

Artist Interviews

Marjie Crop Eared Wolf

Marjie Crop Eared Wolf was born in Fort Macleod, Alberta. Her early childhood was spent with the Shuswap Nation, her father's people, in Kamloops, B.C. and then on the Kainai Nation (Blood) reserve south of Calgary, where she currently lives. The Kainai Nation is one of the three nations which make up the Blackfoot Confederacy.

According to Crop Eared Wolf, she was introduced to art by her father. He had studied at Emily Carr art school (now Emily Carr University) in Vancouver and had his own art practice with exhibitions in southern Alberta and Kamloops and introduced his daughter to art making at a young age. In High School she received further encouragement from one of her teachers, Delia Crosschild, who help her to develop her portfolio. Crop Eared Wolf then applied to Kamloops, Emily Carr, the Alberta College of Art and Design (ACAD) in Calgary, and the University of Lethbridge. She was accepted by ACAD, where she studied for two years, and then transferred to the University of Lethbridge. Marjie Crop Eared Wolf graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2009 and is currently taking a multidisciplinary program at the University of Lethbridge.

Like many artists, Crop Eared Wolf entered art school focusing on drawing and painting. In art school, however, she was introduced to a variety of media and this has influenced her current practice. As she describes it, she now takes a very fluid approach to art making. In some cases the media she's using influences the idea of the work whereas in other, the idea behind the work determines how it is made.

For Marjie Crop Eared Wolf, much of her artistic inspiration comes from wanting to share what she knows about her culture with her son. She also hopes to make viewers in general aware of the Indigenous art history of North America.

In the art works she has submitted for the Travelling Exhibition **Aakí isskská'takssin (Woman - thought)** Crop Eared Wolf was inspired by traditional pictographic images seen at Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park in southern Alberta and other sites. Her interest in these sites and images derives from a trip she once took to Writing-On-Stone and her discovery that a fence had been built around the pictographs there as contemporary graffiti had defaced many images. This experience generated for Crop Eared Wolf an interest in both the pictographs and in graffiti itself, interests that were furthered by her experiences at art school. There she found that Indigenous art was not recognized, or was categorized as primitive. Finding this rather insulting, she began researching the meaning or stories behind pictographs. She also began researching graffiti art itself, wishing to know its history and the techniques used by graffiti artists.



Marjie Crop Eared Wolf
Coyote and Spider, 2010
Photography of installation
Collection of the artist

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

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Crop Eared Wolf's research inspired her to create art pieces in answer to the graffiti and vandalism she witnessed at the pictographic art sites she visited and researched. Her research in graffiti introduced her to the stencilling method which she thought would be best for her purposes. In her project she created stencils of both Shuswap and Blackfoot pictographic images and went to spots on her reserve, around the reserve and to areas of traditional Blackfoot territory and put the pictographs 'back up'. Through this work Crop Eared Wolf states that she is

...hoping that the viewer recognizes the first art of North America...and reads it as a renewal of that first art practice. Maybe they too will be more understanding of those site-specific areas where traditional art is located and help safe-guard them for the future.

While admitting to using traditional Indigenous pictographic imagery, Marjie Crop Eared Wolf is extremely conscious of not re-purposing sacred images. Rather, the images that she has used are from stories or a part of traditional knowledge and history. The insect in the photograph *Insect*, for example, is a Shuswap pictograph while the images in *Coyote and Spider* are from a Shuswap legend. The image entitled *Three Bears*, meanwhile, was inspired by Chief Black Bear, a chief who succeeded the famous Kainai Chief Red Crow who signed Treaty 7 in 1877 for the Kainai Nation. Black Bear was only chief for one year and died in a small pox epidemic. Finally, the work *Capture-Rifle* is based on a pictographic image which may refer to Chief Red Crow, who was also known as Captured the Gun Inside.



Marjie Crop Eared Wolf
Three Bears, 2010
Photography of installation
Collection of the artist