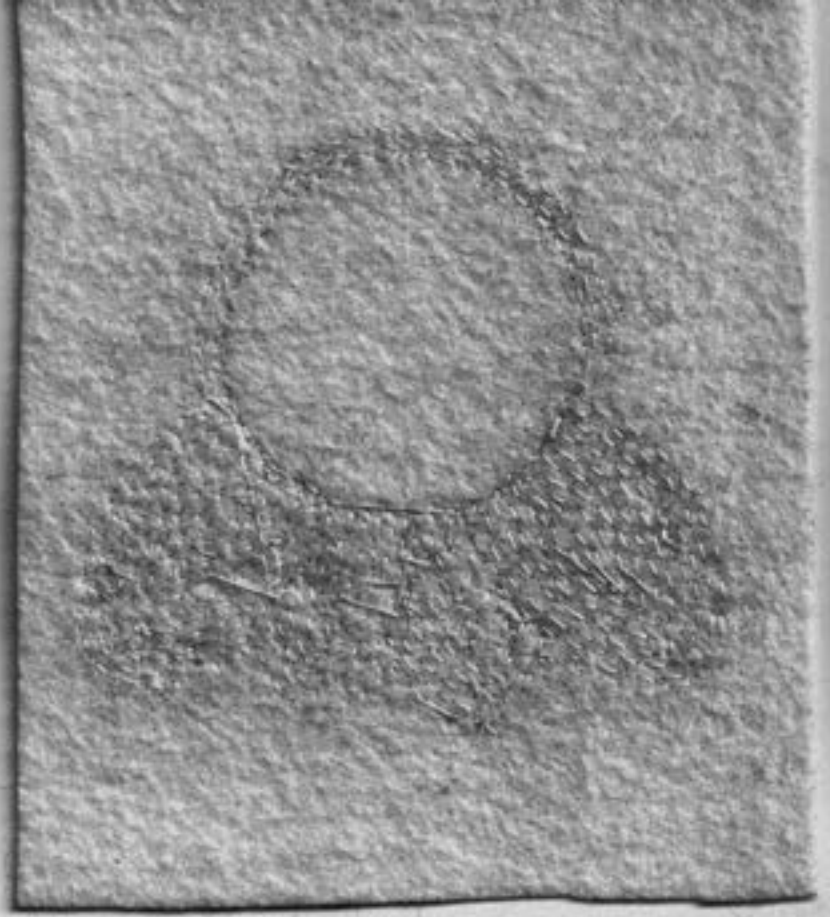




*cataclysm(s)*



***Perzines** are a genre of zines; the "per" meaning "personal". Although most zines could be considered personal in that they represent the opinionated work of one person, this term describes zines that are written about one's own personal experiences, opinions and observations. This genre has become increasingly popular within the zine community and is probably the largest used format for zines today. (wikipedia)*

The name of this zine is *cataclysm(s)* and was made by Whess Harman (Carrier Wit'at, they/them) on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people. They have resided there as an uninvited guest for the last ten years. This zine was made in Dec 2020 in response to the exhibition *Shimmering Horizons*, curated by Laurie White for the Canada Gallery.

The exhibition featured the work of Asinnajaq, Elizabeth Zvonar, Tania Willard, Marina Roy and Meagan Musseau.



The screenshot shows a YouTube playlist interface. The background is a repeating pattern of a blue bird with its wings spread, set against a dark, textured background. The playlist contains four video thumbnails:

- Thumbnail 1: A close-up of a character's face, with a duration of 6:39.
- Thumbnail 2: A character's face with a wide, toothy grin, with a duration of 0:46.
- Thumbnail 3: A character's face with a serious expression, with a duration of 0:25.
- Thumbnail 4: A character's face with a serious expression, with a duration of 24:39.

The playlist title is "Laughing Bull Bebop | Vaporwave". Below the title, it shows "47 views" and "1 video". The channel name is "Vapor Waves" with a profile picture of a colorful, abstract design. A red "SUBSCRIBE" button is visible in the bottom right corner. The video description reads: "From Cowboy Bebop, T.V series 1998-2003, with Vapor Wave music background". Below the description, there is a quote: "Laughing Bull. Know this Swimming Bird. This blue eye perceives all things conjoined. The past, the future, and the present. Everything flows and all is connected. This eye is not merely seen reality. It is touching the truth."



