



I am an Indian princess

CyberPowWow: Digital Natives and the First Wave of Online Publication

MIKHEL PROULX

In the early 1990s three Montreal art students working under the moniker Nation to Nation mounted a series of renegade exhibitions. By 1997, with a handful of art shows, performances, and community projects under their belts, Nation to Nation would launch *CyberPowWow* (CPW), an early experiment in Internet art publication, and to date the most expansive platform for network-based art made by Indigenous artists.

CPW was operational for eight years and is now largely offline, making it difficult to assess its impact. Twenty years on, it has become a remnant of a cyberutopian experiment in Indigenous sovereignty on the early Web. This article attempts to track the networked conditions from which an experiment like CPW could surface, and also to recall its emergence from a political climate of Indigenous self-determination that came to the fore in the nation-state of Canada during the 1990s.

Materializing at this confluence of Indigenous cultural activism and early Web cultures, CPW offers a fascinating alternative to mainstream histories of network-based art. For its creators and participants, the project would house a novel kind of collective politics, a site for symbolic exchange, and a distinct aesthetics – but these have been largely neglected in dominant media art histories. Studies of early Web-based art recall how artistic use of innovative communications technologies led to a certain type of visibility, but such art-historical ventures have tended to canonize a largely central-European group of men.¹ Their practices have been billed as inherently critical, non-institutional, anti-capitalist, and global, though their transnational communication occurred predominantly among white North Americans and Western Europeans.

A study of *CyberPowWow*, conversely, provides a sense of how the artistic adoption of digital network media could be embedded in distinct cultures and

(above) Detail, Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw, *Buffalo Wood*, 1999. *CyberPowWow* 1997–2005. (Courtesy Estate of Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw and Skawennati);

(below) Detail, Michelle Nahanee, *Lilgirls*, 2001. *CyberPowWow* 1997–2005. (Photo: Courtesy of Michelle Nahanee and Skawennati)

local specificities, yielding varied, heterogeneous effects. Where the dominant discourse of Internet-based art has often pointed to the globalizing aesthetics of an ostensibly *World-Wide Web*, *CPW* may exemplify a counterforce to this narrative, and to the imperial structures of the Internet itself. Demonstrably, its artworks and critical texts challenged the prevailing sense of the Internet as a neutral and ‘free’ space, and laid the groundwork for critical discussions of how power and control operate in the network age.

Within the context of this issue of the *Journal of Canadian Art History*, and within a wider study of publications in Canadian artist-run culture, *CPW* is also remarkable as an early investigation – by peoples Indigenous or not – into the communicative affordances of the new networked commons. If a website is something of a publication, with its pages linked and non-linear – code in place of ink and machines in place of binding – then *CPW*, along with a handful of other early Web projects in Canada, challenged the limitations of traditional print. Fostering moments of encounter through interactive networks, these harbingers of online publication engaged the nascent cybercultures of chat rooms, message boards, mailing lists, webzines, and personal homepages. Amid better-known Web culture platforms such as *The Thing*, *the WELL*, *Rhizome*, and *nettime*, *CPW* counted itself as one of only a few emergent virtual spaces for Indigenous cybercultures.² In concert with an increasingly politicized attitude within Canadian art, *CPW* addressed a lack of Aboriginal content in Canadian art publishing. It answered a call, as curator Lee-Ann Martin had urged, for “new models for the presentation and documentation of Aboriginal art.”³ Moreover, for *CPW*’s participants, the Internet fostered not just a new mode of communication and interactivity, but a site for new forms of discourse, exchange, and community. This was an early, robust accomplishment that formalized a uniquely Aboriginal place online (Fig. 1).

