

CYCLICAL MOTION: INDIGENOUS ART & PLACEMAKING



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

The University of Manitoba campuses are located on original lands of Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.

We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, and we dedicate ourselves to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.



INTRODUCTION

Cyclical Motion: Indigenous Art & Placemaking is an initiative intended to affect the physical environment of the Fort Garry campus by making Indigenous arts, cultures, and languages more prominent and visible.

Undertaken in 2017-2018, the project engaged a team of Winnipeg-based Indigenous artists to develop a series of semi-permanent artworks in two phases. Curated by Jenny Western, the project was made possible through support from the University's Indigenous Initiatives Fund. Both phases were rooted in dialogue with Indigenous staff, students and Elders, and collaboration with the Campus Planning Office, Physical Plant, and the Art Collections Coordinator.

The project's first phase saw Dee Barsy and Kenneth Lavallee create a large mural on the UMCycle Bike Kiosk structure. In the second phase, Ian August, Jaimie Isaac, and Niki Little created thematic signs that were installed at various locations on Fort Garry campus. As a whole, *Cyclical Motion* explores themes related to transportation, movement, connections to land and water, Indigenous student experiences, language reclamation and reconciliation, and Indigenous advocacy and activism.

CYCLICAL MOTION: INDIGENOUS ART & PLACEMAKING

Curatorial Essay by Jenny Western

The land upon which the University of Manitoba resides lies next to a waterway we call the Red River. This water brought life – plants, animals, people – through the area well before it was ever a bastion of formal academics and higher learning. Birchbark canoes, York boats, and steam powered paddle wheels all traversed this river, connecting people north and south. Later on, ox carts moved parallel to its shoreline, establishing the Pembina Trail that would eventually grow into the Pembina Highway that for many is the central artery to the U of M's Fort Garry campus today. Cars and buses have been the main modes of transportation to campus over the last few decades with an increasing number of brave souls conquering Pembina by bicycle. The recent addition of bike lanes to Pembina highway has certainly made things easier for the bike commute but it wasn't too many years ago that cyclists often opted to find alternate routes – back allies or monkey trails through the golf course – in order to avoid exhaust fumes, potholes, and the dreaded

Jubilee underpass. However, once on campus the bicycle is a beautiful way to get around. It is quicker than walking, can be locked up almost anywhere, and gliding along upon the saddle of a bicycle offers a different lens through which to view the shifting landscape.

The UMCycle Bike Kiosk opened in 2017, a further encouragement to the promotion and maintenance of cycling culture on campus. It is located across from Migizii Agamik (Bald Eagle Lodge), which houses the University of Manitoba's Indigenous Student Centre. The physical relationship between these two structures may seem incidental and yet the linkages between cycling cultures and Indigenous cultures is not something to be dismissed. As Métis artist and academic Dylan Miner writes, "While Indigenous people are not generally recognized as a significant cycling constituency, many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people have spent countless hours riding the modern-day descendant of the

velocipede."¹ To Miner, the act of riding a bicycle can be a form of civil disobedience, one that turns colonization on its head by resisting über-industrialization and hyper-modernization.² Not only can the bicycle offer a different lens through which to see the campus landscape, but that lens can also include a way of seeing the U of M from an Indigenous perspective. As such, the *Indigenous Art and Placemaking Project* has been a two-phase initiative wherein Indigenous artists use the bicycle as a starting point from which to present and uncover Indigenous ways of understanding and navigating the Fort Garry campus.

The first initiative of the project is "Untitled (Bike Rider)," a collaboration between artists Dee Barsy and Kenneth Lavallee. Painted on the side of the UMCycle Bike Kiosk, this large-scale mural's bright colours and geometric shapes are visible from a long distance away. It is only upon closer inspection that the bike rider at the centre

of the piece reveals its subtler details. Small dots of paint on the cyclist's shirt and helmet reference the beading patterns of Métis culture. The bicycle's handlebars depict a woven braided pattern that recalls both the Métis *ceinture fléchée* as well as a length of braided sweetgrass. The bicycle's wheels are painted to resemble the colours of the First Nations medicine wheel. "Untitled (Bike Rider)" speaks of an active and ongoing Indigenous presence at the U of M; a presence that is rooted in knowledge of the past, a full participation in the present, and a steady eye on the future.