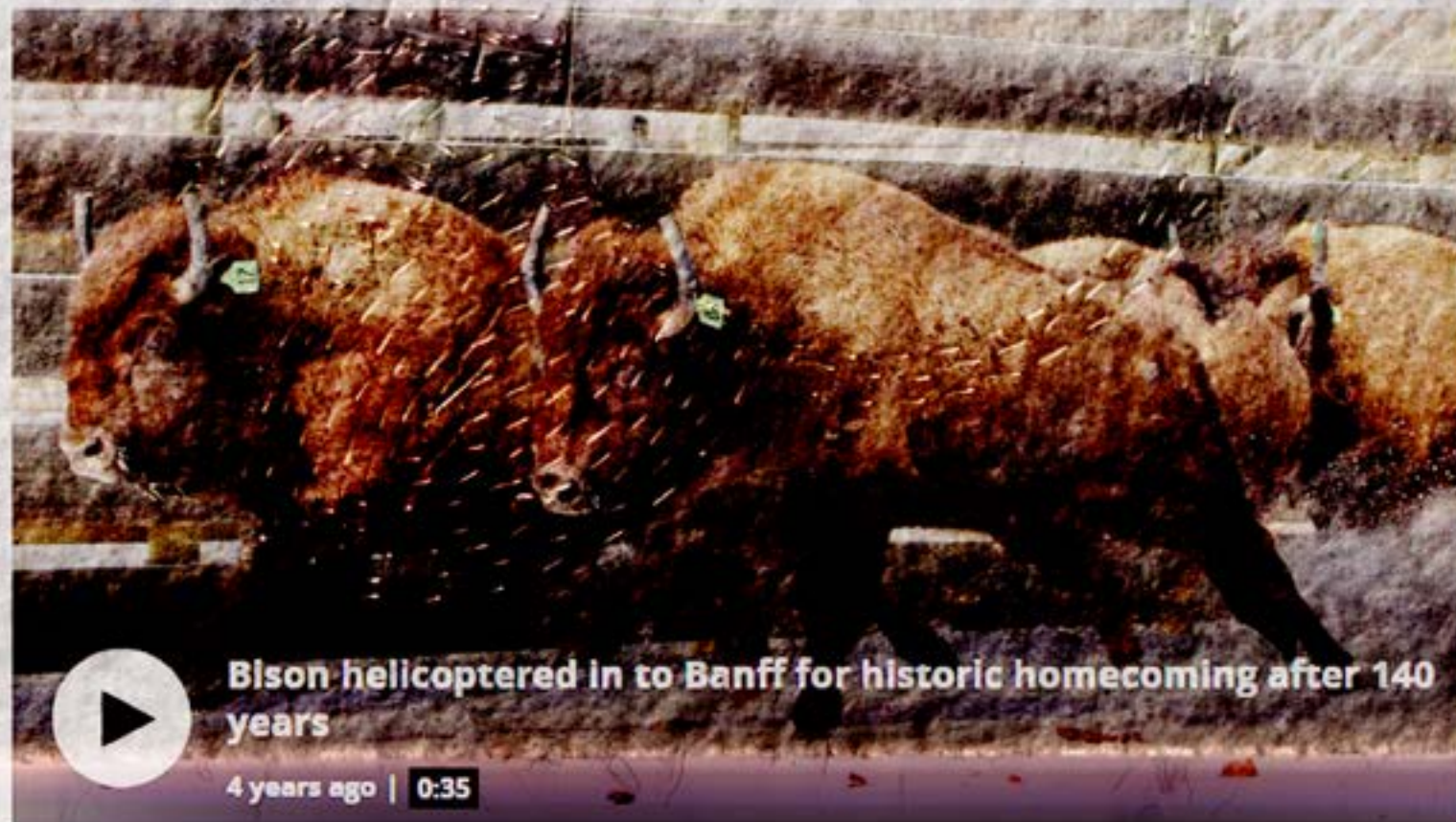
# Wild bison roam Banff National Park for 1st time in more than century



'It's one of the great days for wildlife conservation in the history of North America'

