

THE FRONT

CRYSTAL PRZYBILLE

Rethink150: Indigenous Truth, Billboard Art near Cawston, BC (2017)

Artist Statement

AS A SETTLER-DESCENDANT artist working on Indigenous-led intercultural projects (and simply as a human being), I am trying to develop an important skill: listening.

It sounds easy.

But unlike hearing (which just happens), listening requires more. Listening requires curiosity. Openness. Non-judgment. A suspension of agendas, assumptions, opinions, and world views. A willingness to truly know what someone wants to express, regardless of how it might make us feel or what we may need to sacrifice. It requires non-defensiveness, non-deflection. And if we are able to lower our defences to truly listen, a space is opened within us to experience understanding, empathy, and connection.

It's not easy. But only when this space is made can we begin to build a foundation of trust to collaborate and develop a positive plan of action. It is space with potential for healing, growth, and transformation.

After, in some cases, years of intercultural learning among its individual members, and seven exploratory discussions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributors to the *Rethink150: Indigenous Truth* initiative, such a space was made.

It was within this space that we were able to begin imagining ways of encouraging the broader public to also begin to truly listen – to learn why the last 150+ years of colonialism on these lands is not something Indigenous people feel inclined to celebrate. And why framing it in such celebratory terms a mere two years after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its findings adds insult to injury.

The *Rethink150: Indigenous Truth* Billboard Art was created from this space and for this purpose. I am honoured to have been trusted with the responsibility to render what was courageously shared into an image so that it can be shared further. I hope it will encourage people to stop, look, and then truly listen.