Indigenous Littoral Practice: a Viable Framework for Collaborative and Dialogic Curatorial Practice

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores what I currently term “Indigenous Littoral Curation”. Littoral artists and scholars acknowledge littoral sites, the shorelines where the water meets the land, as a metaphor for dialogical and socially engaged artistic strategies that create meaningful change. This is applicable in naming how certain First Nations, Métis, and Inuit curators strive to contribute to Indigenous communities and nations by centering collaborative process and dialogue. These processes mirror Indigenous research methodologies, which are grounded in Indigenous Knowledge Systems and lived experiences, and are reminiscent of littoral art practice and paracuratorial practices. In this dissertation I create space to contemplate, critique and name the actions of curators who prioritize Indigenous Knowledge Systems, open-ended dialogue and collaboration when working with artists, communities, and art organizations.

To do so, I consider scholarship about Indigenous Knowledge Systems and research methodologies, and how they apply or contribute to curatorial practice. This involves engaging in dialogues with other curators and scholars, and centering the sharing of personal narratives and first-hand accounts of their practices. Teachings provided by Michif knowledge keeper and language carrier, Verna DeMontigny infuses this dissertation with Michif language and land-based knowledge systems that advocate affinity with the natural and human worlds. Organized formal and informal kitchen table talk gatherings and beading sessions have created sites for open-ended dialogues and self-reflection, which led to naming and igniting curatorial strategies to help keep or bring Indigenous hearts home. As well, this allowed for a reflective inquiry into my specific kinship and community ties, and the ways they impact and direct my curatorial practice.

In addition to relying on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and methodologies, I look to art and curatorial studies advocating reciprocity, relationality, self-critique and interrogation. This approach includes a consideration of littoral art and paracuratorial practices which prioritize holding participants socially accountable through collaborations between artists, various communities and agencies. I investigate, write and employ from a Michif paradigm, which requires placing myself along the *washagay*, or shoreline. I believe it is here we are able to hear our ancestors whisper in our ears, mobilize the present, and dream the future.

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I come from a very large family, and have received on-going encouragement, stories, and teachings from aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, nieces, nephews and my parents, for which I am most grateful. I am fortunate to be the daughter of parents who have instilled the importance of our relationships to the land, and I am grateful for their willingness to engage in dialogue about our family, cultures, and model how collectively we make change when we prioritize family and welcome all into our circle. I am also thankful to nimish (my older sister) Leslie and my little brother Kenny for your insight, support and nourishment. I am privileged to be your sister. My husband of twenty-plus years James Tucker, has been my biggest supporter and partner in raising our kids. While pursuing his own doctoral degree and career simultaneously, he remained my "co-heart," for which I am eternally grateful.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

A Note on Language and Terminology

In this dissertation, there is a wide array of terminology used to identify Indigenous peoples. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, since the creation of Canada as a nation-state, government legislation has attempted to define, and therefore control how we are labelled. This has had long-lasting effects, as the definitions and names have been limiting and limited. As we collectively resist and repair the damage done, there is a shift in how we name ourselves. For example in the early 1990s the term "Aboriginal" was more accepted, based on legal definitions and the Canadian governments' adoption of the term. Shortly after, the term "First Peoples" was added to the repertoire of commonly-used terminology. More recently "Indigenous" has been adopted as a more acceptable generic term. All these broad terms refer to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit of Canada. All are contestable as they are not the original names we gave/give ourselves.

Throughout this dissertation I use the term "Indigenous" when speaking in general terms, as I understand it to privilege how Indigenous people self-identify without government involvement, hold strong ties to particular communities and land-bases, and carry distinct socio-political and cultural traits as the inheritors and original peoples of certain territories. However, when quoting scholars, artists and community members, I use their generic term of choice at the time their writing was published. Whenever possible, I make use of the preferred terms and spellings of those discussed when they identify themselves, their nations, and land-bases. I recognize some of these terms and spellings may be contested, but I choose to honour how people self-identify, even if the tides have changed, and there are new names, or the returning to older ones in ancestral languages.

When discussing my own nation of which I am a member, I use "Métis", or "Michif", the word used to identify our language. When employing these terms, I am specifically referring to the descendants of fur traders who ventured out West, and formed relationships with Indigenous women from particular nations, communities, and land-bases. I understand that "métis" is a French word simply meaning "mixed", and upon early contact was utilized in the Eastern provinces to name the offspring of colonial settlers and Indigenous women from that region. However, I recognize the term Métis to only be applicable to those who hold kinship ties to

Indigenous women who birthed our nation on specific lands, in particular communities, resulting in our unique socio-political and cultural contexts. Our ancestors claimed this term to name the existence of our people *as a nation*, to which I adhere in this dissertations, as also in my daily life.

Glossary of Michif Concepts and Terms

I began learning the Michif language after I found out English was not my Indigenous grandparents' first, or only language. I was 24 and my mother and I were at a Métis Women's Annual General Assembly in Winnipeg with some of my aunties and cousins. Norman Fleury, a Michif elder fluent in five languages, demonstrated with his mother how Saulteaux and Michif are spoken, and discussed the need for them to be learned or re-learned. During their presentation, my mother asked me in a whisper if I understood some of the Michif, since I speak French, and the language contains French nouns. I answered no, both sounded very foreign to me, and it was then she told me those were her parents' languages. Her stating this impacted me to the core. I felt cultural pride, but also a sense of loss for the languages not passed on, due to my family's experiences with colonization and racism. As they continued to speak however, I started to recognize the rhythm and pattern of the languages and felt comfort. The way my mother, other family members, and to an extent I speak English - the ebb and flow, intonations, and gestures- contain similar rhythms and patterns. Those languages were not so foreign or removed from my family after all, but were rather right below the surface, feeding how we communicate.

Kimberley Moulton (Yorta Yorta, Australia) asserts, "Language is an intrinsic part of self-identity and expression. It grounds us in our cultures and is part of the continuation of cultures against the invasions of First People's lands."[1] In recent years there has been more enhanced awareness made about the Michif language, and increased opportunities to learn online, in community centers, elementary and high schools, and university settings. This shows the commitment by Métis peoples to slow down or halt the extinction of our language. This battle against time is an exercise in both resistance, resurgence, and cultural continuity.

The Michif language is important to my curatorial work as a Michif, or Métis person. This language emerged from the Red River in the late 1700s, and is currently labelled an endangered language, with only approximately 1200 living speakers left.[2] It is an oral language

[1] Kimberley Moulton, "Mother Tongue: Gertrude Contemporary 2018" in *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice*, edited by Dr. Julie Nagam, Carly Lane, Megan Tamati-Quennell (Winnipeg: ARP Publishing, 2020), 207.
[2] "Census in Brief, The Aboriginal Languages of First Nations People, Métis and Inuit," accessed August 5, 2020, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016.

without a standardized orthography. Due to where Métis travelled and settled, there exist a variety of dialects. These dialects are broken into four main ones based on land-base and familial heritage:

Southern Michif: This variation intricately weaves French nouns and noun phrases, with Plains Cree verbs and verb phrases. Depending upon circumstance, speakers sometimes incorporate Anishinaabe, Saulteaux, and English into dialects of Southerm Michif. Out of all the categories, Southern Michif is considered to be the most in risk of extinction. It was spoken in all of the Prairie provinces as well as in Montana and North Dakota.[3]

French Michif: This variation privileges the French language however incorporates Cree and Saulteaux syntax. It has been mistaken for being a mere dialect of the French language, and French Michif speakers were often stigmatized for speaking "bad French". However very few French speakers can understand French Michif because of its unique structure, pronunciations, and lack of orthography. This language is still spoken by speakers in Métis communities like St. Laurent or St. Eustache, Manitoba.[4]

Northern Michif: This version weaves Woods Cree with the occasional French noun. It comes from Northwest Saskatchewan, including the communities of île-à-la-Crosse and Buffalo Narrows. Unlike other variations, Northern Michif has a standardized Cree-based orthography.[5]

Bungi: This variation privileged the English language, and incorporated Cree and Scots Gaelic words. It was spoken all over the Prairie Provinces, however is considered to now be an extinct language. Despite this categorization, there are those attempting to resurrect the language by accessing archival materials and oral stories.[6]

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[3] Lawrence Barkwell, "A Background Paper on Michif", a report published in November, 2017 for the Métis National Council, Gabriel Dumont Institute and Louis Riel Institute.
[4]"Languages, Atlas/Métis," accessed January 2020, https://indigenouspeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/languages/.
[5] Lawrence Barkwell, "A Background Paper on Michif," 3.
[6] "Bungee (Bungi) Language", compiled by Lawrence Barkwell for the Louis Riel Institute, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/13482.Bungee%20Language%20(new).pdf

I choose to conscientiously "grow into" the Michif language. This means a contemplation of time and space, how the land we walk on is storied, and to offer more, when more is suitable. It is only when the time is right, and in appropriate scenarios that I utilize Michif terms to discuss Indigenous Littoral Curation. I do so by following the rhythm and patterns of our language, and consideration of how we absorb and use our language. As well, I learn and utilize the Michif language to contribute to its preservation, and encourage others to do the same. As Heather Souter, a Michif language revitalization activist and advocate reminds,

> Fluency is not required to share language learnings with others, especially when a language is critically endangered. We need everyone from the most fluent to the novice learners to those who use only a few words here and there. Everyone who uses Michif—even one word—is an integral part of keeping our language out in the air and living with us—where it belongs!
> Ahkameeyimotaak! Let's carry on![7]

Provided here is a glossary of relevant Michif concepts and terms directing my research methodologies and curatorial pedagogy and praxis. Throughout the dissertation I offer some of the applicable terms within the body of the text. Not all of them are presented explicitly in the chapters, yet all have played a part. Some concepts I prioritize, and others I am in earlier phases of learning and better understanding their importance. However they are all entry points into Michif knowledge systems.

As our language does not have a standardized orthography, I spell the words as per my teacher Verna DeMontigny's preference. In the following chart, I also provide a secondary spelling of how the words are pronounced. I give a short definition of meaning, as well as their relevance to my topic, and any additional info as applicable. I elaborate and discuss in more detail some of the concepts and words in the following chapters where they are most applicable.

[7] Heather Souter, Facebook Post, July 14, 2020.

Figure 2: Key Michif Concepts and Words in this Dissertation

Michif Term	Pronounciation	Definition/Meaning	Relevance	Additional Info
Chikishkaytaman	Chi-kish-kay-ta-man	To learn in order to know, or for me to learn or for me to know	This term more aptly describes obtaining knowledge to carry forth to others, and is applicable in naming Indigenous knowledge systems and their relevance in curation.	This term names obtaining knowledge or values that extends beyond simply teaching, or learning. I tie it to curators making space for knowledge transmission.
D'leau pimiihchiwan	De-low-pee-mih-chi-wan	Flowing waters, gentle, continuous flowing waters	When knowledge systems are prioritized by curators, they are mobilized by gentle continuous movement.	This term can also describe knowledge keepers involvement in curatorial development and projects.
Kenawayhta	Ken-ah-wayh-ta	The caring of animate and inanimate objects	The origins of the English word "curator" is care, so I asked Verna DeMontigny what were the different ways to describe caring for animate or inanimate objects. This term best	I learned this word as a strategy to understand meanings of care, and how they happen by curators.

			described the caring for animate and inanimate objects with love and respect.	
Kishnamakay	Kish-na-ma-gay	Meaning “to teach”. Kishnamakayan means “I teach”	Contemplating the importance of teaching, and being taught led to consideration about interdisciplinary practice, and where family, relations, and their value for curating became key.	It is in reflection of this term that the intricacies of being and becoming Métis became a central focus for me. As well it became a term to name the importance of standing on the shoulders of other curators and artists who have taught me, so that I can teach others.
Li Nakishkamohk	Lii na-kish-ka-mok	The bridge, that which creates a bridge, the points of connection	Curators locate points of connection between institutions, artists and communities.	The term also is an apt term to describe curators and curatorial practices.
Miyeu Pimaatshiwin	Mii-you-pi-maat-shi-win	The way to living a good life, naming how one leads a good and enriching life.	A core Michif concept, and something I and other curators strive for in our practices that are based on collaboration and open-ended processes.	When Verna DeMontigny discussed this value with me, she named specifics for me that were art-based and relevant to my

				own lived experiences and priorities.
Nasasyee or nii nasasyee (plural)	naa-sa-sea or nii -naa-sa-sea	Partners or collaborators who hold a bond with one another.	I learned this word in contemplation of the sorts of collaborations and partnerships that occur with other Indigenous curators and artists that are seeped with Indigenous knowledge about relationality.	Naming partners and collaborators in Michif further grounds my practice in our values, disrupts Eurocentric coding, and helps enhance relationship-making, as the meaning is layered and dynamic.
Paashchipew	Paa-shchi-pay-o	Natural flowing waters, like a creek or stream that overflow into other branches of natural flowing waters.	Overflowing into other spaces is a possibility when curators employ ILC pedagogy and praxis. Can symbolize cultural continuity, knowledge transmission and relationship building	Is also a reminder of ancestor's presence, overflowing and moving beneath the surface for, and with us and future generations to come.
Wahkootowin	Waa-koo-toe-win	Kinship or kinship ties	Contemplation of, and engagement with one's own kinship, is a key step for participating in Indigenous Littoral Curation.	This is a Cree and Michif concept that acknowledges kinship ties we hold with other Métis, family members, and animal and non-human beings. It

				secures ourselves to our land base and one another.
Washagay	Waa-shaa-gay	Names the physical region where the land and waters meet.	This concept is central to naming my curatorial practice, the tenets of littoral curation, while aligning it with littoral art theory and praxis.	This is a core concept in Michif knowledge systems. Speaks to the importance of shorelines and how they were once gathering sites. Aligns with littoral art theory and praxis that names shorelines as instigators of dialogic, socially engaged art.
Washagay nimaa	Waa-shaa-gay nii-may	A term for "round dance", stems from the concept of dancing along the shoreline	This term exposes washagay as a root word and knowledge for Michif people. It recognizes how shorelines are continuous and circular in formation, even when they appear as a line, as seen on a sand bar.	This term helps to name curatorial action as moving in response to, and directed by the land and waters our ancestors once frequented.
Washagay peywinwa	Waa-shaa-gay pie-in-wois	Beach wrack, that which washes onto shores, then is taken back out by waters,	I learned this word to describe the importance of	Washagay peywinwa is important and contributes to

		and moved along shorelines in a circular motion.	non-Indigenous art and curatorial theories and praxis that aid in exploring and describing Indigenous Littoral Curation	the life force of washagay, even though it is impermanent, and sometimes an impediment . It exposes the fluidity and continuity that is found along shorelines.

Chapter One

Kishnamakay: Naming and Mapping Curatorial Pedagogies and Praxis[8]

In this dissertation I attempt to create space to contemplate, critique, and name the actions of Indigenous curators and artist/curators who prioritize participatory, collaborative and open-ended processes to co-create generative gathering sites. I currently name their stream of curatorial practice *Indigenous Littoral Curation*. "Littoral" zones are the shifting and intermediate regions that lie along a shore, and suggest a point of complimentary meeting. They are a transitional in-between space that at times is covered by waters, and other times lay bare. Indigenous Littoral Curation (ILC) involves pedagogies and praxis embedded with Indigenous knowledge systems, and correspond to *littoral art* and *paracuratorial* practices.

Littoral art is interdisciplinary, and draws on analytic resources from other areas such as critical theory, social history or environmental science. According to artist and scholar Bruce Barber the term littoral is "used as a trope, a metaphor to describe artists who work liminally, that is between the institution, museological gallery scene and the public sphere."[9] Littoral artists hold participants socially accountable, and their work is based on collaborations and open-ended dialogue between artists, various communities and agencies. Since the 1990s independent curators (those who are not full-time employees of arts organizations and institutions), have also been taking interdisciplinary approaches that are dialogue-driven and sinuous. Their practices are informed by feminism, social activism, queer studies, cultural studies, decolonial theories, and can be described as "paracuratorial". According to Tara McDowell, this is a key term which demonstrates the potential of curatorial practice to be "an operation and a position, to trouble existing paradigms, and insist on a kind of recalcitrant misalignment in regards to discipline, method and historiography".[10] Paracuratorial practices expose the potential of curating to be and become a form of care that extends beyond conventional curatorial practice.

I consider littoral art and paracuratorial practices to be in stride with Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, axiologies, and research methodologies that advocate reciprocal

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[8] Meaning "to teach."

[9] Bruce Barber, "Littoral Practice: An Interview with Bruce Barber," interview by Don Simmons, May 23, 2004, http://www.donsimmons.net.

[10] Tara McDowell, "The Post-Occupational Condition," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 16, no. 1 (2016): 24, https://doi.org/10.1080/14434318.2016.1171723.

dialogue, self-critique and interrogation. I do so to contemplate, critique and name the actions of Indigenous curators who value the dialogical nature of art engagement, prioritize working with contemporary arts and community organizations, and acknowledge curation as creative continuance. Doing so allows for exploration of Indigenous Littoral Curation, where process and dialogue are central to how curators strive to contribute to Indigenous communities and nations, and to the western art paradigm in insurgent and remedying ways. I identify Indigenous Littoral Curation as pedagogy and praxis that a); disrupts conventional curatorial practice by centering dialogue and fluid processes, b); activates art and culture in generative ways to build relations and transmit knowledge, c); employs the littoral as a metaphor for interdisciplinary approaches to curational practice, d); merges lived experiences with theory about the need for dialogue-driven artistic and curatorial encounters, and e); occurs when curators organize projects and exhibitions as an activation and embodiment of their respective knowledge systems, through collaboration, dialogue, and "generous reciprocity".[11]

Just as the meeting points between shorelines and waters are in constant flux, I consider naming the type of curatorial practice discussed in this dissertation to be fluid, and subject to new possibilities, critiques, and renaming from others. In the future there may be new terms and definitions formulated by others that better recognize flexible curatorial strategies and help bring, or keep, Indigenous hearts home. I consider the naming of Indigenous Littoral Curation to be provisional and in no way prescriptive, fixed, or complete.

This dissertation encourages these things, and attempts to answer the following questions: How can a curator contribute to Indigenous communities and nations in ways that privilege participatory, collaborative, and open-ended dialogic engagement and processes with artists and stakeholders? Can models of Indigenous Littoral Curation help move art criticism and curatorial and artistic development forward? How do Indigenous research methodologies and knowledge systems benefit Indigenous curators, artists, and their audiences? How do we best operate within

[11] I began employing the term "generous reciprocity" after reading curator and scholar Mary Jane Jacob's text from 2004 entitled "Reciprocal Generosity". In it Jacob gives firsthand accounts of working with artists who value what she calls reciprocal generosity, and the impact they had on her curatorial work that involves institutional critique and developing new ways of thinking about audience. In my own research and writing, I consider "generous reciprocity" more applicable a term than Jacob's, as it places emphasis on being of a generous mind first, to ensure a type of reciprocity founded on equitable and mutual respect for stakeholders.

and beyond the western art world from Indigenous paradigms? I consider these questions, and the mapping of ILC I provide as offerings and aspirations.