The second phase brings together artists Ian August, Jaimie Isaac, and Niki Little to extend the creation of artwork out into the campus space. They responded with a series of signs placed throughout campus that cover a variety of topics: water rights, the Cardinal directions, Reconciliation, intergenerational teachings, the student experience, and Indigenous histories. These pieces are

composed of laser-cut aluminum and coloured acrylic, affixed to hefty rocks sourced from the Fort Garry campus lands. Creating a flow through areas of campus only accessed by bike or on foot, the signs draw attention to stories and knowledges that are at times overlooked or ignored. This is a sort of way-finding on campus that allows for a different navigation of the landscape for those willing to travel by a different route.

Surrounded by the oxbow of the Red River and Pembina Highway closing its perimeter, the space claimed by the University of Manitoba is so much more than a university campus. The campus stands on Treaty One territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and the homeland of the Métis nation. The histories, the people, the knowledge, the memories, the aspirations that have passed through this space, that continue to pass through this space, and that will continue to pass through this space create a cyclical movement of

sorts, one that the *Indigenous Art & Placemaking Project* aims to recognize and honour through the work of these artists and all those whose efforts have helped to make this project a reality.

¹Dylan Miner, "Red (Pedal) Power: Natives, Bikes, and Anti-Colonial Art," *Do Not Park Bicycles: Aboriginal Bike Culture* (Brandon, MB: Art Gallery of Southwest Manitoba), 2007, 9.

²Ibid, 9.

JENNY WESTERN

is an independent curator, writer, educator, and mother based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She holds an undergraduate degree in History from the University of Winnipeg and a Masters in Art History and Curatorial Practice from York University in Toronto. While completing her graduate studies, she accepted a position at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba in Brandon where she was the Curator of Contemporary / Aboriginal Art from 2005 to 2007 and remained the AGSM's Adjunct Curator until 2011. Western has curated exhibitions and programs

for Ace Art Inc., The Costume Museum of Canada, The Estevan Art Gallery, Gallery 1C03, The Kelowna Art Gallery, The Manitoba Crafts Council, La Maison des Artistes, Plug In ICA, Portage and District Arts Centre, Urban Shaman: Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Video Pool, and The Winnipeg Film Group's Cinematheque. She is a member of the Brothertown Nation of Wisconsin and is of European, Oneida, and Stockbridge-Mussee ancestry.

ARTIST TEAM

IAN AUGUST

is a Métis artist based in Winnipeg. August's work is focused on teasing together connections between the layers of histories associated with a site or object. He is engaged with the dialogue between painting and sculpture, often using the construction of structures and models within his painting process. His recent project titled PLUNDER DUPES is an effort to identify and create replicas of the 8000 Mesopotamian artifacts looted from the Baghdad Museum during the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. The duplicated relics are constructed from found items and scraps then used as source material for a series of oil paintings on canvas. The replicas are also being scanned using 3D software and the files will soon be made available for free download online. August received his MFA from York University, and his BFA, honours from the University of Manitoba's School of Art. His work has been the subject of many solo exhibitions, including Plunder Dupes, Actual Gallery, Winnipeg; and Re: Build Them, Gallery 1C03, Winnipeg. His work has also been included in numerous group exhibitions.

DEE BARSY

lives and works in Winnipeg. In 2013, she graduated from the School of Art at the University of Manitoba. In 2014, she graduated with an Educational Assistant Diploma from the University of Winnipeg. In 2016, she completed the Indigenous Women in Leadership course from the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Dee is a Visual Arts Facilitator who instructs children and youth workshops. She has also worked in the community as an Educational Assistant and Youth Care Worker. As an art instructor, she has had the opportunity to see the benefits of engaging young people in visual arts programming. Dee believes that the creation of art promotes self-empowerment and self-healing through creative risk-taking and confidence-building.