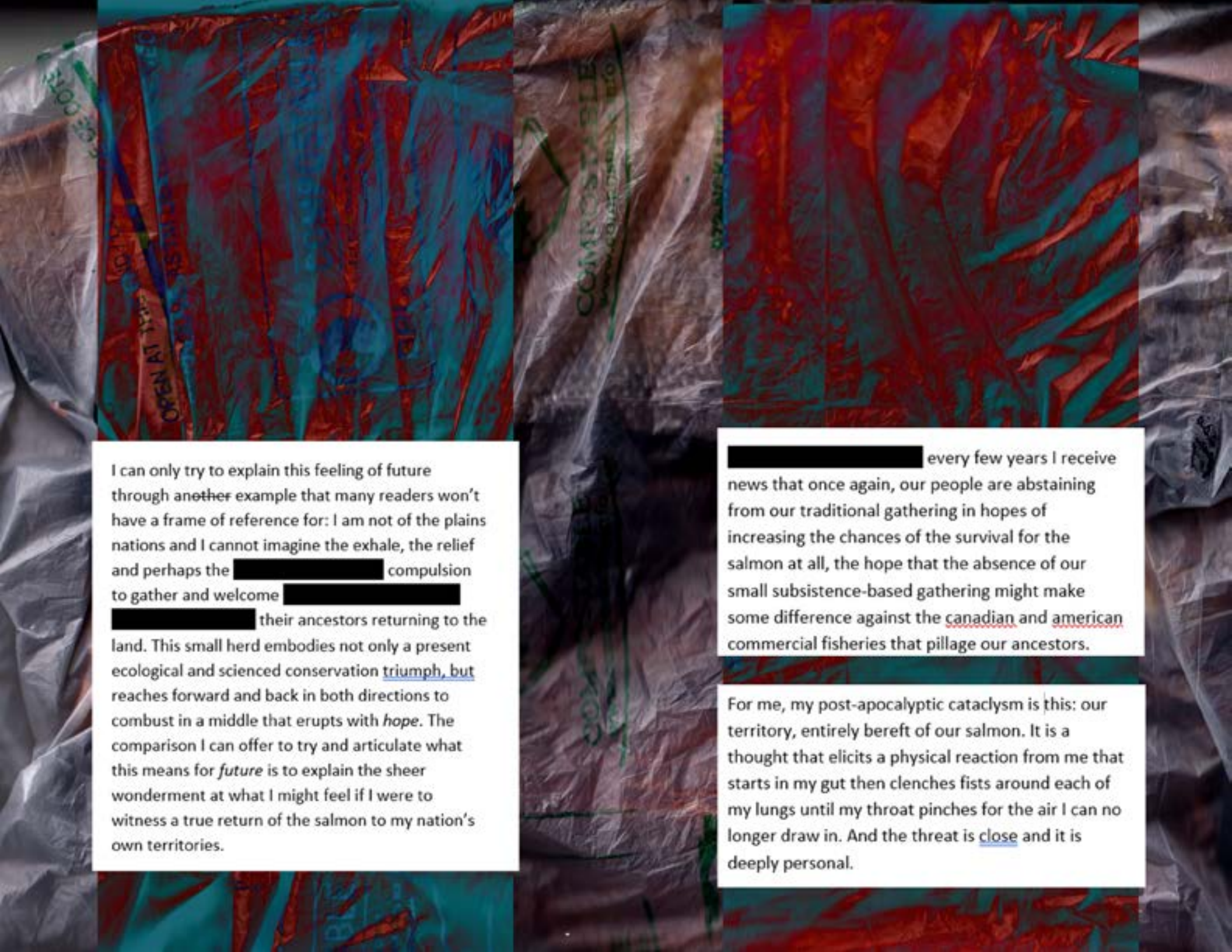
Lisa Monforton · CBC News ·

Posted: Feb 06, 2017 2:16 PM MT | Last Updated: April 25, 2017



Perhaps this is why, even though I am not Stoney Nakoda, Pikani, Kainai, Siksika, Ktunaxa, Maskwacis or Tsuut'ina, all Nations for whom the 2017 reintroduction of the buffalo to the Banff National Park would have been especially important, I was overcome at the news footage of those thundering, woolly ancestors touching the land with their hooves for the first time in over 140 years. Even in reviewing that footage now, years later, I'm quicker to cry than I am to remember what I'm trying to tell you about Indigenous futures in this zine.





I can only try to explain this feeling of future through another example that many readers won't have a frame of reference for: I am not of the plains nations and I cannot imagine the exhale, the relief and perhaps the [REDACTED] compulsion to gather and welcome [REDACTED] their ancestors returning to the land. This small herd embodies not only a present ecological and scienced conservation triumph, but reaches forward and back in both directions to combust in a middle that erupts with *hope*. The comparison I can offer to try and articulate what this means for *future* is to explain the sheer wonderment at what I might feel if I were to witness a true return of the salmon to my nation's own territories.