In this chapter I begin with introducing Indigenous Littoral Curation, existing resources, concepts I pursue, and the curators whose work I discuss. The next section of this chapter provides an explanation of the research framework I operate within, followed by working descriptions for decolonization, Indigenization, research methodologies, paradigms, and knowledge systems. I then move onto naming the non-Indigenous theories and praxis that are of value in this dissertation, followed by listing the research methodologies I apply. I then discuss my positionality as a Métis art curator and scholar. I name my land-base, family and cultural ties, early experiences working in the art world, and ideals as a curator committed to the decolonization and Indigenization of spaces and practices. I end this chapter by introducing the following chapters and their main themes.

Locating and Naming Indigenous Curatorial Pedagogy and Praxis

As Indigenous artists successfully began attracting attention in western galleries and larger art realms in the 1960s, the need for Indigenous curators to help negotiate those spaces emerged. Currently, there are many Indigenous curators and artist/curators who secure Indigenous art's rightful space in the often exclusionary, and exclusive western art world. This has been through exhibition organization, critical writing, freelance curating, forming Indigenous artist-run centres, holding curatorial and educational positions, and organizing international projects and art biennials. I highly value and commend all Indigenous curator and artist/curator colleagues for the work and contributions they make, as the road at times is tumultuous and hard.

There are limited scholarly resources providing in-depth accounts of Indigenous curatorial practice. For many years, the book *Making A Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives On Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community* was the only resource available. Published by the Banff International Curatorial Institute in 2004, and edited by senior curator Lee-Ann Martin (Mohawk), the book is a compilation of papers presented at a conference organized by Martin at the Banff Centre in 2003. This event brought together Indigenous curators from Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. Presented were topics related to the role of the community, the institution, and how to negotiate space for, and with community. In 2011 Felicia Gay (Swampy Cree and Scottish) completed her MA thesis in art history at the University of

Saskatchewan. Titled *The Red Shift: A Contemporary Aboriginal Curatorial Praxis*, the thesis was Gay's personal reflection on her curatorial praxis and weaved cultural teachings, Indigenous studies scholarship, her co-founding of the *The Red Shift Gallery*, and the three gallery exhibition she curated, *Othered Women* (2008). In 2016 Jaimie Isaac (Sagkeeng First Nation) completed her MA thesis at the University of British Columbia (Okanagan), titled *Decolonizing Curatorial Practice: Acknowledging Curatorial Praxis, Mapping its Agency, Recognizing its Aesthetic within Contemporary Canadian Art.* Her thesis identifies and acknowledges Indigenous curatorial praxis as decolonization, grounded in Indigenous knowledges, and a forum for cultural agency and institutional reform. Dr. Erin Sutherland (Métis) completed her PhD thesis about curatorial practice at Queen's University in 2017. *Talkin' Back to Johnny Mac: Interrupting John A. MacDonald & Learning to Curate From an Indigenous Framework*, is a project-based dissertation that involved the curating of a performance series by Sutherland that confronted the current idolization in Kingston, Ont. of the first Canadian Prime minister of Canada, John A. MacDonald. It includes a written thesis about Indigenous curatorial methodologies, based on interviews she conducted with practicing curators. Very recently the book *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice* (2020) was published, which presents written contributions by Indigenous curators from Canada, Australia, the United States and New Zealand. Edited by Dr. Julie Nagam (Métis), Carly Lane (Murri, Queensland, Australia), and Megan Tamati-Quennell (Te Ātiawa, Ngāi Tahu) , the book provides curatorial strategies grounded in Indigenous ways of being that intervene on colonial institutions. The contributing authors name processes grounded in self-determination, while imagining our collective futures.

With this dissertation I attempt to contribute to existing and on-going discourse about Indigenous curatorial practice. I hope to help expand and shift current contemplations of the role of curators in personal, communal, and nation-based undertakings of Indigenization and decolonization. I focus on curators whose practice is purposefully process-focused, open-ended and based upon conversations, collaboration, self-reflection, and critique. Their work is steeped in their respective Indigenous knowledge systems, while recognizing themselves as contributors to the larger artistic milieu, and global world. I consider dialogic and participatory curatorial practices as centered as a type of knowledge production. Therefore I speak about their work as curatorial pedagogy and praxis instead of as methodology, even though they themselves might use this term instead. The curators discussed here create and participate in moments which are

teachable, generative, and culturally grounding. Their actions exemplify what Paulo Freire advocated for in his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In it he proposes a "problem-posing" type of education, that subverts hegemonic structures, and requires dialogicity that occurs with and through love.[12] It's important to acknowledge that curating in this manner is not always conducive to the project, gallery, event, or site, and Indigenous curators engage with art, community and artists however they see fit.

Indigenous Littoral Curation is just one potential approach among others that embody Indigenous ways of being within and beyond a western art construct. Curators whose work that is exemplary, in part or in whole of ILC discussed here are: John Hampton, Missy Leblanc, Tania Willard and Peter Morin for BUSH Gallery, Lisa Meyers, Julie Nagam, Jaimie Isaac, and Heather Igloliorte. Additional curators and artist/curators who I have sought council from and spoke with about their curatorial practice with include Ryan Rice, Lee-Ann Martin, Adrienne Huard and Lindsay Nixon for gijiit collective, Daina Warren, Fran Hebert-Spence, Rachelle Dickenson, and Erin Sutherland. These curators come from diverse backgrounds, experiences and are at various stages of their curatorial careers. By delving into their curatorial practices and motivations, I attempt to rupture any current vague notions about curatorial positionalities, and contribute to critical discourse by naming and providing context for their specific curatorial strategies and actions.

Operating within a Constellatory Research Framework

I rely upon scholarship about Indigenous research paradigms, knowledge systems and methodologies. In recognizing that First Nations, Inuit and Métis curators operate within and against the western art milieu, I examine scholarship about the history of curatorial practice and how it has evolved since the late 1960s. I utilize the published writing of Indigenous curators, as well as public talks they gave I was either present for, or that are available online. These publications and presentations provide an important snapshot into certain curators' insights, experiences, and strategies. To recognize ILC as pedagogy and praxis, I lean on scholarship about littoral art practice and socially-engaged curating. As they stem from the western art milieu

[12] Paulo, Freire. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (London: Penguin Books, 1970).

but challenge hegemonic practices, they intervene and create openings to embed discussion, disrupt, and re-organize.

I introduce and highlight Michif knowledge systems and values that pertain to kinship structuring, relationship-building, and teachings about how to live in a good way. I do so firstly because my family are of the Métis nation, and I want to bring awareness that like other Indigenous peoples, we carry and maintain our own knowledge systems and values. This often goes unrecognized in mainstream Canada, because of misinformation and the mislabeling of our people and nation. This is changing due to recent Michif scholarship, community actions, and the labour of story tellers, language speakers, artists and knowledge keepers. I am so thankful to the ancestors who whisper in our ears, and to those who listen and are the kindle for Métis cultural continuance.

Together these knowledges provide the theoretical and methodological framework for my writing and research. They are praxiological, and encourage criticality, self-reflection, and relationship-making through dialogue. At times they are at odds with one another, and in bringing these knowledges together I do not strive for consensus, unification or particular end results. The tension between them and any notable parallels mirror the processes, priorities, and contexts that curators operate within. Some knowledges are more vital and mobilized than others, however here they are all valued tributaries.

Decolonization, Indigenization, and Indigenous Research Methodologies: Operating from Within Indigenous Paradigms and Knowledge Systems

Since the 1990s, Indigenous academics have provided research methodologies that make researchers accountable to their collaborators and participants. They have done so with the understanding that research and writing should be "decolonized", stem from "Indigenous Research Paradigms" (IRP), and be mobilized with "Indigenous Research Methodologies" (IRM).

Decolonization names tools and strategies in order to divest and undo colonial power. It is guided by Indigenous perspectives on topics such as history, justice, culture, and education infrastructures. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains decolonization as "a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions,

motivations and values which inform research practices."[13] Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and infrastructures can decolonize and participate in repairing the damage created by colonization.

For decolonization to be effective and long-lasting, Indigenous researchers operate from what Cree scholar Shawn Wilson calls an "Indigenous Research Paradigm". According to Wilson this is "a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that goes together to guide people's actions as to how they are going to go about doing their research."[14] Indigenous research paradigms are both theory and practice, and include belief systems which influence a particular set of methods.[15] There are four components that make up an Indigenous Research Paradigm: ontology (a set of carried beliefs about the world), epistemology (knowledge steeped in Indigenous knowledge systems, or worldviews), methodology (the ways in which knowledge is gained), and axiology (morals or ethics driving knowledge production).[16] Indigenous research paradigms extend beyond merely providing an Indigenous perspective on the world, and recognize Indigenous knowledges as instrumental in conducting research that is insurgent, as opposed to extractive in nature.

Scholars name and employ Indigenous Knowledge Systems to guide Indigenous research paradigms that disrupt western academic institutions built upon colonial ventures. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are vital for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' continuance and continuum. How Indigenous people seek understanding about individual and collective relationships they hold with other humans and the natural and spiritual worlds, is an expression of Indigenous knowledge. IKS are the result of on-going individual and collective efforts and are cohesive parts of a whole, grounded in culturally specific stories, songs, ceremonies, art-making, learning, and political and social structures. They shift through time, are tested by the impact of colonial efforts, but never wane. Scholars employ IKS in the name of relationality, resistance and

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[13] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies – Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd edition. (London: ZED Books, 2012), 21.
[14] Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony – Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 175.
[15] Margaret Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research," *First Peoples Child & Family Review,* Vol. 5, No. 1 (2010):40.
[16] Wilson, *Research as Ceremony*, 38.

resurgence. Embarking on research that is process-based and driven by open-ended dialogue is privileged in IRM.

Indigenization privileges and incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, in transformative and restorative ways. It embodies Indigenous perspectives, lived experiences, and prioritizes and activates knowledge systems, culture, relationships, and responsibility to the land. Indigenization can rebalance power structures, but only when directed by Indigenous peoples. For example, universities that provide land-based education, or make space for community beading hives contribute to Indigenization; providing these efforts are led by, and benefit Indigenous people first and foremost.

Both decolonization and Indigenization are guided by Indigenous epistemologies, ethics, and the need to rebalance power systems. They are multifaceted and complex, which is why they are sometimes used to describe the same action. This is evident throughout this dissertation when I quote various scholars. I interpret decolonization and Indigenization as interrelated and reliant on one another. However, I consider decolonization to be the frame, and Indigenous bodies and minds who activate Indigenize ways of being and understanding within those frames, to be the creators and contributors to Indigenization.

The employing of Indigenous paradigms and research methodologies are central to this dissertation. In particular I engage with the scholarship of Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe, Anishinaabe), Dion Million (Tanana Athabaskan), Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree/Saulteaux), Gerald Vizenor (White Earth Nation), Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg), and Adam Gaudry (Métis). I focus on these scholars work as they ignite, name and discuss Indigenous research methodologies which prioritize conversation and participatory acts. Their research and writing is geared towards Indigenous participants, steeped in recognition of their roles and responsibilities as scholars.

Kathleen E. Absolon's text *Kaandossiwin*: *How We Come to Know* is significant to this dissertation. Absolon's text is guided by conversations she had with eleven eminent scholars about their research, worldviews, methodologies, and the importance of Indigenous paradigms. It is grounded in her relationships with family, scholars, the land and Anishinaabe knowledges. The text is structured "in dialogue" with the contributing scholars, including Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, Dr. Leanne Simpson, and Willie Ermine. By sharing her processes, positionality, self-reflections, and contemplations about research methodologies, Absolon provides a mapping of how to

conduct research employing an Indigenous paradigm by prioritizing dialogue, the land as teacher, and kinship structures. *Kaandossiwin* is most helpful in naming and locating Indigenous Knowledge Systems and methodologies, grounded in researchers' willingness to listen and share their lived experiences and insights with others. Her encouragement, and assertion that research grounded in Indigenous paradigms can help people remember and locate home for themselves, is helpful to my discussion about the attributes of Indigenous Littoral Curation.

Poet and scholar Dian Million explores issues of intellectual production and the politics of knowledge. In her scholarship she looks at the political stakes and epistemological issues inherent in Indigenization and decolonization. Million insightfully discusses "intense dreaming" as opportunity to "creatively sidestep all the neat little boxes that obscure larger relations and syntheses of imagination."[17] She names "intense dreaming" as creative process, and a tributary to Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Indigenization and decolonization. Million suggests that dreaming, theory, narrative, and critical thinking form different ways of knowing, but are not exclusive of one another. Millions' poetic visioning, and advocating we tune into our dreams, is beneficial when describing the contributions of ancestral art-makers and art-caretakers, as well as contemporary artists and curators. Her scholarship unravels linear notions of time, and helps name how creative practitioners mobilize through dreaming, contribute to Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and help repair the western art world.

Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson writes about Indigenous knowledges as pathways for reconciliation, resurgence, regeneration, and emergence. In her books *As We Have Always Done – Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* and *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, Simpson names the actions and philosophical terrains that continue to transform Indigenous relationships to the land, settler societies, and one another. Simpson locates them in ways where the past, present and future intertwine and are interdependent. Presenting Anishinaabe knowledge systems and how they guide and formulate continuous acts of resistance, she presents a constellatory framework for stimulating cultural continuance and continuums with research and writing. Simpsons' writing is grounded in stories, philosophy, lived experiences, categories for issues and contexts, and deep

[17] Dian Million, "Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home", in *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 35, No. 3, (Summer 2011): 314.

care and love for the earth and all its inhabitants. Her work is particularly useful in identifying key components of Indigenous knowledge systems and the types of resistance and activity which emerges from them. As well, Simpson is one of the few Indigenous studies scholars who intently recognizes and writes about Indigenous aesthetics, and how various forms of art-making contain signifiers and pathways to true reconciliation and continuance.

Elaborating on notions of peoplehood and asserting Indigeneity in his various published writings, Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor introduces the concept of Indigenous survivance which is "an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent."[18] Vizenor suggests survivance is present in Indigenous stories, natural reason, remembrance, traditions, and customs (but does not aptly define or problematize them). Despite this, the concept of survivance, which is really a discussion based on the fusion of survival and resistance tactics, is an important descriptor and theoretical premise for providing an Indigenous art history, couched in individual and collective searches and assertions of sovereignty. Gerald Vizenors' significant contribution to Indigenous scholarship with notions of survivance has guided discourses in the field of Indigenous studies for many years, and has done the same for Indigenous art and curatorial studies. This is in part because Vizenor deems art as relevant and necessary to knowledge transmission and generation. By tapping into lived experiences, histories, and the wealth of knowledge found in oral stories, ceremony and visual art, he transformed Indigenous scholarship and provided a platform for many. His theorizing about how Indigenous cultures have endured, resisted and grown, helps binds art, curatorial practice, and research scholarship together.

Both Margaret Kovach and Adam Gaudry's writing about dialogic processes and the roles and responsibilities of researchers is effective in naming the tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation, and directing my own research methodologies. The "Conversational Method" is described by Kovach as a method of gathering knowledge based on oral story-telling that is congruent with an Indigenous paradigm. It "involves a dialogical participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others."[19] It allows for the gathering of knowledge

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[18] Gerald Vizenor, "Aesthetics of Survivance." *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Gerald Vizenor. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1.
[19] Margaret Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research", *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, Vol.5, Number 1, (2010): 40.

grounded in Indigenous paradigms which at the heart are relational and useful to Indigenous researchers in conducting insurgent research.[20]

In conceptualizing potential Indigenous Research Methodologies, Métis scholar Adam Gaudry calls for an "insurgent research methodology", as opposed to the often used "extraction methodology". The extraction approach to research involves removing knowledge from its immediate context and presenting it to a highly specialized group of outsiders. This methodology treats participants as informants, and ignores "the context, values, and on-the-ground struggles of the people and communities that provide information and insight to the researcher."[21] Extraction methodologies are what academic institutions are built upon and Indigenous scholars and allies/accomplices continuously grapple with having to contribute to a system that extracts from Indigenous communities. They/we do so in order to obtain tenure, publishing opportunities etc., while being accountable to Indigenous people and communities. These circumstances mirror certain engagements with contemporary Indigenous art. For example, in the 1970s some Woodland School artists would invest fully in providing personal and cultural narratives which spoke to the romanticizing imaginations of non-Indigenous collectors and curators. The art world extracted what was desired, but usually did not consider the artists' needs or wants in the transactions or interactions, placing artists in a somewhat tricky position – they needed to feed perceptions to make a sale, while wanting to be acknowledged as contemporary artists, and feed their families. The narratives they shared, plus their talents, eventually made their artwork worth much more than what it originally sold for, making buyers or galleries the main benefactors of the art due to the extraction process. Some would argue that the working relationships between curators and artists have followed similar paths of the extraction research methodologies, and therefore Indigenous curators, in attempts to operate within an Indigenous framework, must be cognizant and pursue insurgent methodologies.

Insurgent research is rooted within existing Indigenous methodologies in four ways: (1) by employing Indigenous worldviews; (2) by orienting knowledge creation toward Indigenous

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[20] Kim Tallbear (Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate) has utilized dialogical methods that resulted in the co-authoring of research about the Black Hills. "This Stretch of the River" is based upon a transcribed kitchen table discussion about the topic among the Oak Lake Writers Society, which challenged the concept of academic authorship. It involves dialogic participation that holds a deep purpose of sharing story as a means to assist others and is relational at its core.

[21] Adam Gaudry, "Insurgent Research". *Wicaso Review.*(2011), 113.

peoples and their communities; (3) by seeing the responsibility of researchers as directed almost exclusively toward the community and participants and; (4) by promoting community-based action that targets the demise of colonial interference within our lives and communities. According to Gaudry, "Insurgent researchers operate from within a completely different set of values, determined primarily by our relationship to Indigenous communities, as members or allies, and by an ethical motivation in search of more egalitarian and autonomous social, political, and economic relations."[22]

The precepts of "Insurgent Research Methodologies" as discussed by Adam Gaudry is applicable to Indigenous Littoral Curation that is geared towards the Indigenization of self and others. Insurgent research is rooted in existing methodologies, and is oriented towards community-based actions resulting in individual and communal empowerment. Gaudry provides clear definitions of what a researcher must do in order for their work to be insurgent in nature, including recognizing a researchers' primary responsibility to community and kin. Together the writing of Kovach and Gaudry provide guidelines for naming the tenets of ILC, and has guided my research for this dissertation.

The work of these scholars acts as mnemonic aids to knowledges and ways of being. They provide strategies of how to conduct oneself as a researcher and writer by operating from an Indigenous paradigm. As well, their work helps link curatorial practice to the larger sphere of decolonization and Indigenization. Currently it goes mostly unrecognized in the realm of Indigenous studies, despite curators' successes in creating Indigenized and decolonized spaces through similar processes and priorities.

