

RE-CENTERING MARGINS 2ND ANNUAL:  
**Creative Residency 2020-21**

Writings by  
Elysse Cloma  
Haliehana Stepetin  
Christian Vistan

Edited by Emily Dundas Oke

Dance West Network gratefully acknowledges that our work is situated on the traditional, ancestral and unceded Coast Salish territory of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) and x̣ʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.

Dance West Network aimerait reconnaître que cet événement aura lieu sur les terres ancestrales et non cédés des peuples Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl̓ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tseil-Waututh) and x̣ʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam).



*connecting artists and communities in motion*

Dance West Network / Made in BC (MiBC) - Dance on Tour

## RE-CENTERING / MARGINS, 2ND ANNUAL CREATIVE RESIDENCY 20-21

Re - Centering/ Margins: Creative Residency provides opportunities and professional development for three emerging dance artists of colour to continue their creative processes and create contemporary performance works.

All applicants receive an artist fee, mentorship, professional development, access to free studio space with showcase opportunities for their in-process dance works.

Each of these emerging artists - Katie Cassady, Joshua Ongcol, and Jessica McMann - were asked to invite established artists to mentor them with creative feedback, and were also asked to invite a writer of colour to accompany their creative process.

Mentors include: Julianne Chapple (Katie Cassady), Lee Su-Feh and David MacMurray Smith (Joshua Ongcol), and Rulan Tangen (Jessica McMann).

Edited by Emily Dundas Oke, the three writers - Haliehana 'Alaḡum Ayagaa' Stepetin (writer for Jessica McMann), Christian Vistan (writer for Katie Cassady), Elysse Cloma (writer for Joshua Ongcol) - crafted these beautiful responses to the dance artists works.

Writers were asked to connect with the artists creative processes, while keeping their own voice, to create essays that support different kinds of reflection, as well as creative engagement and documentation of these new dance works.

We hope you enjoy the essays that have resulted.

Jane Gabriels, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Dance West Network/MiBC  
Producer, Re-Centering/Margins creative residency

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Writing in Service, and being Gifted in Return

I begin with a question that finds many answers in these three essays: How can writing serve the evasiveness of moving form as they collide and inform each other while in flux? The Re-Centering Margins Creative Residency, with a spirit of generosity (and in much more eloquent words), asks just this. Jane Gabriels prompts project writers: consider your writing a gift to the dancers.

With care, Haliehana Stepetin models such an approach. Constructing a gift at once compassionate and critical, her essay was created alongside Jessica McMann's beguiling (the) land as "an exchange of creation and gratitude." It is a gift, also, for us, as she re-centers narratives of desire—discarding the ever-invasive seeds of damage-centered narratives that aim to propagate on this much loved, much loving land. To witness the exchange of this gifting as it lives here, within distinct practices and towards sovereign futures, is a privilege. Within these times, it is also rare. It seems we scramble to be within community, to feel held by community, as we grow further distanced during isolation.

In writing this note, I am reluctant to write a "pandemic piece." Creative practices, and the communities that foster them, can be spaces of vulnerability. For many, movement and the collaborative constellations of friends and accomplices it supports offer refuge, escapism, and a vehicle for the arrival of a future sense. These past months—year(s)—I've attempted to keep this sacred space separate—to not allow the corroding tendrils COVID-19 to subjugate such aspects of my life as I shut the door on the world outside to better enter the time space of movement. Yet, the totality of this pandemic has shown itself. We brush up against it in every aspect of our lives. Grief is brought along and within each of our wanderings.

We are reminded that many have continually and already survived—been surviving—totalizing crises for some time.

I am grateful, too, for Elysse Cloma showing me that the refuge of friendship extends throughout such "future-induced ache." As we are simultaneously distanced from ourselves, lost to the void of the buffering zoom call, both Cloma and Christian Vistan pull us back to the immediacy of the body and the shared intimacies its practices invoke. In writing alongside Joshua Ongcol's practice, Cloma outlines the possibilities of dance as a linguistic practice. By introducing us to a collision of writing and dancing practices which transit through Tagalog, we see how writing dance may outline granular relations, decidedly situated as personal and historic, yet unfixable. In speaking with Christian Vistan about his text, he made clear his priority that the text should never be confused as to come from anywhere but his own body.

In a time when we've lost all sense of time, I gratefully accept these invitations to come back to myself with an awareness of such distinct positionalities. I thank the writers for building entryways into practices we've had to encounter through indirect passages (slow-loading videos, remnants of scores, and shared recollections). I thank the dancers for knowing, before many of us, the body does not oppose language, and the writers for bringing the body, their own bodies, into the work. If writing is a gift, how necessary that we offer ourselves to it, and what a joy to be brought back to ourselves in the process.