JAIMIE ISAAC

is a Winnipeg-based curator and interdisciplinary artist, member of Sagkeeng First Nation in Treaty 1 territory of Anishinaabe and British heritage. Isaac holds a degree in Art History and an Arts and Cultural Management Certificate from the University of Winnipeg and a Masters of Arts from the University of British Columbia, with research focus on Indigenous Curatorial Praxis, and methodologies in decolonizing and Indigenizing. Recent exhibitions include Woven Together at the Kelowna Art Gallery, at the Winnipeg Art Gallery; organic, *Insurgence Resurgence* (co curated with Julie Nagam) and *Vernon Ah Kee: cantchant, Boarder X, We Are On Treaty Land*, and *Quiyuktchigaewin; Making Good*. Isaac co-founded of *The Ephemerals Collective* (with Niki Little and Jenny Western), which was long-listed for the 2017 Sobey Art Award. Jaimie collaborated on the artistic team with KC Adams and Val Vint with on a public sculpture at the Forks at South Point path; *Niizhoziibeau*. She collaborated on the *official denial (trade value in progress)* a national project

with Leah Decter. Jaimie has contributed articles for *Art + Wonder* magazine, *C Magazine*, *Bordercrossings*, and essays for *Insurgence Resurgence* catalogue, *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* catalogue, *The Land We Are Now: Writers and Artists Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation* and the *Public 54: Indigenous Art: New Media and the Digital* Journal. Jaimie was a co-faculty for the *Wood Land School* at Plug In Summer Institute in 2016. She has presented research in North America and Europe, including at Princeton University, the Royal Holloway University of London and NAISA Conference at the University of Hawaii. Isaac was one of the Canada Council's Indigenous delegation at the 2017 Venice Biennale. She is the Advisory Committee for the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Manitoba Museum and is on the board of directors for Bordercrossings Magazine.

KENNETH LAVALLEE

A strong interest in translating a primarily two-dimensional practice into tangible experiences which occupy physical spaces has been motivating my work as of late. Traditional ideas of balance, order, harmony and interconnectedness gathered from both Indigenous and Western learning continue to guide my work as I explore and respond to the spaces and opportunities around me. Be it through sculpture, large scale mural, animation or object design, I aim to create work that successfully and seamlessly incorporates itself to the world at large.

Kenneth is of Métis descent, and lives and works in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Treaty 1 territory and birthplace of the Metis Nation).

WABISKA MAENGUGN | NIKI LITTLE

is a mother, artist/observer/curator, arts administrator, and a founding member of *The Ephemerals* with Jaimie Isaac and Jenny Western. She is of Anishininew / English descent from Kistiganwacheeng (Garden Hill FN), based in Win-nipi (Winnipeg). Her interests lay in artistic and curatorial strategies that consider Indigenous economies and cultural consumerism and Indigenous womxn and motherhood. Little is the Director for the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition and recently planned a national Indigenous media arts gathering in Saskatoon (June 12-15, 2018). In August 2018, Little co-hosted an on the land residency *Migration* as part of Common Opulence in Demmitt, AB (August 13-31, 2018) and co-curated the La Biennale d'Art Contemporain Autochtone 2018 (BACA) in Montréal (May 03-June 19, 2018) with long time collaborator Becca Taylor. Little was the recipient of the Winnipeg Arts Council's *RBC On the Rise* award (June 07, 2018)



UNTITLED (BIKE RIDER)

