

# Indigenous Legal Matters:

## *Reclaiming Indigenous Arts*

Friday, May 18, 2018 • 1:15 pm - 3:15 pm

### Presenter:

## Jay Soule, Indigenous multi-disciplinary artist from the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (Deshkaan Ziibing Anishinaabeg)

### Workshop Summary:

**BACKGROUND:** Nearly 100% of Indigenous items sold in tourism, museum and gallery gift shops are produced by non-Indigenous workers, primarily in low-income countries. Not only does supporting manufacturing devalue Indigenous arts practices, it also makes consumers complicit in allowing cultural appropriation and unethical, low-wage labour to flood Canadian markets. This choice impedes the potential for sustainable participation of Indigenous artisans and traditional artistic practitioners in a fair, national economy.

The cultural sector is at present a significant contributor to our economy and has simultaneously become one of the means by which Indigenous artists are integrating themselves into urban environments.

Authenticity certification is integral in promoting and protecting Indigenous arts. Demanding authentic, Indigenous artworks in the retail, wholesale and tourism marketplaces supports a greater shift toward true reconciliation, and the respect of Indigenous traditions and practices.

Canada's history is one of land appropriation followed by the systematic oppression, destruction, and exploitation of the cultures of Indigenous peoples. It is time to bring reconciliation to the Indigenous cultural economy and to put a stop to the importation of inauthentic "Indigenous items" and theft of cultural property.

Participants will learn what they can do personally and professional as members of community legal clinics to help stop the appropriation of Indigenous Arts in Canada. Participants will learn about the supportive role the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions Calls To Action have in the appropriation of Indigenous Arts.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a document that describes both individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world. It addresses the rights of Indigenous peoples on issues such as:

•Culture •Identity •Religion •Language •Health •Education •Community

### Learning Outcomes:

After participating in this session, learners will be able to identify:

- i) What cultural appropriation is;
- ii) Who it hurts; and
- iii) Why it is harmful in an Indigenous context?

### Biography

#### Jay Soule

Jay Soule is an Indigenous multi-disciplinary artist from the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (Deshkaan Ziibing Anishinaabeg) located twenty minutes south west of London, Ontario on the north bank of the Thames River. Jay has been painting, clothing design, installation work and performance art for over 15 years. His work brings awareness to the importance of decolonizing worldviews and Indigenizing nonindigenous space and favours using pop art as a medium of expression, creating works that shift the gaze from stereotype to contemporary narratives.

Jay creates art under the name Chippewar, which represents the hostile relationship that Canada's native people's have with the government of the land they have resided in since their creation. Chippewar is also a reminder of the importance of the traditional warrior role that exists in Indigenous cultures across North America that survives into the present day.

