



**2019 SICC ē-micimināyakik Gathering**  
**Museums, Cultural Centres, Archives, Interpretive Centres & Libraries**  
**Panel 4**  
**Sherry Farrell Racette & Naomi Johnson**

**Title:** Indigenous Curation

**Presenters:** Sherry Farrell Racette & Naomi Johnson

**Biography:** Sherry Farrell Racette (Algonquin/Metis/Irish) is a curator, painter and textile artist. She has done extensive research in archives and museum collections in North America and beyond. Her principle areas of work are Indigenous visual culture and history, issues of representation in museums and public history, photography, and traditional media in contemporary art. Her curatorial practice seeks to create dialogue between historic and contemporary artists with an emphasis on retrieving women's voices and recovering aesthetic knowledge. She is currently teaching in Art History/Cultures of Display in the Visual Arts Department, Faculty of Media, Art and Performance at the University of Regina.

**Biography:** Naomi Johnson is a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Bear clan from Six Nations with several years' experience as a curator, art administrator, and community arts facilitator. Naomi has a BFA hon., Visual Arts from York University and a diploma in Cultural Resource Management from the University of Victoria. Currently, she serves as the Artistic Director at the Woodland Cultural Centre, programming performances annually as part of the "Tehonkieron:nions" (They are Entertaining) series. She regularly contributes to Woodland's exhibition schedule, recent notable shows include: Origins (2013), Kent Monkman (2014), and InterNations/InterSections, a commissioned exhibition that premiered at Fort York beneath the Gardner Expressway as part of Panamania Arts & Culture Celebration, and Planet IndigenUs (2015). Her work at the Woodland Cultural Centre has allowed Naomi to build and foster many partnerships with other galleries and like-organizations. In 2016, the WCC in partnership with the University of Waterloo and Native Women in the Arts mounted the Mush Hole Project - a immersive, site-specific art and performance installation within the walls and on the grounds of the former Mohawk Institute, Indian Residential School. The Mush Hole Project included 30 artists, 12 collaborating organizations, as well as the guidance of several former residential school survivors. As part of the curatorial collective for the Mush Hole Project, Naomi participated in the selection of several works from an open call. The Mush Hole Project also allowed Naomi to display her own piece Ohen:ton Karihwatehkwen (2016). Recognizing that she is fortunate to be working within and for her community Naomi takes great pleasure and is honoured to promote Onkwehón:we artists across many disciplines, creating opportunities and increasing appreciation for their artistic works.

**Abstract:** Sherry will talk about the first time she traveled to Britain seeking her material heritage. She found herself alone with one of the oldest surviving Indigenous garments. She had seen it in The Spirit Sings, a troubled exhibition that marked the beginning-of-the-end of old school anthropology and art history's grip on our belongings. It hadn't been returned to its glass case and she had an opportunity to touch it, to peer at the tiny stitches, and see a thread of continuity between the woman who had sewn it and the women who taught me to sew. Since then, she has come to see visits to museum collections as opportunities to learn, to retrieve knowledge that we've lost or forgotten, and to have conversations with artists through the careful study of their creations. In her curatorial practice, she has had opportunities to position these works in dialogue with contemporary work, as a way to honour our collective legacies, to claim our relatives and acknowledge our debt – as contemporary artists – to the resilient artists who came before.



**Abstract:** Naomi will facilitate a discussion centered on best practices when it comes to Indigenous programming and curation from an Indigenous perspective and within an Indigenous space. She will present examples from seven years' worth of experience as the Artistic Director and curator of contemporary art at the Woodland Cultural Centre, the site of a former residential school that has been serving as a Cultural Centre for almost 50 years.

**Learning Outcomes:** Participants will know:

- About the care the creators have taken with their work;
- About personal experiences in curating old Indigenous properties; and,
- The care involved in properly honoring the legacy, make ties to the past and acknowledge those who have come before us.