

CURRICULUM VITAE: Barry Ace

www.barryacearts.com

Barry Ace – Anishinaabe (Odawa), b. 1958

Barry Ace is based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada and is a **debendaagzijig (citizen)** of **M'Chigeeng First Nation**, *Odawa Mnis* (Manitoulin Island). Born in Sudbury, Ontario, he spent many summers in his youth on Manitoulin Island and *Adikamegoshii-ziibiing* Birch Island. He also spent time learning splint ash basketry with his great-aunt from **Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation**, the focus of his Master of Arts degree from Carleton University in *Kokiibinaagan: Symbols of Cultural Continuity*. Barry has also travelled throughout Canada and the USA as a traditional dancer on the **powwow trail**.

Drawing inspiration from multiple facets of traditional Anishinaabeg (Odawa) culture gathered from historical sources, traditional knowledge, found objects and cultural research, Ace creates objects and imagery that utilize many traditional forms and motifs. By disrupting the reading of these works with the introduction of other elements, Ace endeavours to create a convergence of the historical and contemporary. He states, *"My textile and paper works replicate traditional Great Lakes' floral motifs often sourced from reclaimed and salvaged electronic schematics and circuitry (capacitors and resistors) that act as metaphors for cultural continuity (antithesis of stasis), bridging the past with the present and the future. In doing so, my work intentionally integrates traditional cultural art practices, such as beadwork, which is then juxtaposed against contemporary ephemera, breaking new ground as a distinct genre of contemporary indigenous abstraction."*

Ace has been exhibiting since the 1990s, and his work has been included in numerous group and solo exhibitions, including: **Emergence from the Shadows – First Peoples Photographic Perspectives**, Canadian Museum of History (1999: Gatineau); **Urban Myths: Aboriginal Artists in the City**, Karsh-Masson Gallery (2000: Ottawa); **The Dress Show**, Leonard and Ellen Bina Art Gallery (2003: Montréal); **Super Phat Nish**, Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba (2006: Brandon); **Playing Tricks**, American Indian Community House Gallery (2006: New York City, USA); **N'nisidwaamdis (I**

Recognize Myself), Ojibwe Cultural Foundation (2010: M'Chigeeng) "**m̄ntu'c – little spirits, little powers**", Nordamerika Native Museum (2010: Zurich, Switzerland); **Changing Hands 3: Art Without Reservations**, The Museum of Art and Design (MAD) (2012 -2014, New York City, USA); **Memory Landscape**, Museu Nogueira da Silva (2015: Braga, Portugal); **Mnemonic Manifestations**, Latcham Art Gallery (2015: Stouffville); **Native Fashion Now**, Peabody Essex Museum (2015-2016: Salem, USA); **Anishinaabeg Art and Power**, Royal Ontario Museum (2017: Toronto); **Every. Now. Then. Reframing Nationhood**, Art Gallery of Ontario (2017: Toronto); **2017 Canadian Biennial**, National Gallery of Canada (2017: Ottawa); **Public Disturbance: Politics and Protest in Contemporary Indigenous Art from Canada**, Supermarket 2018 (2018: Stockholm, Sweden); **Àbadakone | Continuous Fire | Feu continuel**, National Gallery of Canada (2019: Ottawa, Ontario); **mazinigwaaso / to bead something – Barry Ace's Bandolier Bags as Cultural Conduit**, Faculty of Fine Arts Gallery – Concordia University (2019: Montreal, Quebec); **To Be Continued: Troubling the Queer Archive**, Carleton University Art Gallery (2020: Ottawa, Ontario); **Art of Indigenous Fibers**, SWAIA (2021: Santa Fe, New Mexico); **Environmental Injustice – Indigenous Peoples' Alternatives**, Musée d'ethnographie de Genève (2021: Geneva, Switzerland); **Radical Stitch**. MacKenzie Art Gallery (2022: Regina, Saskatchewan); and **wāwīdamaw – promise: Indigenous Art and Colonial Treaties in Canada**. Nordamerika Native Museum (2022: Zurich, Switzerland); **Persistence/Resistance: Taiwan – Canada Indigenous Art Exhibition**. Tainan Art Museum (2022: Tainan, Taiwan); **Early Days: Indigenous Art at the McMichael**. Heard Museum (2023: Phoenix, Arizona); **Future Imaginaries: Indigenous Art, Fashion, Technology**. Autry Museum of the American West (2024: Los Angeles, California); **Rough and Ready: A True History of the Cowboy Boot**. Bata Shoe Museum (2025: Toronto, Ontario); **From the Ground Up**. Gallery of Indigenous Ceramics, Gardiner Museum (2025: Toronto, Ontario); **Bead Work**. Robert Kardosh/Marion Scott Gallery (2025: Vancouver, British Columbia).

