

Vancouver Traveling Exhibition Summary for website

The traveling exhibition *Dancing with Our Ancestors: Weaving Connections Between Communities* was open to the Vancouver public from May 5th to 19th at the University of British Columbia's Robson Square Gallery. The opening took place on May 5th, 2025, in commemoration of Red Dress Day, also known as the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit People (MMIWG2S+).

The exhibition opening began with a performance by *Butterflies in Spirits*, who co-curated this exhibition. Lorelei Williams from *Butterflies in Spirit* shared about the significance of May 5th and what she hopes audiences will take away from the exhibit, which touches on themes of colonial, structural, and state violence faced by communities on Turtle Island and around the world. Later, Judith Colibri, a Mexican dancer, performed *Nos Verán*, a dance piece she created to protest injustices faced by missing and murdered women from her community in Mexico and guide the public to enter the gallery. There we had a panel with some persons from the curatorial team: Alejandra Gaviria-Serna (exhibition project coordinator), Judith Colibrí (*Butterflies in Spirit*), and Huuyalth (*Butterflies in Spirit*) who talked about the commitment to building transnational solidarity initiatives regarding colonial issues and the role of the traveling exhibit and the creative practices to enable collaborative projects. We had over 150 people join us, and we were over capacity for the panel. People shared their stories, questions and reflections on themes of the exhibit.

"*Dancing with Our Ancestors: Weaving Connections Between Communities*" was a multi-site exhibit and interdisciplinary project co-curated through a collaborative process through Transformative Memory International Network and *Butterflies in Spirit* (an indigenous dance group based in Vancouver). The exhibition illuminates stories, encounters, and lived experiences of structural violence from different geographies, inviting audiences to critically engage with the ways that these systemic issues continue to persist today. The project is a transnational commitment to knit together and recognize the poetics of everyday memories of human beings, who otherwise would be forgotten by dominant history. The pieces that comprise this exhibit are expressions of the numerous resourceful, embodied, and intimate ways in which memory, as a creative force, is articulated by people worldwide who have experienced systemic violence. The exhibition featured pieces from Uganda, Mexico, Northern Ireland, Indonesia, Colombia and Canada. The exhibit also includes three window installations by local artists at Decolonial Clothing (Chinatown), Union Cooperative Initiative (Chinatown), and the windows at UBC Robson Square.

Exhibition Coordinators

Alejandra Gaviria-Serna
David Ng

Curatorial Team

Alejandra Gaviria-Serna
David Ng
Francisco Gomez
Huuyath (Tabatha Frank)
Judith Hummingbird

Palexelsiya (Lorelei Williams)

Featuring pieces by the creators

Alit Ambara (Indonesia)

Adriana Contreras (Turtle Island & Colombia)

Butterflies in Spirit (Turtle Island - Canada)

Conflict Textiles: Irene MacWilliam (Northern Ireland)

Erika Diettes (Colombia)

Guayacan's Crafts Group (Bojayá - Colombia)

Luz H. Almendra Aranda & Violeta K. Rozental Almendra (Misak - Colombia)

Morgan Asoyuf (Ts'msyen Eagle Clan from Ksyen River, BC - Canada)

Movement of Victims of State Crimes - MOVICE (Colombia)

Peter Morin (Tahtlan Nation - Canada)

The Families of the Missing (Gulu - Uganda)

The Women's Advocacy Network - WAN (Gulu - Uganda)

Acknowledgments

This exhibition is the 2025 itinerary of the Transformative Memory International Network's Traveling Exhibit, organized in collaboration with Butterflies in Spirit. Thank you to the creators and initiatives which participate in this itinerancy. Thank you to UBC Robson Square for hosting the exhibit, and to Decolonial Clothing, Butterflies in Spirit, Love Intersections, and the Union Cooperative Initiative for hosting the window installations. Thank you to the Canada Council for the Arts and the BC Arts Council for their support.

Photos: Amber Hughes