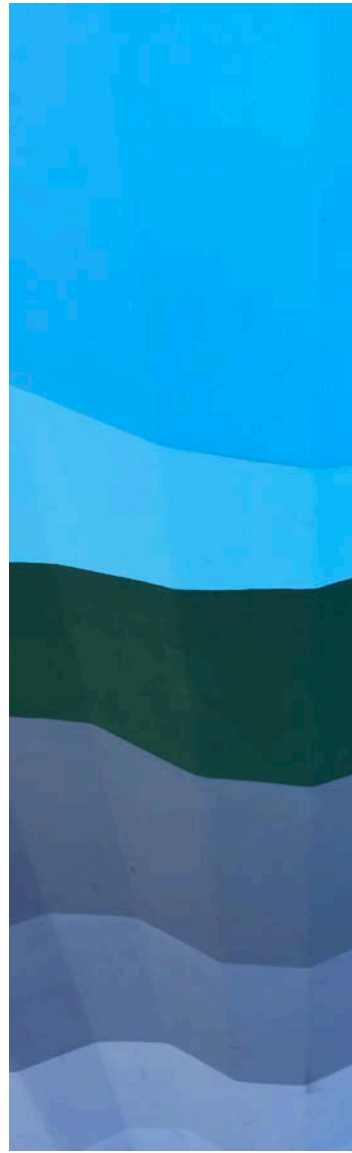
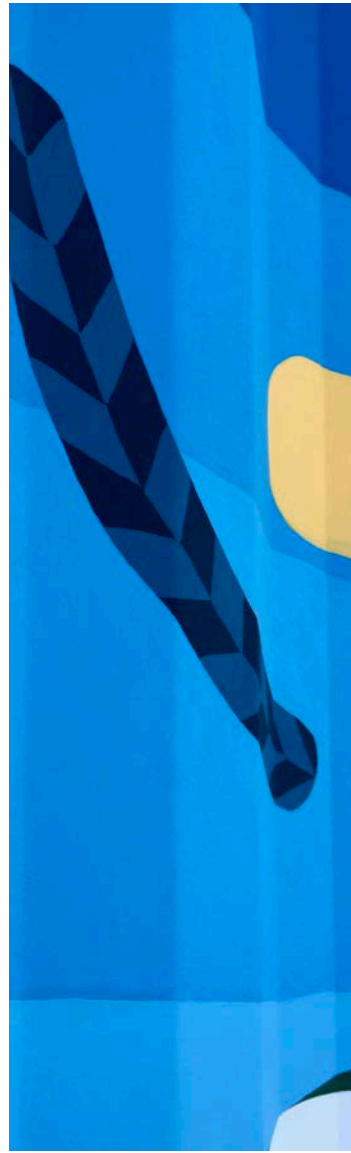
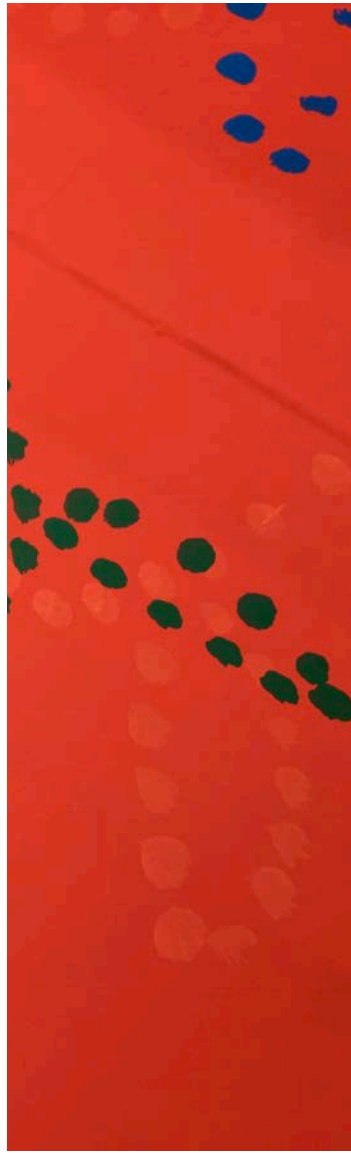
The untitled bike kiosk mural was painted by artists and University of Manitoba alumni Dee Barsy and Kenneth Lavallee. The depicted bicycle rider incorporates Barsy and Lavallee's bold, geometric, and colourful styles alongside elements of Indigenous culture reflective of the artists' own distinct backgrounds and the input of participating Elders.