Non-Indigenous Art Theories and Praxis

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are constructed differently than Western theories, and as Simpson reminds, are "woven into doing, they are layered in meaning and they can be communicated through story, action, and embodied presence."[23] She also importantly states that "There is an incorrect assumption, however, in this narrative that Indigenous scholars and community organizers must therefore engage *only* in what is perceived to be Indigenous

[22] Gaudry, "Insurgent Research," 118

[23] Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), chap. 4, Kindle.

theory."[24] The use of western theories help in contextualizing Indigenous now. To weaken the western colonial construct it's important to peer into socially engaged artistic and curatorial initiatives. In particular, I focus on littoral art and paracuratorial discourses.

Artist and scholar Bruce Barber is the main littoral art scholar I rely on. Bruce Barber's musings on littoral art is compiled in *Littoral Art and Communicative Action*, edited by art scholar Marc Léger. It includes essays, interviews, and artist statements that trace the development of his work and writing from the mid-90s onwards. In addition to this in-depth book, Barber has made his writings and public lectures on littoral art practice readily available online, and his 35 "Sentences on Littoral Art" that define littoral art as a praxis for social change, have influenced how I name the tenets of ILC.

To locate and name Indigenous Littoral Curation I align discourses about paracuratorial practice with littoral art. Curator and scholar Paul O'Neill names paracuratorial as "a terrain of praxis that both operates within the curatorial paradigm and retains a destabilizing relationship with it via (para-) texts, sites, works, and institutes."[25] He also recognizes curatorial practice as a "constellation" of activities, actions and events where the exhibition is but one component, and not the main event. Paracuratorial praxis can be a destabilizing curatorial constellation that disrupts and resists conventional curatorship, thereby defying the authorial roles curators hold in the western art construct.

The scholarship and curatorial praxis of Vienna-based curator and scholar Elke Krasny is instrumental in tracking how the formation of independent curatorship was led by feminist artists and curators. In "Curatorial Materialism: A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-dependent Curating" Krasny notes, "independent curating was crucial to transforming modern art into contemporary art… many of the independent curators who were profoundly shaping this transformation were feminists, active as feminist artists, art historians, activists, thinkers, and public intellectuals."[26] In her work Krasny organizes and partakes in "conversations of

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[24] Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, chap. 4.
[25] Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Constellation and the Paracuratorial Paradox", *The Exhibitionist* 6 (2012): 1, https://fdocuments.net/document/paul-oneill-the-curatorial-constellation.html.
[26] Elke Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism. A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-Dependent Curating". *Oncurating.Org.* Issue 29, May 2016. https://www.on-curating.org/issue-29-reader/curatorial-materialism-a-feminist-perspective-on-independent-and-co-dependent-curating.html.

resistance" with other curators, scholars, artists and the general public within cultural fixed spaces. These flexible conversations are driven by feminist discourse, and operate as a form of critical care that disrupts hegemony and ideally, helps make the planet more livable for all.

Krasny's recent scholarship on curating as "caring activism" is helpful in advocating for practices that emerge from Indigenous paradigms and prioritizes reciprocal relationship building. She turns to feminist care theory that privileges "the co-dependence and interrelatedness" between humans and non-human beings that can lead to the decolonization and depatriarchalizing of museum collections and practices.[27] This happens by first viewing museums as prospective liberating spaces for all. When conceived and ignited through varied acts of care, opportunities for political and social activism are created within these cultural institutions, as well as beyond them and into the larger public realm.

Although these theories and praxis have been driven primarily by artists and scholars who have rarely sought out dialogue with Indigenous peoples (with the exception of Krasny), their ideas and actions matter here. Their stances on the art world, and acts of social change have the potential to break down barriers and create safe space for cross cultural and intercultural social change. Looking outward to non-Indigenous theories about socially-engaged art and curatorial practice has helped secure understandings of my cultural self and my roles and responsibilities as a curator. However, my engagement with them includes a critical lens and mind that recognizes their merits and weaknesses. I turn to them solely as support, and in ways to privilege Indigenous knowledges, goals, and the lived experiences of curators straddling the western art world and non-arts Indigenous communities.

"What is that girl up to now" - Research Methodologies Employed for this Dissertation

The methodologies employed for this dissertation are multifaceted, process-based and dialogic. At times they have been participatory and collaborative in nature. This has included organized private and public kitchen table talk gatherings, collaborative and individual beading sessions, learning the Michif language, and working to strengthen and understand my kinship ties through self-reflection and the sharing of personal narratives with others.

[27] Elke Krasny, "*Caring Activism. Assembly, Collection, and the Museum*" in: http://collecting-in-time.gfzk.de/en,2017.

The Michif language is a portal into learning, naming and mobilizing Métis knowledge systems. Verna DeMontigny (Verna), who originates from the Métis community of Ste. Madeleine, has played an active role in igniting the Michif language for myself and others. She is a knowledge keeper, beadworker, storyteller, Michif language instructor, and translator currently residing in Brandon, MB. Recently DeMontigny translated text into Michif for artists, curators and architects, which has been energizing for both speakers and artists. Since 2014 she has been teaching me about our knowledge and value systems including how to live a good life, and making good relations with all beings. In particular three key Michif terms and concepts have guided my research methodologies. They are:

Kishinamakay: It means to teach, and kishnamakayan means I teach. Contemplating the importance of teaching, and being taught led to consideration about interdisciplinary practice, and where family relations, and the value of them for curating became key. It is in this phase of contemplation of kishinimakay that the intricacies of Métis identity and lived experiences became a central focus for me.

Miyeu Pimaatshiwin: This is the Métis term for living a good life and involves generous reciprocity, a valuing of art, and the sharing of knowledge. It can also mean being wealthy and having lots of things. It's important to pursue the type of miyeu pimaatshiwin that creates relationships, not things. Miyeu Pimaatshiwin guided my research methodology choices, and my intentions to instigate dialogue and actions centered on living in a good way, in the service of others.

Washagay: Washagay is a root word in Michif. It suggests circularity, roundness and ongoing movement. Washagay is also the name given to shorelines, and is a descriptor for where the land and waters meet. It names all terrain found along the shores, and not just sand bars. According to my teacher shorelines are not lines but circles. Therefore, washagay relates to everything we know about our culture because it's circular, continuous, and is land-based knowledge. It is by embedding myself in washagay that I began further pursuing strategies to participate in, contribute to, and generate spaces for the gathering and igniting of IKS.

Throughout this dissertation I name other applicable actions and concepts in the Michif language as they have been taught to me by Verna. The relevant terms are first presented in a graphic chart with their phonetic spelling, meanings, and how I connect them to a discussion about Indigenous Littoral Curation. Many of them were learned only once I began writing about Indigenous Littoral Curation, and the three key Michif concepts led me to them. The process of learning about them exposed me to the existence and specificities of our knowledge system. By introducing and utilizing them either in the body of writing, as chapter titles, or as framing for specific curatorial work, I hope to also contribute to Michif as a living and social language.

In 2013 I began organizing public and private "Métis Kitchen Table Talk" (MKTT) sessions. Feminist scholars and critical race theorists name kitchen table talk theory as a productive way to conduct research that is anti-patriarchal, anti-colonial, and community-minded. It can operate as a platform for difficult and self-reflexive conversations about race, gender, and class structures.[28] Researchers create a forum for open-ended conversation around a particular topic for research participants to share their insight and experiences. Although there is no definite conclusion or consensus sought in kitchen table talk theory, resolutions may arise from the organized conversations. Research driven kitchen table talks can be sites of personal emancipation and collective growth.

Kitchen tables are intimate sites of resistance, restoration, and opportunity. Despite kitchen table talk being universal, I specifically name those I organized, co-hosted or participated in as "Métis Kitchen Table Talk" (MKTT). This is because for many Métis people the kitchen table is where revolutions are started, where we learn to relish in our culture, and where our fondest memories of intergenerational engagement are formed. The kitchen table is where I molded better understandings of my culture and family dynamics. It is where ideas for exhibitions, essay topics, and beaded projects began. And when they did, there were always friends and relatives I was socializing with who helped me through those processes.

The very first MKTTs I organized were held in Brandon and Winnipeg, MB. I invited curators, students, artists, art historians, and scholars to listen to a formal presentation on my research. I provided food, drink, and beads to separate into colour-coded groupings during our

[28] See Ellen Kohl & Priscilla McCutcheon, "Kitchen table reflexivity: negotiating positionality through everyday talk" in *Gender, Place & Culture* 22:6 (2014): https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0966369X.2014.958063.

gatherings. Afterwards there was critical dialogue, debate and encouragement. I then began embarking on private MKTT sessions with curators who are discussed in this dissertation. These took place at coffee shops, artist studios, at restaurants, and over Zoom. I did not enter these sessions with formal interview questions or expectations, but with wanting to engage in open-ended conversations about art and my colleagues' curatorial practices. I initiated conversations by sharing with them my topic, and they responded in a variety of ways, often by sharing personal experiences and insights as curators. The conversations were mostly founded on our familiarities with one another as friends, colleagues, and community members, and with only a few exceptions, we already held a rapport with one another.

Figure Two: First Métis Kitchen Table Talk, December 13, 2013, Brandon University, MB. From left to right: Kevin DeForest separating beads, myself giving the formal presentation, homemade dessert I presented to guests as parting gifts. Photo taken and provided by author.

Figure Three: Examples of bead piles, which were separated during private MKTT sessions. Photo taken and provided by author.

When other curators and scholars heard about these events, they invited me to host, co-host or participate in kitchen table talks at their respective universities or art galleries. For these more public and structured events some of my students, family and community members began helping to organize. The dynamics of the MKTTs changed as their execution became more collaborative and reciprocal between the host curators, volunteer helpers, and participants who were brought to the table. Although they first began as a way to share my research interests, receive feedback, and present Métis cultural ways of being, they evolved into much more. With the investment of others, they became sites to share knowledge, lived experiences, and contemplations on Indigenous curatorial pedagogy and praxis. They became more fluid, lively (some included dancing and singing), and embodied Métis culture. Although the MKTTs were initiated primarily as research methodology, they merged into curatorial pedagogy and praxis. They became a collaborative and curated affair, exemplary of Indigenous Littoral Curation. I am indebted to all the curators and various guests who agreed to participate in these dialogues, and who invited me to their table in part as an offering to my dissertation.

Collaborative and individual beading sessions as both research methodology and curatorial praxis is also highlighted in this dissertation. Beading animates and ignites Indigenous Knowledge Systems, personal narratives, and relationships. It imbues physical space with the pulsating forces that tie ourselves to one another and the land. Scholar and beadworker

Dr.Tiffany Dione Prete (Blood Tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy), reminds, "Beadworking is rooted in the historically and geographically located epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies of Indigenous Peoples".[29] While discussing Blackfoot ways of knowing and beading as an Indigenous research paradigm, she names three principles that form the conceptual basis of beadworking; 1) beadworking as an act of resistance; 2) beadworking as an act of knowledge transmission; and 3) beadworking as an act of resiliency.[30] These principles name how beadworkers sew us into relation with one another, and provide cultural grounding and space for artistic action and resistance to occur. They are relevant when incorporating beading as methodology and curatorial strategy because they help to enhance ways to align curatorial actions and community in relation to one another.

To instate "generous reciprocity", I made beaded gifts for everyone who contributed to this dissertation as mentors, colleagues, friends, or family members. The process of beading gifts include learning about participants' families and land-bases, tuning in to moments of self-reflection and reflexivity, and researching historic and contemporary Métis beadwork as a guide. Often I would bead while listening to recorded MKTT conversations, and then jot down responses on the parchment paper I was beading onto. Sometimes I would stop beading to search for resources or begin writing notes, personal reflections, or draft paragraphs. In this dissertation beading moves the parts and patterns to develop and partake in research methodologies which incorporate the work of scholars, curators and kin.

[29] Tiffany Dione Prete, "Beadworking as an Indigenous Research Paradigm," *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* Vol.4, Issue 1 (2019): 30.
[30] Prete, "Beadworking", 30.

Figure Four: Left: A beaded interpretation of a story my mother shared about picking flowers for my grandmother with her sisters and my grandfather. I beaded my interpretation as an exercise in defining Indigenization for my research, and gifted it to my mother. Right: A beaded belt I made which presents all of the women I am related to by blood. As an exercise in defining decolonization for my research, I beaded emblems for the women on both sides of my family, and connected them through beaded "mouse tracks", or life connectors. Photos taken and provided by author.

Figure Five: Samples of beaded gifts I made for participants and contributors to this dissertation.

To further activate my research methodologies, I savored other opportunities to gather, participate and engage in dialogue with others. Curatorial work and public speaking engagements became occasions for experimentation, and testing the merits of key research methodologies and curatorial strategies. For example, while working with artists to develop an exhibition, or speaking publicly at galleries or in universities, I incorporated the Michif language, beading sessions, conversational praxis, and teaching audience members to dance the Red River Jig as a way to manifest Michif knowledge systems. The weekly beadwork sessions I coordinate for the BU Beading Babes were highly impactful in researching and writing this dissertation. This group is made up of Brandon University students, faculty, and community members who gather to bead gifts for BU graduates, learn new techniques, and to provide an environment of care and culture to students and community. It is an incubator of knowledge transmission, instigated by dialogue, beadwork, and the relationships formed when sewing ourselves into relation with one another. For example, it was in one of our weekly sessions where I learned about the importance of shorelines to the Métis, Cree and Dakota peoples. This shared

information drastically shifted my dissertation and helped place my work more securely in Michif knowledge systems.

I also relished in time spent with loved ones around kitchen tables, and the candid dialogue offered to me by curators and artists invested in naming and discussing curatorial pedagogy and praxis. These impactful conversations happened in person, by phone, Zoom, and text messaging. Importantly, I received nourishment and guidance from Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette as my PhD supervisor, but also in her capacity as an artist, curator, scholar, colleague, collaborator, Michif woman, and beadworker. Some of these relationship structures and processes are difficult to quantify as research, because they were instinctual, iterative, continuous, spontaneous, and seeped in existing relationships. They moved research and writing differently than conventional research methodologies, like formal interview structures and anticipated outcomes. However, they are the core of this research, and embody the curatorial processes I name and encourage in this dissertation.

My Positionality

As an offering and gesture for relationship-building, I want to now introduce myself. I am a freelance curator, writer, and art history professor at Brandon University, in the Department of Visual and Aboriginal Art. I am a member of the Métis nation from Manitoba (MB), Canada, and a mother to two children. My grandmother was Red River Métis from Southwest Manitoba, and my grandfather's Saulteaux family was originally from Sandy Bay First Nation (MB), with some familial ties to the Métis nation. His father was Irish and moved to Manitoba from India, where he was born and raised. Both my grandparents spoke the Michif language, and my mother was raised visiting and connecting with both sides of her family. My father was born and raised in Winnipeg (MB) and is of German and Polish ancestry. My sister, brother and I were brought up in a military family that moved often, yet were fortunate enough to have had access to both sides of our family. This often occurred by visiting around the kitchen tables of loved ones.

Growing up I was conscious that we are Indigenous, despite living on military bases and in communities where there were few other Indigenous folks, and opportunities to learn about and celebrate our culture. Understandings of my own Indigeneity were clouded by the unconscious bias of select teachers, health care providers, and friends' parents. I was asked "what are you?" by many. When I clarified for those posing invasive and uncomfortable questions, they would

then closely examine my facial features, hair colour and skin tone to decipher if I was telling the truth, based on their prejudices of what makes someone Indigenous. Once I convinced them, some then considered my "mixedness" as permission to share their stereotypical and romanticized views of Indigenous peoples, and declarations they now considered me to be "exotic". There was no consideration on their part, or mine at the time, that it should be acknowledged I am from a specific Indigenous nation, family, and land-base. Those experiences, and spending most of my youth living away from Indigenous family and communities, made it at times challenging to exist as a Métis in healthy, productive, and unconcealed ways.

However, I was also consistently provided cultural signifiers and the comfort of familial love that made me resilient and eventually proud. They came in the form of moccasins and mukluks lovingly made and gifted to us all by my aunty Jean Baron Ward, my grandfather's fiddle proudly displayed on the wall, deadly games of crib played around kitchen tables, and food like li bang, bannock, and occasionally wild meat and freshly caught fish cooked to perfection by my mother. Stories were told with much laughter and teasing, and often contained teachings, even though I was unaware of this when they were shared. I am extremely grateful to my grandparents who ensured that during my mother's youth they warmed her home and heart with fiddle music and the Red River jig. They raised her to prioritize family and community, and every summer brought her to Métis community gatherings and pow wows at Sundance ceremonies to support her aunties as they danced and participated. My grandparents found ways to make sure the land, our land, would always remember my mother, despite any hardships she faced as a Métis and Saulteaux woman. This I'm sure was no easy feat.

I come from a long line of resisters, agitators, lovers, survivors and very thoughtful knowledge keepers, who despite all odds, never assimilated (as hard as some of them tried to at points in their lives). They were, and are, very aware of themselves as Indigenous people on this land. This became more obvious to me when I entered the University of Winnipeg to pursue a bachelor's degree in art history. Certain aunts, uncles, and cousins saw my interest in visual art as an opportunity to teach me about their understandings of our culture, history and spirituality. Even though I did not yet have access to learning about Indigenous art history as the program I was in was Eurocentric, to them art was a portal, and my interest in it suggested I was receptive to what they had to offer. They bought me beaded gifts and other cultural items to encourage pride, shared what they knew about Louis Riel and other important leaders, invited me to cultural

gatherings, and imparted their experiences with medicine people and ceremonies. Some of them continue to do so now.

Despite any discomfort ingrained in them from a lifetime of navigating colonial oppression, they recognize(d) the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge intergenerationally. In doing so they affirme(d) their own resilience, and took up roles in securing our cultural continuities. They also provided important descriptors that led to my comfort in proudly identifying as Métis. I thank them all dearly as they are a constant reminder that as Michif we are whole peoples, whole families, and a whole nation.

I identity myself firstly as a member of the Métis nation, however I proudly recognize and value our family ties to Sandy Bay First Nation, and carry immense appreciation and respect for my father and his family. My mother identifies herself as both Métis and a registered member of Sandy Bay First Nation. In my extended family some identify primarily as Saulteaux, while others privilege our Métis heritage. This stems not from identity confusion, or because of our "mixedness". This occurs because we exemplify the multiplicities that exist within a family that is grounded with the love between a Métis grandmother and Saulteaux grandfather, who come from land-bases and communities who were/are intertwined through kinship, history, and recognition.

When I began my curatorial practice, Indigenous artists and curators took on similar roles to my family members in sharing and generating knowledge intergenerationally. In interacting with them, who had a strength I had not, or have not yet developed, I became encouraged to examine my struggles and achievements as an unconcealed Métis. Some of these artists and curators had more of a profound impact than others, and some became my community. They claimed me, challenged me, and nurtured me. I am in part a product of them all, and the future they imagined.

I have been curating and writing about art for 21 years now, with a focus on contemporary art by Métis and First Nations artists. I consider contemporary art, art caretaking, and curating care as reflections of cultural continuance (the state of remaining in existence) and continuum (a coherent whole containing a collection, sequence or progression of values or characters). Community contact with art, and artists having exchange with community have therefore been vital to my practice. I consider this more than "adjacent programming" or "community outreach," as often categorized by the western art world. It is integral, and involves assisting

artists and gallery workers to contemplate and deconstruct ideas of community, while encouraging others that contemporary art can play a central role in creating culturally-grounded holistic communities and nations.

