Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Victoria, 2010)
BA (McGill University, 2006)

“Creative Combat: Indigenous Art, Resurgence, and Decolonization”

Indigenous Governance Program

Thursday, May 14, 2015
12:30PM
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, Indigenous Governance, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Jeff Corntassel, Indigenous Governance, UVic (Member)
Dr. Arthur Kroker, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Jolene Rickard, Department of the History of Art, Cornell University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Patricia Cochran, Faculty of Law, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Indigenous art-making is inseparable from political struggle. Under colonialism, Indigenous life is overcoded by power. Art, therefore, is not simply “a weapon in the struggle of ideas” (Baraka 1974); it is a weapon in the struggle to decolonize. Resistance still matters because the lives of Indigenous people are still subject to colonial rule. Art-making, the act of creation, connects us not only to the long continuum of resistance that Indigenous people have waged against colonial invasion and dispossession, but also to antecedent creative forms that have existed since the world was first created. Resurgence remains our decolonizing imperative. This project thus examines the power and potency of Indigenous arts and media practices embedded within this continuum of resistance and argues that Indigenous artists are creative visionaries and cultural warriors at the forefront of contemporary resurgences against colonialism. Indigenous artists show us that movements in artistic and cultural production have always existed in parallel to, and intimate interrelation with, political action. Acts of creation are entwined with movements toward freedom. Indigenous creativity, therefore, cannot be neutral: it provides a dynamic reflection of our contentions with the structuring logics of settler colonialism and the resilient survival of our peoples. Not only is Indigenous art inherently political, it is inextricably linked to the form and content of our lived circumstances and experiences. Our social movements and cultural renaissances evolve in dynamic response to societal and social change, and Indigenous art provides us with languages, tactics, and strategies for self-determination and self-expression that respond to the multiple, differential ways in which we have represented ourselves (and our struggles) to one another and to the world. Throughout our nations’ and peoples histories, we have used our talents for creation not simply to reflect our reality, but to transform it. Indigenous art is thus mobilized in creative contention with a violent system that continues to seek our assimilation and elimination.