

RAG

RICHMOND ART GALLERY  
School Art Program



## Teacher Guide

Cindy Mochizuki: *Cave to Dream*

Jon Sasaki: *We First Need a Boat for the Rising Tide to Lift Us*

September 28 – November 17, 2019

# Table of Contents

Program Overview .....	3
Your Gallery Visit .....	3
Program Goals .....	3
Big Ideas explored.....	3
Before Your Visit .....	4
Class Discussion: What is Folklore? .....	4
Kindergarten-Primary Background: Japan and Japanese Canadians .....	4
Intermediate Background: Japanese Canadian Internment.....	4
About the Exhibitions.....	6
About the Artists.....	9
After Your Visit .....	10
School Program Supporters and Partners .....	11

# Program Overview

## Your Gallery Visit

Your visit will start with a gallery tour of our current exhibitions *We First Need a Boat for the Rising Tide to Lift us* and *Cave to Dream*. Although these are separate exhibitions, both Cindy Mochizuki and Jon Sasaki draw upon their personal experience as fourth generation Japanese Canadians to create their artwork. We will be discussing how cultural knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, and how in the case of Mochizuki and Sasaki, this was interrupted by the experiences of their families during and after World War II. In the creation of their art, each artist attempts to reclaim and relearn aspects of Japanese **folklore**, such as traditional Japanese boat building and the ancient Japanese tradition of using masked performers to commemorate cycles of time and to ward off bad luck.

After the tour, we will go into the gallery classroom and discuss the Japanese art of **tatebanko** (the art of creating paper sets) which artist Cindy Mochizuki references in her exhibition. Students will be guided through the creation of a simple tatebanko paper scene, illustrating an example of **folklore** that is personally relevant such as a family story or a cultural practice that they and their family participate in. Workshop instruction, materials and tools used are tailored for age and grade level of students.

## Program Goals

The goals of the gallery tour and art workshop are to encourage students to:

- Describe and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent
- Observe and share how artists use processes, materials, technologies, tools, and techniques to express ideas
- Explore connections to identity, place, culture, and belonging through creative expression
- Examine the relationship between art and the wider world
- Create artworks using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play

## Big Ideas explored

- Creative expression is a means to explore and share one's identity within a community
- People connect to others and share ideas through the arts
- Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge, and perspectives
- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us
- Artistic expressions differ across time and place
- Experiencing art challenges our point of view and expands our understanding of others
- Engagement in the arts creates opportunities for inquiry through purposeful play.
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities.

## Before Your Visit

### Class Discussion: What is Folklore?

Folklore can be hard to define, as it includes so many different things. Folktales and proverbs, rituals and celebrations, even traditional ways of building houses and baking bread are examples of folklore. Folklore is made up of two words, *folk*, which means a community of people, and *lore*, which comes from the Old English word *lar* meaning learning or knowledge. **Folklore** is defined as the beliefs, customs, and stories of a community of people that are passed down from one generation to the next. This knowledge is generally unwritten and is usually passed down orally within families and community groups. For this reason, folklore is not something you would typically learn in school. Folklore can be personal, such as a story about where their family came from told to a child by their grandmother, or it can be shared by a larger group, such as the practice of putting up a Christmas tree. As a class discuss the meaning of folklore and try to come up with as many examples of folklore as you can.

### Kindergarten-Primary Background: Japan and Japanese Canadians

Both Cindy Mochizuki and Jon Sasaki are Japanese Canadians. Their great-grandparents moved to Canada from Japan and brought with them their traditional knowledge of fishing and farming. The majority of Japanese Canadians live in British Columbia, and their contribution to Canada and to Richmond especially has been very important. As a class, think of examples of Japanese culture that we see around us and discuss the impact Japanese Canadians have made to our community.

