



DUANE LINKLATER

Sunrise at Cape Spear,
Newfoundland

2011

HD Digital Video, text from
Wikipedia conversations,
artist story (handout)

Courtesy of Catriona
Jeffries Gallery

DUANE LINKLATER

You describe this artwork as a journey. Why?

Everything emerged from me going to Newfoundland to St. John's to Cape Spear to film the sunrise, to be the first person to see the sunrise from the most easterly point in North America. The unexpected components came out of that. For example, I was driving around St. John's and discovered the Beothuk Building, which is an interesting use of words. Beothuk were the original indigenous people of Newfoundland and are no longer there due to colonial contact. "Building" can be a site, but also a process. Then, I had an experience at The Rooms visiting the historical section of the Museum and looking at these fragments of their culture. These objects didn't have an author and they weren't even sure of the function. I began there, started to slowly think about absence. Cape Spear for me, after going there and thinking about the whole experience, wanting to be the first person to see the sunrise, became a space of meditation — to meditate on absence and also who is absent, particularly in Newfoundland. The idea of the Beothuk people was present the whole time I was there. It's interesting to say that absence can have a presence. It's powerful to think of that.

Another part of the project came out of a question of "How do I talk about this experience? What is the form beyond the video?" I felt that I needed to articulate my presence, so I thought, "Where

do I put this presence?" I googled "Cape Spear" and Wikipedia came up. I thought, "This is an interesting place to put this idea." It places the idea within an historical place, but accesses history in a contemporary way. That's when I started to put in the line, under "Current": At 6:24 am NST 3/10/2011, Duane Linklater watched the sunrise. He traveled there to see the sunrise, to be the first one before anyone else.

I think it took a little bit of time for the editors to realize it was there, and then they deleted it. That act was very interesting — that they didn't find that information relevant or interesting enough to keep it there. To a certain degree I would agree with them, but it was important to me to assert the indigenous presence, my own presence in Newfoundland in relation to absence that I was mentioning earlier. Wikipedia is one form of a history book. I wanted to directly and indirectly reference Beothuk people and the eradication of a people and culture.

I noticed that there's been a history of edits over time.

I never responded to the editors, putting it back was my response. People knew that I was doing this and would go in there themselves and edit it or contribute as well. That's good. It disrupts Wikipedia and this idea of who gets to say what in

history. It's important to say. I have received several messages from the editors. The responses are interesting in that they ask the question "Why is this important?" They don't see the relation to Cape Spear history. "Who is this Duane Linklater? Why is this important that he let us know that he saw the sunrise?"

How long do you plan on doing this?

I don't know how long this will go for, but it's important to keep going. I do it semi-regularly. I edit it as a guest, given the open source nature of Wikipedia. It's a great idea in theory. The editors that monitor that specific page are the gatekeepers, the ones that determine what is relevant or what is not if the page has been edited. They consistently deemed that this information is not important enough to keep around on the page.

How does your work relate to folklore?

The idea of folklore is something that is very local, and is intimate. I think the idea of the narrative of the Beothuk people is very local and very specific to the geography of Newfoundland,

but there's a larger narrative there that we can all meditate on — this thing that was awful that happened and hopefully we gather something from that. I think the idea of folklore as stories and relationships is interesting to frame the video and what was done in the Wikipedia. How local is that? Who are these editors? Where are they from? I think that same question can be asked of me, because I'm not local to Newfoundland either. I'm not indigenous to Newfoundland either. Coming there, documenting that experience — is that a kind of folklore? The sentence "Duane Linklater travelled to Cape Spear" — is that a folklore? It's interesting to propose that.

DUANE LINKLATER is Omskëko Cree, from Moose Cree First Nation in Northern Ontario and is currently based in North Bay, ON. He was educated at the University of Alberta, receiving a Bachelor of Native Studies and a BFA. Duane attended the Milton Avery Graduate School of Arts at Bard College in upstate New York, completing his MFA in Film and Video. Duane produces a range of work including video and film installation, performance, sculptural objects, and often works within the contexts of cooperative and collaborative gestures.