Taglined “an Aboriginally determined territory in cyberspace,” *CyberPowWow* was among the first Web-based art exhibitions, in step with the now-canonical European benchmark exhibitions, *Club Berlin* from the 46th Venice Biennale in 1995, and *dx*, curator Simon Lamunière’s virtual contribution to documenta X in 1997. *CPW* was conceived in 1996 by Nation to Nation’s trio of artists: Skawennati, Ryan Rice (both are Kahnawake Mohawk), and Eric Robertson (Métis/Gitksan). Soon after, it would be overseen by Skawennati alone. The formation of their collective Nation to Nation in 1994 was part of a larger watershed moment for Aboriginal media arts in Canada. The group formed within recent memory of the federal *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* and the anti-racist artist-run caucus Minquon Panchayat;⁴ on the heels of Indigenous cultural media projects such as the Aboriginal Film and Video Art Alliance and the Aboriginal Peoples



1 | Marilyn Burgess, *Git yer cowgirl avatar here!* 2001. *CyberPowWow* 1997–2005. (Photo: courtesy of Marilyn Burgess and Skawennati)

Television Network; and in tandem with increased institutional support for Aboriginal media arts at the Banff Centre, the Canada Council for the Arts, and within artist-run centres across the country, including the founding of Tribe in Saskatoon and Urban Shaman in Winnipeg. *CPW* was supported by and participated in this wave uniquely to publish early Internet-based art made by Indigenous people online.

Throughout its eight-year run, *CPW* adhered to a biennial model, and each of its four iterations can be considered as self-determined online ‘territories’ on the early Web. The project served to house network-based art, written stories and critical texts in English and several Indigenous languages, and a real-time, graphical chat service that was live year-round. Additionally, the project held ‘gathering sites’ – real-world events launched in over twenty artist-run centres across North America that allowed the interfacing of multiple publics. Among the twenty-three artists who participated in *CPW*, notable figures in contemporary art include Lori Blondeau, Rosalie Favell, Greg A. Hill, Ryan Johnston, Jason E. Lewis, Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw (1958–2006), Travis Neel, Archer Pechawis, Edward Poitras, and Paul Chaat Smith.

Today this bold undertaking survives only in fragmented form and is otherwise scattered on old machines in Jason E. Lewis and Skawennati’s

obx Labs at Concordia University. Visitors to the current live site⁵ will find a sparse archive of the project, housing the literature published for each biennial, write-ups on the project participants, and only a few of the original (typically smaller) artworks – those made with early versions of Flash and Quicktime. For any other artwork, one is required to make a request for the original, now detached, files, and download the all-but defunct piece of server software – *The Palace*. Like a forebear of the popular virtual world *Second Life*, *The Palace* is a multiple-user chat environment (a MUD, or Multi-User Dungeon) that allows users to interact in a series of graphical ‘rooms’ using 2D avatars, where one may encounter other users concurrently logged into the system. This free software was a framework that Skawennati would eventually tweak for CPW’s own needs.

Looking back from today’s cleanly designed Web interfaces, CPW’s graphics and navigation may seem somewhat glitchy and awkward, lacking clarity in their responsive capacities, its interactive features demonstrating a disorderly pacing. But it also reminds us of the inventiveness artists and techie amateurs brought to early digital technologies in the late twentieth century to develop novel aesthetic forms. This was the imaginative, undetermined era of the so-called 1.0 stage of the Web, before the full-on corporatization of the Internet streamlined the protocols of engaging with digital networks. Here, artists and designers innovated new media forms on low-bandwidth, unsaturated networks.