[REDACTED] every few years I receive news that once again, our people are abstaining from our traditional gathering in hopes of increasing the chances of the survival for the salmon at all, the hope that the absence of our small subsistence-based gathering might make some difference against the canadian and american commercial fisheries that pillage our ancestors.

For me, my post-apocalyptic cataclysm is this: our territory, entirely bereft of our salmon. It is a thought that elicits a physical reaction from me that starts in my gut then clenches fists around each of my lungs until my throat pinches for the air I can no longer draw in. And the threat is close and it is deeply personal.





## Welcome. We are glad you are here.

**The present is a precipice.** The future is a place that we (Carrier Wit'at) can only speculate with how we (Carrier Wit'at) hold and cultivate the present. The past is where our ancestors (Carrier Wit'at) have already taught us (Carrier Wit'at) how to hold ourselves (Carrier Wit'at) and the land (Tentah). These things, and all their splintering branches of possibility, are happening concurrently.

Then for our neighbours, **the present is a precipice.** The future is a place where they (Wet'suwet'en) can only speculate with how they (Wet'suwet'en) hold and cultivate the present. The past is where their ancestors (Wet'suwet'en) have already taught them (Wet'suwet'en) how to hold themselves (Wet'suwet'en) and the land (Yintah). These things, and all their splintering branches of possibility, are happening concurrently.

Then for our shared neighbours, **the present is a precipice.** The future is a place where they (Gitsxan) can only speculate with how they (Gitsxan) hold and cultivate the present. The past is where their ancestors (Gitsxan) have already taught them (Gitsxan) how to hold themselves (Gitsxan) and the land. These things, and all their splintering branches of possibility, are happening concurrently.

Then for our neighbour's-neighbours, **the present is a precipice.** The future is a place where they (Tahltan) can only speculate with how they (Tahltan) hold and cultivate the present. The past is where their ancestors (Tahltan) have already taught them (Tahltan) how to hold themselves (Tahltan) and the land. These things, and all their splintering branches of possibility, are happening concurrently.

Then neighbour's-neighbour's-neighbours, and so forth; the futures branch outward, interconnecting root-systems forming a [REDACTED] shattering reverb, a heavy pulse across time. Every Indigenous peoples on their land or stolen from them holds their own nexus of worlds for the future. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Which brings me to the works in this show; the legacy of sci-fi media well-established as a thoroughly white, male-dominated and cis-gendered space and Afro and Indigenous futurisms and their intersecting paths with feminist critique have served as critical interrogations of this exclusionary space. But how, and how do the works of this exhibition lean into that conversation? As an artist myself I've often been aligned with Indigenous Futurisms by curators and institutions but struggle to claim the categorization myself.

[REDACTED] I've had to wonder harder about what the ever-loving fuck Indigenous Futurism is as the term has taken a deep dive into academia. What is the question of Indigenous Futurism? Or is it only a yearning and desirable projection of simply believing that we, Indigenous people, will survive and have a place in whatever future swallows this world??



In Tim Hickson and Ellie Gordon's video essay, *Hard Worldbuilding vs Soft Worldbuilding | A Study of Studio Ghibli*, they discuss the differences between the two styles and define hard worldbuilding and soft worldbuilding as such:

**Hard worldbuilding** is about immersion through giving the reader or viewer detailed or logical and even realistic cultures, languages, geography and elsewhere with an eye for how they all work together. (ie. JRR Tolkien's, *The Lord of the Rings*)

**Soft worldbuilding** immerses us through consciously using the unknown flexible roles and the readers imaginative involvement to give depth and otherworldliness. (ie. Hayao Miyazaki's, *Spirited Away*)



Their essay doesn't posit one as any better than the other, but [REDACTED] the sense of euphoric wonderment that is conveyed when describing Miyazaki's soft world is also emblematic of the possibilities of that style of worldbuilding and perhaps an entry point into the works of this exhibition. There is exhale in this method of building that feels eager to shake off the trappings of more definitive explanations for why the world is the way it is. For many BIPOC communities especially, the present is the hard worldbuilding stage; we know why the world is the way it is and excessively so. For our futurisms, the most important part is *survivance*; how we get there feels less important than **knowing that we do**. The soft build of fictive futures is a space for oppressed groups to shake off genocidal, legislated, and corporatized presents and to experience the pleasure of life after The Cataclysm (or punctuated series of cataclysms).

