation Artist and Activist, "as a designer, art as a form of activism is so important. The art shows our creativity, to stand together with Indigenous Nations, willingness to work with external partners such as Green Peace, Museum of Vancouver for recording

and honoring an important part of history, for the next generation to see peaceful ways of protecting our lands and the spirit of Chenchenstway (lifting each other up)"

The exhibition, which showcases all 7 of the banners created for this protest, will explore the ubiquitous relationship between indigenous activism and cultural expression. Visitors will be able to engage with the banners up-close and personal, as the banners will be suspended in an innovative way that guides visitors through a gallery comprised of fabric walls.

About Green Peace Canada

Greenpeace exists because this fragile earth deserves a voice. It needs solutions. It needs change. It needs action. Around the globe, Green Peace is standing up with communities, and holding governments and corporations accountable. Whether on the streets or at the ballot box, we hold the real power when we work together.

About Kwekwecnewtxw Coast Salish Watchhouse

Indigenous Coast Salish members, spiritual leaders and youth have erected a traditional "Watch House" as part of their ongoing resistance to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline. A Watch House, ("Kwekwecnewtxw" or "a place to watch from" in the hənqəminəm language, used by members of the Coast Salish Peoples) is grounded in the culture and spirituality of the Coast Salish Peoples. It is a traditional structure they have used for tens of thousands of years to watch for enemies on their territories and protect their communities from danger.

About Museum of Vancouver

The Museum of Vancouver connects Vancouverites to each other and connects Vancouver to the world. The museum's programs, exhibitions, and collections bring people together and inspire conversation about the future. The museum, an enthusiastic civic advocate, is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring a socially connected, civically engaged city.

Institutional Partners: City of Vancouver, BC Arts Council, and the Province of British Columbia

Partners in Reconciliation: Vancity, City of Vancouver Cultural Services,

Listing Information

Acts of Resistance

Dates:

February 5, 2020 – July 2020

Location:

Museum of Vancouver: 1100 Chestnut Street, Vancouver, BC

Website:

museumofvancouver.ca/acts-of-resistance

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