

About the Artist

[Casey Koyczan](#) is a Tlicho Dene interdisciplinary artist from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories who uses various mediums to communicate how culture and technology can grow together in order for us to develop a better understanding of who we are, where we come from, and what we will be in the future. He creates with whatever tools necessary to bring an idea to fruition, and works mostly in sculpture, installation, 3D modelling, VR/360, experimentation, filmmaking, and audio works such as music, soundscapes and film scores. He is an international artist who has participated in many residencies, exhibits, festivals, and collaborations in parts of the world such as Finland, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, The Netherlands, and the UK. He is also a musician, producer, filmmaker, actor/narrator, and advocate for future generations of artists and musicians. He has a Multimedia Production diploma from Lethbridge College, a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Thompson Rivers University, and a Masters of Fine Arts degree from the University of Manitoba.

About the Author

[Jas M. Morgan](#) is a Toronto-based assistant professor in X University's Department of English, curator, writer, and producer. They previously held the position of Editor-at-Large for Canadian Art. Morgan's first book *n̄tis̄anak* (Metonymy Press, 2018) won the prestigious 2019 Dayne Ogilive Prize and a 2019 Quebec Writer's Federation first book prize, and has been nominated for a Lambda Literary Award and an Indigenous Voices Literary Award.

CASEY KOYCZAN AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL HINGE

An essay by Jas M. Morgan

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Founded in 1983, InterAccess is a non-profit gallery, educational facility, production studio, festival, and registered charity dedicated to emerging practices in art and technology. Our programs support art forms that integrate technology, fostering and supporting the full cycle of art and artistic practice through education, production, and exhibition. InterAccess is regarded as a preeminent Canadian arts and technology centre.

[Elexiito ; Ehts'q̄ / Connected ; Apart From Each Other](#)

Casey Koyczan

March 2—April 23, 2022

Opening Reception

Wednesday, March 2 | 7—9 PM

FREE

Artist Talk: Casey Koyczan

Thursday, March 31 | 7—8 PM

Online via Zoom

FREE

Casey Koyczan's *Elexiito ; Ehts'q̄ / Connected ; Apart From Each Other* is an installation that communicates the journey of accessing one's culture through distance education and research, presenting new technologies as viable tools for learning language, tradition, stories, and spiritual beliefs.

In his 2021 genre-bending collection *NISHGA*, Nisga'a writer Jordan Abel describes what he calls "the hinge."¹ Abel identifies as an "intergenerational survivor of Residential Schools" because both his Nisga'a grandparents are survivors of Residential Schools. He grew up on the other side of the country from his community, Kincolith, as an urban Indigenous person in Ontario. Throughout *NISHGA*, Abel grapples with a grief he can't quite name: the loss of language and culture as the result of a deliberate dislocation of Indigenous peoples from their territories and knowledges. Abel reflects on having to access his culture through Anthropology books and proposes that his body acts as a "hinge" between the embodied traditional knowledges of his people and the non-Indigenous knowledges he was forced to access to understand himself. Abel says, "I think you can read these asymmetrical hinges ... as attempts to represent both the lived experiences of intergenerational trauma and the experience of urban Indigenous peoples."²

With the installation *Etexiitq ; Ehts'q̓q̓*, Casey Koyczan uses technological hinges in his journey as a Dene artist learning about his culture through distance educa-

tion and research. Similar to Abel, technology is a way that Koyczan creates viable resources for learning language, tradition, stories, and culture. *Etexiitq ; Ehts'q̓q̓* considers how technology can aid Dene knowledge sharing and language acquisition. Koyczan's own journey with learning his language could perhaps be witnessed in the installation's surround sound trail. Koyczan once asked a Dene person to teach him some songs in their language. However, the Elder was quick to tell him that he "needs to make his own songs" and to "just play what you want." The surround sound trail in *Etexiitq ; Ehts'q̓q̓* is Koyczan's song.

Koyczan's immersive installation was made during a time when powwows weren't taking place. The ability to arrange sound to evoke drumming imbued the feeling of ceremony into the experience of making a sonic environment by and for Indigenous peoples. The trail is composed of five different mini layered soundscapes represented by five hollowed-out logs, each with its own sound patterns. The soundscape is a multi-channel installation with five separate audio sources that are all synced up and run for the same duration in a con-

sistent loop. All of the soundscapes include a drum being played with different timing variations (such as being played in double time or quadruple time). When the soundscapes are all playing at once they sound like a drum group or a ceremony. Koyczan is showing the "difficult" journey he had, growing up away from home, in a place like Whitehorse or Winnipeg where other Indigenous cultures are so important and prominent. Various technological tools, when brought together, were the hinge in Koyczan's life and art practice that allowed him to connect with the Dene culture he, at times, felt disconnected from.

The installation also includes a video projection portraying a binary code translation of the Dene laws to live by: share what you have, help each other, sleep at night and work during the day, be polite and don't argue with others, young girls and boys should behave respectfully, love each other as much as possible, be as happy as possible at all times, and pass on teachings. This was done using an online English to binary converter, and conveys Koyczan's usage of technology as a means of enacting Dene law in his art, life, and relationships (rather than

something that disconnects Indigenous peoples from their traditional knowledge). Digital communication tools aided Koyczan's learning process with Tlicho Dene language and culture, and this relationship created a deep intimacy between himself and the technology he used. For Koyczan, his kinship to technologies is another facet of extending Dene understandings of self, culture, and kinship beyond colonial logics. He is enacting Dene cosmologies that extend animacy and relatedness to non-human beings. In this brave new world, could technologies be our relations too, as Koyczan suggests?

There is an aspect of Dene cosmology in the ways that Koyczan installs the work into different spaces. Everything within a digital world is created. Technological worlds are Creation. Every time Koyczan shows the immersive installation, he shifts the work slightly to suit the space he is working in. The piece has changed and evolved through different stages of its life to adapt to its surroundings, similar to the way that nature does. The work also appears to be changing because of how the projection is animated. The binary code plays with the imagery layered behind it,

so it's always seemingly in motion, though the binary code is actually not moving at all. This effect is just a trick of the eye (or perhaps the heart since we, the viewer, so desire that fluidity). There is reclamation in the work, as the sounds and visuals adapt to reclaim whatever architectural space it is being installed into from a colonized space into one ordered through Dene knowledge. Koyczan's work is a practice in seeing Dene people, non-human beings, and knowledge in the future, as Indigenous cultures and languages evolve alongside technology.

Notes

1. Jordan Abel, *NISHGA* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2021): 78.
2. Ibid, 80.