[REDACTED] these works included in *Shimmering Horizons*, blend and bend forward and back between each other. From the reconfigured past blends into the possible but grounded futures of *Asinnajaq's Three Thousand*, in the cryptic anthro-cyborged visions of Elizabeth Zvonar's collages as subjects of an uncategorized populace, to the fragmented and recollected compilations of Marina Roy's work echoing a future museums efforts to categorize an inaccessible past and then in Tania and Meagan's work the insistence that the memory of Indigenous making will persist regardless of the shifting conditions of material collection. Together they build a wide landscape that focuses on the essential desire to hold identity but to be flexible enough to adapt for what will come to bear.



Grace Dove (Secwépemc) in *How It Ends* (2018)



When I try to convey to you that immense feeling that comes with witnessing the footage of the reintroduction of the buffalo or when I attempt to explain the terror I feel in the salmon disappearing from my nation's traditional waters, I know that there aren't the kind of words in colonial language to adequately do so. Colonial words do not translate well those things which feel ancestral; the ancestral feeling is intuitive, disconcerting and expands outwards in a breath that lands heavy across something that isn't space or time. If I could show you what I really wanted to show you, I wouldn't have to speak directly to the feeling. The worldbuilding I would want to use would be soft, visual, and discarded of the empirical qualities of the english language; *"The fewer requirements to rationalise soft worldbuilding choices means you can prioritise and be more flexible with that meaning you want to imbue your world with"* (Hickson + Gordon). It may still not be enough, but it might convince you to surrender into not needing to understand the mechanics of why I feel a certain way about it.

(so, not like this pictured situation in this 1995 episode of *Star Trek Voyager*, *The Cloud* where Robert Beltran's character Commander Chakotay is showing Captain Janeway how to partake in a modernized vision quest. Which, I feel a certain way about)



an *akoonah*.



My ancestors used psychoactive herbs



to assist their vision quests.



Now they're no longer necessary.



Our scientists have found more modern ways



to facilitate the search for animal guides.



A-roo-chee-moya.

We are far from the sacred places of our grandfathers.



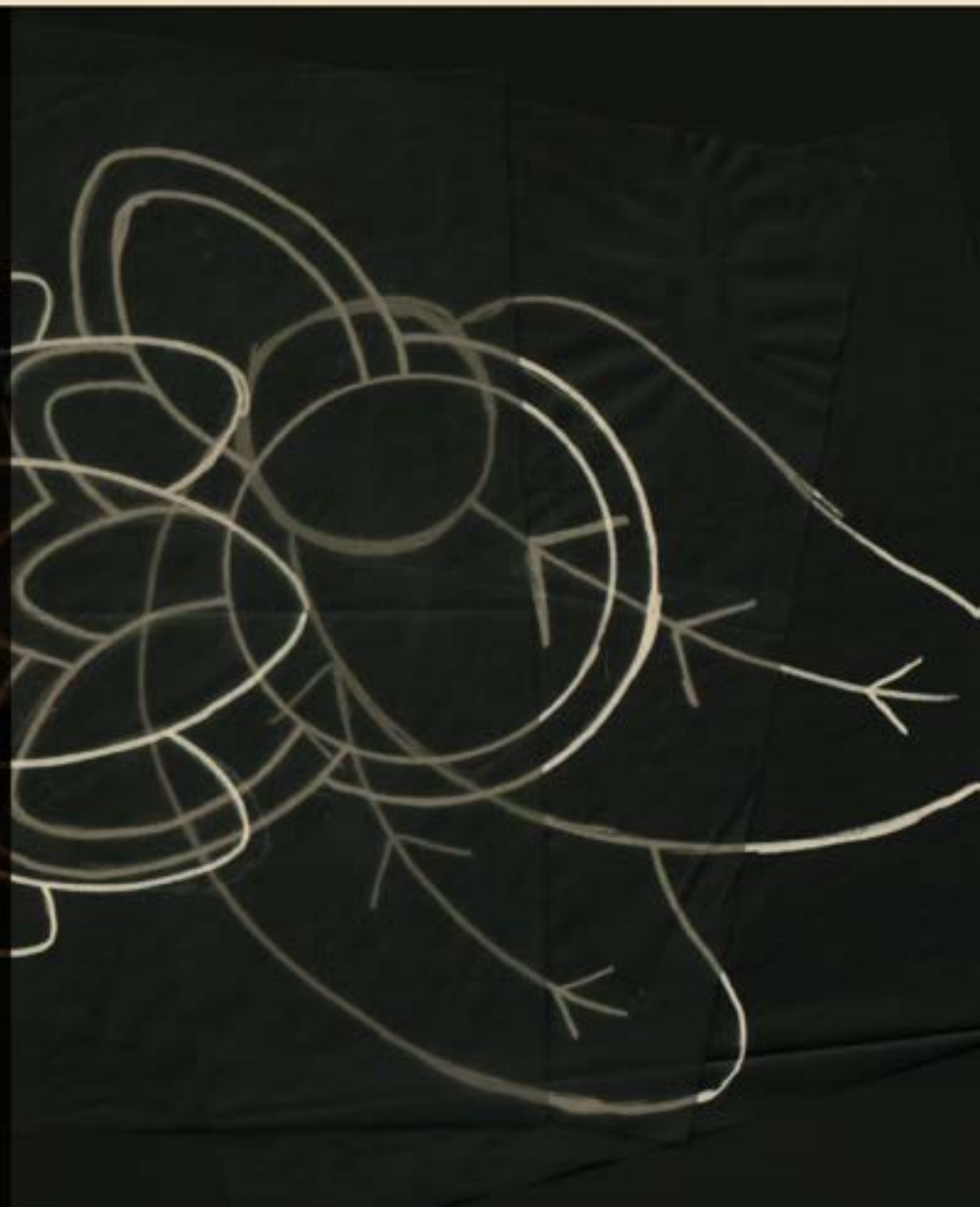
We are far from the bones of our people,



