

Re-counting Coup

Matthew Provost Naatsikapamatoosin (Two Smudge)
May 14 – June 25, 2026
Fazakas Gallery, Vancouver

Re-counting Coup is the first solo exhibition in British Columbia by Matthew Provost Naatsikapamatoosin (Two Smudge), an artist from the Piikani and Kainai Nations in Southern Alberta, part of the Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot Confederacy).

Working across painting, material intervention, installation, and hanging mobile sculpture, Two Smudge explores how Siksikaitstapi knowledge systems persist and adapt within contemporary contexts. His practice engages histories of mark-making, land, and value, asking how cultural knowledge is carried forward across time and changing conditions.

The exhibition's title draws from the Siksikaitstapi practice of counting coup, a Plains Indigenous tradition in which warriors demonstrated bravery through acts of close physical proximity—touching an opponent rather than killing them. Rooted in risk, precision, and restraint, the act held deep cultural and social significance. Here, this gesture is reinterpreted through material and process.

Painting over maps and financial documents such as cheques—tools historically tied to colonial systems of land division and economic control—Two Smudge disrupts their authority without fully erasing them. These works function as acts of “re-counting,” where layered marks assert presence while challenging imposed structures.

This approach resonates with earlier visual traditions, including winter counts—pictorial records used by Plains Indigenous communities to mark significant events—and the later emergence of 19th-century ledger art. While ledger art often emphasizes figuration and narrative, Two Smudge departs from these conventions. His compositions draw instead from the painted visual language of Niitoyis (lodges), where surface, structure, and meaning are inseparable.

Though the works may initially appear abstract, they are grounded in a Siksikaitstapi visual vocabulary: circles, lines, and geometric forms that reference stars, celestial systems, and relationships to land. The lodge remains central—not only as a formal structure, but as a site of teachings related to home, land, and community. Drawn from lived experience in Piikani Nation, these forms are rearticulated across each surface, creating spatial systems that resist the fixed boundaries of colonial cartography.

Throughout the exhibition, layers of information remain visible. Fragments of maps persist beneath painted fields—their borders disrupted but still legible. This coexistence reflects an ongoing tension between imposed territorial frameworks and Siksikaitstapi understandings of land as relational, lived, and continually renewed.

Re-counting Coup considers what it means to act with courage today. Here, bravery is expressed through continuation: through the sustained acts of making, learning, and transmitting knowledge. The work affirms that Siksikaitstapi ways of knowing are not static, but evolving—carried forward through practice, memory, and presence.