

## J E R R Y E V A N S

## Q&amp;A

**What subject matters inspire you, and why?** This place, this land on which we stand, its people, our people, my ancestry and heritage, my family, stories, legends, memories, and material culture. All of these are present in the subject matter that I employ in my practice. Having grown up in Newfoundland settler culture, I didn't have the opportunity to learn about the indigenous side of my heritage when I was young. When I got older, I started asking questions about our Indigenous ancestry. Through deep digging and prying into family history and learning from uncles and aunties, I began to find answers and insights into what I had missed ... what many Indigenous people of my generation had missed. That journey took me well outside my family circle and that path of learning still unfolds in front of me and is central to my work as an artist. My visual art practice gives shape to those questions and answers, and transforms them into representations, interpretations, and investigations that can be shared with others. So, my practice is one way I witness and honor and celebrate my history, my people's history and their being here, in this place, on this land. **What media do you work in, and why?** I had the privilege of exploring and working in different mediums of expression at Mt Pearl Central High, with awesome art teacher Robin Cook. During my years at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design I gravitated towards printmaking under the guidance of Professors Bob Rodgers and Ed Porter. I focused on stone and plate lithography, because of its amazing range of mark-making and manipulation in the layering of colour. The alchemy and the hands-on process excited me. Printmaking is important to me because we make multiples of the image, so there is more than one (an edition), and that means you have the democracy of a more affordable image that can be distributed to more than one gallery and sold to more than one person. The work can be seen by more eyes. Upon graduation and return to St John's, St Michaels Printshop had recently moved from the southern shore and quickly became my art studio. Its artist-run not-for-profit centre, with all the facilities at my reach, enabled me to continue my practice without having to invest in my own equipment and chemistry. Very similar to the art college situation. I slipped into that community with ease and with no hesitation. I was the first Newfoundlander to receive a printer's chop. Other artists not versed in printmaking would work with me to produce a print edition of their work. I also use beads and porcupine quills on the leather of my regalia. I've created my Northern Traditional dancing bustle and head roach from dyed deer tails and porcupine guard hair, gifted eagle feathers, and much more. I've made many pairs of moccasins; I dance with a pair of hard sole that are fully beaded. I do all of this work, even my artwork, to deepen my relationship with my people. I still paint with acrylics, oils, and ink. Everything I work with is part of my practice. In 2017 I had the privilege to attend Earthline Indigenous Tattoo School in Kelowna, BC, where I became an Indigenous Cultural Tattoo Practitioner. In learning these new skills of hand poke and skin stitch, I am now able to keep making marks while at the same time bringing back body marking to our people in a culturally appropriate way. In a safe way, as a medicine to help lift up our people. It's an honour and privilege to be able to do that. I carry that responsibility like I carry my Eagle feathers and





dance for the people. **What artists, not necessarily visual, influence you?** Many, like Anne Meredith Barry, Carl Beam, Rebecca Belmore, Jane Ash Poitras, and Pam Hall. Most recently Jordan Bennett, Meagan Musseau, Nelson White ... but I can't answer this question without telling the story of my first encounter with Gerry Squires when I was 15 or 16. I met him at the gallery at the Murray Premises in 1975-76. I can't remember the gallery name. I introduced myself to him and told him I admired his work. He invited me down to the Lighthouse at Ferryland where he and wife Gail and their kids lived at the time and of course his studio was there too. I had my first car then so one day I packed up everything I had produced in high school and headed down the shore to Ferryland. When I got there it was pouring rain, sideways. When I crossed the jut of land where the lighthouse was, I got stuck in the mud and couldn't go in any further. I walked into the lighthouse and knocked on the door, soaking wet. No one was home. I walked around the side of the lighthouse and I looked in the window. I had never seen an artist's studio before. Large stretched canvases with work in progress, paint brushes everywhere. I stood there, a voyeur, for at least an hour, maybe more. I left there totally inspired with everything I had hoped to get by going there. It was many years later, after my graduation from NSCAD, that I told Gerry that story. **Do you have a work routine?** I wish! It's hard to have one, especially during these troubled times, but I'm trying my best. I keep busy all the time! Can that be a routine? I currently don't have a studio in my house, so when things shut down, I did too. Pre-Covid, I had just started some new work at St Michaels, started working in film some, was tattooing. Pre-that I had just finished a collaborative project with fellow artist Pam Hall (The Middle River Project, Chapter 3 of *Towards an Encyclopedia of Local Knowledge*, supported by the Canada Council, SSHRC, and Miawpukek First Nation). The first exhibition of the bilingual artwork for that project was in Miawpukek (Conne River), then at Grenfell Art Gallery in Corner Brook. An exhibition is planned for Eastern Edge here in St John's this coming fall. Is that a routine? I just keep busy! **Have current circumstances challenged your routine, or re-directed your focus?** I have struggled with anxiety throughout my life. I have found this period in time, these strange days, really hard to get my head in the creative space. Hard to grasp the full extent of what is going on and what the future may hold, what some sort of a new normalcy might be. I have been busy catching up with unfinished projects around the house, culling my space in the house and workshop (shed). I've been baking and cooking more than usual. I eat way too much of my bread and I'm pretty sure someone has broken into our house and altered my clothes cause they're fitting way to snug. I received an ArtsNL grant the past session to finally get a website up and running so that has taken up some time. I've been working on my regalia, doing lots of beading, and now that spring has sort of arrived, I started working on the moose hide from the moose I got almost two years ago. I have plenty of things each day to keep me busy, most days there's not enough hours. I miss tattooing a lot. Most everyone in my bubble has fresh ink now; I may even give myself something new. I miss working in film too. Its secure pay for a time and it's the people I miss most I think. **What are you working on now?** Currently I'm focusing on getting this moose hide worked and smoke-tanned. Making painting panels, graining litho stones, and sharpening my pencils, mixing ink and prepping paper. Clearing baggage is important right now. **What (artistic-wise or not) do you hope to get up to this summer?** I'd like to burst my bubble if that is ever possible. I have a garden where I grow a few things for food. Launch my website. Try to enjoy some nice weather if we get any. New dancing moccasins for powwow next year because there won't be any powwow this year. I'll spend time with my mom and family, stay positive, be happy, and not worry so much! 





