

# How can we investigate the past to inform a new strategic direction for Indigenous digital arts?

## Indigenous Digital Media Research Project Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity 2021

**Ballad led the Indigenous Digital Media Research Project, gathering historical insight and guidance from respected artists and administrators, and translating them into recommendations for the renewal of sovereign programming at Banff Centre.**

Banff Centre is one of Canada's highest-profile learning institutions focused on artistic and creative development. Through its Indigenous Arts programs, it has contributed to strong and vibrant communities of Indigenous creative practice, both in Canada and internationally, for the last 30 years. The origins of Indigenous programming at Banff Centre began in digital arts in the 1990s. In 2020, staff determined that a phase of research and engagement examining the department's foundation and rapid growth should precede the development of new strategies to support Indigenous digital creators.

Ballad completed a series of oral history interviews with artists and administrators that participated in or significantly impacted Indigenous digital media arts over the last 30 years. The research project focused on two primary goals: to re-establish institutional knowledge related to successes and challenges in Indigenous Arts programming in the 1990s and 2000s for archival purposes and to seek the advice of knowledgeable individuals on strategic opportunities during a period of revitalization for Indigenous Arts at Banff Centre. To further support these objectives, we reviewed archival

materials and created a database documenting past events and programming from the 1980s to the present. Throughout the project, we worked with Banff Centre's Indigenous Arts leadership team, as well as its archivist, in a collaborative process focused on co-design and collective decision-making.

Findings informed a series of ten recommendations in areas such as departmental autonomy, collaboration with other institutions, grassroots engagement, program accessibility, and fundraising. This report continues to function as a strategic document for Banff Centre, guiding discussion at subsequent think tanks in 2021 and 2023.

## What We Heard

*“The content gathered from the interviews was exceptional and the time spent with each interviewee allowed for rich dialogue and great recommendations that gave me a ton of insight into Banff Centre's history working with Indigenous people in their Digital Programs.”*