The sophisticated designs developed by Cree/French Métis artist Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw may feel cumbersome to the sensibilities of today’s typical computer-user (Fig. 2). To navigate *Buffalo Wood*, his contribution to 1999’s *CyberPowWow 2*, one must first place one’s avatar on top of, and then click on, any of several circles serving as navigation buttons to direct oneself through the multiple, non-linear pages. In other words, the interactive designs he invented represented an idiosyncratic mode of engaging with technology, and today appear novel and perhaps strange. As in other Web-based works of Maskêgon-Iskwêw’s,⁶ this interface is an experiment in non-linear hypertext navigation, and it also deliberately references aspects of his heritage. The website mimics the decentralized structure of a spider-web, allowing for multiple pathways within the network, and referring to the nine domains in the Salteaux cosmological cycle. This structure underlies layers of found archival imagery: navigating through the ‘rooms’ conjures overlaid pictures of Indigenous political uprisings, residential schools, illustrations of animal bones, and photos of buffalo, all visible behind a fiery target symbol. Some pages spout spoken phrases in Cree, displaying pixelated or heavily filtered photos taken by the artist himself. Adept in interactive design technologies, Maskêgon-Iskwêw created this imagery, utilizing JavaScript and iptScrae



2 | Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw, *Buffalo Wood*, 1999. *CyberPowWow* 1997–2005.
(courtesy of Estate of Âhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw and Skawennati)

3 | Greg A. Hill, *Buffalo Wood, Kanata Boutique*, 2004. *CyberPowWow* 1997–2005.
(Photo: courtesy of Skawennati)

(a coding language specific to *The Palace*) to structure responsive, user-based actions in the multimedia chat environment. The results are a unique articulation of a specific cultural aesthetics in a media that has become streamlined and ostensibly ‘neutral.’

Integral to *CyberPowWow*’s aim of increasing public access to Indigenous media artists’ work was its *Gathering Sites*, coinciding with the four biennial launches held at twenty-one art spaces internationally. The first of these events took place in April of 1997 at both Circle Vision Arts Corporation in Saskatoon, and Galerie Oboro in Montreal. By the last CPW in 2004 (Fig. 3), no less than a dozen organizations co-hosted the event.⁷ Each space supported simultaneous, two-day events – expanded ‘openings’ – during which time visitors could eat and drink but, more importantly, were invited to become participants via engagement with CPW. Tech-savvy assistants would guide users through the projects on computer stations, as in the mid-1990s personal ownership of computers was not yet ubiquitous, especially among Indigenous populations.⁸ For many participants of the day, this engagement was a distinctly Aboriginal experience. As Tuscarora art historian Jolene Rickard wrote at the time: “somehow when you exit this site you definitely know you were in Indian territory.”⁹

The Internet of twenty years ago was far less populous than the continuously jacked-into networks of today, but its participants shared an enthusiasm that was quite different from the pre-structured, corporate,

social-media-driven Web 2.0 culture that is now dominant. Within Peer2Peer communities, virtual meeting spaces were established as inclusive and open publics, accessibly written in HTML as a kind of digital Esperanto. This once-widespread zeal for the liberatory possibilities of a new, networked society is apparent in *CPW*, while the project was also rooted in further aspirations toward Indigenous sovereignty and self-identification.

Thus, while the producers and artists of *CPW* partook wholeheartedly in this cyberutopian wave, they also enacted a critical alternative to its mainstream impulses. Many authors have demonstrated that the coming of a global ‘network age’ or ‘digital age’ implicitly promoted a set of values thoroughly tethered to the cultural ‘West’.¹⁰ The ostensibly ‘global’ distribution of Internet technologies has often led to a whitewashed and homogenized understanding of culture. As the anthropologist Faye Ginsburg expresses it, “the seeming ubiquity of the Internet appears a façade of First World illusions.”¹¹ The notion of a singular “digital age” – with its rhetoric of ubiquity and inclusion – hides the unequal material conditions and distribution of resources that shape access to information and communications technologies. The reasons for this inequality span issues of social class, geographic conditions, political protocols, and issues of ability and literacy. In brief, the ‘global’ digital communications network has been structured favourably for those within the ‘developed’ world. The gap between these haves and have-nots is termed the “digital divide” (and this divide appears to be growing).¹² Significantly, this gap is not structured along national borders, but on economic, cultural, and political biases. In fact, Indian reserves across North America have often been omitted from the global communications network. Reasons for this range from systemic inequalities at the level of governmental support for technological infrastructure, to geographical reasons: as reservations are often located on remote lands, they are often also far from fibre-optic cable networks.¹³