As a curator who has been gifted with multiple opportunities to work with artists and communities from many different nations, I consider it important to operate on a nation-to-nation basis. This means I value and recognize similarities and differences in worldviews, cultural and social structures, and experiences as Indigenous peoples on this land. I take steps to ensure my actions are guided by my own culturally specific structures, knowledge systems, and lived experiences.

Bringing Hearts Home

In speaking about the motivations leading research by Indigenous scholars, Absolon notes how, "Remembering creates cultural mirrors that validate our life and experiences and those of other Indigenous peoples too. The gift of our searches ends up being in the remembering of ancestral ties, their legacies and knowledge."[31] The overall purpose of this dissertation is to name and ignite curatorial strategies to help keep, or bring Indigenous hearts home. Keeping and bringing hearts home means recognizing past approaches and devising new ones. The intent is to spur a remembering of who we are, what we know, and to then bring our individual and collective truths forward.[32] The "home" I speak of is not a particular, fixed location. It is, as curator Joan Borsa suggests, "a place one both understands and needs to know more about, a space "between" where distance is accounted for, constantly travelled and negotiated."[33] Home can consist of several locations or circumstances where we feel aligned, nourished, challenged, and where we exhale with certainty that we belong, our experiences matter, and what we have to offer is welcome. No matter the contexts, strategies, or impacts of their work, Indigenous curators play a critical role in helping others locate, navigate, and find ways to bring themselves and others

[31] Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe), *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* (Fernwood Publshing: Halifax & Winnipeg, 2011), 78.
[32] Kathleen Absolon, *Kaandossiwin*, 77.
[33] Joan Borsa, "Nomadic Locations, Travelling Subjects: Affirmations of Autobiographical Acts," in *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future.* (ed) Peter White *(*Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 1996), 69.

home. It is the thread that connects the various curatorial work discussed in this dissertation, and the impetus for naming Indigenous Littoral Curation as a strategy for curating care.

Introducing the Chapters and Inserts by Sequence

Chapter Two, "Kenawayhta: Framing Indigenous Littoral Curation: A Brief History of Indigenous and Western Curatorial Practice", is a synopsis of Indigenous art and curation as well as relevant shifts found in western curation. I position these topics within a description of Gerald Vizenors' notions of Surviance and Transmotion, and Jolene Rickard's definition of Visual Sovereignty, and how art and curating are both attributes. In Chapter Three, "Chikishkaytaman: Indigenous Knowledge Systems Located in Curatorial Praxis", I introduce how Indigenous curators engage with Indigenous Knowledge Systems in their work. I provide a working explanation that presents general aspects of IKS. These are not meant to be all-embracing nor reductive as IKS are not finite, static or homogenous. I arrange my discussion of curatorial initiatives that incorporate knowledge systems with consideration of Dian Million's concept of "Intense Dreaming". I deem this to be itself a knowledge system that can ignite IKS in curatorial work.

In Chapter 4, "Washagay Peywinwa: The Merits of Discourse about Littoral Art, the Paracuratorial and Curating Care in Indigenous Littoral Curation", I present theories and praxis about Littoral art and curating as care, and how they are relevant components of discourse on ILC. I track the intricacies of both, their theoretical terrains, and how they overlap and are helpful. In this chapter I also provide a critical consideration of the notion of "community", as it is often mentioned in writing about socially engaged artistic and curatorial practices. Chapter 5, "Miyeu Pimaatshiwin: Bringing Indigenous Hearts Home and the Tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation and Select Examples" provides the specifics of how I identify ILC. I include a list of "tenets" or principles, and then provide examples of specific curatorial projects I consider as representations of ILC. These include detailed information about exhibitions or projects, the curators who organized them, and highlights of our conversations about how their work fits the tenets of ILC. In Chapter 6, "Washagay: Michif Curatorial Pedagogy and Praxis – A Jig in Three Parts", I contribute to on-going pedagogy and praxis which encourages curators to consider how they represent their own kinship and knowledge systems in their strategies for curatorial care. In this section I frame my personal insights, experiences, and ILC projects with

particular Métis knowledges that recognize littoral spaces as sites for cultural continuance and continuum, and the importance of kinship and living a good life through acts of generosity and care. By sharing personal insights and experiences, I attempt to model, embody and ignite what I consider to be important tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation, as discussed in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 7, "Dancing Guests Out and Reflections for Continuance and Continuums", I conclude by providing a recap of what was discussed in this dissertation. I summarize each section, and include insights from curators, family, artists and knowledge keepers who impacted my writing and research. I end this final chapter without any firm conclusions, but by posing questions for further critical dialogue. Leaving the dissertation in this way is an attribute to operating in an open-ended, process-driven, and dialogic manner.

Chapter 2

Kenawayhta: Framing Indigenous Littoral Curation: A Brief History of Indigenous and Western Curatorial Practice

Megan Tamati-Quennell, Curator of Modern & Contemporary Mãori and Indigenous Art at the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, suggests curators and artist/curators of Indigenous ancestry are "shape-shifting time travelers", operating inside and outside of dual contexts, navigating between cultural paradigms, and at times, being everything to everybody".[34] Indigenous curators initiate, probe, challenge, and have the arduous task of traversing funding systems, galleries, artists, audiences, cultural priorities and protocols. This is a tricky balancing act as the residuals of changing curatorial discourse and the restrictive and exclusive western art milieu impact our processes and projects. Our actions are in concert with artists who have been driven by the search for sovereignty through *survivance* through *transmotion*.

This chapter provides a synopsis of Indigenous art, curation and relevant historical shifts of western curation. Its purpose is to; a) trace the relationships between contemporary Indigenous curatorial and arts practices; b) discuss how this traversing discipline reflects Indigenous heritage and contemporary priorities and; c) how it intercepts and impacts the larger art world. I give a brief description of contemporary Indigenous art practice over the last forty-plus years, and how the actions of artists exemplify the search for visual sovereignty, survivance and transmotion. I then give a brief background on independent curatorial practices in the western contemporary art milieu. Next, I discuss the rise of Indigenous curators in this arena. I end the chapter by naming recent curatorial initiatives and how they reflect continuance and continuum. Providing this historical background to curatorial practice and applicable Indigenous scholarship, aids in framing the cultural climate Indigenous littoral curatorial practice stems from.

To do so most effectively, I include an explanation of visual sovereignty and Gerald Vizenors' concepts of survivance and transmotion. I discuss several large-scale art exhibitions curated by Indigenous curators and artist/curators as sites of attempted sovereignty formation which exemplify survivance and transmotion. I examine current discourses that align with, extend from, or challenge notions of Indigenous sovereignty, survivance and transmotion. Lastly,

[34] Megan Tamati-Quennell, "In Conversation with Peter Robinson" *Planet Magazine*, vol. 14 (1994), 60.

I present emerging discourse about Indigenous art and curatorial criticism, and the need for enhanced criticality within the contemporary Indigenous art milieu.

Survivance and Transmotion: Presence in Indigenous Art and Curatorial Practice

Indigenous survivance and transmotion are noteworthy concepts devised by Anishinabe scholar Gerald Vizenor (enrolled member of White Earth Reservation) when naming contemporary Indigenous artistic and curatorial practice from the late 1960s to early 2000s. Vizenor states, "The nature of survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihility, and victimry. Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence".[35] Survivance is derived from personal experiences of ceremonies, critical examination of sacred objects in museums, and Vizenors' observations of natural motion and totemic associations found in art, stories, and literature.[36] Vizenor's concept of survivance includes agency and Indigenous presence but does not refuse stories of struggle, particularly those that create a context for understanding and appreciating the creative methods of resistance and survival in the face of turmoil. It nourishes Indigenous ways of being and knowledge transmission.

Indigenous transmotion is directly related to the ordinary practices of survivance. Transmotion is "non-linear movement across imagined boundaries. Native transmotion is an instance of natural reason, and aesthetic creation, to be sure, but not a literal simile of nature as a resistance to civilization; transmotion is motion and native memories, and not mere comparatives or performative acts".[37] Vizenor sees the inherent Indigenous rights of presence, motion, and survivance on this continent as an "originary" form of sovereignty, which is sustained through treaties, but not limited by them.[38]

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[35] Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 162.
[36] Carla Taunton, "Performing Resistance/Negotiating Sovereignty: Indigenous Women's Performance Art in Canada" (PhD Thesis, Queen's University, 2011), 15.
[37] Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998),182.
[38] Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses,* 189.

Indigenous Visual Sovereignty as Artistic Aspiration

Tuscarora scholar, artist and curator Jolene Rickard asserts for ongoing survival strategies, the work of Indigenous artists needs to be understood through "the clarifying lens of sovereignty and self-determination".[39] The term "sovereignty" was adopted by Indigenous activists and leaders after World War II who were striving for self-determination, land rights, treaty rights, and cultural integrity.[40] It articulated their concerns and agendas for social change, and analyses of histories and cultures were made. As Indigenous studies scholars like Audra Simpson (Kahnawake Mohawk), Joan Barker (Lenape), and Vine Deloria (Lakota) developed their scholarship and presence in western academia, Indigenous sovereignties became a staple in discourses around self-governance, decolonization, and cultural empowerment.

Although the applications of sovereignty may vary or even mirror European notions of political autonomy or jurisprudence, it maintains ties to older concepts of self-governance. According to Michelle Raheja (Seneca), "Native nations prior to European contact theorized about the concept of sovereignty in order to discursively distinguish themselves from the other human, spirit, animal, and inanimate communities surrounding them through performance, songs, stories, dreams, and visual texts such as wampum, pictographs, and tipi drawings".[41] These are remembered and constructed through oral and visual narratives and collective consensus on what pre-contact forms and theories of government and social structure were.[42]

Because Indigenous people as a whole have no single shared culture or experience, there are multiple interpretations and engagements with the concept. As Michelle Raheja (Seneca) states, sovereignty "is a difficult idea to define because it is always in motion and is inherently contradictory."[43] Scholars like Billy Ray Belcourt (Driftpile Cree Nation) and Lindsay Nixon (Cree, Métis, Saulteaux) remind that sovereignty is not all-embracing and requires disruption.

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[39] Jolene Rickard, "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand", *Strong Hearts: Native American Visions and Voices in Aperature,* (Summer 1995), 51.
[40] King, L. "Speaking Sovereignty and Communicating Change: Rhetorical Sovereignty and the Inaugral Exhibits at the NMAI", *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter 2011),80.
[41] Raheja, M., "Reading Nanook's Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Revisions of Ethnography and Atanarjuat (Fast Runner), *American Quarterly* 59.4 (2007): 1164.
[42] Raheja, "Reading", 1164.
[43] Raheja, "Reading", 1164.

For example, when discussing the future and how it relates to queerness, Belcourt shares with Nixon in a published conversation in *Canadian Art Magazine*:

> …the concept of sovereignty, which is a charismatic concept in Indigenous studies, cannot be the ideational house for those of us who are queer and/or trans Indigenous and two-spirit…it is not just that we experience multi-faceted forms of oppression that "race" itself cannot fully account for; it is also that we participate in relational practices that agitate the body or the nation as inviolable containers for political life.[44]

Indigenous sovereignties should therefore move through the impact of colonization in ways that do not maintain, or create more systems of exclusion or erasure. They should be both flexible and negotiable but not to the point the term becomes overused, misused or so flexible, it can mean anything.[45]

It is through the concept of "visual sovereignty" Indigenous artists represent their historical and contemporary cultural struggles and achievements, and make social change. It is a creative act of self-representation permitting the flow of Indigenous knowledge about land rights, language, and cultural preservation. Visual sovereignty is, as Jolene Rickard asserts, one of the "most dominant expressions of self-determination".[46] It intervenes in larger discourses on Indigenous sovereignty, and recognizes the right to visually create space for self-definition and determination.[47] Therefore, it's role as a motivating force for Indigenous artists and curators should be included here, but with deep consideration of the concerns raised by Belcourt and Nixon.

Contemporary Indigenous Art History

[44] Billy Ray Belcourt, Lindsay Nixon, "What Do We Mean By Queer Indigenous Ethics?", *Canadian Art Magazine*, May, 2018, https://canadianart.ca/features/what-do-we-mean-by-queerindigenousethics/.

[45]A, Cobb. "Understanding Tribal Sovereignty: Definitions, Conceptualizations, and Interpretations", *American Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 3/4, Indigeneity at the Crossroads of American Studies (Indigenous Studies Today, Issue 1, Fall 2005/Spring 2006) (Fall/Winter 2005): 116.

[46] Jolene Rickard, "Diversifying Sovereignty and the Reception of Indigenous Art", *artjournal* (Summer, 2017): 82.

[47]J. Hubbs, *Race in Cinema*, blog, November 16, 2012, http://prezi.com/w91_7bmwsjyj/race-in-cinema/.

> We have learned very fast. We have adapted, sacrificed, given up, been divided, divided ourselves, been numbered, discarded, re-enlisted, re-grouped, and celebrated ourselves. (We have to!).[48] – Joane Cardinal-Schubert

In discussing the relevance of current arts practice in communities and public forums, Sherry Farrell Racette (Métis/Timiskaming First Nation) reminds, "the gestures of art making that enfold memory and words move knowledge forward to another generation, while simultaneously engaging an audience beyond family and community. Reconfigured within contemporary art practices old meanings are complicated and multiplied."[49] Contemporary artists find ways in their respective times and circumstances, to create art reflecting who they are as Indigenous peoples and global citizens. It is because of the hard work of ancestor artists and art caretakers I value contemporary art and curatorial practice as both cultural continuance (the state of remaining in existence) and continuum (a coherent whole characterized as a collection, sequence, or progression of values).

Beyond creating art intrinsically linked to their cultures and histories, Indigenous artists create work that effectively reforms and restructures the social context in which they live. Initially focused on drawing, abstract painting, collage and photography, Indigenous contemporary artists expanded into digital art, installation, video, performance art, and more recently, incorporating mediums like beadwork, quillwork or animal hair tufting. *The Indians of Canada Pavilion* at Expo '67, the birth of the Professional Native Indian Artists' Inc., and the formation of the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA), are early examples of artist's creating important contemporary artwork, and taking action to make space for artists, and art forms to come.[50]

The installations found at the Indians of Canada Pavilion in 1967 affirmed "the contemporary value of cultural difference and the survival of traditional values and beliefs in the

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[48] Joane Cardinal-Schubert, "Flying With Louis" in *Making a noise: Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community*, ed. Lee-Ann Martin (Banff: The Banff Centre, 2003), 27.

[49]Sherry, Farrell-Racette. "Encoded Knowledge: Memory and Objects in Contemporary Native American Art." *New Native Art Criticism: Manifestations* (Santa Fe: Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, 2011), 43.

[50] "Expo '67, the Universal and International Exhibition" was held in Montreal, Quebec in 1967, which was also the 100th year birthday of Canada, which was a focal point of the event.

face of great odds".[51] This occurred through the presence of commissioned contemporary Indigenous art for the exterior and interior of the Pavilion. Artists like Tom Hill (Konadaha Seneca) and Norval Morrisseau (Anishinaabe) created paintings and sculptures exposing cultural continuity and experiences with colonization. The project forged a sense of common purpose among artists and allies/accomplices, as discord with organizers from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs arose, because they wanted to present a cleansed version of Indigenous experience with colonization. According to Tom Hill who played a major role in the project, "The government really wanted a positive image in the pavilion and what they got was the truth. That's what shocked them the most."[52] This struggle along with others brought a sense of collectivity among artists, as they had to unite to present history through art, as it actually happened.

Figure Six: The Indians of Canada Pavillion, Expo '67, Montreal, QC. Library and Archives Canada.

Recognizing existing voids, the isolation artists felt, and the strengths and talents of artists, Daphne Odjig set forth in 1973 to develop an incorporated organization that would better serve the needs of artists. Invitations were sent out to about fifty recognized artists across Canada to come to a gathering hosted in Winnipeg which would lead to an incorporated arts organization. Only seven showed up. The Professional Native Indian Artists' Inc. included artists

[51] Ruth B. Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Quebec, McGill University Press, 2011): 27.
[52] Ruth B. Phillips, "Museum Pieces," 27.

Daphne Odjig (Odawa, Potowatomi), Alex Janvier (Dene Suline), Jackson Beardy (Oji-Cree), Carl Ray (Cree), Joseph Sanchez (Taos Pueblo), Norval Morrisseau (Anishinaabe) and Eddy Cobiness (Anishinaabe). Characterized by bright colours, abstracted landscapes and stylized images of animals, humans, spirits, and the earth, their diverse work visually interprets oral stories, addresses post-contact history from an Indigenous perspective, contemplates spiritually, and maps the land in abstract, painted form and drawing. These seven artists officially formed the Professional Native Indian Artists' Inc. in 1974, and although it only lasted several years, it proved seminal in setting the course of contemporary Indigenous art history.

PNIAI developed partly in response to the lack of opportunities for contemporary Indigenous artists in the larger Canadian art scene, the exclusionary practices of local Winnipeg arts organizations, and the societal and cultural contexts of when they first appeared. These contexts include the forming of Indigenous political rights' organizations, the refutation of the White Paper Policy, and the resurgence of cultural pride on a grand scale.[53] Although art made by members of the PNIAI was contemporary and held great cultural relevance, they were often met with the wild imaginations of a non-Indigenous audience, who romanticized them as survivors or revivers of a great and noble past.[54] Their work was treated as ethnographic objects, and relegated to museums instead of contemporary art galleries, where the artists felt their work belonged. Getting their art into galleries and recognized by curators, dealers, and patrons became a main focus of the Group. They succeeded in these arenas, and forged new space in the art world for themselves and other emerging artists.

Simultaneously there was a shift to more explicit politicized points of view being expressed by artists who entered western art education institutions, and Indigenous cultural education centres, like Manitou College at la Macaza in Quebec in 1972. The primary activities

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[53] Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau governments' policy of assimilation, known as the White Paper Policy, became a formative event for Indigenous leaders. This was policy of assimilation, which was a contradiction of Trudeau's promise of a just society (how can one argue for multiculturalism and equality and then still marginalize First peoples?) made during his 1968 political campaign. It fuelled anger in many, and the federal government had to withdraw the policy of assimilation in 1970. See: Peter Kulchyski, "Aboriginal Peoples and Hegemony in Canada". *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol.3, No.1, (Spring, 1995), 62.