With gratitude,

Emily Dundas Oke

## Lakbay: An Invitation to Witness

ELYSSE CLOMA  
DANCER: JOSHUA ONGCOL

Video stills by Han Pham

### Dust

By midsummer 2020, I realized I had begun to memorize the evening rhythms of my neighbourhood from going on daily walks: sprinklers chattering, the mutter of children's giggles in the distance, orange sky slowly melting over the edge of the earth at the westward end of the block. These scenes repeated, eventually becoming almost indiscernible from one another—trapped in a strange void of Pandemic Time.

In one of these moments, I lingered on the sidewalk and watched the remaining fragments of daylight creep through the smudgy window of a brown Cadillac Supreme. They created strong beams that shone and reflected off the dark leather interiors as the car sat parked peacefully on Columbia Street. Thousands of kinetic particles of illuminated dust sparkled inside of each thread of light, orbiting around each other like a tiny constellation, or a baton filled with glitter. Inside the sun's rays they looked so tangible, but if I dared reach into the crack in the car's window in an attempt to hold them, I knew that the mischievous specks would dodge my fingers and move around frantically instead, for they exist so faintly in the air that even the slightest disruption—like the wind from my hand waving close by—would send them into a flurry in order to maintain their freedom from my obtuse effort to touch them.

As I walked away from the Cadillac, I rubbed my fingers softly into my palms as if crumbling dust inside of them, letting it slip through the cracks of my fingers, away from my grasp. The nostalgia sparked by the sight of a vintage car can make the present time seem somehow inadequate, and gazing into that Cadillac made me ponder the name for the opposite notion, for when you ache desperately for the future.

The next time I experienced that future-induced ache was almost half a year later, when Josh and I were in the studio together for the first time, reconnecting after months of separation. In the spirit of play, Josh began swaying to a crooning orchestral waltz while holding onto himself or, perhaps, an invisible lover. It was an act of self-romance and a radical pursuit of pleasure. The reverberation of the strings and the turn of Josh's hips dripped with a sense of longing, of wanting to be like little pieces of gossamer floating in a sunbeam.



### Seed

When Josh tells me he's exploring how to be a tree, we talk about the urge to be grounded in our Filipino ancestry, to explore our rootedness and our connectedness with the land. In his movement, he starts as a seed, watered, slowly emerging out of the ground, searching for light and the right kind of nurturing.

I always wonder if seeds want to germinate as much as we want them to. I think that sowing seeds is a major act of faith since we do it with a sincere hope for the future and the belief in new life. Seeds show us that one way to grow is to do so in the dark, out of sight and buried underground. Through cultivating them, we learn lessons in the discipline of patience.

As Josh's roots wait to come to light, they start to become stronger and more assured, until his feet are planted wide and firm, and stomping, evoking both street dance and ceremony. Then a startling cry erupts from deep within his core, like the moment a seed breaks out of its shell and sprouts its first proud stem above the soil line. The sound of his voice is strong, from the loob. The voice is the tree that grew from the original seed, now echoing with desire and decaying into the quiet corners of the room.

### Tenemos

I can see Josh from my vantage point on the studio floor as I try to take note of the places in the room, and the gestures he returns to, like a deep squat or a rolling shoulder that meets his neck, followed by his head, which begins climbing upwards in a spiral motion like a vine on a trellis. At first, he appears just to the right of me, then forays closer and to my left, then he goes backwards while staying in the same horizontal orientation. On the ground beneath him is an invisible right triangle of imaginary tape, like a small *tenemos* carved out specifically for those movements.

*Tenemos* is a Greek term for a sacred place, one that is allotted for deities and worship. It's a place we often return to, that we revere, or that we are obsessed with. I wonder if a *tenemos* can be a place we go to instinctively, or if it's a place we visit repeatedly without consciousness. I start to think that my *tenemos* within Josh's process has been the act of trying to make sense of dance through my words.

Often, dancing is seen as of the body, and writing is seen as of the mind, yet writing is as embodied as dance, and dance is as mindful as writing. Together, Josh and I navigate the space between our respective mediums in order to understand how to describe movement and how to notate dance. In my search for our shared language, I find the presence required to witness Josh, which is less about casting my projections about the narrative of his dance and more about holding a space for the intimacies that we feel when we are together.