The wheels of the bicycle are composed of First Nations medicine wheel symbols. One medicine wheel is painted at a right angle and one is painted at a 45-degree angle to signify the bicycle's momentum. The cyclist's shirt and helmet are decorated with beading as a representation of Métis culture. The bicycle's handlebars employ a braided pattern, recalling the woven Métis sash as well as braided sweetgrass. The mural's background incorporates the colours of water, grass, trees, sky, and the concrete road that the cyclist is riding on.

The image of the Indigenous cyclist is one that promotes active living but it also speaks to the honouring of this land and place on Treaty One territory where the University of Manitoba campus is situated. The Indigenous cyclist points to contemporary identities, ones that are respectful of and informed by customary teachings, histories, and traditions, while at the same time embracing technology, progress, and movement towards the future.

- Jenny Western





SHOAL LAKE

Water is life. It is sacred and vital for survival, health and economy. This sign acknowledges and honours the source of Winnipeg's water supply: Shoal Lake, which straddles the Manitoba-Ontario border. This particular sign is located in an area where an underground water line accesses the main campus, acknowledging the campus' water source. Unpacking historical connections to the origins of this resource assists in understanding the contemporary circumstances. In 1915, using its powers in the Indian Act, the federal government sold "land, lake bed, and islands" of the Shoal Lake 40 Reserve to the City of Winnipeg's Greater Winnipeg Water District¹ and in 1919 the aqueduct was constructed to extract and flow fresh water from Shoal Lake to Winnipeg. While Winnipeg residents enjoy water from our taps to drink and to bathe, for decades the flooded residents of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation have been on "boil water advisory" and are forced to import water by barge and truck at substantial costs. The federal government refused to contribute funds for a water treatment plant; instead, construction of the "Freedom Road" is being built for safe

transport of fresh water. Adele Perry poignantly points out, "the city of Winnipeg and its relationships to Shoal Lake 40 tells us about colonialism, and the particular form it has generally taken in twentieth-century Canada, settler colonialism. At its core the story of the Aqueduct is about the exploitation of Indigenous resources in the interest of settler ones."²

- Jaimie Isaac

¹ Peter Ives and Adele Perry, "Drinking Water Denied to Residents," Winnipeg Free Press, July 3, 2015.

