



**Q & A Summary**

***Indigenizing Immersive Tools AR VR XR to Celebrate the Arts***

**with Josh Conrad**

December 12, 2024

**Q: Thank you for sharing about the free and low-cost programs. Is there a website or link we can go to, to access those or to share these resources with others?**

*Josh has created a resource list "Getting Started with Creative Technology." The link to this document can be found in the description to this webinar's video on the FPCC YouTube channel.*

**Q: With Meta Sparks Studio shutting down in January, what other platforms are you moving to? 8th Wall, Snapchat studio? I am currently in need of migrating some of my AR effects and want your recommendation.**

Yeah, that's a great question. I did a lot of research and development thinking about how I'm also going to navigate from Meta Spark studio which is accessible software. I don't want to shy away from admitting that 8th Wall is a very good platform, however, it comes at a large expense. I don't believe that it's the most accessible software, for the creator. Although you can have a couple AR experiences uploaded to work as a commercial artist or somebody that has multiple projects, it would be a large expense not just for you, but for the client that wants to work with you.

I actually think that Snapchat is the most accessible and best option, especially because they've integrated web AR, so you don't even need to download Snapchat in order to have an experience activate. Definitely check that out. That's a new feature in Snapchat's new version, 5.0. For those of you who are just curious and are thinking about it, Snapchat is completely free software that you can use and it has a sharing capability if you have the Snapchat app. You can also use it without the app.

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There's a lot of capabilities in this very powerful software that's completely free for you to use. You can read all about it in the link on my resources page. *[linked in the video description to this webinar recording on YouTube]*

**Q: What kind of protocol practices do you have, if any, when creating AR experiences in ancestral lands outside of your own?**

Engagement is the most important. It's around creating to connect and asking the community that you're visiting if they would like to contribute, and how they would like to connect with this type of practice. That's the biggest focus. With myself being Stó:lo, and visiting the Tsleil-Waututh, my goal with creating augmented reality experiences there was first to introduce and then to connect with the nations of which the land that we're standing upon there and making sure that those stories are told first and foremost and then leaving space.

Of course, for our urban indigenous folks and folks that might not have that same connection with the land, always making sure to just ask, invite and continue dialogue. This is such a new field and because this type of work travels and I mean digitally, which is sort of spatially, there's always discourse about protocol and how do we approach it as we continue to move through technology. I think it's a really good question that we all must ask each other and ourselves when it comes to what we put into this technology and what we leave out. But always making sure to be respectful of the folks in the Nations and the lands that you're visiting and making sure you're engaging with that land and the people.

**Q: Is there a high rate of interaction for work that includes AR elements. In other words, do you notice if the more interactive the work, the more people are drawn to it, and can you see some data in regard to that?**

What I found fascinating actually is some of the most successful pieces were the pieces that people could experience with their hands or their face. This is, I think, just very innate in us to want to touch and feel and to be a part of.

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The tangibility of that type of experience using augmented reality is really something that sets apart the world effects from the tangible effects that people can interact with physically. So I do see jumps in engagement oftentimes depending on the context where, for example, the dragonfly piece is our star in that set of works because it is something that people can play with and share with their friends in a physical sense, which is really interesting and exciting. However, we do have some world effects that people really seem to engage with, so I wouldn't want to cast any shadow on the other works because I feel like it really depends on the audience in that moment.

So maybe we have some younger people that really understand how to use augmented reality coming through and they're playing and using those tangible effects that you can touch and play with because they understand the technology. But folks that are new to the technology, really enjoy that world space because they can just approach it and it just like you would approach something you don't understand, you can approach it and it's digestible because you don't have to do anything. You can just observe and walk through it. I think that immersion is fun for some people too so it just depends on the audience.

Because of where we were in the time that it had launched, there was a lot of younger folks with the bars and restaurants and things there. So I feel like young folks were kind of impressed with the hand interactions.

**Q: What is your current process or workflow like right now? In terms of your current AR process, do you do all your meshes and rendering and everything in Blender and then take that to, let's say, Snapchat studio or elsewhere?**

That's a good tech question. It actually depends on what I want to achieve. So with a lot of point A to point B animations or things where there's some kind of movement that I can get away with animating within the actual AR program, I'll tend to just leave that all set up all the joints and rigging inside of either Cinema 4D mostly, or Blender. Each program has its own thing, but I will definitely do that. And then sometimes I'll bring it in and then I can play with it using different nodes.