[54] Philips, R. (with Valda Blundell), "If it's not Shamanic, is it Sham?" in *Anthropologica,* 1986, 25:1 (1986), 117-132.

of the education centres were language retention, history, culturally relevant educational materials, "tradition", and art forms. They were usually quite conservative, and focused on more historical forms of artistic expression. However, Manitou College in La Macaza, Quebec, encouraged artists to address issues of political and social relevance, while also gaining a deeper understanding of spirituality. The art program at La Macaza was born when there was political turmoil surfacing in Quebec. The FLQ crisis of 1970, the language crisis, and Robert Bourassa's government plans to develop the James Bay hydroelectric project were issues posing grave concerns among Indigenous people in Quebec. Some students from Manitou College regularly protested in Montreal, developing their political standpoints. Artists like Edward Poitras (Métis), and Ruth Cuthand (Plains Cree) were inspired by the political and artistic climate, and did not want to mold to the nostalgic tastes of a non-Indigenous audience. Encouraged by their instructor artist Domingo Cisneros (Mestizo), they overtly expressed their political and cultural ideologies in their art.

In Saskatchewan around the same time Manitou College was beginning its art program, The Saskatchewan Cultural College in Saskatoon implemented an accreted art program in 1972 under the direction of poet, singer, dancer and artist Sarain Stump. Stump explored ancestral practices as well as contemporary modes of expression. He introduced classes in assemblage, collage, video, performance art and modern dance. One program entitled "Indart" proved to be the most popular. Students retraced ancestral relationships by the creation of "traditional" forms of expression in the natural environment. They collected natural materials to make pigments and dyes, tanned hides, and painted tipis. Stump encouraged a kind of art making that connected students to their ancestors, and expressed the conflicts in the co-existence of perceived traditional and technological societies.

Figure Seven: *Untitled,* Edward Poitras, 1995, sculpture, Canadian Museum of History, K2007-00008

In 1975, the Woodland Cultural Centre, led by Executive Director Glen Crane, set forth to include contemporary Indigenous art in its' programming. Indigenous artists were being excluded in mainstream galleries and so an annual juried exhibition was established to help fill a void. Located at the site of a former residential school in Brantford Ontario, the Centre focuses on the histories, languages and cultures of the nearby Anishinaabe and members of the Iroquois Confederacy. From 1982-2004 Tom Hill was the Museum Director, and now the Woodland Cultural Centre holds a robust collection of Indigenous art. It continues to support emerging, mid-career and established artists with exhibiting, collecting, and professional development opportunities.[55]

In the 80s the contemporary art world experienced the appearance of the "art tribe", a term used by Joanne Cardinal-Schubert (Blood) to name a group of artists who were for the most part educated in university fine arts programs or cultural education centres, and often lumped together in group exhibitions in contemporary galleries, usually in numbers of 10. The "art tribe" included Jane Ash Poitras (Chipeweyan), Joanne Cardinal-Schubert (Blood), Mike McDonald (Mi'q Maq), Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun (Cowichan/Syilix First Nations), Ron Noganosh, (Anishinaabe), Robert Houle (Saulteaux), Carl Beam (Anishinaabe), Edward Poitras (Métis), Lance Belanger (Tobique First Nation), and Rick Rivet (Métis). These artists' work is as diverse as their respective nations, and in addition to abstract painting, their innovation in video, new media, and collage was celebrated. They and their cohorts made opportunities for those who came after to actively pursue these newer mediums. Themes found in their work include hybridity, identity, colonization, racism, and human impact on the land. They were a collective force, and encouraged freedom of artistic expression that was overtly political and decolonial. However, the reception of new visual languages impacted some senior artists whose work aligned more with ancestor artists. According to Lee-Ann Martin, "artists working within these traditional vocabularies were excluded from contemporary discourses that were centered on identity politics and colonial critique."[56] Artists from the Northwest Coast and Woodland

[55] See: https://woodlandculturalcentre.ca

[56] Lee -Ann, Martin . "Contemporary First Nations Art since 1970: Individual Practice and Collective Activism," in *The Visual Arts in Canada: the Twentieth Century.* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007), 383.

schools were often overlooked by institutions, as their work was viewed as either too "traditional" or outdated as contemporary art.

Additional obstacles came with more presence in the western art milieu by a new generation of artists. Some artists held concerns about art markets being consumer oriented and sterile, non-Indigenous academics and art institutions dictating control over their practice, and that the title "Indian art" was stifling and homogenizing. In 1983, at a national Indigenous artists' symposium held at 'Ksan, BC, the Society of Canadian Artists of Native Ancestry (SCANA) formed, and included artists Shirley Bear (Tobique First Nation) , Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Jim Logan (Métis), and Joane Cardinal-Schubert, to name some. SCANA's mandate was to pressure publicly funded art galleries to cease deliberate exclusion of Indigenous art, to encourage tours of national collections to local communities, and to explore the formation of a national art gallery and art bank.

Those artists who became practicing artists in the early 90s had greater opportunities to obtain advanced university degrees and broader entry into art exhibitions, gallery collections, and the art market. Content continued to reflect common issues, while artists enhanced their visual languages with new mediums like digital imagery and video installation. However, they narrowed in on personal and collective memory and experiences, such as the effects of residential schools, the environment, identity politics, and self-government. This can be seen in the work of Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), Rosalie Favell (Métis), Arthur Renwick (Tsimpshian), Faye Heavyshield (Kanai-Blood), Shelly Niro (Bay of Quinte Mohawk) and Skawennati Fragnito (Kanien'kehá:ka).

Performance art became a highly valued artistic medium to address these themes, and the *INDIANacts: Aboriginal Performance Art* event held in 2002 at grunt gallery in Vancouver BC, solidified its importance. Produced by grunt gallery and TRIBE, this was one of the largest gatherings organized by Indigenous artists and curators, and included a performance art series, a symposium, and exhibitions connected to the event. Artists like Rebecca Belmore, James Luna (Payómkawichum, Ipi, and Mexican-American), Ayana Maracle (Haudenosaunee), Archer Pechawis (Plains Cree), Lori Blondeau (Cree/Métis/Saulteaux), April Brass (Cree) and Bentley Spang (Northern Cheyenne) presented performances which examined intimacy, fear, stereotypes, and empowerment. Daina Warren (Akamihk First Nation) who was the Aboriginal Curator- in - Residence at grunt gallery suggests, *"INDIANacts* was an integral and important event to

Indigenous performance art", and I would further add, a defining moment for Indigenous contemporary art.[57]

Figure Eight: James Luna in Toy Headdress, INDIANacts Conference panel one, Lori Blondeau Performance, Conference panel two, 2002. https://indianacts.gruntarchives.org.

The critique of colonialism and discourse continued to be present, however community engagement, and Indigenizing self and others became central in the 2000s. This often occurs with ancestral art mediums and spoken and written language. For example, since the early 2000s Nadia Myre (Algonquin) has been making community-engaged art with beads, hide, and the sharing of personal narratives. Peter Morin's (Tahltan) performance work often involves the making of button blankets, drums, rattles, and song as a collaborative effort. Cheryl L'Hirondelle's (Cree, Métis) performance art is grounded in the Cree language and knowledge systems, Kent Monkman (Fisher River Cree Nation) confronts stereotypes and hegemony in photography, performance and painting, and KC Adams (Cree/Ojibway) reverses the gaze in collaborative photo-based series.

More recently artists like Joi T. Arcand (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation) have continued to address the loss of language by inserting large scale Cree syllabics in bright colours in public spaces. Inuvialuk artist and curator Kablusiak creates stone sculpture to make commentary on lived experiences, and Dayna Danger (Métis/Saulteaux/Polish) utilizes photography and beaded sculpture to create more enriched understandings of Indigenous sexualities. While Scott Benisiinabandan (Anishinaabe) translates land rhythms in sound waves, Amy Malbeuf (Métis),

[57] Cathy Mattes & Daina Warren, "Curating, Culture, and Bringing Heart Home," in *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice* ed, Julie Nagam et al., (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2020), 222.

Jordan Bennett (Mi'kmaq), Ursula Johnson (Mi'kmaq) and Megan Musseau (L'nu) move their hands and bodies in the ways of their ancestor artists by interpreting and expanding upon beading, weaving, and basketry. All these artists stand with hundreds of others who embody the past, present, and future in their art.

As artists pushed cultural and artistic boundaries over the past four-plus decades, the need for Indigenous curators to properly negotiate, represent and create a framework for artists and their work in galleries arose. Curation became a discipline for individuals to contribute to survivance and transmotion through exhibition research, development, programming and writing. However, this required much intervention and disruption to the western field of curation. Therefore to recognize the strives and contributions made by Indigenous artists and curators, it's necessary to consider what is curatorial practice, and how it shifted and expanded through time.

Western Curatorial Practice – Trying to Fit a Circle in a Box

In speaking broadly about art curation, well-known curator Hans Ulbrist suggests curators maneuver in contested spaces and defines them as "a catalyst, generator and motivator" and "a sparring partner, accompanying the artist while they build a show."[58] Historically curators working in the western art arena were (and in many circumstances still are) mostly responsible for acquiring and preserving works, and organizing their display within museums and galleries. They stayed behind-the-scenes, and were the arbiters of taste.[59] This was until the late 1960s when a curator-centered discourse surfaced that was the advent of independent curatorship which challenged audiences, critics, and institutions.[60] Curators began to articulate a particular form of creativity in the organization of exhibitions, which were based on particular themes or over-arching curatorial concepts. Bruce Altshuler describes this as the "rise of the curator as creator".[61] This shift began once conceptual art had a secure place in the western art milieu, the civil rights

[58] Stuart Jeffries, Nancy Groves, "Hans Ulrich Obrist: the art of curation", *The Guardian*. Sunday, March 23, 2014. Theguardian.com.
[59] Clair Bishop, "What is a Curator?". *La Habana*, No. 7 (2011), http://www.academia.edu/3052639/What_is_a_Curator.
[60] Paul O'Neill. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012), 1.
[61] Bruce Altshuler, *The Avant-Garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p. 236.

movement had left its mark, and feminists were radically challenging inequality for women in the arts.

According to Elke Krasny, "independent curating was crucial to transforming modern art into contemporary art" and "many of the independent curators who were profoundly shaping this transformation were feminists, active as feminist artists, art historians, activists, thinkers, and public intellectuals."[62] The 1972 project *Womanhouse* is a prime example. For the final year of the Feminist Art Program at California State College Fresno (now California State University Fresno), Judy Chicago, Miriam Shapiro, and their students (including Faith Wilding and Suzanne Lacy) renovated a derelict house near downtown LA, and filled the house with feminist performance and art installations. Each installation provided feminist commentary on aspects of domestic space, women's labour, experiences with violence, sexuality, and sexism. *Womanhouse* announced feminist artists' presence and disrupted conventional curatorial practice. As Amelia Jones states, it was "a tour de force of feminist curating-as-pedagogy".[63]

That same year, Harald Szeemanns' large-scale curatorial project *Questions of Reality: The Image-World Today* for Documenta 1972 took place[64]. This multi-layered project was split into 15 sections and presented ideas of reality through art and the broader field of visual culture. It was conceived as a 100- day event with performances, continual lectures by Joseph Beuys, happenings, and installations that were considered atypical for the time. It challenged the "high art" conventions established for Documenta and opened Szeemann up to criticism about prioritizing his curatorial thesis over the art and artists' desires.[65]

Shortly before these events, the birth of the artist-run-centre (ARC's) happened in Canada with Greg Curnoe founding cooperative galleries in London Ont, and then Intermedia established in Vancouver in 1967. ARC's remain to be what artist AA Bronson refers to as "connective tissue", providing opportunity for artists to network and collaborate with one

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[62] Elke Krasny, "Curatorial Materialism. A Feminist Perspective on Independent and Co-Dependent Curating". *Oncurating.Org.* Issue 29, (May 2016), https://www.on-curating.org/issue-29.html#.Xv9cyC2z00o.

[63] Amelia Jones. "Feminist Subject Versus Feminist Effect: The Curating of Feminist Art (Or Is It The Feminist Curating of Art?)". *Oncurating.Org.* Issue 29, May 2016.

[64] Documenta is a large-scale international exhibition that takes place in Kassel Germany every 5 years. It was initiated by Arnold Bode, an artist and curator in 1955 who wanted to help fill the void of modern art appreciation caused by the Nazi regime during World War II.

[65] See: https://curatorsintl.org/exhibitions/harald_szeemann_documenta_5

another, and to work outside the commercial and large public gallery systems.[66] They often focus on specific disciplines, like video, performance and photography, and the staff and boards are primarily artists. When they first appeared ARC's were also nurturing sites of experimentation for independent curators, including Peggy Gale (A Space), Glenn Alteen (grunt gallery), and Daniel Dion (galerie Oboro). They eventually went on to become Directors of ARC's across Canada and supported other independent curators, recognizing curatorial practice as one of experimentation and inquiry.

In the 1980s there was the emergence of curator-focused biennials, international meetings and curatorial summits that provided opportunities for certain curators to self-position alongside other like-minded curators in the name of commonality and connectivity.[67] In Canada key meetings began with curator Peggy Gale in 1982 to discuss independent curatorial practice, then in 1999 the LaSalle River Accord was created by a group of independent curators to name the concerns and rights of those working independently.[68] Topics such as protecting curators' intellectual property, and the right to adequate payment were named.

The early 1990s saw the development of curating as a teachable, professional field, and programs were set up in academic and art institutions to train curators. For example, Bard College in the state of New York founded the Centre for Curatorial Studies and Art in Contemporary Culture in 1990 and implemented a Masters' Program in Curatorial Studies in 1994. These developments caused curators to be compared more often with authors who demonstrated an artistic development through time, "creating an oeuvre not unlike a film director, a writer or a visual artist."[69] The new valorization of curators caused some to become sought-after art stars, and with this new function of authorial autonomy, came accusations curators were parasitic, or that curating was "a very corrupt discourse".[70]

However, by the late 1990s a more differentiated and complex notion of curating emerged as a distinct practice of mediation, brought about by independent curators, artist-

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[66] AA Bronson, Peggy Gale (ed), *The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat: Artist-Run Centres as Museums by Artists*. (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 29-37.
[67] O'Neill. *The Culture of Curating*, 41.
[68] Bruce Dewar, *Curatorial Toolkit – A Guide For Curators*. 2010 Legacies Now. WEB.
[69] Jens Hoffman "The Art of Curating and the Curating of Art," *The Utopian Display Forum – Nuova Accademia Di Belle Arti Milano* (2004). WEB
[70] *James Elkins and Michael Newman (eds). The State of Art Criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008),

curators, curatorial collectives and artists. In 1994 the *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future* seminar took place in Banff as an independent curatorial project to provide a forum on curating. This event involved 29 participants who came together to discuss curatorial methodologies, ethics, the importance of local knowledge and New Internationalism.[71] This gathering and subsequent publication exposed how curatorial practice had expanded beyond conventional roles, where curators are "mediators of cultural exchange", instead of arbiters of taste.[72]

Artists and curators started to try on each other's identities, and curators began making attempts to work outside the boundaries of capitalist society, and occasionally the gallery construct. For example, *Culture in Action,* curated by Mary Jane Jacob, was a community-based art project with eight components that took place in Chicago in 1992-1993. The goal was to bring art to urban communities not considered part of the museum- and gallery-going public, and create artistic collaborations between artists and particular communities. The themes ranged from ecology, HIV education to women's rights.[73]

Certain forms of curatorial practice are now designated as activism, or social curating. According to Maura Reilly, curatorial activism is "the practice of organizing art exhibitions with the principal aim of ensuring that certain constituencies of artists are no longer ghettoized or excluded from the master narratives of art. It is a practice that commits itself to counter-hegemonic initiatives that give voice to those who have been historically silenced or omitted altogether—and, as such, focuses almost exclusively on work produced by women, artists of color, non-Euro-Americans, and/or queer artists."[74] In the text *Curatorial Activism, Towards an Ethics of Curating,* Reilly provides examples of curated exhibitions activist in nature and meant to disrupt exhibiting and collecting practices in large-scale galleries and biennials. These include *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party" in Feminist Art History,* curated by Amelia Jones, *Mining the Museum,* curated by artist/curator Fred Wilson, and the *Great American*

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[71] Peter White (Coordinator). *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future (*Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 1996). Print.
[72] Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2018): 105.
[73] Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity. (*Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004): 188-135.
[74] Elena Martinique, "An Interview with Maura Reilly", (January 16, 2018), https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/maura-reilly-interview.

Lesbian Art Show (GALAS), curated by a collective of artists/curators including Barbara Stopha, Terry Wolverton, and Louise Moore.[75] Although Reilly brings to light curating as a potential forum for disruption, she narrowly focuses on large-scale projects and mostly on successful Euro-western curators.

When the changing role and discourse around curating shifted, it did not necessarily benefit, or make space for Indigenous curators. For although space was made for marginalized artists within large institutions and ground-breaking exhibitions, rarely did they happen with BIPOC curators leading from the inside. Therefore curating becoming a strategy for Indigenous curators and artists/curators, to confront the art world's mediocre interest in, or understanding of, Indigenous contemporary art. It began with artists curating the shows that were not being curated for them.

Indigenous Curation- A Brief Overview

The field of Indigenous curation has greatly expanded since the late 1980s. This resulted in a variety of opportunities, in small, middle and large public institutions, artist-run centres, and international biennales. Although full-time opportunities at galleries are limited, Indigenous curators have secured space in the western art world. This is because of the hard work of many Indigenous artists, curators, and allies, who curated exhibitions, formed organizations, facilitated key events, and provided reports demanding change. As Cree/Sioux/Métis artist Jim Logan states, "We used to yell from outside the walls, but now we are starting to yell from within the halls."[76]

Curating became a strategy to confront the art world's mediocre interest in, or understanding of Indigenous art. For example, several years before Szeemann's *Documenta* project, Daphne Odjigs' socially-engaged curatorial interventions took place in her own gallery The New Warehouse Gallery (formerly Odjig Fine Prints), at the top of escalators in department stores, in her garage, living room, and in commercial galleries run by well-meaning non-

[75] Maura Reilly, *Curatorial Activism: Towards an Ethics of Curating.* London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2018. Print

[76] Jim Logan, "It's Not Just Noise," in *Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community,* Lee-Ann Martin (ed),(Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre, 2006), 73.

Indigenous supporters (1967-76). Although Odjig is usually not referred to as a curator (due to her immense talent as an artist and the recognition she was the owner of her own gallery), her actions are aligned with Indigenous curators who came after, intervened in public galleries and museums, and organized group exhibitions as a way to stand in solidarity with others.

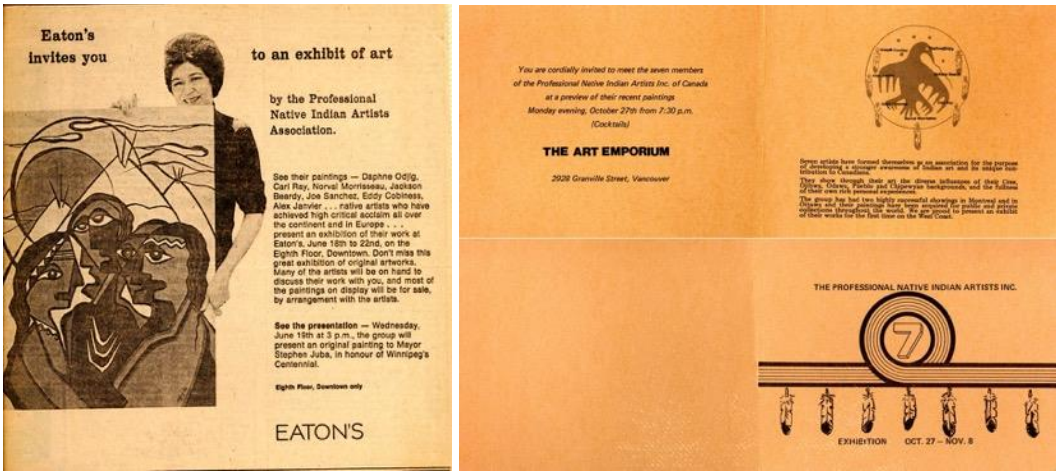

Figure Nine: Publicity for exhibitions of artwork by members of the PNIAI, dates vary, images from the collection of Joseph Sanchez.