His work can be found in numerous public and private collections in Canada and abroad, including the **National Gallery of Canada** (Ottawa, Ontario); **Canadian Museum of History** (Gatineau, Québec); **Art Gallery of Ontario** (Toronto, Ontario); **Royal Ontario Museum** (Toronto, Ontario); **Government of Ontario Art Collection** (Toronto, Ontario); **City of Ottawa** (Ottawa, Ontario); **Ottawa Art Gallery** (Ottawa, Ontario); **Woodland Cultural Centre** (Brantford, Ontario); **Canada**

Council Art Bank (Ottawa, Ontario); **North American Native Museum** (Zurich, Switzerland); **Ojibwe Cultural Foundation** (M'Chigeeng, Ontario); **Global Affairs Canada** (Ottawa, Ontario); **TD Bank Art Collection** (Toronto, Ontario); **Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada** (Gatineau, Québec); **Carleton University Art Gallery** (Ottawa, Ontario); **McMichael Canadian Art Collection** (Kleinburg, Ontario); **Westerkirk Works of Art** (Toronto, Ontario); **Deloitte Canada** (Ottawa, Ontario); **Richardson Wealth** (Toronto, Ontario); and the **Gardiner Museum** (Toronto, Ontario).

From 1994 to 2000, Ace served as Chief Curator with the Indigenous Art Centre, *Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)*, and during his tenure, he curated or co-curated numerous exhibitions, including the international touring exhibition, *Transitions: Contemporary Canadian Indian and Inuit Art* (1997). In 1999, Ace and his team won the Deputy Minister's Outstanding Achievement Award for the development and implementation of a groundbreaking artist-in-residence and exhibition program at (CIRNAC) that featured an impressive roster of Indigenous emerging and established artists, including Shelley Niro, George Littlechild, Michael Belmore, Maria Hupfield, Ron Noganosh, Mary Anne Barkhouse, Nadia Myre, Jeffrey Thomas, Greg Stats, Jerry Evans, David General, Roger Simon, and many others. **For a complete and accurate history of the Indigenous Art Centre Program (CIRNAC) in the 1990s that was not addressed by any of the contributors of the 2018 CIRNAC publication, "The Indigenous Art Collection: Selected Works 1967-2017", read *Presence and Absence: Indian Art in the 1990s* by Ryan Rice.**

In 2006, Ace co-founded and served as the inaugural Director of the **Indigenous Curatorial Collective** (formerly Aboriginal Curatorial Collective) (**original archived website**), an incorporated national non-profit arts service organization in support of the Indigenous critical and curatorial communities with membership in Canada, United States of America, New Zealand and Australia. In 2012, Ace co-founded the Ottawa-based artist collective: **Ottawa Ontario Seven (O07)** with local Ottawa-based Indigenous artists to provide opportunities for self-curation, public engagement and critique, and he regularly exhibited under this moniker in Canada and the USA until 2017.

In 2010, at the invitation of artist Robert Houle, Ace travelled to Paris (France) and undertook **four site-specific dance performances** honouring the Ojibwa dance troupe lead by Maungwaudaus (George Henry), whom in 1844 performed in George Catlin's traveling portrait gallery exhibition. Ace's dance performances are documented in Shelley Niro's award-winning film *Robert's Paintings*, chronicling the life and career of Robert Houle. Ace's essay, **A Reparative Act**, written for Houle's exhibition catalogue from the perspective of a dancer, won the **Ontario Association of Art Gallery's Curatorial Writing Award** for 2012. Under special commission by the Ottawa Art Gallery, Shelley Niro and Katharine Asals edited a film short entitled **Homage to Four In Paris in 2018** from the stock footage that was shot in Paris in 2010 for inclusion in the Ottawa Art Gallery's inaugural exhibition **Àdisòkàmagan / Nous connaître un peu nous-mêmes / We'll All Become Stories**. Ace entered into the pow wow dance community following dancer protocols at Wiikwemkoong, Manitoulin Island, and he has participated in numerous **traditional gatherings and pow wow competitions** throughout Canada and the United States.