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(There are nodes in Meta Spark, and nodes in Snapchat as well but different.)  
So I think that or in the patch editor I can also animate.

So there's some things that I can do without using an FBX file or something like that where I have to bring in the whole animation. However, I will always make sure that all my 3D files are rigged and appropriately detached in ways so I can reinterpret it inside of that software because sometimes, as you know, things will be either giant or like one thing will be like totally a mess. I try to limit that as much as possible.

If there are parts like, for instance, the butterflies you seen in the slide, I used two planes inside of Spark and then I just modeled the body because it was so much easier just to bring that in and I could control it much better inside if I wanted it to do different things, or each butterfly to do something different. So yeah, lots of different little techniques, I guess.

***Josh:* I am wanting to bring any knowledge that I do have in these different programs forward so people can also use these tools in a way that's accessible and fun. If I were to make maybe a Snapchat Lens Studio AR introductory program, would there be interest in that?** If that is the case, [please again DM me on Instagram](#) to let me know because I would love to find a way to make sure that that happens in the coming new year.

**Q: You shared about Spark Indigenous, and I wondered, are there any public resources that came out of that initiative that are still available, or that could be made available.**

I'm going to make a sad face. I was going to be launching it as a public resource this summer. However, we were notified that this particular platform was to be no longer, with very short notice. So yeah, it was kind of disappointing.

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However, I am looking now to create a new series so we can then rebuild, using a different software, a more stable software which I'm really excited about which will be Lens Studio.

Ideally, again, get your votes in guys, because after you read my PDF, I will definitely try to make that happen and launch something that everyone can digest at their own pace.

*Cindy Charleyboy (FPCC staff) shared how important it is for First Nations artists to make copies of their work all along the way whether they sell or give the work away. Whether you're a persistent beader, t-shirt maker, etc., artists of all ages would be interested in using some of the skills Josh is sharing.*

**Q: Every time you were saying the word *persistence*, I was thinking of how within our Nation, we will use the word *perseverance* and that it goes back to everything that we used to do, whether it was picking berries or catching and drying fish, you do the thing until you're done. I appreciate you sharing that something we as indigenous people have is persistence.**

Yeah, I don't want to say hard, but it takes time, and with anything, like you're saying, everything takes time to master. We don't become master illustrators or masters in our languages when we don't practice. So, bringing a little bit to the table every day and making sure you get a few steps in and that's all we can do.

Practicing anything is a great lesson to learn every time, because when you achieve that little goal, you become more of a master yourself. Celebrating those little achievements and ensuring that you're taking care of yourself as well as exercising your mind and your attention and your follow-through is a big part of being here in this world. Like you said, like we had to do it, and we still have to do it. It helps bring our ourselves into a realm of good mental health.

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Art is for me vital to my mental health and these strategies for me to practice and persist are vital to my wellbeing and who I am as a person. I feel like I learn more about myself when I learn painting or beading or software. Having the exercise of keeping an open mind and being curious is a big part of my foundation and I wouldn't have achieved that as my foundation without persistence in what I do.

**Josh: I'm also open to support those folks who may be in an earlier stage than AR.** If anybody would be interested in a graphic software tutorial to learn how to digitize your work using some software similar to Photoshop or Illustrator. Or even drawing on a tablet using one of the free and accessible inexpensive software. Message me in my DMs, we can make it as accessible as possible when introducing you to free versions of the same type of software.

**Q: My question is to do with drawing. I only have an Android tablet, and it seems like there's not great apps for drawing on it. Is that true? Is there a way to connect it to a computer to kind of use it like a Wacom tablet?**

Unfortunately for Android, there is one program, but I don't have it off the top of my head, but I think that it's rather expensive for what it is, and it's not as good as the program that's often used, such as Procreate on iPad.

That's a really good question because I am now going to go into my little cave and find a better solution for that. One of my cousins had approached me with the same question and we were only able to find one software for that, sadly.

**Q: Is a drawing tablet, like a Wacom tablet, useful for the kind of work you do?**

Absolutely. I actually have a super accessible one. I bought it on Amazon for \$25 or \$30 and it's called a *ugee* tablet. It's very similar to the Wacom bamboo, like one of the small tablets and I often use it. I don't need a big fancy one with a screen because I have screens, so for me the purpose is totally fulfilled using this very small tablet and you can find them inexpensive online.

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