In 1968, curator and artist Tom Hill became the first Indigenous curatorial intern at the National Gallery of Canada, and then quickly accepted the role of director of the newly formed Cultural Affairs section at the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (1968). Over the course of ten years he oversaw the creation of exhibitions, initiated the art magazine *Tawow*, and developed DIAND's impressive collection of Indigenous art. Saulteaux artist, curator and writer Robert Houle was one of the first to work in an arts institution as the Curator of Contemporary Indian Art at the Canadian Museum of Civilization from 1977 to 1980. During his tenure, he resisted the relegation of contemporary Indigenous art to anthropological or ethnographic artifact. In 1982, Houle co-curated with Bob Boyer and Carol Phillips an exhibition as a culmination of the shifts and movements made by Indigenous artists. *New Works by A New Generation* featured artists such as Carl Beam (Anishinaabe), Harry Fonseca (Nisenan-Maidu), and Jaune Quick-To-See Smith (Confederated Salish and Kootenay), whose art contains cultural themes expressed in modernist format. The show was organized in conjunction with the World Assembly of First Peoples Gathering in Regina, and held at the Mackenzie Art Gallery. It was a response to the lack of inclusion in art galleries, and exposed how some artists were participating

in what was considered to be a new social and political motivated ideology. The exhibition reflected a want for change from anthropological points of view in exhibiting practices to ones emphasizing aesthetics and contemporary experiences and values.

The late 1980s and early 1990s marked a time of reaction and insurgence. In 1989, the Task Force of Museums and First Peoples was formed, in response to the Lubicon Lake Cree Nation boycott of the large-scale exhibition *The Spirit Sings: The Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples*, held at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary during the 1988 Olympics. The exhibition contained over 650 objects collected from 90 national collections around the world. In the structural relationship of settler colonialism, the institutional operation of power/ knowledge is not neutral—it actively displaces Indigenous peoples from their lands.[77] The Lubicon had long-standing land claims with the government, and the Shell Oil Company, a major sponsor of *The Spirit Sings* was infringing on inherited land rights, by drilling for oil, and destroying natural resources. The boycott instigated calls to action to remedy museum collecting and exhibiting practices (but did not alleviate the Lubicon Cree Nations' struggles with Shell).

Figure Ten: *Artifact #671B*, Rebecca Belmore, 1988, Outside the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, performance in solidarity with the Lubicon Cree Nation. Photo credit: Bill Lindsay, J. David Galway, *The Chronicle Journal*, January 13, 1988.

Indigenous leaders, artists, curators, the Canadian Museums Association, and the Canada Council for the Arts partnered to come up with targeted improvements, that included a call for

[77] Kelsey R. Wrightson, "The Limits of Recognition: The Spirit Sings, Canadian Museums and the Colonial Politics of Recognition" *in Museum Anthropology*, Vol.40(1), (March 2017), 40.

"increased involvement of Aboriginal people in the interpretation of their and improved access to museum collections."[78] Although the Task Force was in reaction to the controversies around *The Spirit Sings*, it highlighted the struggles that both PNIAI and SCANA were attempting to end. The report called for community consultation and guidance, and the integration of Indigenous voices within museum and gallery displays.

Simultaneously, Lee-Ann Martin was working on "The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Contemporary Native Art and Public Art Museums in Canada," a report published by the Canada Council for the Arts in 1991. This was an independent survey on the status of contemporary Indigenous art within 29 contemporary Canadian art institutions. Martin studied how museums and large-scale galleries acquired and exhibited art, and whether there was any sort of publications, programming, and intent to forge relationships with Indigenous communities. The result of the survey was a mapping and detailing of "the systemic exclusion of contemporary Indigenous art from Canada's foremost art museums."[79] In addition to assessing the state of collecting and exhibiting of Indigenous art, the report also provided a template for the Canada Council to build funding models that would address the under-representation of Indigenous arts. As noted by Métis curator and writer Rachelle Dickason, "Both 'The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion' and the 'Task Force on Museums and First Peoples' report, are documents of larger movements in Indigenous art and history in Canada that contributed to—if not entirely resulted in—significant change in representation of Indigenous arts and museum engagement with Indigenous people and collections in Canada."[80]

In 1989, Lee-Ann Martin and Cree curator Gerald McMaster formally initiated *Indigena: Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples on Five Hundred Years* as a community and Indigenous grounded curatorial intervention into the narrative around Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of North America, the 125th anniversary of Canada, and exclusionary gallery exhibiting practices across the continent. Supported by SCANA, it was a major international travelling exhibition that first opened in 1992 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, now the Canadian Museum of

[78] Lee-Ann Martin, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples* Task Force Report, 3rd edition (Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations and Canadian Museums Association, 1994), 1.
[79] Rachelle Dickason and Lee-Ann Martin, "Turning the Page on the Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion, 30 Years On" in *C Magazine*, issue 144 (Winter, 2020), WEB.
[80] Rachelle Dickason and Lee-Ann Martin, "Turning the Page", WEB.

History. It contained paintings, sculptures, photographs, video and mixed media installation which critiqued 500 years of colonial history. It was accompanied by a major publication with six essays and poems, and portfolios of 19 visual artists, including Bob Boyer (Métis), Rick Rivet (Sahtu-Métis), Joanne Cardinal-Schubert (Blood), and Jane Ash Poitras (Chippewa).

Martin writes, "The primacy of Indigenous voices, representation and community support were central tenets of the project; hosting venues in both Canada and the US were selected based upon the involvement of local Indigenous communities."[81] In venues like the Winnipeg Art Gallery, a culturally relevant opening was organized in concert with local community members, and there were events and education programming driven by the critique provided with *Indigena* by the artists, curators and writers. As Martin also notes, "As Indigenous curators, we could not acknowledge any such celebrations of Western dominance and oppression, so we seized that moment to present, on our own terms, issues of importance to our communities."[82]

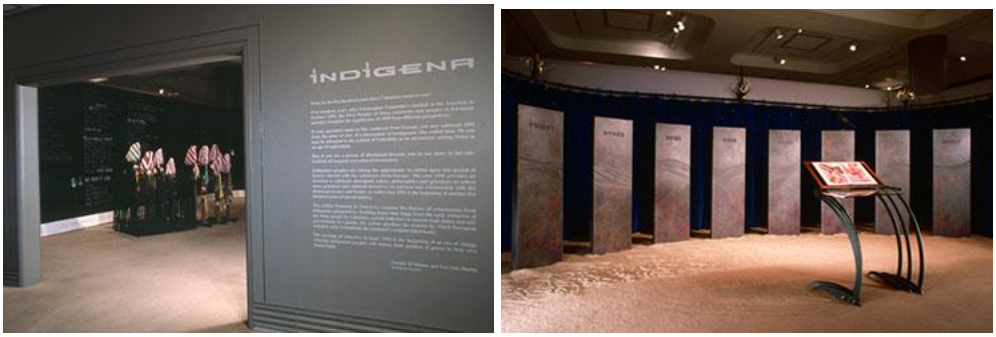

Figure Eleven: *Indigena* exhibition, Canadian Museum of History, S93-14333-Dm and S93-14346-Dm.

Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations, co-curated by Robert Houle with Dianna Nemiroff and Charlotte Townsend-Gault, opened at the National Gallery of Canada in 1992, in close proximity to *Indigena* while on exhibit at The Canadian Museum of History. This internationally touring exhibition featured the work of 18 artists who thematically and collectively provided counternarratives to official nation-state colonial histories. Houle points out, "Land, spirit, power

[81] Lee-Ann Martin, "Anger and Reconciliation: A Very Brief History of Exhibiting Contemporary Indigenous Art in Canada", *Afterall*, Issue 43, Spring/Summer 2017, https://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.43/anger-and-reconciliation-a-very-brief-history-of-exhibiting-contemporary-indigenous-art-in-canada.
[82] Lee-Ann Martin, "A Brief History", WEB.

– those gifts left us by the ancients, the 'antiquity' of this hemisphere – are the cornerstones upon which their descendants, the artists in this exhibition, the first international exhibition of contemporary native art at the National Gallery, have built a monument to those benefactors."[83] The exhibition, which included artists like Alex Janvier, Faye Heavyshield, and Bob Boyer, affirmed Indigenous resilience and presence, courtesy of continual ties to the land, spirit held within, and the collective power to resist.

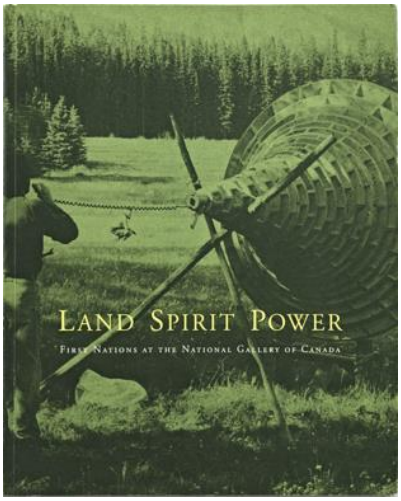

Figure Twelve: Front cover of the *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada* exhibition catalogue.

Shortly afterwards artists, curators and scholars Ryan Rice (Mohawk), Skawennati Fragnito (Mohawk) and Eric Robertson (BC Métis) instigated Nation to Nation (circa 1993), a community-focused and solidarity-building initiative to provide opportunities to interact, hold dialogue and facilitate change, with art as the catalyst. According to, Lindsay Nixon, "Nation to Nation saw themselves as community organizers who facilitated collaboration between Indigenous artists, and activated their communities through art. The collective began organizing art actions at a time when Indigenous art was just beginning to find its way into the white cubes of contemporary-art galleries."[84] The group was based on the Two Row Wampum to

[83] Robert Houle, "The Spiritual Legacy of the Ancient Ones". From the catalogue for *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992, http://ccca.concordia.ca/c/writing/h/houle/hou009t.html.
[84] Lindsay Nixon, "Nation to Nation," in *Canadianart*, July 10, 2017. https://canadianart.ca/features/nation-to-nation/.

acknowledge respective cultural diversity and the belief that creativity is a fundamental link between all aspects of community.

Nation to Nation invited artists of all levels of experience and cultural backgrounds to participate in their exhibitions and events to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue. These included an *Art Bingo,* and the exhibitions *Vision to Vision*, *Native Love,* and *Tattoonation*. The themed exhibitions were raw, edgy, and a platform for curators and artist/curators to hone their curatorial and writing skills, while working closely with non-arts community organizations, like local band councils and Friendship Centres.

Figure Thirteen: Card invitation for the touring exhibition *Native Love*, 1995, organized by Nation to Nation.

Around the same time Nation to Nation formed, Indigenous artist-run centres and organizations surfaced, in part as a response to the lack of inclusion at galleries and artist run centres. For example Sâkēwēwak Artist's Collective in Regina formed circa 1993. It was an offshoot of Ironbow (1991), a provincial-wide Indigenous artists service organization, which then became Circle Vision in 1993. Founded by Âhasiw Maskêgon –Iskêw (Cree), Edward Poitras (Métis, Gordon First Nation), Sherry Farrell Racette, Reona Brass (Peepekisis First Nation), and Robin Brass (Peepekisis First Nation), Sâkēwēwak is community driven and provides space for artists working in multi-media. Recently under the direction of Adam Martin (Mohawk) it has enhanced its community program and focuses on embedding festivals and cultural gatherings with contemporary art actions.

Led by Lori Blondeau (Cree/Saulteaux/Métis) and Bradlee Larocque (Cree), Tribe Inc. (1995-2018) in Saskatoon held goals reflecting the need for development and presentation of Indigenous new media, as well as visual and performance arts. In the spirit of collaboration, Tribe Inc. did not have a physical gallery space, but partnered with local artist-run centres and galleries to host their innovative programming. Urban Shaman Gallery (1996) in Winnipeg was founded around the same time and its main goals and purpose were to provide exhibiting opportunities to emerging artists, offer training to those wanting to work in art galleries, and connect visual artists with Indigenous communities, in particular youth. In 2006 Felicia Gay (Swampy Cree) and Joi T. Arcand co-founded the Red Shift Gallery, an artist-run centre which for four years, intervened on the predominantly non-Indigenous artist run culture in Saskatoon.[85]

The founding artists, and artist/curators of these artist-run centres became instigators of social change as they navigated multiple fields: their own communities, a range of political jurisdictions and networks, artistic worlds, and the heart of their urban settings. The organizations created space for contemporary artists of Indigenous ancestry to exhibit their art, engage with other artists, and embed contemporary art within Indigenous communities and the larger Canadian art scene. Part of their activities have included fostering curatorial skills development for emerging curators, and opportunities to established curators to take risks with creative curating, something that working with small organizations can afford them. For example, Daina Warren, Steve Loft, Candice Hopkins, Leanne L'Hirondelle (Cree/Métis), Wanda Nanibush (Anishinaabe), Lori Blondeau, and Audrey Dreaver (nehiyiwak) have all curated exhibitions and programming for Indigenous ARCs.[86]

Although securing on-going employment at larger galleries was nearly impossible in the 1990s and early 2000s, artist/curator Jim Logan had success. From 1999 to 2002, he was the

[85] Felicia Gay, *The Red Shift: A Contemporary Aboriginal Curatorial Praxis*, (M.A Thesis History Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2011), 26.

[86] Some non-Indigenous specific artist- run centres have been fruitful for Indigenous curators. For example, grunt gallery in Vancouver has hosted Tania Willard (Secpwemc) as curator-in-residence, and their support of her web-based project *Beat Nation* (2012) led to it evolving into a large-scale, touring exhibition with hard-cover catalogue. Although there are artist-run centres who in recent years have included Indigenous curators and artists in their programming, grunt is one of the few that have a longstanding and productive engagement with Indigenous curators and artists.

Aboriginal Curator for the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax, NS. In 2002 Logan went on to become the Visual Arts Officer for the Canada Council for the Arts. During his tenure at the Canada Council, he secured international Indigenous curatorial exchanges, continued to facilitate the Aboriginal Curators in Residence Program, and helped develop the *Creating, Sharing, Knowing: The Arts and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis* funding program.

Important to also note is *Making a Noise* (2003). This was an international curatorial summit where Indigenous curators (myself included) gathered to assess the current state of Indigenous curation. The gathering provided us opportunities to debate our roles, share our struggles within Western art galleries, and contemplate best practices for engaging with Indigenous communities. It was a chance for curators and writers to come together to locate and name curatorial practice as a relevant instigator of change, which could secure ties with Indigenous communities, and intervene on exclusionary gallery practices.

Although large public art galleries continued to only provide minimal acknowledgement of the value of Indigenous curators after *Indigena,* in more recent years there have been major advancements made. This is due in part to the formation of the Indigenous Curatorial Collective (formerly called the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective) in 2005, a national service organization. This organization formed in response to the lack of curatorial opportunities for Indigenous curators, despite the existence of the Canada Council Aboriginal Curator-In-Residence program since 1998, and the presence of talented, knowledgeable Indigenous curators across Canada. The ICC also recognized there were few opportunities for curators to publish critical essays about contemporary art, and set out to make opportunities for both writing and curating, while expanding critical discourse around art and curation. The ICC organizes bi-annual curatorial symposiums, annual mentorship programs, and partners with galleries and arts organizations to support the work of Indigenous curators.

Since the formation of the ICC, curatorial activities have multiplied and ground-breaking exhibitions have been held in large institutions. For example, in 2006 the exhibition *Norval Morrisseau – Shaman Artist* was held at the National Gallery of Canada, the first large-scale solo exhibition of an Indigenous artist to be exhibited there. Curated by Greg Hill (Ongwehonwe), the show was a thorough investigation of Morrisseau's (Anishinabe) contributions to contemporary art in Canada. Two years later, Bonnie Devine's (Odawa) curated exhibition *The Drawings and*

Paintings of Daphne Odjig began its international tour, starting at the Art Gallery of Sudbury and ending at the National Gallery of Canada.

Like our non-Indigenous colleagues Indigenous curators now travel and work globally for biennials, and have infiltrated large, mid-size and small art institutions. These are important strives benefitting artists, galleries, and communities. In more recent years there have been three large-scale international Indigenous art exhibitions curated by teams of Indigenous curators. *Close Encounters, The Next 500 Years* (Plug-In ICA, 2011)*)* was curated by Steve Loft (Mohawk), Lee-Ann Martin (Mohawk), Candice Hopkins (Carcross/Tagish First Nation), and Jenny Western. The exhibition featured Indigenous artists from North America, New Zealand, and Australia and was the first large-scale exhibition in Canada with artwork from Indigenous artists from around the globe. The exhibition was curated as an Indigenous take-over of Winnipeg, and there were multiple sites of curated art exhibitions over several months.

Two years later in 2013, *Sakahán, International Indigenous Art* was erected at the National Gallery of Canada. This exhibition, curated by Candice Hopkins, Greg Hill, and Christine Lalonde, was heralded as the largest exhibition of Indigenous art to be amassed from around the globe. The NGC held a large-scale opening and related cultural events throughout its run, and purchased a large amount of art, mostly from Indigenous artists outside of Canada. Both these exhibitions celebrated the talents of contributing artists, and exposed the role curators' play in asserting Indigeneity in a global context. Candice Hopkins has continued to work internationally, having curated for SITE Santa Fe in 2015, Documenta 14 (Spring 2017), and more recently, the Toronto Art Biennial (2019). In November 2019, the National Gallery of Canada hosted another international Indigenous art exhibition, entitled *Àbadakone – Continuous Fire/Feu continuel.* This is an extension of *Sakahán,* and was curated by Greg Hill, Rachelle Dickinson (Métis) and Christine Lalonde in consultation with Candace Hopkins and a team of advisors from North America and abroad. According to Maya Wilson-Sanchez, "The artwork in the exhibition both reproduces and represents Indigenous knowledge, and brings attention to issues facing Indigenous communities today."[87] The opening events, robust education program, and collaborative and performative actions transformed the NGC into a site of knowledge transmission and solidarity.

[87] Maya Wilson-Sanchez, "Àbadakone Creates Community", *Canadianart*, November 21, 2019. https://canadianart.ca/features/abadakone-creates-community/.

