



TRIBECA
FILM
FESTIVAL

Unceded Territories

Created by Paisley Smith &
Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun
World Premiere | Tribeca Immersive
2019 Tribeca Film Festival

Unceded Territories

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Format: Interactive Virtual Reality
Language: English
Country: Canada
Run Time: 6 minutes

CONTACT

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Tribeca website:
www.tribecafilm.com/filmguide/unceded-territories-2019

LOGLINE

Unceded Territories is a provocative VR experience created from First Nations artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's iconic work, engaging viewers in an interactive landscape that grapples with colonialism, climate change and indigenous civil rights.

SYNOPSIS

Unceded Territories is an interactive VR experience where the audience creates a colourful natural world made up of acclaimed First Nations artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's iconic pop-surrealist art style. Through infectious interaction, the participant creates a beautiful, natural paradise. They experience freedom and joy and the satisfaction of control over this land. A Tribe Called Red provides the powerful music for the piece. Spirit Bear warns the participant of their parlous role in this new world. But it is too late. They are performing colonialism, draining the world of its resources. As the pulse of this world beats faster, they are increasingly faced with their lack of control. The wheel of environmental destruction has been set in motion. Evil Colonial Snake emerges, leaving a trail of bones behind him, and devours the audience in one gulp. Inside the psychedelic belly of Colonialist Snake the participant is faced to see the environmental chaos they have created.



Ovoid painting in progress at Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's studio

PAISLEY SMITH

Unceded Territories is a provocative interactive experience that harnesses virtual reality and the power of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's artistic practice. What emerges is a world that is both entertaining and political, made entirely out of Yuxweluptun's bold, surrealist style, dominated by the ovoid form. Yuxweluptun uses ovoids as an expression of his freedom as an artist, and "Ovoidism" is his own theory of conceptual art. Yuxweluptun's art activism makes the toxic realities of forest fires, poisoned waters, dead fish, spilled oil palatable. The VR participant is forced to question their own role in the real world, and recognize the need for change.

I have been working in VR's recent 'renaissance' creating immersive journalism and documentary works. While researching the history of VR art, I was astonished to discover that Yuxweluptun had created a pioneering work "Inherent Rights, Vision Rights" at the Banff Centre in 1992. My worlds – VR innovation, art activism – were uniting. My personal connection with Yuxweluptun and a deep fascination with the power of recent virtual reality innovations inspired me to create *Unceded Territories*. Where his pioneering '92 VR experience created a space "...where digital code becomes the medium through which Yuxweluptun's spirit-simulations begin to speak," *Unceded Territories* moves beyond the spiritual, into a not so subtle political and environmental confrontation. The powerful beats of A Tribe Called Red pulse through the experience and create an anthem for change. Together, we are invading your virtual worlds to assert indigenous aesthetics and rights – a rebellious, full-colour, fight against colonialism, environmental destruction and systematic racism.

— Paisley Smith

LAWRENCE PAUL
YUXWELUPTUN

“I have been a Blackface dancer eighteen years now, a masked dancer, a *Sxquxwey* dancer since I was fourteen. I have been able to draw from these native experiences, combining them with western world experiences and technology to make my work. Employing technology that has in past been used against native people. I create art to show people what is happening to me spiritually. Always, I create art to communicate with others, to let other cultures see things for themselves. To show my world, Indian World, to show that we do have a spirit, a place to go, so people will understand who I am as a west coast native person. “Virtual Reality” is very primitive at this point of evolution – it has its limits in visual resolution and the capabilities of the technology will change in years to come. At the moment, the piece consists of a white man’s mask, the “helmet,” as it is called by the computer program. A screen goes over your eyes covering part of your face, an electronic mask with an electronic-motion hand. You start to experience a new art form. As you look into the mask, the screen shows you a piece of artwork, computer-electronically stimulated into color. Sound can be brought in at the same time. I think this first mask will end up in museums just like other masks! Very primitive, with numbers on them, and the date they were made. You cannot hide the real history or even the censorship of native history, a colonial syndrome. You can hide the Department of Indian Affairs documents from the time of Confederation, but you cannot hide my paintings. They are are for all people to see.”

I wrote these words when talking about Inherent Rights, Vision Rights a virtual reality experience that invited audiences into the longhouse and to witness the spirit world. It was 1992. That was 27 years ago. The Indian Act is still in place and we have not made strides to improve climate change. Computers are now fast and can now hold more memories for others to experience. Paisley Smith and I have made Unceded Territories to force audiences to recognize their role in the destruction of the environment by having them embody the greedy, Super Predator. Are we that different than the pipeline executives sacrificing mother earth for their own wealth? We want you to think about these things, to feel our anger, and to fight for change.

— Yuxweluptun



Canadian First Nations artist, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (of Coast Salish and Okanagan descent) uses First Nations imagery and surrealism to explore environmental issues and indigenous civil rights. Paisley Smith is a Canadian Virtual Reality director using art and technology to foster personal reflection, and a deep connection with reality.