A quick glance at my Facebook friendship history with Josh says that we connected in December 2015, though I couldn't tell you the story of how we met. My memory of the moment our paths crossed has become totally obscured by other instances, like shows at Red Gate or dinners with friends. In fact, it's difficult to remember a time where he didn't exist in my orbit. Also, there has never been a time where our sense of *kapwa* has gone unacknowledged. We have always bonded over a joint purpose to serve our Filipinoness through our art practice. When I am watching him, when I hear and listen to his voice, when I mirror it all through words, these are acts of love and sacred expressions of our *kapwa*.







### Maarte

Josh says his tendency to cycle through movements has looked like gravitating towards new ideas rather than venturing into the depths of recurring ones. To identify the pattern, his loved ones and mentors tell him that he tends to get bored easily. To break the pattern, he begins improvising with increasing intention, giving himself permission to explore his impulses and letting curiosity take over within limit, asking “What happens if I’m sad and express sadness in a fast way? What happens if I do this one movement and elongate it?” (Ongcol, 2021)

Becoming more deliberate and specific with practicing intentionality allows Josh to begin to magnify things like a scientist, to revisit movements again and again, to evaluate why they occur and the sensations they correspond with. When approached this way, choreography becomes less about following prescriptive rules and more about expressing movement shaped by intentions, sensations, and decisions. This allows Josh to intimate movement to the viewer in a way that invites them to access their own kind of understanding.

Josh is maarte, a Tagalog word for: being ensconced in Nina Simone’s *Feeling Good*, the dizzying effects of quickly panning camera angles, the deep blue lights that give Wong Kar-Wai’s films their iconic moods, grooving to Funkadelic, and expressing the fierce duality of being a queer, beautiful man twirling in a long, flouncy skirt. Maarte is about understanding how to access your joy and embracing your agency to be deeply dramatic. When you are maarte, you aren’t obligated to craft choreography that is punitive or dictated by red lines.

### Lakbay

Dance has always been a language for Josh, one he uses his body to write with, to express difficult emotions, to explore the things that cannot be expressed with words alone. He dances to find ways to understand himself and what he’s experiencing. This is a survival strategy that started in high school, but now he’s being called to move away from processing only pain through dance to explore other possibilities for his practice—embodying the meaning of lakbay, meaning journey, or more specifically, a journey that you take away from your usual environment to understand yourself better.

Using dance to re-learn language, Josh reconnects with himself through his mother tongue of Tagalog. Once again, like a seedling, Josh emerges. He finds his roots in the most elemental aspects of language learning, like saying his name and reciting the alphabet. Each letter becomes language for movements, which repeat until they become muscle memory and the words internalized. They sound more assured every time, with Josh’s voice growing louder and clearer with each cycle of the movement.

In *Lakbay*, Josh uses Tagalog to re-introduce himself to us as a settler on stolen lands. He is illuminated and liberated, and the trees are his witness, as are we. Tagalog speakers may understand the words, so *Lakbay* exists within our cognition, while others are invited to memorize the rhythms of the sound of the words, to interpret the gestures made by a maarte, a dancing body for themselves.



### Endnotes

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## Dance is a Language of the Land

HALIEHANA STEPETIN (UNANGAX)  
DANCER: JESSICA MCMANN  
(CREE/NÊHIYAWAK, COWESSESS FIRST NATIONS)

Photos by Jessica McMann

### Desire-Centered Stories with, by, and for Indigenous Peoples

Eve Tuck's (2009) call to suspend damage-centered narratives in Indigenous communities considers that documentation of only damage continues oppression, fulfills negative stereotypes and fetishizations, and perpetuates undesirable representation. Damage-centered narratives presume to represent a complete story, but our stories are much more complex with densities of experience that emphasize decolonial futures invested in our "survivance" (Vizenor 1998, 2008). I understand Tuck's (2009) call as an invitation to (re)think the ways that Indigenous Peoples might tell our stories from our own perspectives to self-determine our futures. As self-determining Peoples, it is our responsibility to shift the stories told and untold from the colonially based "on" and "about" method to a "with, by, and for" approach (Atalay 2012). Telling stories with, by, and for Indigenous communities refuses Western and academic power dynamics that situate Indigenous communities as sites of extraction to an approach of co-creating research on Indigenous terms while centering Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Co-creating research following a with, by, and for approach is an act of epistemic justice. I create this piece with Jessica McMann (Cree/Nêhiyawak, Cowessess First Nations) who created the dance film *beguiling (the) land* that invites this response, alongside (by) her and Elijah Wells (Blackfoot, Kainai), who co-filmed the piece, as my humble attempt at a gift for Jessica.

