Temporal Re-Imaginings retraces the tracks artists have left behind as they traverse temporal territories and other worlds. Their works shift across histories, memory and myth, inviting us to question boundaries where moments in time exist in constant dialogue. How we, as Indigenous people, understand time, how we remember the past and tell stories about it are all highly contested and cultural acts.

Temporal territories

In Carl Beam’s *Burying the Ruler*, the artist stands in the sands of the Dominican Republic – near the site of first European arrival in 1492 – and buries a school ruler, a Western and linear tool of measurement to highlight the potential limitations of linear thinking, and perhaps encourages us to critically address the imposition of systems of thought and conceptions of self-rule.

Beam’s *Sitting Bull and Einstein* parallels the lives of two individuals who enacted revolutionary shifts in thinking and in history: Sitting Bull, the Lakota chief who led the resistance against the United States government; and Albert Einstein, the physicist who challenged established understandings of time as an absolute, and theorized rather, that time is instead variable and relative.¹

Across history

Meryl McMaster’s *Victoria* explores the artist’s bi-cultural heritage (Indigenous/European) by engaging in an extraordinary liminal reality. Rather than viewing her identity as two opposing cultures in historical conflict, she fearlessly transforms it into a site of synergistic strength.²

Mary Longman’s *Hills Never Lie* makes visible the layering of inherited difficult histories. Viewers witness the transformation of the Lebret cemetery site in Fort Qu’Appelle, Saskatchewan, by shifting photographically from the past to the present; yet two visual elements remain powerfully consistent – the hills and the persons standing wrapped blankets – the active and ongoing Indigenous presence on the land.

³

Resurgence is dancing on our turtle’s back; it is visioning and dancing new realities and worlds into existence.”

Leanne Simpson, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer

Alexandra Kahsennioiio Nahwegahbow is Anishinaabe and Kanien’kehaka, and a member of Whitefish River First Nation with roots in Kahnawake. She grew up just outside of Ottawa and is currently pursuing her PhD in Cultural Mediations in the Institute of Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture at Carleton University. She has a strong interest in stories, oral history and Indigenous art and material culture, and believes that creativity, art and processes of imagining and art-making have the ability to change the world.

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Many artists access and journey the past through family memory and intergenerational relationships that span across time. In each case, familial roots provide a means by which the artists understand their current positions as Indigenous peoples and artmakers.

Marianne Nicolson’s Portrait of Am’yaxid evokes images of a Northwest Coast Kwakwaka’wakw ceremonial house and central beaded/button work dancing apron to memorialize the life of her younger brother. In place of a central family crest, Nicholson includes another significant marker of identity, a family photograph. Third generation artist Goota Ashoona echoes the renowned skills of her father in Kiawak Ashoona, Inuit Carver, My Father; and Rosalie Favell likewise includes portraits of family members in her work, Navigating By Our Grandmothers, and pays tribute to the guidance of the older generations.

Telling Creation Stories is an empowering act that mirrors our own self re-creation and resurgence. In different versions of the story, a powerful being or person – Nanabozho (Ojibway), Weesahkay Jack (Cree), and Sky Woman (Iroquois), among others – envisions a mediatory terrestrial world of land between the realms of sky and water for humans, animals and other beings to call home. A small handful of earth was gathered from the bottom of the world of water, placed on the canoe, raft, or back of the Great Turtle, and in moving around that small bit of earth, the animals and beings “dance[d] a new world into existence.”

Both Roy Kakegamic’s Weesahkay Jack and the Great Flood, and Hannah Claus’ clouds return to the ongoing creation and re-creation of the world. The dreamlike quality of clouds invites us to imagine what Sky Woman saw as she fell from the Sky World to create the world in which we now live.

In a chronological mash-up of visual forms that make permeable the fixed boundaries between the ‘traditional’ and the ‘contemporary,’ Barry Ace fuses glass bead work with a modern painted aesthetic, innovatively transforming and creating new translations of Anishinaabe visual language. In the same vein, Lance Belanger juxtaposes media from the natural and technological worlds, drawing complementary visual parallels between the intricate metal computer chips and shimmery sealskin.