While early rhetoric surrounding the World Wide Web included an account of its global reach, it also promised an array of inclusive virtues corresponding to democracy and egalitarianism, liberation and freedom, and transparency and fluidity.¹⁴ As a transnational, anonymous force, the Web promised to liberate subjects from their geographical locales, and also from their bodies. And as network theorist Wendy Hui Kyong Chun discerns, “significantly, this rewriting of the Internet as emancipator, as ‘freeing’ oneself from one’s body, also naturalized racism.”¹⁵ For Chun, this is evidenced by the amplified bigotries found readily in chatrooms, online comments, and multiplayer games. By proposing a blind equivalence on this transnational stage, the Internet necessitated a defection from our bodies, and the places that they occupy. In ‘freeing’ us from our bodies and from our physical

contexts, this technological utopianism expressed a distinctly ‘Western’ Judeo-Christian set of ideological desires to escape the material plane. As Cree/Métis filmmaker and theorist Loretta Todd stated at the time of *CPW*, “a fear of the body, aversion to nature, a desire for salvation and transcendence of the earthly plane has created a need for cyberspace. The wealth of the land almost plundered, the air dense with waste, the water sick with poisons, there has to be somewhere else to go.”¹⁶

Whereas Marshall McLuhan’s global village evoked a *tribal*, inclusive global community,¹⁷ cultures on the ’Net have in fact devolved into exclusive cliques reinforced by various digital divides, and the expansion of self-interested, insular discourses. As sociologist Todd Gitlin has said: “If there is a global village, it speaks American. It wears jeans, drinks Coke, eats at the golden arches, walks on swooshed shoes . . . recognizes Mickey Mouse . . . Bart Simpson, R2-D2, and Pamela Anderson.”¹⁸ Claims toward tolerance and global inclusivity are offset by the overwhelming presence of dominant settler-North American cultures and bigotry in all its forms. As media theorist Lisa Nakamura has said: “we should remember it was the villagers that chased Frankenstein out of the village. Villages have often been xenophobic places where there is a narrow range of identities that are tolerated.”¹⁹ Todd also gives insight into the so-called ‘tribal’ nature of networked media culture and suggests that if it actually resembled tribal societies it would directly “cause the breakdown of central authorities . . . renew communal values [, and exhibit] concern for the future generation.”²⁰ Instead of these positive aspects of tribal society, it can be argued that the Web (in its current state) seems to breed closed spaces that *constrict* the development of cultural connectedness. Thus digital communications network technologies operate according to imperatives drawn from an imperialist heritage – in both their material, structural biases, and in the restrictive sets of protocols that shape online engagement. The development of these technologies, and of these forms of power, has been veiled by a myth of a connected, global space. It is this myth, I am proposing, that is directly countered by the efforts of *CyberPowWow*.

Illustrating this flattening of cultural specificity is *Portal*, one of a series of rooms in Trevor Van Weeren’s contribution to the 2001 *CPW2K* (Fig. 4). Of Dutch settler ancestry, Van Weeren here virtualizes the shortcomings of his own cultural understanding before his involved engagement with Aboriginal peoples as a researcher and educator in Australia’s Northern Territory. In *Portal*, we encounter an oblong corridor, its floor and ceiling overlaid with text evoking colonial and racist speech. The two walls are surfaced with imagery corresponding alternately to artefacts and clichéd Euro-settler ethnographic illustrations (the Aboriginals of the past), and to imagery of Australian settler nationalism: a flag, a street-sign, a game of cricket, and a



4 | Trevor Van Weeren, *Portal*, 2001.
CyberPowWow 1997–2005. (Photo: courtesy
 of Trevor Van Weeren and Skawennati)

pair of bright Caucasian children (the Australia of the future). At the far end is a colourful seascape – low-fi, but nonetheless inviting – luring us into the next ‘room’. In coating the surface of Cartesian space with such culturally specific imagery, Van Weeren makes clear his own unsettled relation to colonial histories of Australia, and also colours the apparently inert spaces of *cyberspace*.