I write this piece as an extension of Jessica's desire-centered story and as an accompaniment to her journey through the Re-Centering / Margins 2nd annual Creative Residency. Jessica and I met in 2018 at the University of California Riverside Indigenous Choreographer's Conference. We gravitated towards each other for reasons I believe are revealed in her Re-Centering / Margins

performance and in this very writing. For starters, we are both Indigenous dancers trained in our respective dance forms. I do not use words such as "traditional" or "contemporary" to characterize my own dance repertoire. I refuse this binary that assumes "traditional" dance as a pre-colonial legacy from some "pure" Indigenous past. This logic might also consider "contemporary" Indigenous dance as void of the values, ethics, and protocols upheld in "traditional" dance. Of course, this not the case. Our dance legacies have always expanded, transformed, and continued. Such characterization of our dance acts as an "enduring structure" of settler colonialism (Kauanui 2016) that seeks to erase Indigenous Peoples in the present and future should we waiver from upholding traits that mark our dance as "traditional." Jessica and I are both exploring what it means to continue creating and expanding our own Indigenous dance forms that we were initially trained in. *beguiling (the) land* is such an expansion, where we witness elements of Jingle Dress dancing alongside multisensory experiences of place that map her dance practices on the land in new and important ways.

I ground this writing in Tuck's (2009) call to suspend damage-centered narratives because I believe that Jessica's performance embodies this call through sharing her own desire-centered story. Jessica wanted her residency to be about connection. She shared with me that her past performances tended to start from stories of disconnection, racism, or removals driven by colonial governments such as adoption which can lead to feelings of unbelonging. Indeed, our stories are not whole without also acknowledging the ways that colonial legacies have attempted to write our histories through severing Indigenous relations from lands and kin. These stories are certainly important to understand and share, but Jessica's approach to the Re-Centering / Margins Creative Residency takes a different turn. She embraces connection, refuses feelings of unbelonging from an upbringing marked by removal, and she returns home to "(re)write" and "(re)right" (Risling Baldy 2018, 7) her story. There is tangible power, "felt" power (Million 2009), in this paradigm shift of creation that we witness and

experience in *beguiling (the) land*.

### Dance is a Language of the Land

"Survivance . . . means a [N]ative sense of presence, the motion of sovereignty and the will to resist dominance. Survivance is not just survival but also resistance, not heroic or tragic, but the tease of tradition, and my sense of survivance outwits dominance and victimry." - Gerald Vizenor (1998, 93)



The sounds of a Jingle Dress, dancing superimposed on a sun setting over lands that always have been and always will be Indigenous lands, echo sentiments of Vizenor's notion of survivance (1998, 2008). Jessica invites us to experience what survivance means to her, what it can mean for us, and what it can mean for her future of creating dance grounded in desire-centered approaches.

It is no coincidence that Jessica roots this residency in Jingle Dress dancing as a thematic nexus amidst a pandemic when the Re-Centering / Margins Creative Residency would typically transpire in a studio space in what is known as Vancouver, British Columbia (Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh homelands/waters). The Jingle Dress Dance is known as a healing dance among Native Peoples who practice it. When I asked Jessica, who has an expansive repertoire of Indigenous dance training, to explain why she chose to center Jingle Dress dancing in this performance she said, "For some reason it just felt right to bring my dress," and that this dance was a language she could speak with the land. Dance is a language. Somatic movement combined with rhythmic sounds tell stories. Jingles on a dress dance to life and collectively chime to generate music that offers transcending sensations. Jessica verbs herself into being in place through (re)connecting and (re)awakening, communicating her return home through dance.



Dance is a language of the land. Jessica continued, “The dress echoed through the valleys. You could hear the birds talking, the crows, the ravens, speaking to it. It just felt right.” The Jingle Dress has agency to actualize healing communication. So, too, do more-than-human relatives who respond to the dress, enlivened by her dancing. As an act of Indigenous diplomacy, when Jessica arrives at the Cypress Hills, she announced herself to the beings of that place in Nêhiyawêwin. She said, “When you speak the language you feel like the land is answering.” Announcing herself to her homelands in Nêhiyawêwin invites engagement where exchange becomes possible. Jessica performs protocols that facilitate relationships of reciprocity grounded in Indigenous understandings of diplomacy and respect (Stark 2017, 250).

beguiling (the) land offers a story of reconnection to place that transcends time and space, allowing witnesses to experience Jessica’s homeland beside her. Where seconds turn to minutes, we hear the rhythmic beats of the Jingle Dress become the rustling of leaves on trees filled with singing birds swaying on branches in the wind. For a moment, we can almost sense the wind on our skin. We can almost feel the crunch of snow beneath our feet, leftover from the winter snowfall. We can almost smell spring blooming to life. We can almost be there, lying beside her as we take in the directions of place: above to the sky, below to the land, around us among more-than-human kin. We, too, are transported to beguile the Cypress Hills.



