



Elinor Whidden:

Elinor Whidden received a BA in Canadian/Environmental Studies from *Trent University*, a BFA from the *Nova Scotia College of Art and Design* and a MFA from *SUNY at Buffalo*. In 2007 she attended the Walking and Art residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts and in 2013 she was part of the VSVSVS Summery Residency program in Toronto. Whidden is the recipient of numerous grants and awards including a current (2018) *Chalmers Art Fellowship* from the *Ontario Arts Council*. Her work has been included in various biennials including the 2010 exhibition of *Beyond/In* Western New York and *Show11* in Cambridge ON. Whidden recently had a selection of her car themed work curated into a large solo exhibition titled *Rearview* at the *University of Waterloo Art Gallery*. Since 2011 Whidden has also worked with arts collective [DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC MEMORY](http://www.departmentofpublicmemory.com) to find out what the city forgets.

Notes from the podcast interview by Andrew Stuck: Interviewed October 2007 and published May, 2008 on <http://talkingwalking.net>

Walking and Art Residency <http://walkingandartresidency.pbwiki.com/> At the Banff Centre of Arts <http://www.banffcentre.ca/>

Elinor's own website: elinorwhidden.com and that for the Department for Public Memory: departmentofpublicmemory.com

Louis Hennepin http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Hennepin and René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/René-Robert_Cavelier,_Sieur_de_La_Salle Portaged some 8 miles around Niagara Falls in 1679.

Hudson River School of Painters
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River_School

Rocky Mountain Fur Company <http://www.oregonpioneers.com/rmfc.htm>

Elinor recommends Arthur Manuel - "Unsettling Canada":
<https://btlbooks.com/book/unsettling-canada>

Elinor's favourite walks:

Around Banff in the Rockies: Stanley Glacier
Tombstone Territorial Park, Yukon



Since the interview was recorded:

"**Elinor Whidden** has been a practicing visual artist since 2005. She uses sculpture and performance to deconstruct colonial narratives, particularly as they relate to contemporary car culture.

In 2006, she deconstructed an entire 1995 Ford Taurus, fabricating canoes, knapsacks, paddles and rucksacks, which were then hauled in a two-day portage around Niagara Falls by nine modern-day Voyageurs. In her persona as *Mountain Man* she has re-traced the colonial



paths of the fur trade in urban settings by leading walking tours in Vancouver, Kamloops and Sudbury using her collection of *Rearview Walking Sticks*. In 2013, Elinor recreated a Depression era “Bennett Buggy”, outfitting participants in horse costumes fabricated from scavenged mufflers to drag a car through downtown Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Her most recent work, *Head-Smashed-In-Engine-Block-Buffalo-Jump*, is an enormous pile of Buffalo skulls and bones formed from scavenged car parts. Working from early photographs that document giant mountains of Buffalo bones waiting to be shipped by train for use as fertilizer and in bone china, these Buffalo reference both the grandeur *and* decline of dreams related to the Western Frontier and Henry Ford’s utopian vision of “a car in every drive way”. The colonial greed and disregard for the land that fueled the extinction of the North American bison is manifest today in the towering piles of scrapped automobiles and in our incessant thirst for oil. Whidden believes that reconciliation is only possible when we look critically at the ways in which history continues to repeat itself.

Since 2011 Elinor has also collaborated with artist Maggie Hutcheson as DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC MEMORY. In collaboration with communities of service users and staff they combine street performance, creative writing, visual/installation art, testimony and ceremony to tell the unique stories of specific public institutions in Toronto. They have commemorated the first publicly funded daycare in all of Canada in collaboration with parents, daycare workers and childcare advocates; celebrated the first Canadian organization run by and for HIV Positive Women with the organization’s founders, past members and staff; mourned the closure of a palliative care hospice with nurses and support workers, and much more. In each case, the DEPARTMENT encourages participants and audiences to reflect not only on their own stories but on broader questions of how we might foster a more caring, liveable and inclusive society. “

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