

Common Weal Community Arts presents
Why the Caged Bird Sings—Immersive Engagements

A solo exhibition by Cheryl L'Hirondelle

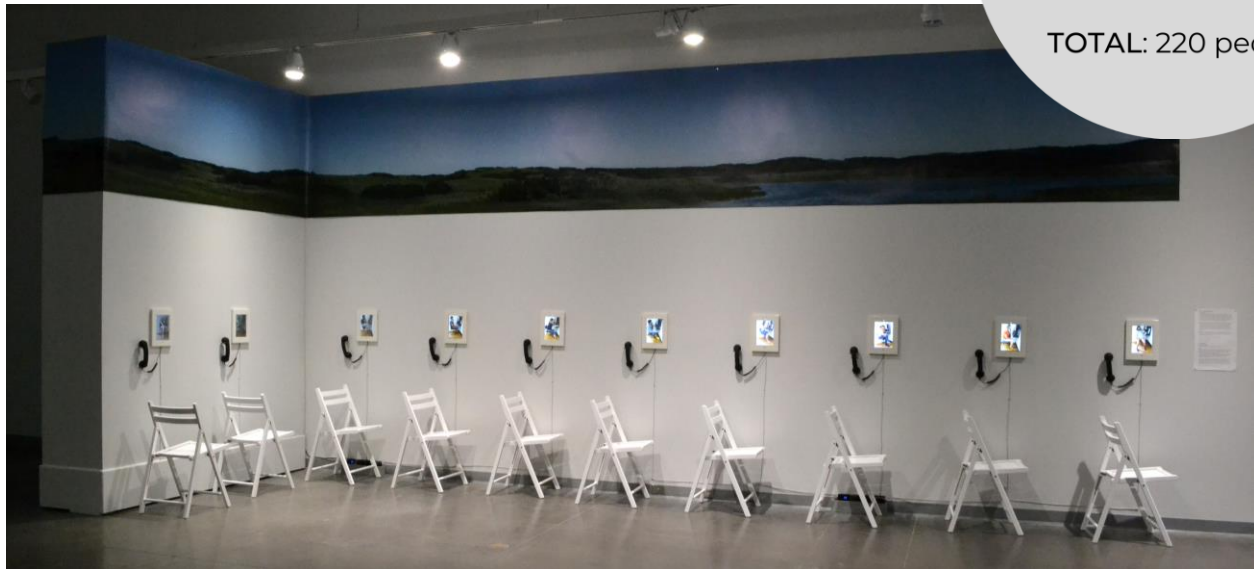
September 17 — October 22, 2020

Public Engagement

Reception: 70 people

Visitors: 150 people

TOTAL: 220 people



Cheryl L'Hirondelle, *Here I Am* (2013), multimedia installation, 7.9m x 2.43m [26' X 8'], 10 Acer Tablets in holders with handheld telephone receivers

Why The Caged Bird Sings is a participatory and community-engaged, five-day singing, songwriting and recording workshop that involves small groups of incarcerated women, men or detained youth along with their literacy educators and cultural programmers in federal prisons, provincial correctional centres and youth detention facilities. The song lyrics created by the participants are strung together to create a narrative, using consensus as a way to create equity so that everyone's voice is heard and validated. The resulting songs are uplifting and positive in theme and are meant to become a repeatable mantra that belongs to all the participants who co-wrote the song—extending out to the greater community, so that everyone can join in.

Cheryl L'Hirondelle (*Cree/Halfbreed; German/Polish*) is an interdisciplinary artist, singer/songwriter and critical thinker. Her work investigates and articulates the dynamism of *nêhiyawin* (Cree worldview) in contemporary time-place incorporating audio, video, VR, olfactory, music and audience/user participation to create immersive environments towards 'radical inclusion'. As a songwriter, L'Hirondelle's focus is on both sharing *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree language) and Indigenous song-forms and personal narrative songwriting as methodologies toward survivance.