Cyberspace – this rather corny, nineties-flavoured catchword – was the first of a myriad of spatial conceptions of digital network technologies.²¹ As suggested above, these metaphors helped to naturalize some of the ideologies hidden within the architecture of these technologies. The image of a physically-inhabitable space made possible a sense of movement within an electronically-generated alternate reality. The

Internet as “information superhighway,” as “network,” and as the “electronic frontier,” and the use of architectural forms within the popular imaginary such as the “gateway,” the “table,” and the “cloud,” and in applications like Explorer and Navigator, all imply movement and spatiality. This implication carried forward a thoroughly imperial flavour to digital technologies’ colonizing expansion across the planet. Hence, the mythologizing of network technologies as an “open space” has often served to naturalize its highly-structured organization. This recalls Manifest Destiny frontier attitudes in which a materialist conception of the empty land (*terra nullius*) led to its dismemberment and occupation. As Lewis and Skawennati made clear: “if Aboriginal peoples learned one thing from contact, it is the danger of seeing any place as *terra nullius*, even cyber space. Its foundations were designed with a specific logic, built on a specific form of technology, and first used for specific purposes.”²²

Intent on occupying these virtual spaces in a self-determined way, Indigenous artists took to the open Web to thwart the reiteration of European conquest and the great land grab. They would also circumvent the repetition of an earlier chapter in colonial telecommunications, in which 1880s North American settler governments’ use of rapid telegraph exchange expedited the seizure of ‘wild’ lands. They listened to Otoe-Missouria writer Randy Ross’s now-famous proclamation to not become “road kill on the Information Superhighway.”²³ Demonstrably, Indigenous artists on the early ‘Net favoured a particular flavour of cyberutopianism geared toward making a *place* within

the Web's open spaces, and to occupy a virtual commons outside the corridors of the nation-state. In his text published in one of *CPW*'s later issues (2001), Plains Cree artist Archer Pechawis claimed: "We saw the Internet not just as a new technology but a new territory, one that we could help shape from its inception."²⁴ Such self-sustaining (and self-actualizing) endeavours flew in the face of clichés that misconstrued Indigenous peoples as pre-technological. In going online – in staking a claim within cyberspace – self-determining Indigenous cultural actors on the early Web enacted a counterforce to this ideology within the networked media landscape.

This cultural agency persists today in the extensive use of the Web by Indigenous peoples, from the use of networked media on and off reservations, to Web activism in support of missing and murdered Indigenous women, to solidarity building for activist groups such as Idle No More. Acts of self-determination and independence of distribution have a legacy in Indigenous media usage, and for some, networked culture decidedly parallels traditional Indigenous and small-scale social worldviews, in which an intimacy with the growing, shifting world makes for a good sense of the interconnectivity of things, and leads to "a truly networked way of being," as Maskêgon-Iskwêw once wrote.²⁵ A further connection between Indigeneity and 'the virtual' has been suggested in relation to traditional prayer and song, storytelling, and relations to ancestors and to future generations, as in the claim of Ho-chunk scholar Renya Ramirez, with regards to sacred Sweat Lodge ceremonies.²⁶ Regardless of any innate connections between Indigeneity and virtually networked modes of being, Web technologies have been utilized in remarkable ways within Indigenous cultural and political practice. The role of technology is notable in both the sharing of struggles, and in Indigenous cultural flourishing.

