

# Claiming Back Their Heritage

Indigenous Empowerment and Community Development through World Heritage

*Introducing the Winner of a Pierre Savard Award 2025*



**Thursday, Jan 15, 2026**

**16:00 CET**

**Zoom**

**07:00 PST**

**10:00 EST**

**Pre-registration:** [click here](#)

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World Heritage sites are designated as humanity's most outstanding cultural and natural places, belonging to all the people of the world, regardless of national borders. For Indigenous communities, however, heritage is not a universal abstraction but a vital foundation for cultural continuity, identity, and sovereignty. In this talk, Geneviève Susemihl examines three Indigenous World Heritage sites in Canada, exploring how they are mobilized as instruments of empowerment and community development. Drawing on extensive ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth narrative interviews and engaging critically with universalistic discourses of World Heritage, she demonstrates how First Nation communities leverage these designations to assert collective rights, strengthen the preservation of cultural heritage, and advance political, economic, cultural, and social self-determination.



**Geneviève Susemihl** is a senior researcher and lecturer of North American literature, culture and media at Kiel University, Germany. She has published extensively on Indigenous heritage, the construction of the American Indian in literature and culture, migration and storytelling.

