
KAITLYN PURCELL (she/they) is a Dene-Irish artist, poet, and storyteller. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Calgary whose research meditates on recovery, ecology, community, and intergenerational survivance. It will be presented through multi-modal creative productions such as storytelling, poetry, visual, digital, and installation arts. They are the recipient of numerous awards, including a doctoral SSHRC award and the Metatron Prize for their debut poetic novella *?bédayne (Spirit)*.

KABLUSIAK is an Inuvialuk artist/curator who uses Inuk ingenuity to create work in a variety of mediums including, but not limited to, lingerie, soapstone, Sharpies, bedsheets, felt, and words.

Quyanainni to: Holly Nasogaluak Carpenter, Missy LeBlanc, Koji Naganawa, Josh Vettivelu.
Image of Tuktoyaktuk Cemetery courtesy of Koji Naganawa.

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WE CAN STILL FEEL
THEIR TEARS IN OUR HAIR

BY KAITLYN PURCELL

BEWARE

To the Indigenous people that may experience this space, please take care of yourself. We never deserved any of the pain that was passed down through being intergenerational survivors of Residential Schools. STAY OUT is written primarily to non-Indigenous people. PHOBOPHILIA is written to all my Indigenous relations across Turtle Island, and beyond.

STAY OUT

When asked to write this, I was in the process of reading and teaching Jordan Abel's latest work of autobiographical creative-research, *NISHGA*. After immersing myself in *Suviittuq!* ㄟ(ㄣ)ㄟ • *Can't be helped/Too bad!* ㄟ(ㄣ)ㄟ I couldn't help but notice how the space embodies Abel's contextualization of destabilizing reading practices. In *NISGHA*, Abel mediates on a settler's interpretation of his previous work, *Injun*, and how they were confounded by the experience of having to flip the book upside down to read sections of it. Abel responds to the confusion and anger that reader experienced and explains that those feelings should become an invitation to create "a dialogue about how this colonial writing has shaped and continues to shape us" (142). Abel states that the reader is "asked to understand and relate to an Indigenous experience and an experience of intergenerational trauma" (142). Kablusiak's *Suviittuq!* poses similar questions to all who experience it. How has the legacy of colonization informed and shaped your perception of the world? Can you begin to imagine what it would be like to carry the intergenerational trauma from Residential Schools, and to now finally have our reality recognized through the unearthing of these gravesites?

How do you begin to confront the histories of Residential Schools and Day Schools? How can you begin to confront the ways your positionality shapes your experience? Are you a witness? Do you carry lived experiences? What does it mean if you are only just realizing this trauma? What does it mean to have always known, and to have experienced the ongoing systemic violence and genocide of Indigenous peoples?

As an Indigenous person, and a survivor of intergenerational trauma from Residential Schools, the unearthing of these gravesites has been unsettling to say the least. I have lived my entire life in a state of what Abel calls the "shadow presence of Residential Schools" (140). When I look at *Suviittuq!* I see it shining on the same wavelength as Amanda Strong's *Four Faces of the Moon*. I see *Suviittuq!* with Jordan Abel's *NISHGA*. I see *Suviittuq!* in Tanya Tagaq's latest music video release for the single titled "Tongues". We lost so much, but we are still here. Existing in the absurdity of it all.

PHOBOPHILIA

Nonunion fractures.
This wrist injury
embodies my confusion.
Who am I? I've kept circling
back to this question
ever since I could remember.
A chattering of caws.
Follow the vibrations
and I look up. Above me,
a ring of crows trail a
brown-white speckled hawk.
They call together, calling in,
calling for—I'm prone to error.
We can't call this a conspiracy
theory anymore. We know
what you do behind closed doors.
This is a eulogy for the person I was.

If manifest destiny was built
on death and destroying,
when will we start building
through life and living?
Jupiter sits over the skyline
as caterpillars the size of
my middle finger explores
the riverside. Their name
is Sphinx Vashti, said someone.

Overcome with the collective
sadness and grief. It is impossible
to evade interconnectedness.
This reminds me of a dream
I cannot recall. Wading through

a house full of sand. Each movement
is connected to the other movements
everywhere. Existence is its own kind of prison.

Imagine if all these thoughts were happy.
Imagine if all these thoughts were power.
Looking to medicate my spirit, but
the city skyline is crushing me.
I wish pines and beds of sweetgrass
were here to give me your unsolicited advice.
Wouldn't it be nice to be healed?
The web of moss on the sandy paths,
purple luminescence leaves this river edge.
Mother stopped crying. She's here.

Everything exists in a state of polarity.
The only thing holding me lately is gravity.
Seven years of trying to come home to myself
but going the wrong way. I am meteoric
splitting across the earth's atmosphere.
There was so much there in the violet
healing clouds. A resolution. Lightning.
It's hard to wash it away. Last time I sweat
I was in a dark place. I'm in the subbasement
of my childhood home. Is that where I hid?
There are so many secrets here.

There is a body buried in the yard
and this young man with dark hair
is trying to dig it up because he feels
guilty and scared. I worry the neighbours
will find out. They keep coming over.
They're an older white couple that seems
pleasant. "Look this is just a hole for a pool
we're building." The older man says
that he also has a pool and would be happy
to come back to give us pointers. This house
has glass walls and seems very white.

After the couple leaves, the young man
keeps digging. The hole looks almost
coffin shaped. He keeps digging and
the blood and body are exposed.

I go to the bed and look at my phone,
opening the selfie camera—but I'm invisible.
I don't seem to exist. I just see the bedding
around me. There is a second young man
that appears, and he puts my smart watch
around my ankle. He says that it's okay
to wear it this way. Outside, I talk to the
older white man, and he says, "You need

to be more careful, or you'll get caught.
I have my own bodies too." He laughs.
Everything is dirty and I want to clean
but I am so tired. I just want my partner
to come back to help. Long distance
relationships are no way to be.

I am at a distance from the house,
and there is perfect tunnel
that extends underneath.
At the end of the tunnel
there is a view of the house's roots.
They are alive and
slithering like a snake pit.

Melamine plates serve anthrax
and colonial science. Dark salmon
under black tourmaline encrusted thoughts.
We can't be helped.
We sit at the dinner table.
I don't want what you feed me.
You hold me down with your wooden spoon.
They tried to take you from us.
We sit at the dinner table.
I don't want your food.
We sit at the dinner table.
We can't be helped.
It's easier to lie
because that's all they try to feed us.
The only way out is to scream for help.
Suviittuq!

I'm eleven years old.
My mom and two aunties
take me to a haunted house
at a Halloween festival.
At its finale, a tall man appears
with a chainsaw held above his head.
He starts running at us and
I'm surrounded by screams
as my aunty takes me
by my shoulders and
holds me in front of her.
All I can do is scream
and laugh.