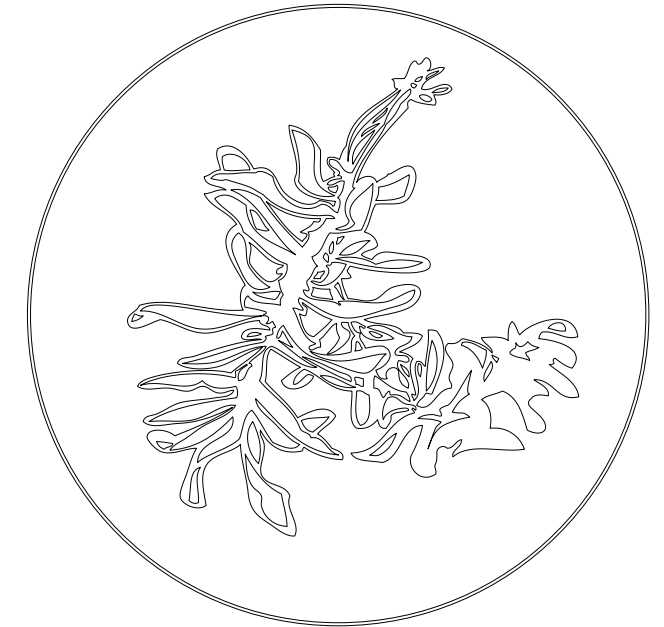
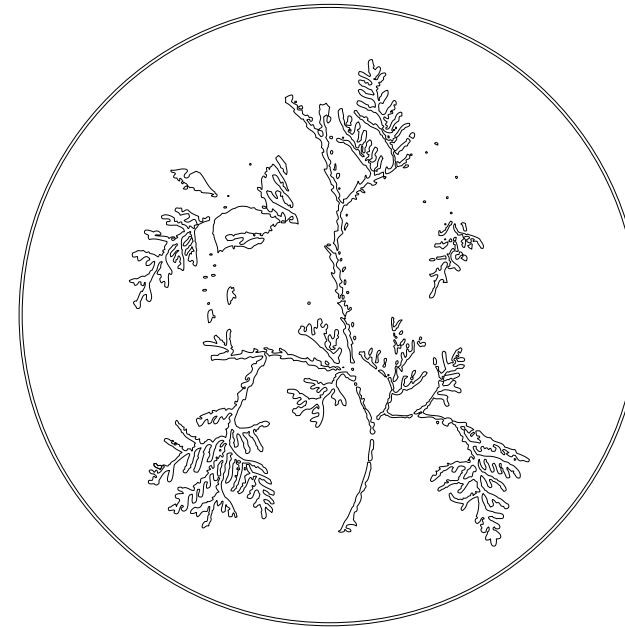
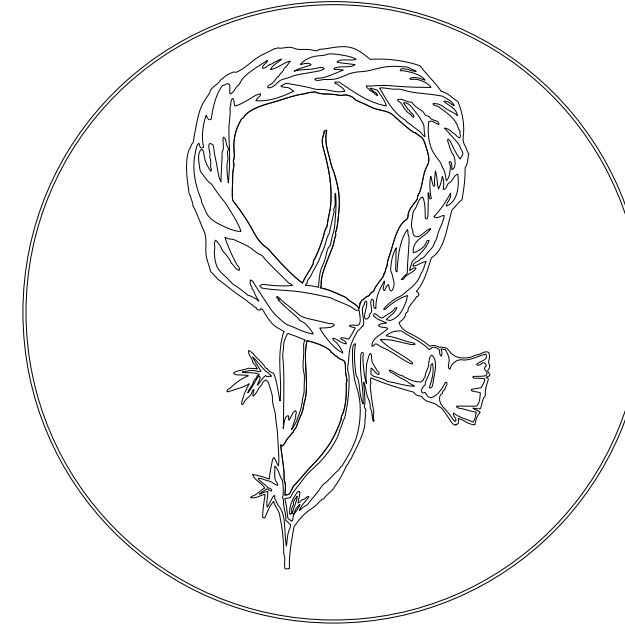
² Adele Perry, *Aqueduct: Colonialism, Resources, and the Histories We Remember*, Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2016), 14.



CURRY PLACE SIGNS

These signs mark the four cardinal directions north, east, south and west. These serve as a form of wayfinding on the campus and refer to the medicine wheel, which has many layers and systems of Indigenous knowledges, cosmologies and epistemologies that are guides to the life cycle and ways of being. The cardinal directions only represent one layer among age, tribes or clans, seasons, aspects of self, colours and the four sacred medicines (sweetgrass, tobacco, sage and cedar).

- Ian August, Jaimie Isaac, Niki Little





BAGIGEWINAN

To honor our ancestors and the next generations, reconciliation sets the tone for building relationships and instilling respect for the living land. The land and people have experienced fractured connections on Turtle Island. The use of Anishinaabemowin language in this piece is a way of rekindling generational resurgence and self-determination. It is vital to learn why Indigenous languages are not commonly understood by Canadians (non-Indigenous and Indigenous alike) because of the impact of colonization. Indigenous people have endured a legacy of trauma that affected many generations, triggering dysfunction and numerous other scars still felt today. Through sheer survival, generations of Indigenous people have not only inherited genetic imprints of trauma but also a stronger imprint of resiliency. We have a responsibility to pass on teachings to future generations. We must leave our legacy and gifts that were passed on to us, called, Bagigewinan ("that which we leave behind"), to ensure sustainability of life for our people. The design emulates a loop

of interconnection, intergenerations, and serves to resemble an embryo within a continuous loop similar to the curvilinear cycles found in the woodland school style of art. This style was revived from the birchbark scrolls as used by members of Professional Native Indian Artists Incorporated, co-founded by Daphne Odjig and Norval Morrisseau. Additionally, the loops articulate the circle of life important to many nations' epistemologies. The copper colour symbolizes copper metal, which denotes medicine and prosperity. This teaching was conceived by intergenerational familial connection gifted by Elder Dr. Mary Courchene, and Elder Elaine Isaac, (MSW). This sign is gifted by the artists to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, as an artistic interpretation of reconciliation and a contribution to its realization.