but perhaps there is one powerful being

who will embrace this woman

and give her the answers she seeks.





Sci-fi is a world where Black and Indigenous people have had to legitimize their places within while many other people of colour have only received invitation through flagrant fetishization. Women, be they racialized or white, have long been shunted aside in [REDACTED] misogynistic derision or sexualized and regulated to posturing in metal bikinis. To *employ* futurisms, even as the terminology has entered the milieu of academia, is a refusal that is decidedly pop culture [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and is especially flexible within the exhibition space where less is often more. Even Asinnajaq's film, which so heavily draws from the "concreteness" of archival footage invites more questions rather than would often be permitted in the current landscape of overwrought superhero styled futures and does so by an instinctive leaning back towards rooting the future in the past.

The future is an atmosphere. The works in this exhibition reach narratively past a world that still struggles to prioritize Indigenous survivance and the histories of feminized labour and experience and do so without excessively feeling that they must legitimate their presence.



#### References:

Tim Hickson and Ellie Gordon (Hello Future Me). "Hard Worldbuilding vs Soft Worldbuilding | A Study of Studio Ghibli." *Youtube*, June 13, 2020, <https://youtu.be/gcyrrTud3x4>

#### Images:

Screenapped youtube search for Cowboy Bebop (1998) character "Laughing Bull"

Screenapped news article from CBC News, 2017: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bison-buffalo-banff-national-park-1.3969106>

Screenapped territory map from <https://native-land.ca/>

Screenaps from the film, *How It Ends* (2018), dir. David M. Rosenthal

Screenaps from *Star Trek Voyager*, ep. *The Cloud*, (S01E05), 1995.

All other images are scans of original works of the artist.

# EXTRA

## Film Idea:

Sometimes I dream about a moment, where I have arrived with my loved ones, where we witness the departure of the colonizers and their descendants abandon the land, mark it forfeit and take to the stars.

After many generations of rebuilding our relation to the land, our young people will ask, "*why did they give up? Why would they leave?*"

Perhaps the reply that will have been passed down is simply that they gave up and left because it was in their nature and that it is in our nature to stay. We will forget that some of our own left too.

More generations pass. The once husked out shells of late-capitalist cities have once again become wild. The cityscapes once riveting the surfaces of earth have been subsumed by time. We have found a way; and then, our descendants who took to the stars begin to find their ways home.

*"This is your home, I'd know you from a starscape away, maybe more."*



*Dreaming of the future can be to indulge the desire to walk through an aftermath. The empty, decaying buildings of cities overtaken by green. Cracked roads disused from no long needing to constantly depart, arrive, depart. Those who survive will be humbled by their suffering, those who are born into the aftermath granted the naivety of pre-contact worlds. In the aftermath the discontents of the present are past, arms-length and palatable. We walk among the ruins, easily sidestep the evidence of the crimes that brought the world to a crucible.*

*We romanticize our cataclysms. We create an archive for the future, endless possibilities as we refuse to give our end a singular definition.*

**10,000 possible**

**futures** *for survival, more. a fervent belief that survival outweighs extinction.*