### **Beguiling the Cypress Hills**

Powerful undertones echo throughout Jessica’s piece, calling for #LandBack and the visibility of Indigenous Peoples on Indigenous lands that experience settler colonial erasures of the legacy of Indigenous presence in place. Consider the title of her piece, beguiling (the) land. Beguile has a duplicity

in meaning, evoking a density of sensing land. Jessica’s piece relays this duplicity, this density, through filming dance in what is known as the Cypress Hills. Parts of the Cypress Hills are originally Cree/Nêhiyawak territory, to which she has ancestral ties. The Cypress Hills is both a place that one can beguile, or spend time pleasantly in, with the creation of parks made possible only through the removal of the Original Peoples of that place. The latter part of this “pleasant” beguiling reminds us of the multiplicity in meaning. To pass time pleasantly in the Cypress Hills without regard for the history of removal and attempted erasure of Indigenous Peoples who have always stewarded the land, is to embrace a deceptive settler story of place.



This film is a dance of (re)connection. Why seeking re-connection is necessary must also be included in this story. Returning home, a place with a history of settler colonial land theft, is a healing journey. Jessica said, “Our lands were seized deceitfully through treaties and now we may never get them back.” Settler legislation attempted to sever Indigenous relationships to place through treaties. This legislation continued through forced removals of Indigenous Peoples in their once expansive and mobile territories to fixed Reserves/Reservations with arbitrary borders for Indigenous containment, settler surveillance, and for the deceitful transformation of Indigenous homelands/waters into settler constructs of “property.” The Cypress Hills are a shared homeland among Cree/Nêhiyawak and Blackfoot Peoples. Jessica asserts, “For us, it’s our land.” Just as the Cypress Hills is a place of meaning and connection for Cree/Nêhiyawak and Blackfoot, Jessica reminds us that it is also home to more-than-human relatives such as Bison. Through film, the many beings who know the Cypress Hills as home are included and become important agents in telling the story of the land—disrupting the tendency to tell anthropocentric stories.





### (Re)Mapping a Cree/Nêhiyawak Place-World

I understand Jessica's film as a project of "(re)mapping" (Goeman 2013) Indigenous survivance in place and as an act of what Keith Basso (1996) calls "place-worlding" (13). Desire-centered stories in places marked by histories of deceit and removal recognize the ways that places become made and (re)made through relationships. Jessica dances a place-world into being with intention to center land, sky, more-than-human kin, weather, and cosmos, while strategically removing most of the human body from film. This perspective allows us to experience the dimensionality and density of place from the body with emphasis on everything surrounding and sustaining our human existence, including the dancing of the Jingle Dress. *beguiling (the) land* is an exercise in reclamation, an embodiment of self-determination, and an exchange of reciprocity—just as this writing is an exchange of creation and gratitude. Jessica performs a deeply intimate return, questioning the fixity of migration or removal. Indigenous Peoples have an undeniable intimate familiarity with spatial violence and migrations that include, but are not limited to, forced removal from our homelands/waters, theft of our homelands/waters, and exploitation and extraction of our homelands/waters for capitalist consumption. Jessica said, "Cree/Nêhiyawak People once traversed freely throughout the Cypress Hills," as in, they were not solely confined to Reserves/Reservations demarcated through settler legislation. They moved. Freely. Across time and space following seasonal migration patterns.

*beguiling (the) land* is a migration of returning. Jessica (re)configures "migration" in literal and figurative contexts beyond the physical or colonial acts of displacement that led to undesirable migration away from Indigenous homelands. Migration is (re)contextualized to include moving toward survivance through connection in place. Migration, (re)articulated in Jessica's performance, emphasizes movement away from trauma towards sustainable futures. This migration is sacred, just as dancing through the Jingle Dress to invite healing for Peoples and places is, or the experience of returning home and (re)kindling relationships to place, or the way land and animals welcome us in a warm embrace when we enter their spaces with

respect and diplomacy, honoring their agency and self-determination, or the way the land responds with gratitude to Indigenous languages spoken by Peoples belonging to that place.

