

# American Museum of Natural History

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## *Shaping the Future Through Tradition,* A New Exhibition of Contemporary Northwest Coast Indigenous Art, Opens Today at the American Museum of Natural History

Works by Seven Artists of the Pacific Northwest  
Celebrate Blending Ancestral Knowledge with Contemporary Forms and Media



**IMAGES AND B-ROLL AVAILABLE [HERE](#)**

[\*Shaping the Future Through Tradition\*](#), an exhibition of multimedia works by Indigenous artists from the Pacific Northwest, opens to the public on June 18 in the rotating contemporary art gallery of the Northwest Coast Hall at the American Museum of Natural History.

Exploring how seven of today's Indigenous artists ground their creative work with heritage and history while working in contemporary modes of expression, the exhibition is produced with guest curator Michael Bourquin (Tăltān/Gitxsan, Wolf Clan), a filmmaker from Iskut First Nation whose work centers Indigenous oral history, tradition, cultural revitalization, and community empowerment. *Shaping the Future Through Tradition* features 12 interdisciplinary works—including documentary and narrative films, music and music videos, animations, and a multi-channel video art installation—that honor tradition while sharing Northwest Coast Indigenous cultures in contemporary art forms.

"We are excited to open this exhibition that celebrates the perspectives and creativity of this dynamic group of Pacific Northwest Coast artists," said Museum President Sean M. Decatur. "The latest contemporary art exhibition to open in our Northwest Coast Hall, *Shaping the Future Through Tradition* is a powerful expression of the ways that Indigenous culture and history fuel the creative visions of these seven artists, whose present-day work reflects their enduring connection to their communities."

“Bringing together these seven artists and seeing their work nestled in this space amongst the work of our ancestors adds an extra layer to the juxtaposition of traditional and current technologies, as well as the shaping of the future, informed by the past,” said Bourquin.

The artists featured in the gallery are:

- **Wuulhu, Bracken Hanuse Corlett** (Wuikinuxv and Klahoose Nations), an interdisciplinary artist who fuses sculpture, painting, and drawing with digital media, audio-visual performance, animation, and narrative, embracing ancestral art forms meant to be seen in motion
- **Kayah George** (Tulalip and Tsleil-Waututh Nations), a filmmaker, activist, and student who blends storytelling, environmental advocacy, and cultural revitalization
- **Jordan Hill** (T’Sou-ke Nation), an emerging new media artist who constructs physical and virtual installations that recontextualize the viewer’s relationship with often overlooked spaces and challenge normalized social and spatial assumptions
- **Dustin McGladrey** (Nisga’a, Grizzly Bear Clan), a filmmaker, writer, and editor who celebrates Indigenous stories through an Indigenous lens, highlighting the richness, complexity, and innovation within communities
- **Wil Uks Batsga Galaaw (Jeremy Pahl)** (Ts’msyen, Laxsgyiik (Eagle) Clan of the House of Txat Gwatk), a musical artist formerly known as Saltwater Hank whose project *Gamksimoon* – meaning “waterspout” – is performed entirely in Sm’algayax, revitalizing the language while crafting music that flows with the force of the natural phenomenon for which it is named
- **Danika Saunders** (Nuxalk, Gwa’sala-Nakwaxda’xw), a tattoo artist who follows traditional Northwest Coast formline design principles while integrating contemporary mediums
- **Kristi Lane Sinclair** (Haida, Cree), an artist whose music features grinding guitars and soaring strings to accentuate the roller coaster of emotions that has distinguished Sinclair’s work about the experiences of womanhood

The Museum’s Northwest Coast Hall reopened in 2022 following a transformative renovation and reinterpretation in consultation with Indigenous communities from the Pacific Northwest Coast. As part of the revitalization, a rotating art gallery was created to showcase the continuity and transformation of Indigenous creative practices. *Shaping the Future Through Tradition* follows *Grounded by Our Roots* (2024) and the inaugural exhibition, *Living with the Sea* (2022). The exhibition is organized with guest curator Michael Bourquin, who also produced [Voices of the Native Northwest Coast](#), a video featured in the introductory theater of the Northwest Coast Hall.

### **Northwest Coast Hall**

Featuring exhibits that showcase the creativity, scholarship, and history of the living cultures of the Pacific Northwest, the Northwest Coast Hall focuses on the material culture of 10 Native Nations and language communities of the Pacific Northwest and presents more than 1,000 restored cultural items, enlivened with new interpretation developed with Consulting Curators from the Coast Salish, Gitksan, Haida, Hailzaqv, Kwakwaka’wakw, Nuuchah-nulth, Nuxalk, Tlingit, and Tsimshian communities. The curator of the Northwest Coast Hall is Peter Whiteley, curator of North American Ethnology at the Museum, and the co-curator is Haa’yuups, Nuuchah-nulth scholar and cultural historian.

### **ABOUT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH)**

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869 with a dual mission of scientific research and science education, is one of the world’s preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The

Museum encompasses more than 40 permanent exhibition halls, galleries for temporary exhibitions, the Rose Center for Earth and Space including the Hayden Planetarium, and the Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation. The Museum's scientists draw on a world-class permanent collection of more than 30 million specimens and objects, some of which are billions of years old, and on one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, the Museum offers two of the only free-standing, degree-granting programs of their kind at any museum in the U.S.: the Ph.D. program in Comparative Biology and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Earth Science residency program. Visit [amnh.org](http://amnh.org) for more information.

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