

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 19, 2025



Bill Reid Gallery Explores the Potlatch Tradition with Premiere of **– NDN Giver –**

The exhibition invites viewers to consider how the act of giving is tied to identity, responsibility, resistance, and renewal

VANCOUVER, BC — Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art presents the world premiere of **NDN Giver**, from **September 27, 2025 – February 22, 2026**. Curated by the gallery's Assistant Curator **Amelia Rea** in her solo curatorial debut, the exhibition examines reciprocity, identity, and the evolving practice of gift-giving within potlatch traditions. Bringing together contemporary potlatch gifts such as prints and mugs alongside archival records of historical potlatches, **NDN Giver** features select pieces from Amelia's personal collection as well as works by artists from communities across the coast, including the Haida and Heiltsuk Nations.

"The preparation for *NDN Giver* has been deeply personal and community-oriented," says Rea, Bill Reid Gallery Assistant Curator. "It has meant revisiting my own collection of potlatch gifts, reaching out to artists and knowledge holders, and navigating the responsibilities of representation with care. Drawing from a lifetime of experience attending and participating in potlatches along the Northwest Coast, the process has also given me the opportunity to reflect on my own relationship to the potlatch as a lived practice, a political act, and a cultural foundation."

At the heart of the exhibition is the potlatch as a living system of governance, law, wealth distribution, and cultural affirmation. Once criminalized under Canadian law, the potlatch has endured and evolved, and today offers a powerful alternative worldview based on sharing, sustainability, and relational accountability in the face of global crises.

NDN Giver also speaks to a generational return to Indigenous law and knowledge systems, as well as a resurgence and reclamation of Identity. The exhibition's title reclaims the derogatory term "Indian giver," confronting colonial stereotypes imposed on Indigenous generosity and governing structures while reframing them through the potlatch, a system where giving is reciprocal, ceremonial, and deeply significant.

Artworks and gifts on display reflect the diversity of visual expression and ceremonial practice across different Nations, while emphasizing inter-Nation relationships and the ways in which potlatch culture is both distinct and interconnected along the coast. Contemporary pieces such as limited-edition prints, mugs, and multimedia work will be displayed in conversation with older potlatch and archival documents gathered by Rea and her mother, Dr. Lucy Bell. These historical records document events spanning generations, including potlatches held by Rea's own ancestors, and highlight the protocols, family lineages, and governance structures embedded in the practice.

"Growing up in Haida Gwaii and travelling to potlatches throughout the coast, I developed a deep appreciation for the gifts that are given, not only for their material beauty, but for the teachings they carry," adds Rea. "Beauty and meaning are embedded in objects given with intention. These pieces mark important moments of history for families, nations, and clans, and show the acceptance of the receiver to carry the responsibility of sharing the events that took place if anyone were to ask."

/more...

Amelia Rea is a member of the Tsiits Git'anee clan from Old Massett, Haida Gwaii, and a passionate Haida Nation-based scholar with deep roots in her culture. Raised immersed in Haida language, singing, dancing, and repatriation, Amelia has spent her life learning and contributing to the preservation of Haida traditions. A lifelong member of the Haida Repatriation Committee, she follows the guidance of her mother, aunties, and elders, and has spent countless hours in museums, potlatches, language classes, and with cultural bearers across the community. This rich upbringing has instilled in Amelia a profound love for Haida culture and storytelling. Amelia is committed to the preservation and transmission of Haida language and knowledge to future generations. Currently, Amelia works as the assistant curator at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art, where she continues to blend her love for art, culture, and storytelling.

About Bill Reid Gallery (billreidgallery.ca)

The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art is a public gallery nestled in the heart of downtown Vancouver. It was named after acclaimed Haida artist Bill Reid (1920–1998), a master goldsmith, carver, sculptor, writer, broadcaster, and spokesman.

Since opening in May 2008, the Bill Reid Gallery has remained the only public gallery in Canada devoted to contemporary Indigenous art of the Northwest Coast and is home to the Simon Fraser University Bill Reid Art Collection, as well as special exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous art of the Northwest Coast of North America. Through his art, Bill Reid continues to inspire emerging and established contemporary Indigenous artists. His legacies include infusing the art traditions of the Haida with modern forms of expression, influencing the next generation of artists, and building lasting bridges between First Nations and other peoples.

The Bill Reid Gallery offers public programs including artist talks and artist-led workshops which provide a greater awareness and appreciation of Indigenous values and cultures. Find public programs at billreidgallery.ca.

The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art is an initiative of the Bill Reid Foundation. Established in 1999 as a non-profit charitable organization, the Foundation's mission is to preserve the art and perpetuate the legacies of Bill Reid.

LISTING INFORMATION

Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art presents NDN Giver

Dates:	September 17, 2025 – February 22 2026
Winter Hours:	Tues to Sat, 10am to 5pm
Address:	Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art 639 Hornby St Vancouver, BC
Website:	billreidgallery.ca

-30-

For further media information, contact

Angela Poon | C. 604.569.5343

apoon@mpmgarts.com

MURRAY PATERSON
MARKETING GROUP