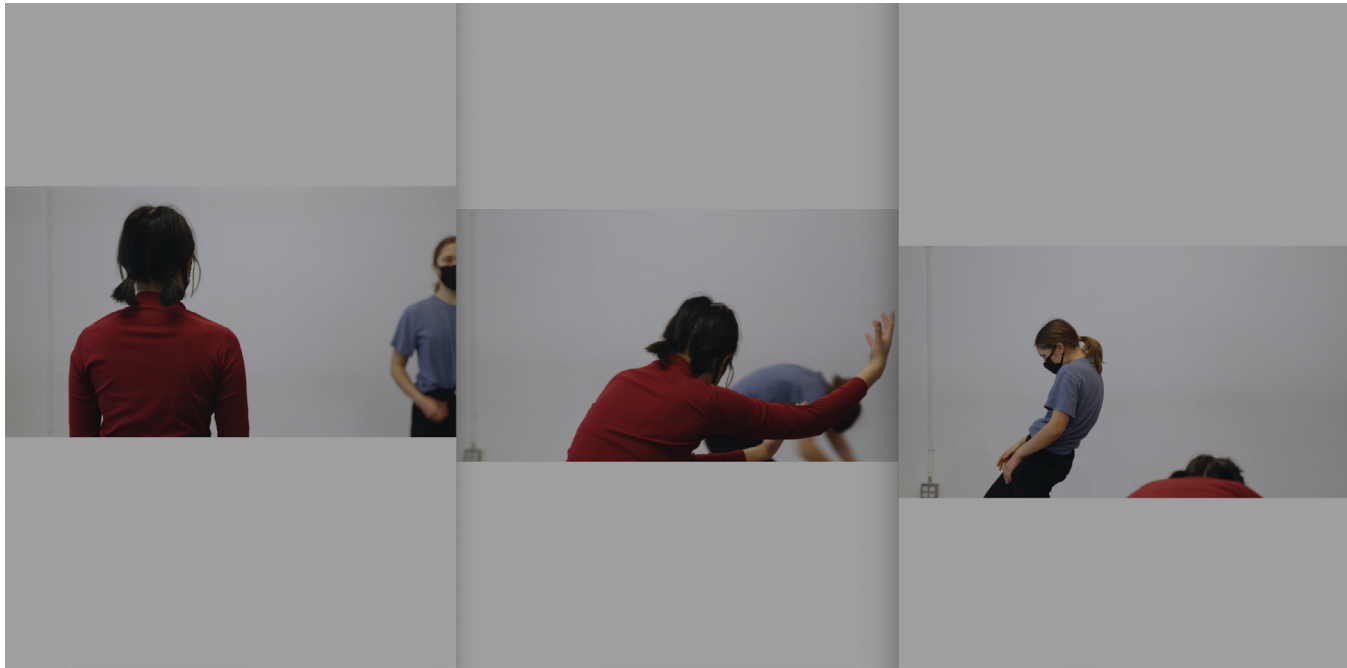
### Returns

Jessica's performance embodies the power of kinship and memory as a connecting force despite settler colonial desires for Indigenous erasure and removal. Her dance film is a sensory experience that invokes affect through moments, movement, and sounds on the land. She captures a human experience of survivance with the land among kin as an intimate sensory encounter. Sensing place in this way invites change and transformation within us. We experience the land in our bodies. The land dances. Branches sway in the wind. Birds have songs to sing. Bison share their cadence with us. Our heart beats to the same drum. We share a breath. This is how we belong.

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## Notes on II

CHRISTIAN VISTAN

DANCER: KATIE CASSADY

Photos by Susanna Barlow, collage by Katie Cassidy

My stillness is the un-moving thing in the room. Tasked with writing about the movement un-folding around me, I watch Sarah, Sophie and Katie rehearse—talking through the dance and interacting from a distance. From my corner of the studio, I became aware of how I sat. How I held myself.

Anchored. A leg asleep. Heel hole.

My spine and shoulders lift up. I feel the moments of contact between my sit and the ground. Shifting my weight, I rock. Slow shimmies. My butt on the floor.

My back finds the studio mirror. I lean. Layers of my clothes compress against my reflection. The morning light melts the foggy dew on the window. They breathe. My pen moves. Almost frictionless. Next page. My notes tumble forward.

It's hard to hear in the studio

*shooow*

*shhwoohhkk*

I mishear the lyrics to the song

*I don't want to settle down, I just want to have fun*

*I don't want to settle alone, I just want to chew gum*

*shwoo* mouth sweeps sounds

*shhooowhkkkk*

Katie made *sswwhookkhh* sounds describing a wiping gesture. Her forearms sway sideways. Their lines become an arc, wiping an imaginary surface. This flows into a step.

The dance was rendered this way, stringing lines and movements one after another. Their movements shape these words. Applying language to these gestures, I write phrases. I notice the direction of each action and the body's orientation in these short compound sentences.

*Sarah opens up.*

In this space, phrases turn from something said to something done to something written down.