As an accomplished and award-winning writer and educator, Ace has worked in the milieu of visual, literary and performing arts for over 30 years. Upon completion of his Master of Arts at Carleton University, Ace presented at the Lake Superior State University his research on his great-aunt's splint-ash basketry in his paper **Kokiibinaagan: Symbols of Cultural Continuity** which is published in **Celebration of Indigenous Thought and Expression**. Lake Superior: State University Press, 1995.

In the early 1990s, he was Lecturer with the University of Sudbury in the Indigenous Studies Program, and he was principal writer for the distance education manual **Indigenous Arts of the Americas: Retrospect and Transition**. He has also written numerous essays on contemporary Indigenous art and artists, including a series of essays on four contemporary Native American artists for **Manifestations – New Vocabularies in Native Art Criticism** published by the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico. He completed a comprehensive essay, **Reactive Intermediates: Aboriginal Art, Politics, and Resonance of the 1960s and 1970s**, for (7), a ground-breaking exhibition on the Indian Group of 7 (Odjig, Janvier, Morrisseau, Sanchez, Ray, Beardy, Cobiness) for the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina. Most recently, he contributed an essay on his work *Fox Tail Moccasins* for the exhibition catalogue that accompanies **Early Days: Indigenous Art From The**

McMichael, an international touring exhibition (2023-2025). He has also presented at conferences and published essays on Anishinaabe artist Norval Morrisseau.

In 2015, Ace was awarded the prestigious **KM Hunter Visual Artist Award**. This award was administered by the **Ontario Arts Foundation** and given to support mid-career, professional artists who have a reasonable body of work, a fair degree of public exposure, have made an impact in their chosen field and demonstrate an original artistic voice within their artistic tradition.

Since 2017, the National Gallery of Canada acquired **five of Ace's works** for the permanent collection and included the work *Healing Dance 2* in the **2017 Canadian Biennial** exhibition.

In January 2018, Ace completed the month long **Nigig Artist-in-Residence** program through the Indigenous Visual Culture program at Ontario College of Art and Design University in Toronto. During his residency, Ace mentored students, presented in numerous classes on his work and completed in his studio a new work on Indigenous residential schools entitled, *How can you expect me to reconcile, when I know the truth?* This work was included in the exhibition *Public Disturbance: Politics and Protest in Contemporary Indigenous Art from Canada* for SAW Gallery (Ottawa) who invited Ace as the featured artist to Supermarket 2018, an international artist-run-centre art fair in Stockholm Sweden. *How can you expect me to reconcile, when I know the truth?* is now in the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinberg, Ontario.

In November 2018, Ace was selected as the first Indigenous artist for the newly established **Art + Law Indigenous Artist in Residence Program**. This exciting new residency came about as a partnership between the Arts Council Windsor & Region, the University of Windsor Faculty of Law and School of Creative Arts in support of contemporary Indigenous art and its practices as an integral educational opportunity for both students and community. Being the first of its kind, the Art + Law residency brought together 94 students, faculty, and participants from the Indigenous community and the general-public around a collaborative project.

Ace proposed a collaborative work that would coalesce a very complex legal document, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's – Calls to Action (***download here***), into a single work of art taking the form of an 11.5 metre long contemporary wampum belt. Working in the Armouries Art Gallery in the School of Creative Arts, each participant was asked to confirm their participation by first surrendering their rights to the work by signing a witnessed document and symbolically accepting one dollar in exchange. The surrender was a wry reference to the treaty making process in Canada, and also reflected in the work's title, ***For as long as the sun shines, grass grows and water flows.***

In October 2019, Ace participated in the international art fair ***Art Toronto 2019***. Ace exhibited three works: *Bandolier for Aanikegamaa-gichigami: Lake Erie (Chain of Lakes Sea) (2019)*; *Bandolier for Gichi-ziibi (Big River), Ottawa River (2019)* and *Bandolier for Gichi-zaaga'igan: Lake Ontario (Big Lake) (2019)*. All works are now placed in private collections in Canada and the United States.