Indigenous curation has clearly expanded and diversified, due in part to an increase in the number of curators and interests, as well as it being an evolving discipline. Senior curators like Ryan Rice and Lee-Ann Martin have investigated artist and curatorial actions as activism, reminding that solidarity is the foundation for us all. For example with the onset of #Idlenomore, curator and scholar Wanda Nanibush (Anishinaabe-kwe) folded activism, curation, and social protest together in her curatorial practice. Nanibush is now the Curator of Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, and organizes large-scale exhibitions, notably the touring solo exhibition, *Rebecca Belmore: Facing the Monumental (*2018). Anishinaabe curator Jaimie Isaac is Curator of Indigenous Art at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and is organizing exhibitions and community artistic embedment around topics of treaties, land and Truth and Reconciliation. The newly opened Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre in Edmonton, AB, was created by artists, architects and curators, including Becca Taylor, Tiffany Collinge-Shaw, and Erin Sutherland. The centre plans to host exhibitions, and foster research, public art, and awareness about Indigenous contemporary art opportunities. All of these curators, and many others not mentioned here, are li nakishkamohk; they locate and become points of connection between institutions, artists and audiences.

Concluding Thoughts

As the Indigenous curatorial field continues to diversify, so does the need for critical discourse around these expanding curatorial initiatives. This poses a challenge because the fight for recognition and inclusion has been long, and the successes warrant savoring and celebration. But by not engaging in critical dialogue new power dynamics among curators, artists and communities develop. The intricacies of the processes and outcomes of our work requires diligent examination to ensure the power structures of the western world do not take hold in curators' attempts. We therefore need to name curators' motivations and actions, and interrogate them to move the field forward with the type of love that generates other acts of freedom within our communities and nations. By finding models to move the process forward, we can formulate criticism that acknowledges our Indigeneity, and the vitality of curation, within and outside contemporary art milieus. Kenawayhta requires we do so. Although the provided information about Indigenous art, curatorial practice, and western curatorial frameworks is far from

comprehensive, it hopefully is helpful in considering how curators and artists mobilize and create space. Their work is pollination and foundational for Indigenous Littoral Curation.

Chapter 3

D'leau pimiihchiwan: Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Curatorial Pedagogy and Praxis

> I look to my own Iroquoian philosophical traditions to help me pose the questions and find the balance.... My curatorial experience is a constant interrogation of the real world in order to make the necessary adjustments in my practice between local and international concerns. This constant movement towards maintaining the balance must be the goal in itself. - Tom Hill[88]

When Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are prioritized in curatorial practice, the pulsations of intertwining human, spiritual and physical realms become apparent. Although manifested differently than with our ancestors, they are current and active. Operating within Indigenous paradigms which privilege oral storytelling, languages, the land, kinship ties, and intergenerational relationships, curators contribute "to the continuance of Indigenous peoples' way of life and existence."[89] This involves "intense dreaming", operating as both a learner and conduit of knowledge, and activating space in ways to help Indigenous audiences recognize and embrace encoded cultural knowledges. Curators Ryan Rice (Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawake), Heather Igloliorte (Inuk), Fran Hebert-Spence (Sagkeeng First Nation), the curatorial team of *Àbadakone*, and the collective gijiit, pursue and represent aspects of Indigenous knowledges in their curatorial projects. On occasion they hone in on one key facet which cohesively ties art and knowledge systems together. Other times they approach Indigenous knowledge in more expansive and interrelated ways. Regardless of the degree or manner to which they seek to present IKS in their work, they flow towards bodies of knowledge that are restorative and regenerative in nature.

This chapter discusses the presence of Indigenous Knowledge Systems in select curatorial projects. Its purpose is to; a) recognize the relevance of IKS to curators and artists; b) draw linkages to curatorial practice as a tributary to Indigenous knowledge generation and transmission; c) provide concrete examples of how curators pursue IKS in their work and; d) introduce IKS as an important and necessary component of Indigenous Littoral Curation. I begin

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[88] Canada Council for the Arts, "Tom Hill Bibliography". The Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Award, 2004. Accessed May 1, 2020, https://en.ggarts.ca/the-awards/past-winnershttp://archive.ggavma.canadacouncil.ca/htmlfixed/Archives/2004/hill-e.html.

[89] Kathleen Abselon (Minogiizhigokwe), *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2011), 78.

by providing a working definition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and how they are carried forth in contemporary times. I then root creative practice as "intense dreaming" and vital to knowledge generation and transference. I provide examples of curatorial projects instigated by curators who purposefully organized exhibitions guided by knowledge systems. I discuss specific topics they pursued as IKS creation and transmission including; land, language, oral storytelling, kinship and intergenerational relationships. I conclude the chapter by preparing for further discussion about ILC, and how commitment by curators to IKS is crucial for this type of curatorial practice.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems as Foundation to Continuance and Resilience

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are vital for First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples' continuance and continuum. According to Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, they "set up, maintain, and regenerate the neuropathways for Indigenous living both inside our bodies and the web of connections that structure our nationhood outside our bodies."[90] How Indigenous people seek understanding about individual and collective relationships they hold with other humans and the natural and spiritual worlds, is an expression of Indigenous knowledge. IKS are interrelated and grounded in culturally specific stories, songs, ceremonies, art-making, learning, and political and social structures. There are noticeable similarities, complimentary ideas, and parallels in knowledge systems among Indigenous nations. Some stem from sharing similar goals and values about relationships with physical and spiritual realms, while others are a result of tumultuous experiences with colonization. Notions of time and space are non-linear within IKS and they move kinetically, bringing people into relationships in significant and dynamic ways.

Experiences with IKS vary due to colonial interference and access to language, knowledge keepers, land, ceremony and art. This means it is necessary to seek out strategies and remedies to ensure their on-going stimulation. Intense scrutiny of the impact of colonization on inherited Indigenous lands is required, and the way ancestors survived and carried forth for those who came before and after them. If we don't, engagement with IKS is otherwise limited. As Simpson reminds, "The ancestors not only fought, blockaded, protested and mobilized against these forces on every Indigenous territory in Turtle Island, they also engaged in countless acts of

[90] Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), chap.3, Kindle.

hidden resistance and kitchen table resistance aimed at ensuring their children and grandchildren could live as *Indigenous* Peoples."[91] Their actions are a reflection of how they actively engaged with their respective IKS, making it possible for future generations to bring or maintain their hearts home. This is a lifelong process and requires individual and collective effort.

Indigenous knowledges and practices are dynamic, innovative and shift with the development of new technologies, and social and political systems.[92] For example, social media proves useful to share teachings, art, and bring awareness to current issues. In 2012, #Idlenomore became an important movement that utilized social media to assert Indigenous sovereignties and resist colonial efforts. In-person and online teach-ins occurred, to educate about the extraction of land resources by government, and its disregard for Indigenous inherited rights. Chief Theresa Spence from Attawaspikat First Nation began fasting in ceremony by the legislative grounds in Ottawa, to send a strong message about Indigenous rights being ignored in the name of profit. Calls were put out on Facebook for round dance flash mobs in shopping malls across the land, to help bring attention in a wholistic and culturally-grounded way to the plight of Indigenous peoples. These gatherings were attended by hundreds of drummers, singers, dancers, community members, and non-Indigenous allies across the land. As Indigenous Knowledge Systems are a series of complex networks, these teach-ins, flash mobs, and Chief Spence's fasting ceremony brought solidarity, awareness, and changes in consciousness.

Presently, as COVID-19 prohibits our ability to share physical spaces together, artists, storytellers, musicians and dancers have taken to social media. There they share oral stories, participate in "social distance pow wows", teach moccasin-making, and host musical performances. They do so to ensure Indigenous people are well, and that knowledge continues to be generated and transmitted during this global pandemic. Curators are also utilizing social media to curate physically-distanced projects as offerings of care and IKS sharing. ICC recently launched an initiative called "Curating Care." This project considers how care is located in curatorial and arts practices from around the globe. Participants were invited to upload two

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[91] Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011), 101.
[92] Kerstin Knopf, "The Turn Toward the Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Academy". *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 2/3 (2015): 183, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44071904.

minute videos of themselves talking about how they locate care in their work. The project centers the important and generous work of curators which often goes unrecognized, while presenting the intersections of Indigenous knowledges and curatorial and artistic practices.[93] Although there are many obstacles found on social media, not limited to expressions of overt racism, gender violence, and the proliferation of stereotypes, social media is a platform that continues and expands IKS.

Kathleen Absolon shares how the searching and articulation of Indigenous knowledge, in what she calls an Indigenous way, is "about turning around and finding our experiences, and we're finding our way back home. ...We know when we're home because we can feel it; we feel that familiarity when our process fits who we are. There are supportive signals and landmarks around us."[94] Contained in the art and actions of ancestral and living artists are encoded knowledges which provide mappings towards sharing what Jolene Rickard calls, "cultural priorities while informing our own peoples about key historic and philosophic practices".[95] They signal and signify cultural endurance, help us to remember, and are the result of "intense dreaming".

Intense Dreaming and Bringing Indigenous Hearts Home

Joanne Cardinal-Schubert notes in her essay "Flying With Louis" how Métis writer and knowledge keeper Maria Campbell names the mind, *mon tune aychikun*, a sacred place to dream and visualize. Joanne Cardinal-Schubert writes how according to Campbell, "The visions and dreams that come from here are called *mon tune a ychi kuna,* which means wisdom."[96] Dreaming and visualizing transforms the dreamer as well as others, and requires collaboration and relationship building strategies.

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[93] "Curating Care," ACC/CCA, accessed July 1, 2020. https://acc-cca.com/programs/curating-care-support-right-now/.
[94] Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe), *Kaandossiwin*: *How We Come to Know* (Halifax & Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing, 2011),115.
[95] Jolene Rickard, "returning home: Indigenous art creating the path" in *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice,* ed. Julie Nagam et al. (Winnipeg: ARP Publishing, 2020), 19.
[96] Joanne Cardinal-Schubert, "Flying With Louis," in *Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community,* ed. Lee-Ann Martin (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 2006): 35.

In “Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home”, Dian Million defines dreaming as the effort “to make sense of relations in the worlds we live, dreaming and empathizing intensely our relations with past and present and the future without the boundaries of linear time.”[97] She suggests, “the stake in intense dreaming is to release the creativity of the peoples, to involve all that is dear to you in the endeavor, and to practice from what it is you believe in.”[98] Willie Ermine also shares that “It is through dreams that the gifted in our Aboriginal communities 'create' experience for the benefit of the community through the capacity inherent in mamatowisowin”, which he describes as “the capacity to connect to the life force that makes anything and everything possible.”[99] Dreaming can not only release the creativity of the people, but also encourage the taking-up of struggle, and establishing a true multi-layered and inclusive peoplehood. For example language hives, community beading groups, land-based education, Indigenous -scholar led symposiums and conferences, are the result of intense dreaming.

Million responds to Craig Womack’s (Creek Cherokee) recognition of the vitality of dreaming by stating, “In order to support those ways of knowing and those projects that strengthen those positions that seem generative, it seems that we need to visualize, speak, and practice toward a future that *we do dream and create*.”[100] Womack dreams “for a dynamic and engaged relational understanding of culture and scholarship, one in which we are active participants in the continual creation of the people as well as the intellectual and artistic products of the people.”[101] This dreaming involves mobilizing from Indigenous paradigms which center art-makers and art-caretakers as tributaries to IKS. As intense dreamers, art makers and art caretakers contribute and guide their nations through artistic action, and by holding space for/with art.

Artists and Art-Caretakers as Transmitters and Generators of Indigenous Knowledge Systems

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[97] Million, “Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home,” 314.
[98] Million, “Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home”, 330.
[99] Willie Ermine, “Aboriginal Epistemology” in *First Nations Education in Canada*: *The Circle Unfolds*. Ed. Marie Battiste and Jean Barman (British Columbia: UBC Press, 1995), 108.
[100] Dian Million, “Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home,” 316.
[101] Dian Million, “Theories,” 316.

Understandings of visual art have been marred by western constructs of what it is, who makes and takes care of art, and what may be their priorities and purposes. However, art-making and art- caretaking are carriers and contributors to Indigenous knowledges. France Trépanier, a visual artist, curator and researcher of Kanien'kéha:ka and French ancestry reminds that:

> Before contact with Europeans, Aboriginal art was deeply ingrained in everyday life. Art was, and still is, a practice imbedded in worldview, cultural protocols and meanings. It did not neatly reflect the concept of 'art' as it has been understood from a Western perspective. Art objects were conduits for transferring knowledge and occupied the full spectrum of practice—sacred and ceremonial, customary and contemporary.[102]

Ancestor artists sourced their dreams to create and contribute. They harvested materials, traded goods, and developed aesthetics and techniques. They responded to the needs and wishes of their communities and kin, and alleviated the impact of colonization with intellectual rigour, resilience, and a valuing of material and critique.[103] This is evident in the technical perfection, intricate designs, and vibrant and encoded aesthetics present in the work of ancestral and living artists.

Ancestor art caretakers carried and passed along stories and knowledge about art and artists. They wore ornate clothing lovingly made for them, ignited ceremonial objects when requested, and ensured functional works were valued and utilized in a good way. They did their best to protect it all from restrictive and unjust government legislation that often led to its destruction, or being placed in private and museum collections. Later, as some became artist/curators, curators, administrators, and arts educators, they worked to restructure the western art canon to one of inclusion and recognition. Standing on the shoulders of ancestor artists and art-caretakers, contemporary curators disrupt institutions in ways that remember, evoke, and kindle Indigenous knowledges. The exhibitions *May the Land Remember You as You Walk Across Its Surface, Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois, Oh So Iroquois, Àbadakone, Ilippunga: I*

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[102]France Trépanier, *The Time of Things, The Continuum of Customary Practice Into Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue (Victoria: Legacy Art Galleries, 2018), 5.
[103] Lee-Ann Martin, "Wordplay: Issues of Authority and Territory," in *Making a Noise! Aboriginal Perspectives on Art, Art History, Critical Writing and Community,* ed. Lee-Ann Martin (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery, 2006), 106.

Have Learned, *Àbadakone*, and *Creative Kinship and Other Survivalist Tendencies*, exemplify how curators mobilize, and are mobilized by IKS and curatorial motivations.

Land as Kin and Generator of Knowledge

Shawn Wilson states, "Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land."[104] The land generates and transmits knowledge. It is storied with acts of resistance, resurgence, ceremony, and cultivation. As Missy Leblanc notes, this is in part because "Land is not a commodity or just a place. It is our life source, it is our kin."[105] It's rooted with the cosmos, animal beings, and other life forces. Recognizing, continuing, and creating kinship ties happens because it is our collective life source.

There are multiple exhibitions identifying the land as a conduit of knowledge and growth. The exhibition *May the Land Remember You as You Walk Across Its Surface* (2020), is one such example. Curated by Fran Hebert-Spence (Sagkeeng First Nation) for C2 Centre for Craft in Winnipeg, MB, the exhibition featured artists Katherine Boyer (Métis), Dayna Danger (Métis/Saulteaux/Polish) and Camille Georgeson-Usher (Coast Salish/Sahtu Dene/Scottish) with assinajaq. This exhibition was held in conjunction with *Beading Symposium: Ziigimineshin Winnipeg 2020*, a multi-venue beading symposium organized by multiple partnering organizations, also organized by Hebert-Spence (Fran).

Fran was previously a Curatorial Assistant in the Indigenous Art department at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Ont., and was the Adjunct Curator of Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Alberta. She is currently a PhD student in Cultural Mediations (Visual Culture) at Carleton University, and is an independent curator. She shares, "As a curator, I try to practice plurality of voices within the projects I coordinate, from exhibitions to gatherings. Kinship is what directs this engagement and what my social obligations are to my various communities. My research interests look at the institution itself, their collective and individual

[104] Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony- Indigenous Research Methods*. (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 80.
[105] Missy Leblanc, *Taskoch pipon kona kah nipa muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew*, exhibition catalogue (Calgary: TRUCK Contemporary Art, 2019): Unpag.

histories, and how to integrate models of care into these structures."[106] Fran has benefitted from experiential learning stemming from time spent with knowledge carriers, communal beading groups, and formal curatorial mentorships, where she was encouraged to locate strategies for intergenerational relationship building, and curating as care.

The exhibition considers what it means to be "in relation to the land and one another."[107] The artists in the exhibition make "beadwork to create new markers, objects that build relationality to the land in the past, present and future."[108] Presented were mixed media beadworks expressing intergenerational fortitude (Boyer), providing protection and empowerment for LGBTQ2S kin (Danger), and honouring the generative properties of inter-connectivity (Georgeson-Usher with assinajaq). The collected contemporary beadworks documented the artists relationships they hold dear, how the artists translated important conversations they held into beaded work, and the land as a stimulator for remembering and locating home. The exhibition displayed personal and collective engagements that tuned the artists and curator into the ties they hold with the land as our kin. According to Fran, the exhibition was also about "how we move through our community in a way that honours the people who came before us, and how we consider our actions to make space for those who come after. It also poses the question, how do we move through these spaces in a way that our kindness echoes?"[109]

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[106] "Your AGA", Art Gallery of Alberta. Accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.youraga.ca/whats-happening/blog/international-museum-day-introducing-aga-curator-takeover.

[107] "May the Land Remember You", c2 Centre for Craft. Accessed August 5, 2020. https://c2centreforcraft.ca/2020/01/04/may-the-land-remember-you-as-you-walk-upon-its-surface/.

[108] Fran Hebert-Spence, "Curatorial Statement" for *May the Land Remember You as You Walk Upon Its Surface*, C2 Centre for Craft, Winnipeg, MB. February 2020, https://c2centreforcraft.ca/2020/01/04/may-the-land-remember-you-as-you-walk-upon-its-surface/.

[109] Fran Hebert-Spence, personal communication with the author, December 16, 2020.

Figure Fifteen: Installation photos of *May the Land Remember You as You Walk Across Its Surface,* C2. Photo credit: Serge Saurette for C2.

Storytelling and Storied Practices

In *"Go Away, Water!": Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative",* Daniel Heath Justice suggests, "Stories—like kinship, like fire—are what we do, what we create, as much as what we are… To assert our self-determination, to assert our presence in the face of erasure, is to free ourselves from the ghost-making rhetorics of colonization. Stories define relationships, between nations as well as individuals, and those relationships imply presence—you can't have a mutual relationship between something and nothingness."[110]

The transmission and creation of knowledge through storytelling is also vital for Indigenous knowledge systems to be ignited, maintained, and acted upon. They help "invoke teachings and tell ourselves into communities," and build a genealogy of story.[111] Molly McGlennen communicates it is important to center Indigenous stories, because: "Centering our stories also means subscribing to particular modes of learning that the stories themselves intimate, such as the accrual of deepened knowledge over long periods of time, or the power in learning through observation and meditation, or the evolution of traditions articulated in story built *on* the communal knowledge of those who have gone before us, and built *for* those who are

[110] Daniel Heath Justice, "'Go Away, Water!': Kinship Criticism and the Decolonization Imperative" in *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collection* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 150.
[111] Kimberly Blaeser, "Wild Rice Rights: Gerald Vizenor and an Affiliation of Story," in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, ed. Jill Doerfler et al. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 241.

yet to be born."[112] Stories help us dream the future, and take up important roles and responsibilities with our respective IKS.