The rehearsal corresponds with the speed of thoughts transforming. It runs at the pace of Sophie, Sarah and Katie's thinking together. I write to track my thinking alongside theirs. They find their paths, moving through thoughts and through trajectories in the space. They perform the phrases. Dancing sentences. I watch them change their minds mid motion, moving forward, stopping, back, starting again. I write and rewrite along to the end of these sentences, to the spine of the notebook, the edge of the page, across the room.

Sarah opens up

Comes down

gathers repeat

Sophie rolls

The whole body

nods hold

The whole body

holds the roll

The whole body

breathes a nod

They nod together  
rolling agreement

The sound of holding  
pulses

How do you hold

What's next to you  
What's in front of you

Sophie and Sarah are dancing, feeling and thinking, in parallel. Squares taped on the floor demarcate space and appropriate distances. Lines do not touch, instead their eyes meet. The mirror in front of them holds their bodies parallel, too. I watched them dance side by side and simultaneously. Looking. They were momentary mirrors, seeing, seemingly mimicking, reflecting each other. In parallel, they try on each other's dancing. Embodying the other's movement. They meet in re-action. They touch in how they respond to other's movement in their body.

In Sophie's body  
Sarah's spinning  
buries into the floor

Sophie draws her circumference  
Knee folded to the centre  
Spins  
becomes searching

Sarah glistens  
listens  
elbow  
near ear  
below  
push down

I wonder about something Katie said  
*touch as an inevitability*

*in dance*

Sophie sticks stuck  
Sarah lets her hand limp

Drag pull  
Follow  
what Sarah thinks  
how Sophie feels  
Imagine

The two dance

in conversation

gazes  
greet  
exchanges  
checks in  
asks questions  
hears  
touches

From a distance, two lights illuminate the back wall of the stage. Sophie and Sarah's movements find their shadows between them. They see each other. Looking at their hands. They hold their reflection in their palms. Leaning in. Touch face. Till their shadows overlap and come together.

Sarah's forearm extends. From her mouth, a word, a wrist, a touch.

Sophie reaches out and returns the gesture.

# CREATIVE RESIDENCY 2020-21

## B I O G R A P H I E S

**Elysse Cloma** is a second generation Filipino-Canadian settler based on unceded x̣ṃəθkwəỵəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) territories. Some of Elysse's past work includes launching re:asian magazine, an online platform for diasporic Asian voices across Turtle Island, and organizing with The Future is you and me to support BIPOC, self-identifying women, non-binary, and gender diverse artists. She has also worked in communications and programming in the arts and nonprofit sector. Elysse's art practice explores identity through writing, sound, and music.



**ELYSSE**  
Photo by Tin Lorica

### HALIEHANA

Photo by Jaiden Willetto



Haliehana Alagum Ayagaa Stepetin is Unangaʔ from the Qigiigun Tribe and was born and raised in her homelands/waters in the village of Akutan, Alaska. She weaves together her transdisciplinary experience deeply shaped by the Unangaʔ subsistence cosmology she was raised within as an artist and scholar, Unangaʔ dancer, choreographer, performance artist, poet, and activist. Haliehana is a PhD Candidate in Native American Studies at the University of California Davis with a designated emphasis in Studies in Performance and Practice. She has a Master of Arts in Cultural Studies from the University of Washington Bothell (2018) and a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies with a concentration on Russia (2016) from the University of Alaska Anchorage, where she serves as Instructor of Alaska Native Studies. Her research engages Native North Pacific perspectives on food sovereignty and environmental justice in dialogue with Unangaʔ subsistence performance(s) and sustainability protocols as interventions to the ongoing climate crisis.

**Christian Vistan** is an artist, writer and curator from the peninsula now known as Bataan, Philippines, currently living and working on the unceded and traditional lands of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam and Tsawwassen First Nations. They make paintings, texts and collaborations that describe a hybridity in form, exploring notions of surface, sound, place and memory. Their work is embodied in their inquiries into identity, lineage and the materials they work with: water, paint and language among others.

Their artwork has been exhibited at Artspeak, Unit 17 and Hearth Garage in Canada; mild climate and Atlanta Contemporary in the United States; and Kamias Triennial and Green Papaya in the Philippines. Their writing has been published by The Capilano Review, Canadian Art and Haunt Projects. Their curatorial projects and exhibitions have been presented at Vancouver Art Gallery, Libby Leshgold Gallery, Centre A and Vancouver Art/Book Fair in Vancouver and Nanaimo Art Gallery on Vancouver Island.

Recently, Vistan and artist, friend and collaborator Aubin Kwon started dreams comma delta, a space for artist projects and exhibitions located in their family home in Delta, BC.



