

# Woodland Cultural Centre opens new exhibit: Performagraphic

By Chezney Martin

**BRANTFORD** – The newest exhibit to call the Woodland Cultural Centre home is the “Performagraphic” exhibit filled with cultural identity, humour and history created by Artist James Luna.

The entire gallery spans a period of video, performance and photographic works created between 2010 to 2014, referencing Luna's artistic career of over 30 years. From the Pooyukitchchum/Ipai, Luna comes from the La Jolla Indian Reservation in North County San Diego and his work builds a confrontation with audiences using his indigenous perspective of cultural identity and the realities of race.

In an interview with *Two Row Times*, Luna explained that being an artist is a way of life and this ties in with the kind of inspiration he would like to give young or aspiring artists.

“We're given gifts as artists, they're pretty simple gifts, but they're hard to understand. But, I think that maybe once you hear this you won't forget; it is a gift that not many people have to be an artist, to have the ability to see the things that other people don't see, but the real trick is to take the things you see and make them into something called art. Like any other skill, it's something you should do every day,” said Luna, as he began to list different forms of art including writing, taping and hand made creating.

“It will keep you balanced,” he said. “We're



James Luna powerfully explained the messages behind several of his pieces for the first visitors to the opening of his gallery “Performagraphic” at the Woodland Cultural Centre. PHOTO BY CHEZNEY MARTIN

not talking full on finished works, we're talking about just being in the process of it and learning the various ways to speak, whether it be blank paper or your body. You'll live a better life for that.”

Artistic Director Naomi Johnson said that the opening itself “was great,” with the gallery being filled with more than 60 people.

“We had [students from the Ontario College of Art and Design University] Indigenous Visual Culture Program

out here, and I think they brought over 45 people,” said Johnson. “So, these are the best and brightest indigenous creators and those interested in indigenous art. I couldn't have asked for a better set of people in a really good number too.”

In regards to Luna, Johnson had nothing but kind words.

“It's a huge honour to have James Luna exhibiting at Woodland,” said Johnson. “Personally, he's been a huge art hero of mine for over 15 years now and he's real-

ly a trailblazer for First Nations artists. His work has posed questions that I think are often raised now, but when he did it he was the first. So, it's a huge honour in our gallery spaces, and I hope

everybody gets a chance to come out and see it before it's done, which is May 6. I always hope that with these exhibitions, people will come and see them. It's great to know that we have such

a breadth of talent in our communities, and yeah he's from California, but his work influenced and inspired so many of our own Six Nations artists, even Tyendinaga, Wahta artists. He is intrinsic.”



Splitting the audience in half, James Luna began one of his performances which included himself walking up right, then very slowly, and finally with a cane to enact the importance of knowledge as an elder. PHOTO BY CHEZNEY MARTIN