

The Red Dahlia Project

Patricia MacAulay - Masters of Art and Social Practice - University of the Highlands and Islands - 2019



Socially Engaged Art

This describes any art practice that involves people and communities in debate, collaboration, or interaction. It is often, but not always, associated with activism.



Goal

As the last generation leaves the land, this project seeks to engage members of a Canadian settler family in co-creating a shared sense of place and identity while grappling with related issues.



Participants

Descendants and relatives of George and Esta MacAulay of St. Catherine's, PEI form the core group of participants. We come from displaced Irish and Scots Gaels who moved onto traditional Mi'kmaw land.



Social Issues

In examining our sense of place and identity, three key issues appear - stewardship, reconciliation, and migration. More may emerge as the project progresses.



Theme

I always loved my grandmother's red dahlias. They are strong, beautiful flowers that, like relationships, require careful nurturing in order to grow and flourish..



Process

The project will engage participants on-line through an interactive family website, on-the-land through eco-art initiatives, and in-person through conversation, story-telling, and reflection.



Research Question

The project seeks to understand the transformative possibilities of various forms of encounter, asking the question, what experiences enable us to see ourselves and others with clarity and compassion?



Future

This project has no set beginning or any planned end. Like the red dahlia, it will continue to flower as long as it is nurtured.



"Art is a state of encounter." (Bourriard, 1998)