Article on the history of Japanese Canadians in Richmond:

<https://thetyee.ca/Culture/2015/06/20/As-Steveston-Japanese-Community-Shrinks-Its-History-Grows/>

### Intermediate Background: Japanese Canadian Internment

A significant event that affected both the artist's families was the internment and dislocation of Japanese Canadians during World War Two. **Internment** means the imprisonment of people for political reasons, and in 1942 Japanese Canadians in British Columbia were forced to move out of their homes and go to internment camps following the invasion of Hong Kong in December of 1941 by Japan. In addition, their property, including fishing boats, shops, farms, and homes were taken and sold. After the war, many Japanese Canadians were not allowed to move back to their original communities in BC and were forced to choose between relocating to other parts of Canada, such as Ontario where Jon Sasaki's great-grandparents moved, or to go to Japan, where Cindy Mochizuki's grandfather moved, even though he was born in Canada. In 1949 Japanese Canadians were finally allowed to return to BC, but many remained in their new communities in Eastern Canada. Although the exhibitions are not directly about Japanese internment, they reference the legacy of the internment, specifically the loss of cultural knowledge passed down to the artists themselves and the Japanese Canadian Community as a whole.

Here are some resources on the historical background of the Japanese internment you can explore with your class:

Animated short film - Minoru: Memory of exile, National Film Board, 18 min.

<http://www.nfb.ca/film/minoru-memory-of-exile/>

Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre <https://centre.nikkeiplace.org/>

Online Exhibition by the Nikkei National Museum <http://nikkeistories.com/#home>

Nikkei National Museum Education Kit <https://centre.nikkeiplace.org/education/journeys-education-kits/>

## About the Exhibitions

On entering the gallery, you will first see the work of Jon Sasaki, a Toronto-based artist whose work utilizes performance art, objects, and installation. *We First Need a Boat for the Rising Tide to Lift Us* traces his journey of self-discovery of his Japanese-Canadian heritage.

In **performance art** it is the actions performed by the artist that create meaning, rather than the creation of a picture or sculpture. In Sasaki's performance, he attempts to build a boat using traditional Japanese tools while he himself is standing waist deep in water. The performance was done in Steveston Harbour in front of a public audience, and it was also documented in a video, which you will see in the gallery. The act of building a boat while standing in water seems like a somewhat ridiculous thing to do, and Sasaki intentionally embraces humor in his performances. What he gets us to reflect on is that if you happened to find yourself stuck in water, building a boat would be the most logical thing to do in order to rescue yourself, no matter what the difficulty and it is that resilience to overcome obstacles that he is celebrating in his performance. Accompanying the video are the tools Jon used, many of which are historical Japanese boat building tools. The boat that was constructed in the performance is also on display.



The exhibition includes a second performance video on the same theme of resilience, featuring an origami artist who makes and remakes many different objects from the same piece of paper. Many Japanese Canadians, like Sasaki's great-grandfather, endured great hardships during and after internment, and needed to rely on their own resilience, creativity, and ingenuity to rebuild their lives, often learning new jobs or relocating to new places. Sasaki is reflecting on this journey of reinvention and asking us to consider what is lost in the process. After so many iterations, the origami paper becomes worn, even torn, and only the traces of previous folds remain. The loss of culture and identity experienced as a result of internment has rippled down the generations, and Jon Sasaki explains how this has affected him.

*"A few years ago I embarked on a course of research into my Japanese Canadian ancestors, fishermen and farmers living on the west coast before the 1942 internment and eastward migration. Theirs was a fairly sad but typical story: as with almost all the internees, they lost their civil rights, homes, livelihoods, keepsakes, community ties and eventually their cultural heritage. This last point is particularly stinging... after the war my great grandparents felt it was problematic to retain any Japanese cultural identity, and they taught their children to assimilate with the Anglo Ontarian society they found themselves in. This had ripple effects down through the generations... I was raised to ignore and even shun my Japanese heritage and it is only lately that I have begun to discover the rich culture that was left behind in British Columbia." – Jon Sasaki*

*Cave to Dream* is a multi-media installation that includes hand-drawn animations, sound and live action video set within a dreamlike space. Accompanying the four short films are the costumes worn by the performers, and a set of porcelain game pieces in the centre of the room that reference the titles of the films *Salt*, *Onyx*, *Shadow*, and *Snow*. Each film represents one of the four respective seasons, and co-exists in a cyclical loop, with the same characters and events appearing in the different films. They can be watched in any order, and the sounds of each blend with each other to create a sense of heightened unreality, mirroring the magical realms of the films themselves.