Online Indigenous activity since the early Internet is manifest in political activism networks, local heritage initiatives, language repositories, commercial enterprises, and artistic expression. Such self-actualizing initiatives of Indigenous peoples creating media content speaks to the endeavour to stake new claims on the territory of the Web, and to rectify a legacy of non-Native (mis)representations of Native content. Such practices accomplish what Coast Salish artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun has recognized as the Indigenous use of "employing technology that in the past has been used against native people."²⁷ For many, such intent to take up these globalizing digital tools allowed for a critical leveraging of their ideological functions. This was the critical query that Todd posed in 1996: "Will cyberspace enable people to communicate in ways that rupture the power relations of the colonizer and the colonized? Or is cyberspace a clever guise



5 | Michelle Nahanee, *Lilgirls*, 2001.
CyberPowWow 1997–2005. (Photo: courtesy of
 Michelle Nahanee and Skawennati)

for neocolonialism, where tyranny will find further domain?”²⁸ (Fig. 5)

Like the historically cross-tribal pow-wow, *CyberPowWow* was designed toward inclusivity: people from different communities, cultures, and nations were invited to contribute. Pechawis, co-curating the 2001 iteration, described *CPW* as “a place where ‘Native meets non-Native’, be it technologically, socially, or culturally.”²⁹ Utilizing new, interactive technologies, and developing a novel curatorial model in the form of Gathering Sites, *CPW* made possible, as Yuxweluptun recognized of his own technological use, a “cultural exchange . . . designed to make people share a spiritual world.”³⁰ For both Native and non-Native

participants of *CPW*, specific cultural experiences are relayed, coloured with traces of identifiable spiritualities, ontologies, and lived experiences. The artworks made for *CPW* position these self-determined cultural representations upon a transcultural, transnational stage, and allow for entry points for those who do and do not have access to the experiences they arose from. Together, these artworks engender a concern for articulating and sharing lived experience: from traditional customs of longhouse ceremonies and storytelling rituals, to legacies of cultural genocide and systemic oppression, to depictions of daily lives specific to Indigenous urban Canadians in the 1990s. For the artists and curators of *CPW*, these representations were purposed in an imperative of intercultural sharing. The Hunkpapa Lakota artist Dana Claxton, writing in 2005 and stressing the pedagogical role of art, identified this capacity for Aboriginal artists to “affect, inform, and shape non-aboriginal-aboriginal relationships.”³¹

Far from the imagined universal network of a unified and liberated commons, online cultures reveal themselves to be highly structured and culturally biased. *CyberPowWow* is remarkable as an early example of a conscious and robust experiment to preserve cultural integrity in a global and globalizing media. Lost in the cyberflow, *CPW* is no longer a beacon of cultural force and intercultural engagement. Yet in recalling its power, we may be motivated to recognize a mode of social engagement online that foregrounds cultural codes specific to Indigenous cultures.