**CHRISTIAN**  
Photo by Nadya Isabella

### EMILY

Photo courtesy of the artist



**Emily Dundas Oke** is an emerging curator and interdisciplinary artist. She works between mediums to navigate conceptions and interventions of public spaces, often employing photography and installation to address complicated embodied relationships to land. As a 2018 graduate of Philosophy and Visual Art (BA) from Thompson Rivers University, she has been the recipient of numerous awards including the Ken Lepin Award of Excellence. She is an alumni of the TRU Indigenous Knowledge Makers program, where she developed research addressing complicated relationships to land as they are embodied within the performative work of contemporary Indigenous artists. Her philosophical research in epistemology guides her interest in works that deal with the production and retention of knowledge and shared histories. Emily has exhibited nationally and internationally and has been an artist in residence at Nida Art Colony (Lithuania), Ideas Block (Lithuania) and the Kamloops Printmakers Society (Canada). She is a grateful Cree, Métis, Scottish, and English visitor on the unceded and ancestral territories of the x̣ṃəθkwəỵəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. emilydundasoke.com



# CREATIVE RESIDENCY 2020-21

## DANCE ARTISTS

**Katie Cassidy** is a Japanese-Canadian teacher, performer, and choreographer based in Vancouver, BC, the unceded territories of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Katie completed her training at Simon Fraser University and the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance and has had the honour to perform with Kokoro Dance, Amber Funk Barton/the response., Julianne Chapple, and TWObigsteps Collective. As an independent creator, her work has been presented in Vancouver at the Contemporary Art Gallery's Dance Week 2019, the Shooting Gallery Performance Series, and Vines Art Festival. Katie holds a BA in Art History from the University of British Columbia.



**KATIE**  
Photo by Mack Walker

## JESSICA

Photo by Chelsea Yang-Smith



**Jessica McMann** is a Cree (Cowessess, SK) musician, contemporary dancer and choreographer. She is also a classically trained flutist, with a Bachelor of Music from the University of Calgary. Her research focus has been contemporary music, jazz, and improvisation. She has successfully defended her thesis for her MFA - Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University. Her recent compositions and soundscapes explore Indigenous identity and history. She has been dancing fancy shawl, jingle and hoop dance for 17 years, and has had the opportunity to present contemporary and traditional work at festivals across western Canada, and tour northern Europe. Currently her personal experience, Two-Spirit identity, Cree and Blackfoot language, and the strength of Indigenous women guide her current contemporary dance work. [www.wildmintarts.com](http://www.wildmintarts.com) | <https://jessicamcmann.com>

## JOSHUA

Photo by Othelo Uy

**Joshua Ongcol** is a Dubai born, Queer, Filipinx artist that is currently a settler on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples. As a multidisciplinary artist, he trained in streetdance culture including Krump, Locking, Popping House, Hip hop, Vogue, Whacking from Jerry Chien, Koffi Noumedor, Ralph Escamillan, Mike Brown, Natasha Gorie, Rina Palerina, Anna Martynova, and Kim Sato, and Contemporary dance from Tiffany Tegarthen, David Raymond, 605 Collective, Lee Su-Feh, Kevin Fraser, Peter Bingham, Justine Chambers, Delia Brett and Deanna Peters. He is interested in the ways tenderness manifests in his body, and its receptivity to deep wisdom and power. With this, he hopes to unravel the narrative of being a part of the Filipinx diaspora; specifically of intergenerational exchange, resilience, autonomy, queerness and spirituality.



# DANCE WEST NETWORK

As a move to develop and embrace new collaborations, Made in BC - Dance on Tour has changed its name in its 15th anniversary year to better reflect the work of the organization and inspire current directions. In Fall 2021, the organization will be called Dance West Network: connecting artists and communities in motion.

The roots of Dance West Network connect BC through dance. Our new name allows the work to reach even further by supporting our efforts to be more inclusive, to centre dance, to facilitate connections between communities and dance artists sharing vibrant practices and experience, and to create collaborations that work towards greater equity for historically excluded dance artists and audiences, offering opportunities for people from all over BC to learn about the arts, express themselves creatively and celebrate a shared humanity through dance.



**DANCE  
WEST  
NETWORK**

*connecting artists and  
communities in motion*

## THANK YOU

Produced by Jane Gabriels, Ph.D. and Executive Director of Dance West Network/Made in BC - Dance on Tour, Re-Centering/Margins 2nd annual Creative Residency 2020-21 is supported, in part, by the City of Vancouver's Art, Culture and Community Services Department, the RBC Foundation, British Columbia Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts, Tara Chyeyenne Performance, and generous individual donors. [dancewest.net](http://dancewest.net)



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Booklet Design:

Golsa Golestaneh

Cover photography by Susanna Barlow | Collage by Katie Cassady