The ideas behind the films came from research done by the artist, Cindy Mochizuki, when she visited Japan in 2017 to participate in an artist residency. Growing up in Vancouver as a fourth generation Japanese Canadian Mochizuki always felt that she lived between two worlds, Canada and Japan. She recalled hearing many stories and legends about Japanese magical beings from her grandmother, and she was curious to learn more about these stories and where they came from. In Japan, she researched the folklore and rituals that historically would have been performed to chase away bad luck and to celebrate the passage of the seasons and cycles of life. On her return, she began to weave these traditions into a narrative that unfolds through four stories representing the four seasons.

One ritual in particular drew her interest, that of the Nama Hage demon, a tradition where a masked demon performer arrives on December 31<sup>st</sup> to scare away bad luck from your home. The costumes in the gallery are Cindy Mochizuki's recreations of this demon, with a modern twist. In the tradition, a young man would perform this role, but in Mochizuki's films, the demons are all performed by women. In bringing these stories and rituals to Canada from Japan, she was not interested in simply re-creating them, but instead to re-invent them, to reflect on the true meanings and purpose behind the stories, and to adapt them to the modern Canadian context in which we live.

## About the Artists

**Cindy Mochizuki** creates multi-media installation, audio fiction, performance, animation, and drawings. Her works explore the manifestation of story and its relationship to site-specificity, invisible histories, archives, and memory work. Her artistic process moves back and forth between multiple sites of cultural production considering language, chance, improvisation and engaging communities. She has exhibited, performed and screened her work in Canada, US, and Asia. Exhibitions include the Frye Art Museum (Seattle, Washington), Yonago City Museum (Yonago, Japan), The New Gallery (Calgary), Hamilton Artists Inc. (Hamilton), and Koganecho Bazaar (Yokohama). In 2015, she received the Vancouver's Mayor's Arts Award in New Media and Film. She received her MFA in Interdisciplinary Studies from the School For Contemporary Arts (2006).

**Cindy Mochizuki's Website:** [cindymochizuki.com](http://cindymochizuki.com)

**Video Interview with Cindy Mochizuki** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ukl50Bfx2jc>

Toronto-based artist **Jon Sasaki** brings performance, video, object and installation into a framework where expectation and outcome never align, generating a simultaneous sense of pathos and fun. His work employs reason-based approaches reminiscent of conceptual art while investigating romantic subjects; in this juxtaposition, Sasaki creates humorous, self-exhaustive systems caught in cycles of trial and error.

**Jon Sasaki's Website:** [jonsasaki.com](http://jonsasaki.com)

**Video Interview with Jon Sasaki** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9\\_vh5Jjoq4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9_vh5Jjoq4)

# After Your Visit

## Activity: Japanese Boatbuilding with Origami

Jon Sasaki used traditional Japanese boat building tools in his performance in Steveston, drawing attention to the long history of boatbuilding in our community. For nearly a century, Japanese Canadian boatbuilders, known as shipwrights, built wooden fishing boats for thousands of local fishermen. Steveston was the home of three such Japanese boat building companies. Examine the history of this tradition, and create your own boat using the Japanese paper craft origami.

Short film on the history of Japanese boat building in Steveston:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGaqJutvlsI>

Origami Boat Tutorial: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhLmE\\_IMBtM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhLmE_IMBtM)

Reference books available at the Richmond Public Library

Easy Ocean Origami - Harbo, Christopher L

<https://yourlibrary.bibliocommons.com/item/show/1153566101>

Origami - Henry, Sally

<https://yourlibrary.bibliocommons.com/item/show/1151961101>

## Reflection: Folklore

Examine the examples of folklore depicted in the art you created as a class and choose a few to examine in more depth.

- How old is this tradition?
- Where did the tradition come from?
- What is the purpose of this tradition?
- Has the tradition changed over time? In what ways?

**Extension:** Research the origins of an example of folklore. For example, why do we put candles on birthday cakes or throw rice at weddings?

## School Program Supporters and Partners



The Richmond Art Gallery School Art Program is one of many gallery programs made possible by the Richmond Art Gallery Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to extending the reach of our gallery exhibitions through community programming.



[www.islbus.com](http://www.islbus.com)

International Stage Lines is making it possible for more schools to visit by donating free bus travel to and from the gallery. Find out more about this at <http://www.richmondartgallery.org/learn-and-create/schools/elementary>



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ARTS COUNCIL  
An agency of the Province of British Columbia

*We acknowledge the  
financial support of the  
Province of British Columbia*



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des arts  
du Canada



 Richmond