- 1 Such is the case in the benchmark studies: Rachel GREENE, *Internet Art* (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004) and Julian STALLABRASS, *The Aesthetics of Net.art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).
- 2 Others in the Canadian context include the bulletin-board systems *Igloo Station* (1991), based out of Montreal, and *Native_Network* (1993), based out of Hull/Ottawa; the educational project *KIDS FROM KA-NA-TA* (1992), created by John Ord, which also led to Buffy Saint-Marie's *Cradleboard Teaching Project* (1997); and the Aboriginal media arts network *Drumbeats to Drumbytes* (1994), initiated by Áhasiw Maskêgon-Iskwêw at the Banff Centre.
- 3 Lee-Ann MARTIN, "Wordplay: Issues of Authority and Territory," in *Making a Noise: Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community* (Banff, AB: The Banff International Curatorial Institute, 2004), 104.
- 4 The *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* called for museums to mandate partnerships with First Peoples, which was paralleled by Minquon Panchayat, the anti-racist coalition which promoted the structural reformation of artist-run culture.
- 5 *CyberPowWow*, "Welcome to CyberPowWow," (1996). Accessed 15 Aug. 2016, <http://www.cyberpowwow.net/>.
- 6 This can be seen in his 1996 website *isi-píkiskwêwin-ayapihkêsisak (Speaking the Language of Spiders)*, created in collaboration with Lynn Acoose, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Joseph Naytowhow, Greg Daniels, Elvina Piapot, Sheila Urbanoski, Sylvain Carrette, Mark Schmidt, and Russell Wallace, and viewable online: spiderlanguage.net.
- 7 These included: The Walter Phillips Gallery at the Banff Centre; EMMEDIA Gallery and Production Society in partnership with MayWorks Festival, Calgary; Tribe, A Centre for the Evolving Aboriginal Media, Visual and Performing Arts Inc., and PAVED Art + New Media, Saskatoon; Urban Shaman Gallery, Winnipeg; InterAccess, Toronto; Artengine and G-101, Ottawa; OBORO, Montreal; Eyelevel Gallery, Halifax; and Confederation Centre Art Gallery, Charlottetown.
- 8 The uneven distribution of computation technology is shown by, among others, Christian SANDVIG in his essay "Connection at Ewiiapaayp Mountain: Indigenous Internet Infrastructure," in *Race After the Internet*, eds. L. Nakamura & P. Chow-White (New York: Routledge, 2012), 168–200.
- 9 Jolene RICKARD, "First Nation Territory in Cyber Space Declared: No Treaties Needed," *CyberPowWow* 2 (1999). Accessed 1 Jan. 2010, <http://www.cyberpowwow.net/nation2nation/jolenework.html>.
- 10 This has been articulated in a legacy of scholarly writing, from Joseph Weizenbaum's landmark analyses of the cultural biases of technologists and designers, to more recent theoretical discussions of the impacts of European and Settler-American ideologies in digital networks, such as by Thomas Streeter and Marcus Breen. Joseph WEIZENBAUM, *Computer Power and Human Reason: From Judgment to Calculation* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1976); Thomas STREETER, *The Net Effect: Romanticism, Capitalism, and the Internet* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Marcus BREEN, *Uprising: The Internet's Unintended Consequences* (Champaign, IL: Common Ground, 2011).
- 11 Faye GINSBURG, "Rethinking the Digital Age," in *Global Indigenous Media: Cultures, Poetics, and Politics*, eds. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 289.

- 12 Canada, Statistics Canada, *Canadian Internet Use Survey (CIUS)*. Ottawa, 28 October 2013. Accessed 1 Jan. 2016, http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4432&Item_Id=66020&lang=en.
- 13 This point has been researched by Christian Sandvig: “almost all Indian reservations were chosen as prisons.” SANDVIG, “Connection at Ewiiapaayp,” 172.
- 14 See, as example: Mark POSTER, *The Second Media Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1995); and Howard RHEINGOLD, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1993).
- 15 Wendy Hui Kyong CHUN, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 132.
- 16 Loretta TODD, “Aboriginal Narratives in Cyberspace,” in *Transference, Tradition, Technology*, eds. Melanie A. Townsend, Dana Claxton and Steven Loft (Banff, AB: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 2006), 155.
- 17 This is a central premise in Marshall McLuhan’s *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).
- 18 Todd Gitlin, qtd. in Henry JENKINS, *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 153.
- 19 Lisa NAKAMURA, “5 Types of Online Racism and Why You Should Care” (Paper presented at TedXUillinois, University of Illinois, IL, 15 September 2011).
- 20 TODD, “Aboriginal Narratives in Cyberspace,” 159.
- 21 The term was popularized in early cyberpunk fiction – notably William Gibson’s 1984 *Neuromancer*.
- 22 Jason E. LEWIS and Skawennati Tricia FRAGNITO, “Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 29:2 (Summer 2005): 30.
- 23 Randy ROSS, “Native American Culture and the Emerging Internet Technology,” *First Nations Development Business Alert* (September–October 1996): 1.
- 24 Archer PECHAWIS, “Not So Much a Land Claim,” *CyberPowWow* 2K (2001). Accessed 1 Jan. 2010, cyberpowwow.net/archerweb/index.html.
- 25 Áhasiw MASKÊGON-ISKWÊW, “Drumbeats to Drumbytes: Globalizing Networked Aboriginal Art,” in *Transference, Tradition, Technology*, 191.
- 26 Renya K. RAMIREZ, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 69.
- 27 Lawrence Paul YUXWELUPTUN, “Inherent Rights, Vision Rights,” in *Immersed in Technology: Art and Virtual Environments*, ed. Mary Anne Moser (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 316.
- 28 Loretta TODD, “Aboriginal Narratives in Cyberspace,” in *ibid.*, 180.
- 29 PECHAWIS, “Not So Much a Land Claim.”
- 30 Yuxweluptun said this regarding his 1991 work *Inherent Rights, Vision Rights*, the first virtual-reality artwork to be exhibited in Canada and in Europe. Qtd. in Rafael LOZANO-HEMMER, “FLOATING TROUT SPACE: Native Art in Cyberspace. Interview with Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun,” *Telepolis, Heise Online* (23 July 1996). Accessed 1 Jan. 2010, <http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/3/3029/1.html>.
- 31 Dana CLAXTON, “Re:Wind,” in *Transference, Tradition, Technology*, 16.