-Jaimie Isaac

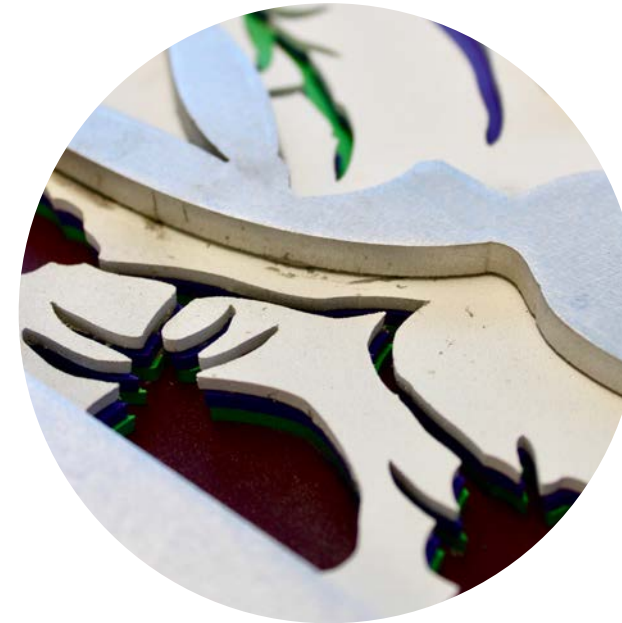


KOKUM'S SCARF

Flowers bud, we harvest
Harvest for many generations
Generations of Ikwe
Ikwe growing from the root, our root

A single braid covered by floral scarf wrapped around her head tied under the chin, my kokum Lucy was one of my first teachers. In our community, Kokums teach little ones; they are gentle, strong, and tough. Kokum's scarf reflects the role of matriarchs in Oji-Cree communities, touching upon notions of their labour, their caring, their continuing and remembering who our first teachers are. The florals upon this Kokum scarf reflect different plants (sage, clover, and strawberry) in relation to different life stages for Ikwe. The scarf transforms as a storyteller rooted from the land, connecting our past and our futures.

-Niki Little



GHOST SIGNS

"Ghost Signs" thinks further through the land as memory, cultural items as storytellers, and Indigenous bodies as futurity always growing from the root (our root).

How does the land, the roots relate to the stone, the institution?

"Ghost Signs" (Indigenous presence) as "found" or "reconciled" to the colonial encounter.

Do "Ghost Signs" (Indigenous presence) haunt these places until they find our bodies for our memories, to live, to thrive?

Rather than to be encountered, "Ghost Signs" seeks notions of animacy through Indigenous presence, memory, and sovereignty, toward active participation and collective responsibility. To engage ideas around developing relationships from Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies of the land, "Ghost Signs" occupies

and shifts relational accountability from the position of the institution to Indigenous presence; from self to community / the collective; and from a personal to inter-racial scope. The sites chosen for these pieces reflect memories of Indigenous gathering and action.

-Niki Little



NATIVE VIEWS

In 1971 a racist and defamatory article in a student paper became the first challenge for the newly formed, student-led Indian Métis Eskimo Student Association (IMESA). They confronted the paper and were given the option of having the students responsible expelled, but instead decided to educate the students.¹

This initiative started with publishing articles on Indigenous history and culture in The Manitoban, and in the fall of 1971 IMESA members offered a hugely successful community-driven course called “Native Views.” The establishment of this course – along with the constant work of IMESA and its allies – brought about the formation of the University of Manitoba’s Department of Native Studies in 1975.²

-Ian August

¹“Distinguished Alumnus for 2013 Ovide Mercredi: A Legacy of Peace and Progress,” UMToday, December 2nd, 2013, <http://news.umanitoba.ca/distinguished-alumnus-for-2013-ovide-mercredi-a-legacy-of-peace-and-progress/>.

²“History of Native Studies,” Department of Native Studies, University of Manitoba, 2018, http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/native_studies/history/History.html.