In November 2019, Ace's work was included two exhibitions: one group and one solo exhibition. Ace's ***Nigig Makininan (Otter Mocassins) (2014)*** and ***Healing Dance 2 (2013)*** were included in the second large scale survey exhibition of international Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Canada. This group exhibition entitled ***Àbadakone | Continuous Fire | Feu continuel***, builds on the first exhibition mounted in 2013 entitled ***Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art***. The same week as the National Gallery of Canada opening ceremony and *vernissage*, Ace also launched a solo exhibition entitled ***mazinigwaaso / to bead something – Barry Ace's Bandolier Bags as Cultural Conduit*** at the Faculty of Fine Art Gallery, Concordia University in Montreal. This exhibition was curated by ***Lori Beavis*** and presented for the very first time a survey featuring Ace's two-dimensional and three-dimensional bandolier bags spanning almost a decade of work.

2020 was a difficult year. As with so many, Ace was also adversely impacted by the the coronavirus pandemic and global lockdown with the cancellation of all upcoming exhibitions, international conference presentations, artist residencies and access to his City of Ottawa art studio. During this time, Ace had only a short window of opportunity to remove any art supplies from his art studio before the City restricted access. Ace produced his ***Covid-19 Suite***, a suite of 19 mixed media works on paper, at home during several months of self-imposed isolation in his makeshift studio between March 15 to May 31, 2020. The suite of works marks a unique perspective of

an artist's personal experience and reflections during a global pandemic. In 2024, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection (Kleinberg) acquired the *Covid-19 Suite* for their permanent collection.

In 2022, Ace was invited to participate in the international exhibition ***wāwīndamaw – promise: Indigenous Art and Colonial Treaties in Canada***, Nordamerika Native Museum (***NONAM***), Zurich, Switzerland (April 8, 2022 to January 8, 2023). The exhibition responded to the concept of treaty and treaty-making processes in Canada; inherent rights and relationship to land and power; and the historical and contemporary impacts from an Indigenous perspective. Ace undertook a new site specific work for the exhibition based on the ***United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)***. While the *Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) – Calls to Action* document is applicable within Canada, *UNDRIP* is an international instrument that calls for the international recognition of Indigenous treaty rights by the United Nations and signatory countries.

The workshops for the new work ***waawiindmawaa – promise (to promise something to somebody)*** took place in Zurich at *NONAM* with a second session at the ***Musée d'ethnographie de Genève (MEG)*** in Geneva. They involved 46 international law students, artists and general-public participants (23 in Zurich and 23 in Geneva) who each hand-beaded a floral motif design and hand wrote one of the 46 *UNDRIP* articles in graphite on a sheet of vellum. At the start of the workshop, each participant confirmed their participation by first surrendering their rights to the collaborative work by signing a witnessed document and symbolically accepting one Swiss Franc in exchange for the extinguishment of their rights. This surrender was a wry reference to the treaty-making process in Canada. The *Musée d'ethnographie de Genève (MEG)* produced a video short entitled ***L'art autochtone et les traités coloniaux au Canada*** of the Geneva workshop sessions.

This collaborative work is a collective acknowledgement of *UNDRIP* and a commitment by the United Nations and ***Canada as signatory*** to this international declaration to uphold and honour the treaty agreements (including other social, political, economic and cultural rights contained therein) with Indigenous peoples of Canada. When read together with ***For as long as the sun shines, grass grows and water flows***, the two works are a contemporary visual and mnemonic *waawiindmawaa – promise*. Also see ***Making Art from A Human Rights Standard*** by Brian Phillips (Arts Rights Truth).

Working throughout 2021 and 2022, Ace began to produce new work for his solo exhibition **Encoding Culture II: The Works of Barry Ace** at Heffel Galleries in Toronto. The exhibition ran from October 26 to November 9, 2022 and two works (**Traditional** and **Erased**) sold to Global Affairs Canada for their permanent collection for installation in Canadian diplomatic missions abroad in 2023. All the proceeds from the sale of **Erased** was generously donated by the artist and Heffel Galleries to **Bruce House** (Ottawa). In late 2022, Ace's work was also acquired by Canada Council Art Bank for their **50th anniversary acquisitions** that included 72 new artworks by emerging and established artists from across Canada. From January 16 to 26, 2023, Ace travelled to France with a delegation of artists, curators, and arts administrators to participate in the project **Rencontres décoloniales** in the port city of **La Rochelle** and met with museums and visited their collections that include Indigenous art from the Americas. These **meetings, presentations and discussions** with partners and institutions will lead to future collaborative projects in the spirit of decolonization.

