Indigenous Media Futures Panel
American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting 2016

Jason Edward Lewis
Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace & Concordia University
aboriginal territories in cyberspace

2006 - present
Skins Workshops on Aboriginal Storytelling and Digital Media Design (2008 – 2014)
Skawennati • *TimeTraveller™* • (2008 - 2013)
Marcia Crosby

Construction of the Imaginary Indian

I am going to speak about what seems to be a recent phenomenon in the arts and social sciences—the embracing of “difference.” As a component of postmodernism, difference may take the form of the many voices that struggle against the hegemony of the European “master narrative.” In the face of popular culture and an ever-shrinking globe, it is also a saleable commodity. Increasingly, we as First Nations people assert our national and cultural differences against the homogenizing effects of academic discourse, mass culture and government legislation. However, interest in First Nations people by Western civilization is not such a recent phenomenon; it dates back hundreds of years, and has been manifest in many ways: collecting and displaying “Indian” objects and collecting and displaying “Indians” as objects or human specimens, constructing pseudo-Indians in literature and the visual arts. This interest extended to dominating or colonizing First Nations people, our cultural images and our land, as well as salvaging, preserving and reinterpreting material fragments of a supposedly dying native culture for Western “art and culture” collections. Historically, Western interest in aboriginal peoples has really been self-interest, and this Eurocentric approach to natives—in all its forms—takes up a considerable amount of space within academic discourse. The purpose of this paper is to refuse the prescribed space set aside for the Imaginary Indian. Despite the West’s recent self-critique of its historical depiction of “the other,” I am not entirely convinced that this is not just another form of the West’s curious interest in it or, more specifically, the ultimate colonization of “the Indian” into the spaces of the West’s postmodern centre/margin cartography. Exposing the self-serving purposes, and the limitations that such cultural maps impose on all First Nations people, is an act of confrontation and resistance. I also consider it an act of affirmation to speak in the first-person singular, refusing an imposed
“when I read science fiction set in the future, where there are no people of color, I wonder when the race war happened that killed us all off and why has the writer seen fit not to mention something so huge?”

Nalo Hopkins
riffing off Ian Hagemann
Initiative for Indigenous Futures
Initiative for Indigenous Futures

Partnership Locations

1. Montreal, QC
   - IIF HEADQUARTERS
   - Concordia University
   - Behavior Interactive

2. Kahnawake, QC
   - Kahnawake Education Center
   - Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Center

3. Kanehsatà:ke, QC
   - Kontinónhststs – Mohawk Language Custodians Association

4. Toronto & Waterloo, ON
   - ImagineNATIVE
   - University of Waterloo
   - OCAD U

5. Regina, SK
   - MacKenzie Gallery

6. Okanagan, BC
   - University of British Columbia - Okanagan

7. Yellowknife, NT
   - Dechinta Bush University Centre for Research and Learning
   - Western Arctic Moving Pictures

* Partners
  * Collaborators
Exploring the cultural, conceptual, creative and technical dimensions of the Indigenous Future Imaginary while encouraging Aboriginal people to craft a future of their choosing.

Skins Workshops
To empower Aboriginal youth with critical, creative and technical skills within a context of storytelling from their communities.

Residencies on The Future Imaginary
To foster new work by Indigenous artists, scholars and community members.

Aboriginal New Media Arts Archive
To generate scholarship about and document the work of Aboriginal artists using advanced digital media.

Symposia on The Future Imaginary
To provide an ongoing forum on the Indigenous Future Imaginary.
Future Character Workshop
Postcommodity
Each Branch
Determined
(2016)
Illustrating the Future Imaginary
Kaia’tanoron Bush (Mohawk). *Use It.*
Graphite on Gessoed Ground and Digital Painting. 2015
“The girls in the drawing are some of my students...I was also thinking about the role social media and personal devices will play in young people's lives and how this might change their futures and of course, as you said, the importance of preserving our traditions and practices. Initially my outlook on the future of Indigenous people was bleak. We spend everyday fighting for tomorrow, it was difficult for me to imagine something beyond 50 years but doing this work made me realize that we can build a kind future for our children.”

Kaia’tanoron Bush