



FNLKC Conference Workshop Presenter

Workshop Title: The Poetics and Politics of Reclaiming Ts'msyen Cultural Heritage

Name of Presenters: Dr. Robin R. R. Gray

Biography: Robin R. R. Gray, PhD (T'u'u'tk) is Ts'msyen from Lax Kw'alaams, BC and Mikisew Cree from Fort Chipewyan, AB. In 2015, she earned a PhD in anthropology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst from Amherst, MA. Dr. Gray has been facilitating community-based research projects with, by and for her people, including the repatriation of Ts'msyen songs from archives, and an exploration of embodied heritage with an urban Ts'msyen dance group. In addition to her academic life, Robin is active in her culture and community, a Ts'msyen dancer and singer and an apprentice Chilkat weaver.

Abstract: In this workshop, Robin will share the poetics and politics of reclaiming various aspects of her Ts'msyen cultural heritage. Although she grew up outside of her traditional territories without speaking either of her languages, Robin has become involved in several Ts'msyen specific reclamation strategies that have helped to nurture her identity, her responsibility to her culture, and her connection to her community. Her 20 year participation in an urban Ts'msyen dance group, her family's recent history of Feasting in her village, her new apprenticeship as a Chilkat weaver, and her ongoing community-based research on the repatriation of songs with, by and for her people, have helped to strengthen the retention of her Sm'algyax language, her understanding of Ts'msyen laws, and her embodiment of Ts'msyen sovereignty. Robin will also discuss the social life of Ts'msyen songs and why reclaiming and protecting tangible and intangible cultural heritage is considered a lawful and decolonizing act to her people.

Learning Outcome:

By the end of this workshop, delegates will:

- Learn about Ts'msyen laws as they relate to language, song, dance and material culture
- Make connections between language learning and embodied heritage reclamation
- Discuss the issue of ownership, access and control of Indigenous cultural heritage
- Gain awareness about digital platforms that aim to both increase and decrease public use