In April 2023, *Les Cahiers du CIÉRA* issued a special edition journal entitled **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Possible Interpretations (Volume 1)**. Ace's work **waawiindmawaa – promise (to promise something to somebody)** was selected for the publication's cover.

Four of Ace's *Memory Landscape II* mixed media works from the Government of Ontario Art Collection (Toronto, Ontario) have recently been installed in the suite of the **Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (Queen's Park, Toronto)**. Ace also maintains an ongoing studio practice creating new works for the art galleries who represent his work and for several **upcoming group and solo exhibitions**, including a large scale North American Indigenous group exhibition entitled **Native American Art Now** curated by **Leesa Fanning** for the **Sundaram Tagore Gallery** (Chelsea), New York, NY. (September 7 – October 7, 2023); **Histórias Indígenas [Indigenous Histories]** an international touring exhibition at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil) and Kode Bergen Art Museums, Norway (2023-2024); **Early Days: Indigenous Art From The McMichael** an international touring exhibition (2023-2025); and **Future Imaginaries: Indigenous Art, Fashion, Technology** funded by the Getty Museum Foundation as part of *Pacific Standard Time: Art & Science Collide* series at the *Autry Museum of the American West*, Los Angeles, California. (September 7, 2024 – June 21, 2026).

In 2023, **SAW Gallery** was celebrating its 50th Anniversary and was commissioned Ace to create an outdoor sculpture that was installed in April 2024 in the west facing portico on Nicholas Street at Daly Avenue. His proposed work entitled **Zasaan** integrates Anishinaabe traditional knowledge, teachings and iconography into a contemporary work as a confluence between the historical and contemporary connecting generations.

In early 2024, the *Ontario Arts Council* awarded \$15,000 in funding through the *Indigenous Arts Projects* in support of Ace's upcoming project *Zhaabwaabndaan (to see through)*. Ace worked with artist D'Andrea Bowie for a two-week one-on-one intensive residency from June 30 to July 14, 2024 to learn the process of working with clay and glass to produce new works and explore the potential of integrating both materials with his signature electronic component treatments.

In August and September 2024, Ace was in Paris, Nantes and La Rochelle (France) for a *five-week collaborative residency* with artists Olive Martin and Patrick Bernier in Nantes and La Rochelle (France), followed by workshops at the **Centre Intermondes – Ethnopôle Humanités Océanes (La Rochelle)**. Ace's new collaborative project **Bskaabwidmaagen** (return something back to its owner) is an extension of his previous work undertaken in Canada and Switzerland addressing two key domestic and international documents: Canada's Residential Schools' Truth and Reconciliation Commission's – 94 Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In his essay "**Making Art From A Human Rights Standard**" human rights practitioner and educator **Brian Phillips** analyses Ace's work to argue that through arts-based consciousness raising and collaborative creation, it is possible for human rights standards to find compelling new lives as works of art **Art Rights Truth (ART)**.

Ace's November 2024 project, **kinoownaa (to counsel somebody)**, was a new collaborative work with law, interdisciplinary students, faculty, including Indigenous students, at the **University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM)** and is an extension of his previous work undertaken in Canada, Switzerland, and France addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This on-going series of collaborations making art out of human rights standards is a "*call to action*" to heighten the domestic and international profile and urgency for the full implementation UNDRIP and

alignment of federal and provincial laws by Canada, the Provinces and international Nation States. ***kinoownaa*** is currently on exhibition in the **Indigenous Ceramic Gallery at the Gardiner Museum** in Toronto. ***kinoownaa*** has been recently acquired and is now included in the Gardiner's permanent collection.

Ace's summer grant application in 2024 to create a new body of work was successful under the Canada Council for the Arts ***Explore and Create Grant – Concept to Realization Project Component***.

In March 2025, Ace was awarded the ***King Charles III Coronation Medal*** for his longstanding contributions to Indigenous art.