LAWRENCE PAUL
YUXWELUPTUN

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun is an advocate for contemporary indigenous issues in Canada. This is evidenced by his exhibition history and reception of awards, such as the Vancouver Institute for the Visual Arts (VIVA) award in 1998. Especially relevant to his practice are the elements of Coast Salish cosmology, Northwest Coast Design and the Western Landscape Tradition. Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, of Coast Salish descent, graduated from the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in British Columbia. Yuxweluptun is Salish for “man of many masks,” a name given to the artist during his initiation into the Sxwaixwe Society at the age of fourteen. Yuxweluptun’s political roots can be traced back to childhood. His father was founder of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs and Vice President of the North American Native Brotherhood. His mother was Executive Director of the Indian Homemakers Association of British Columbia. With his parents as role models, Yuxweluptun was involved in Native politicization, attending meetings, demonstrations, and mailing out copies of *The Native Voice*, the province’s first Native newspaper.

Yuxweluptun has chosen art as a way to voice his political concerns, exposing environmental destruction and the struggle of Native people. He believes that his artwork stimulates dialogue between Native and non-Native people.

PAISLEY SMITH



Paisley Smith is a Canadian filmmaker & virtual reality creator based in Los Angeles, California and Vancouver, British Columbia. She grew up on the Unceded Territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. Paisley Smith is the creator of *Homestay*, an interactive VR documentary produced by the National Film Board of Canada Interactive, with Jam3. *Homestay* has screened internationally at IDFA DocLab 2017, Expanded Realities at the Open City Doc Fest (London), Reel Asian International Film Festival (Toronto), and the Vancouver International Film Festival's Immersed 2018. *Homestay* won the BC Spotlight Audience Award at the inaugural VIFF Immersed Exhibition 2018.

Smith is the recipient of the 2018 Sundance Institute and Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Fellowship for *Unceded Territories*, with support from Creative B.C.

Paisley is a visiting artist at the University of Southern California's Interactive Media Division's Mobile & Environmental Media Lab, led by Scott Fisher. She is an admin of the thriving Women in VR/AR Facebook group.

Smith holds an MFA from the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, which she attended on a Fulbright scholarship. She received her Bachelor of Arts Honours in Film and Media Studies and Art History from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

A TRIBE CALLED RED

Bursting forth from Canada's capital, native Producer and DJ crew A Tribe Called Red is making an impact on the global electronic scene with a truly unique sound..

If you're an indigenous person living in a country that was forcefully colonized, it's all too common to find yourself underrepresented and misrepresented if not blatantly and systematically devalued and attacked. Positive role models and a positive self-identity are hard to come by, yet the Canadian DJ collective A Tribe Called Red is a modern gateway into urban and contemporary indigenous culture and experience, celebrating all its layers and complexity.

Looking to the future, without losing sight of their past, ATCR straddles a broad range of musical influences based in modern hip-hop, traditional pow wow drums and vocals, blended with edgy electronic music production styles. Currently made up of Bear Witness and Zoolman, ATCR first got together in 2008. They are part of a vital new generation of artists making a cultural and social impact in Canada alongside a renewed Aboriginal rights movement called Idle No More. In 2014, they garnered mainstream recognition when the band became the first Indigenous group to win the Breakthrough Group of the Year award at the Juno Awards (Canada's Grammys), and in 2018 they received the prestigious award for "Group of the Year."

A Tribe Called Red promotes inclusivity, empathy and acceptance amongst all races and genders in the name of social justice. They believe that indigenous people need to define their identity on their own terms. If you share this vision, then you are already part of the Halluci Nation. "We are the Halluci Nation."



CREDITS

Unceded Territories

CREDITS

Spirit Bear | Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun | Co-director, Artist
Paisley Smith | Co-Director, Writer

Patrick Weekes | Tech Director

Jason Legge | Producer

Ketsia Vedrine | Producer

Peter Denny | Producer

Dirk van Dinkel | Creative Director

Matthew Smith | Lead Developer

Nicky Thomson | Developer

Shaun Larkin | Creative Developer / Artist

Cliff Li | Developer

Andrew Guan | 3D Artist

Miguel Sastre | 3D Artist

Adrian Ellis | Composition & Sound Engineering

Kieran Wagstaff | Recording Engineer

Caitlin Conlen | Graphic Design

Roxanna Suarez | Exhibition Designer

(continued on next page)



Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun's *Christy Clark And The Kinder Morgan Go-Go Girls*

CREDITS, cont.

Music:

Stadium Pow Wow Feat. Black Bear | A Tribe Called Red

Sila Feat. Tanya Tagaq | A Tribe Called Red

Album: We Are The Halluci Nation

Special Thanks:

Stephen Foster | Director, Centre for Indigenous Media Arts | Advisor
Scott Fisher | Founding Chair of the Interactive Media Division
in the USC SCA, and Director of the Mobile and Environmental
Media Lab | Advisor

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Kamal Sinclair

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Guillaume Decouflet

Simon Anderson

The Sundance Institute

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Creative B.C.

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