CyberPowWow : les Autochtones à l'ère numérique et la première vague de publications en ligne

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Au début des années 1990, trois étudiants en art montréalais (Skawennati, Ryan Rice et Eric Robertson), connus sous le pseudonyme de Nation to Nation, montent une série d'expositions révolutionnaires. En 1997, comptant quelques présentations artistiques, performances et projets communautaires à leur actif, ils lancent *CyberPowWow* (CPW), une ébauche de publication d'art sur Internet et, à ce jour, la plateforme d'art en réseau le plus vaste à avoir été réalisée par des artistes autochtones.

Remarquable réalisation à la confluence de l'activisme culturel autochtone et des premières technologies Internet, CPW fascine parce qu'il se distingue nettement des présentations classiques de l'art en réseau. Malgré quatre expositions bisannuelles, 23 artistes et des dizaines de partenaires institutionnels, cette manifestation, qui compte parmi les premières expositions artistiques sur le Web, est boudée par l'histoire de l'art des médias numériques. Cet article propose une lecture du projet et avance que ses réussites ouvrent une perspective essentielle sur le Web d'aujourd'hui. CPW montre que l'adoption des supports numériques du réseau à des fins artistiques peut s'ancrer dans des cultures distinctes et des spécificités locales, et produire des effets diversifiés et hétérogènes.

Si le discours dominant sur l'art fondé sur Internet a souvent souligné la mondialisation de l'esthétique du Web, CPW pourrait bien faire contrepoids à cette idée et à l'impérialisme des structures d'Internet. Manifestement, les œuvres d'art et les critiques du CPW ont remis en question la conception prédominante voulant qu'Internet soit un espace neutre et « libre ». Elles ont plutôt préparé le terrain pour d'importantes discussions sur le mode de fonctionnement du pouvoir et du contrôle à l'ère numérique. CPW s'illustre comme l'un des premiers exemples d'une expérimentation délibérée et vigoureuse visant à préserver l'intégrité culturelle au sein d'un média planétaire et globalisant. Les artistes qui collaborent au projet préservent l'héritage de la production de médias autodéterminée par des artistes autochtones vivant dans des États coloniaux. Ils démontrent ainsi que les technologies du Web peuvent être utilisées de façon remarquable dans le respect des pratiques culturelles et des politiques autochtones. Grâce à des

innovations esthétiques et technologiques et à une plateforme conçue pour être participative, ils ont créé des œuvres vraiment originales et encouragé la réflexion critique sur les forces dominantes inhérentes aux réseaux de communications numériques.