

## THUNDERBIRD NEST, 1999-2004

The *Thunderbird nest* in (Figure 24, 25), revisits the historical stories of thunderbirds and imagines what their nest of stones might of looked like. The



*Thunderbird nest* is made out of an alpha gypsum and stones with willow branches that form the inner nest. In the nest is a large egg that appears to be old and fossilized. The intent of this work not only revives the stories of the thunderbird but also quietly poses the question to the possibilities of the great thunderbird's existence. Some would say that thunderbirds were real, as opposed to mythological. Given that Aboriginal history stems back to the Ice Age, it is possible that they were accounts of large prehistoric birds that were passed down, either orally or through artistic renditions. Perhaps stories of the thunderbird are an amalgamation of oral accounts and mythology.



Figure 24, 25. *Thunderbird nest*, 1999-2004. Wood, stones, matrix G, willow branches, ostrich egg, raffia. 60 x 76 x 72 cm

Images of thunderbirds have existed across the country for several thousands of years, found on early artefacts and petroglyphs and pictographs. Stories about the thunderbird still exist today amongst aboriginal groups, commonly described as a massive, powerful bird. In my territory, the thunderbird is said to have black feathers and large glowing eyes. On the west coast, the thunderbird is said to be so large it could pick up whales right out of ocean, and its home is a nest made of rocks in the mountains. This thunderbird was also known for casting lightning bolts and sounding like thunder in flight. The Anishnabe stories say that there are two kinds

of thunderbirds, one of which is a man transformed into a thunderbird, the other, the mighty, powerful thunderbird. These birds lived in the mountains and some even say left large circular impressions of their nests in the earth. The Anishnabe say they traveled disguised in storm clouds. Across Canada, the stories of the thunderbird's power vary, but generally, it is known for its ability to be a guardian in life and in ceremony, to protect one from destructive or enemy forces, and to bring rain.