



University  
of Victoria

# ANTHROPOLOGY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## Embellishing the cracks: Postmemory, archives, and intergenerational repair in contemporary Japanese Canadian art



Photo credit: Motoki Tonn

**Dr. Andrea Mariko Grant**

Postdoc, History department, University of Victoria

Monday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023

11:30 am – 12:50 pm

COR A125

This talk considers how contemporary Japanese Canadian art addresses the legacies of the uprooting, internment, and dispossession experienced by the Japanese Canadian community during the 1940s. I argue that this work must be understood as postmemorial and explore how it engages with recently digitized Government of Canada archives. Japanese Canadian artists are drawn to the archive as a way to better know the past in a community where intergenerational silence often prevails. Yet the archive, as an instrument of the state, cannot escape its violence, and artists struggle to give ‘flesh’ to ancestors in a context where they were categorized as unassimilable others. Despite these limits, artists remake the archive so that it becomes not a passive repository of documents but rather agentive, capable of stimulating intergenerational relationships in the present and future. One outcome of these archival engagements is a re-evaluation of silence, reframing it from a pathology preventing cultural transmission into an embodied response to trauma, a way to protect descendants, and a form of respect for ancestors.

**EVERYONE WELCOME**

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