Curators become sharers and carriers of knowledge when they center oral stories in their work. *Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois, Oh So Iroquois* is one such example. It was curated by Ryan Rice (Ryan), for the Ottawa Art Gallery in 2007. It toured to the Woodland Cultural Centre, the Art Gallery of Peterborough, ON, and the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba in Brandon, MB. The group exhibition presented the work of 24 visual artists and 6 essayists. With the exception of one non-Indigenous essayist, all artists and writers are members of the Iroquois Confederacy (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, Tuscarora). The curatorial premise recognizes how oral traditions are foundational for the formation of the Confederacy, the establishment of the *Kaienerako:wa (*The Great Law of Peace), and creation stories. It situates art made by members of the Confederacy with oral stories, Iroquois knowledge systems, collective art history, and shared aesthetics.

Ryan Rice is an independent curator and the Associate Dean, Academic Affairs in the Faculty of Liberal Arts / School of Interdisciplinary Studies at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University (Toronto, ON). Ryan has held curatorial positions in the US and Canada, including Chief Curator at the IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts in Santa Fe, NM, and he co-founded the Aboriginal Curatorial Collective. During a long career as an independent curator and writer, Ryan has produced work which redresses colonial workings and asserts Indigenous sovereignties and ties to the land; as it is presented in art, and carried forth by d'leau pimiihchiwan.

Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois, Oh So Iroquois imparts how "Iroquois artists have defined a role in their community as innovators, keepers of tradition, spokespersons, and storytellers, as well as those who ask questions that both nourish and stir the fires".[113] Exhibiting artists include Hannah Claus, Jolene Rickard, Samuel Thomas, and Greg Staats, and essayists Stephanie Phillips and Audra Simpson. The exhibition established the existence of an Iroquoian aesthetic,

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[112] Molly McGlennen, "Horizon Lines, Medicine Painting, and Moose Calling: The Visual/Performative Storytelling of Three Anishinaabeg Artists" in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, ed. Jill Doerfler et al. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 343.

[113] Ryan Rice*, "*Oh So Iroquois" in *Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois,* exhibition catalogue, (Ottawa: The Ottawa Art Gallery, 2008), 64.

while recognizing artists' rightful place in the web of Iroquoian knowledge systems. For example, Ryan shares how the stories of "Turtle Island, the Good Minds, the Tree of Peace, and the Three Sisters (Corn, Beans, and Squash) are cosmologies that reflect Iroquoian values, as well as intellectual concepts that are embedded in the strata of our artwork, whether it is made from beads or video."[114]

Figure Fifteen: Installation shots of *Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois, Oh So Iroquois,* © Ottawa Art Gallery / Galerie d'art d'Ottawa, 2007. Photo credit: David Barbour

The exhibition catalogue privileges the Kanien'kehá:ka language, placing it before English and French, thereby subverting the power of colonial languages. Emily Falvey, the former Curator of Contemporary Art at the Ottawa Art Gallery, spearheaded the initiative to translate the essays into the Kanien'kehá:ka language. With funding she secured to do so, the catalogue further built the capacity of the exhibition, and was an additional repository for conveying knowledge through storytelling.[115]

[114] Ryan Rice, "Oh So Iroquois," 59.
[115] Ryan Rice, Interview with the author, June 24, 2020.

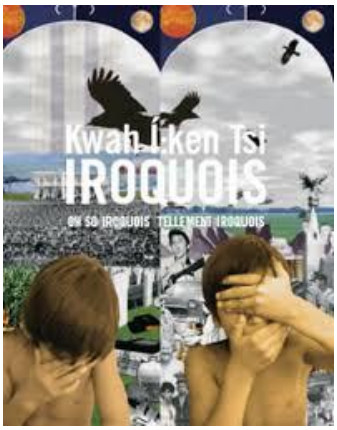

Figure Seventeen: Exhibition Catalogue Cover, *Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois, Oh So Iroquois.*

Kwah I:ken Tsi Iroquois, Oh So Iroquois set a precedent for other curators in several ways.[116] At the time it was executed, it was a rarity for curators to organize group exhibitions specifically about their own cultures. Ryan did so with family, community and the artists as tributaries to IKS in mind. He was receptive to Falvey's desire to privilege the Kanien'kehá:ka language, and they worked in concert to shift institutional priorities, processes, and understandings of how to work in solidarity with Indigenous artists and curators. As a result the catalogue and exhibition were one of the firsts to provide opportunity for audiences to engage with Indigenous language and oral histories and creation stories. Lastly, it reminded how intense dreaming makes the land laden with our stories, and that curators play an important role in moving cultures forward and backwards for reflection and cultural continuance.

Language as Beacon

Missy Leblanc notes, "Our ancestral languages are embedded in us – they are us. They are at the base of our worldviews and they shape how we see and relate to the world."[117] Although for

[116] One example is *Li Salay*, curated by Métis artists/curators Jessie Short and Amy Malbeuf, and hosted by the Art Gallery of Alberta in 2018. This group exhibition presented Métis artists from across Canada, and the intersecting themes of kinship, the body, labour and land found in their work. The curators worked with Michif speaker and knowledge keeper Verna DeMontigny to create the title, and present the introductory text panel entirely in Michif. By framing the exhibition in this endangered language, the curators tied the importance of language to lived experience, while asserting our collective presence through our inherited language.
[117] Missy Leblanc, "Taskoch pipon," unpag.

many Indigenous peoples their languages have been stolen by colonization, there exist opportunities to access knowledge embedded in ancestral languages. Basil Johnston (Anishinaabe) shares how in his ancestral language "all words have three levels of meaning: There is the surface meaning that everyone instantly understands. Beneath this meaning is a more fundamental meaning derived from the prefixes and their combinations with other terms. Underlying both is the philosophical meaning."[118] Johnston uses the word Anishinaubae as an example. This word identifies a man who is Chippewa or Ojibway, while also naming their value systems and intentions. The first part of the word means good, fine, excellent and beautiful, while the second part means being male and of the human species. Stories of Nanabush, who is always full of good intentions, provides the philosophical meaning, and secures the surface and fundamental meanings of the word Anishinaubae together.[119]

The core philosophical layer Johnston speaks of is not all lost, even when the ability to speak and comprehend in the other two levels have been taken. For example, different Indigenous nations have their own variation on teachings for the way to live a good life, best expressed in ancestral languages. These teachings in culturally specific ways fold ceremony, oral stories, and experiential learning into service to self, family, community and culture. The Anishinaabe refer to it as *bimaadiziwin*, the Cree and Métis *Miyeu Pimaatshiwin*, the Mi'kmaq *pekajo'tmnej,* and the Inuit *Qaujimajatuqangit* (loosely translated into body of knowledge). Naming these teachings in our respective languages, regardless of our accessibilities to them, helps secure kinship ties and mobilize beyond colonial ventures.

Framing a curatorial thesis with Indigenous language locates the work as an interconnecting force of opportunity, recognition, and hope. Curator Tom Hill recognized this early on, and when sharing about his curatorial process, he states, "Sometimes I use another language to try to look at what I do. It's interesting because First Nations languages are not object oriented. They're verb oriented. They're always doing something so even when you end up with a product, the product has to do something. So you have to keep thinking that everything

[118] Basil Johnston, "Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature" in *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World through Stories*, ed. Jill Doerfler et al., (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), 6.
[119] Basil Johnston, "Is That All," 6.

you do has this kind of life. It's a really interesting way of coming at things."[120] Indigenous language can guide curatorial process, choices in artwork, layout, writing, and relationships sought. It announces curators' intentions to create an exhibition space which is transformative, a testament to resilience and perseverance, and tributary to the reclamation of Indigenous languages.

The exhibition *Àbadakone – Continuous Fire/Feu continuel* (2019/20) is one such example. It was led by National Gallery of Canada curators Greg A. Hill (Greg) and Christine Lalonde (Christine), with Rachelle Dickenson (Rachelle). Candice Hopkins, Ariel Smith, Carla Taunton, and a team of advisors from around the globe provided curatorial consultation. It is an extension of *Sakahán, International Indigenous Art*, held in 2013 at the NGC. Conceived as a large survey of Indigenous art, it features the work of over 70 artists, representing almost 40 Indigenous nations, ethnicities and tribal affiliations from around the globe. *Àbadakone* was developed upon themes of continuity, activation and relatedness. Curators Rachelle, Greg and Christine explain:

> For *Àbadakone*, we, the curatorial team composed of Rachelle Dickenson, Greg A. Hill and Christine Lalonde, looked to ideas of Relatedness—the relationships between human beings, animals, plants and the land; Continuities—examining links between ancestral work, contemporary and the future; and Activation—how artists are active, how audiences are engaged and how artworks themselves have agency.[121]

The work, which ranges from site specific installation, video, photography and sculpture, cloak the NGC with properties of IKS within contemporary contexts. For example, Mi'kmaq artist Jordan Bennett's massive ceiling installation *Tepkik*, is inspired by petroglyphs and quillwork from his home territory of Ktaqamkuk (Newfoundland). The work reinforces how Mi'kmaq navigate the world with stories of the celestial, spiritual and physical worlds. The Maori women's artist group *Maha Ato Collective* purposefully created a large-scale rope structure extending in column formation towards the gallery ceiling. *Aka* is a reflection on knowledge

[120] Tom Hill, *Naming a Practice: Curatorial Strategies for the Future.* (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 1996), 131.
[121] Rachelle Dickenson, Greg A. Hill, Christine Lalonde, "Curatorial Notes on the National Gallery of Canada," in *Inuit Art Quarterly* Winter (2019), https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/iaq-online/curatorial-notes-national-gallery-canadas-abadakone-continuous-fire-feu-continuel.

transmission through contemporary Indigenous storytelling, the importance of women's narratives within Indigenous arts, and the need for women to take up as much space as possible within art institutions. The *Sàmi Architectural Library* by Sàmi artist Joar Nango took over the gallery's lobby to build an onsite library and artist's workshop. Nango invited local Indigenous peoples to the gallery to take part in collaborative hide tanning, resulting in the creation of leather book covers for included texts about architecture, activism and colonialism. In addition to the leather book coverings, the installation included materials used to tan the hide, expressing the importance of collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and process.

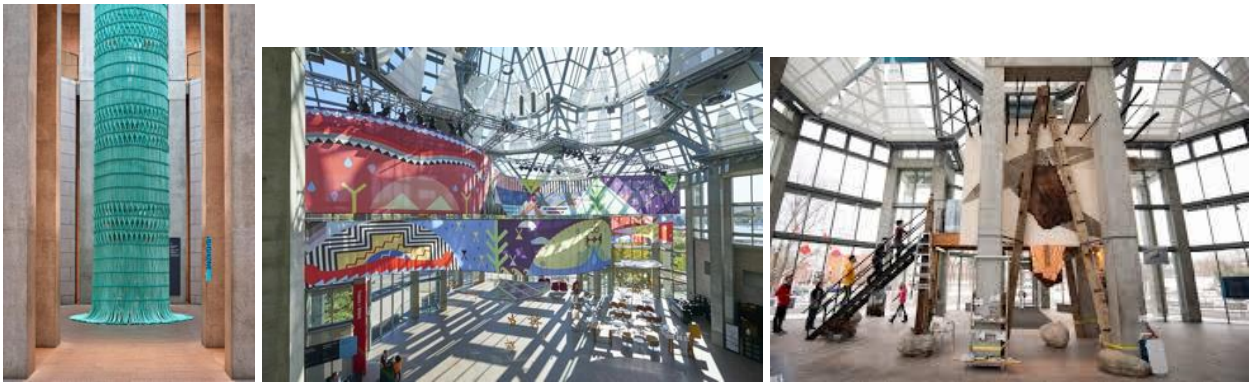

Figure Seventeen: *Aka* by Maha Ato Collective, installed at the National Gallery of Canada, 2019. Collection of the Collective © Mata Aho Collective Photo: NGC, *Tepkik* by Jordan Bennett, 2018–19. Collection of the artist. Commissioned by Brookfield Place, Toronto. Produced by Pearl Wagner Media & Art Consultants. © Jordan Bennett Photo: NGC (CNW Group/National Gallery of Canada), ***Sàmi Architectural Library*** **by Joar Nango, 2019, National Gallery of Canada, Photo: The Canadian Press/Justin Tang.**[122]

Àbadakone is the Algonquin word for continuous fire, and distinguishes whose territory the NGC sits upon. Rachelle Dickenson notes the title came to be because the curatorial team "worked with Kitigan Zibi Cultural Center Elders who advised us… we showed them a preliminary list of artwork and we had really great discussions with them around choosing a title.

[122] Images of *Aka* by Maha Ato Collective, *Tepkik* by Jordan Bennett downloaded from: https://artsfile.ca/abadakone-from-big-to-small-its-an-uplifting-exhibition-of-contemporary-indigenous-art/. Image of *Sàmi Architectural Library* by Joar Nagno downloaded from: https://globalnews.ca/news/6273447/installations-in-major-ottawa-indigenous-art-exhibition-have-broken-precedent/.

The committee gave us amazing feedback for developing a curatorial vision. Because we didn't start with a curatorial vision; it was a survey show. We started with artwork."[123]

Because some of the artwork was dialogical, collaborative and participatory, the NGC was required to implement approaches to connect artists with communities and make space for relationship-building. This component was spear-headed by Jaime Morse, an Otipemisiwak/Nehiyaw arts activator, maker, and educator. Morse currently holds the position of Educator, Indigenous Programs and Outreach at the NGC. During *Àbadakone* she secured ties between visiting artists and local communities, organized communal art-making events, and continuously shared moments, performances and events on social media. Her role as a facilitator exposes that, for decolonization and Indigenization to truly occur in art institutions, there must be Indigenous people working in all parts of a gallery system; including education, curatorial, collections, and senior administration. It also exemplifies how large-scale exhibitions such as this require Indigenous employees to often take an "all hands on deck" approach, to ensure the vision of the artists and curators is met. By navigating outside of delineated roles and responsibilities, Morse's work with the artists, communities and curatorial team was needed cross-fertilization between gallery departments, and collaboration within and outside the institution. By negotiating institutional space, Morse helped to ensure the exhibition lived up to its name, and embodied Indigenous ways of being within a colonial construct.

Àbadakone transformed the NGC as a temporary site for gathering, sharing, and potential transformation and relationship-making. The exhibition opening was attended by hundreds, and was grand-scale event, with musical and dance performances, extended welcoming to artists and the public, and expressions of gratitude to the hosting Indigenous nations. Live feeds of the event were shared online by attendees, exposing how beneficial digital spaces can be for gathering and knowledge sharing beyond gallery walls.

By working with community to name the exhibition in a local language, the curators indicated their intentions, and the responsibility to community the NGC would thus hold. This choice instigated the processes and types of collaboration which would occur within and outside the NGC. Indigenous languages are a vital conduit to IKS, and by naming the exhibition with the Algonquin word for continuous fire, stakeholders were navigated towards transnational

[123] Rachelle Dickinson, interview with the author, July 13, 2020.

mutual understandings. For a short period, the NGC became a propagative space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to gather, visit, learn, and experiment.

Kincentric Curating

The concept of Indigenous kinship is a consistent thread which links IKS across time and space.[124] Distinct from western notions of lineage, principles of Indigenous kinship encompass complex relationships with place, the land, and human, animal, and spirit beings.[125] Indigenous kinship systems inform miyeu pimaatshiwin, centered on relationships, actions, and generous reciprocity. Relationality is central to understanding kincentric Indigenous cultures. According to Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Relationality is grounded in a holistic conception of the inter-connectedness and inter-substantiation between and among all living things and the earth, which is inhabited by a world of ancestors and creator beings."[126] Concentrating on community-engaged art practices with themes of gender, sex, and sexuality, the recently formed curatorial collective gijiit is founded on relationality and teachings of Indigenous kinships.

gijiit was founded by Adrienne Huard (Adrienne) and Lindsay Nixon (Lindsay) with the guidance of Dayna Danger. Adrienne Huard is a Winnipeg-based Anishinaabekwe independent curator, art critic, and PhD student with the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba. In addition to co-curating gijiit, Adrienne has written for Briar Patch Magazine, is an appointed editor-at-large at Canadian Art magazine, and has curated events like the short film screening event, *Kinship and Closeness* for the Calgary Queer Arts Society (2018). Adrienne shares, "The kind of consensual care, reciprocity that comes with building these communities is intrinsic for my curatorial practice as an Indigenous cis, queer, femme."[127] Lindsay Nixon is a

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[124] Ana Maria Fraile-Marcos, "The Turn to Indigenization in Canadian Writing: Kinship Ethics and the Ecology of Knowledges", in *ariel: A Revie of International English Literature,* vol. 52, no. 2-3, (2020): 128, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/ari.2020.0011.

[125] Patricia Dudgeon and Abigail Bray, "Indigenous Relationality: Women, Kinship and the Law" in *Genealogy*, 3, 23, (2019); doi:10.3390/genealogy3020023.
[126] Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Relationality- A key presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm" in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, (Routledge, 2017), 71.
[127] Adrienne Huard, "Curating Care," filmed March 18, 2020, video, 2:26, https://vimeo.com/398664387.

Toronto-based Cree-Métis-Saulteaux curator, editor, writer, McGill University art history PhD candidate, and Assistant Professor in Ryerson University's Department of English. In addition to being the co-founder of gijiit, they are an award-winning author, and previously held the position of editor-at-large for Canadian Art magazine. According to Lindsay their curatorial work is "another way for me to be creative and ground collaboration in the ways I work. I was also called to curation because I felt a responsibility to represent queer and trans Indigenous artists I saw being pushed out of gallery spaces."[128]

Since its inception in 2019, the collective has curated residencies, performances, screenings and other arts-related events. Adrienne conveys, "By having a curatorial collective, we venture outside this individualistic approach often celebrated by western modes of art display and visual culture. In this way it adds a multitude of voices, and in a lot of ways we build community: especially for Two Spirit, Trans, Gender-variant, Queer and women Indigenous voices."[129] In May 2019, Adrienne and Lindsay curated the collaborative residency *Creative Kinship and Other Survivalist Tendencies*, at Articule in Montréal, QC. The month long residency featured Black and Indigenous artists with ties to Tio'tia:ke/Mooniyaang and Kahnawake, including Dayna Danger, Stacy Lee, Moe Clark, Beric Manywounds, and ReCollection Kahnawake. The residency was premised on "creative kinship" and collaborations, where the artists and curators worked together in a non-hierarchical mentorship/residency format to produce work.

According to Adrienne and Lindsay, "Creative kinship encapsulates the intimacy, solidarity and mutual survivance creators find through various forms of collaboration."[130] They both carry encoded memories which guide their making of creative kinships in the large urban settings of Montréal and Toronto. Lindsay states, "It came just very naturally because we have connections to Manitoba and that's how we saw our families interact, and how we should interact when we were in the city together, to create allyships and be accountable to each other."[131]

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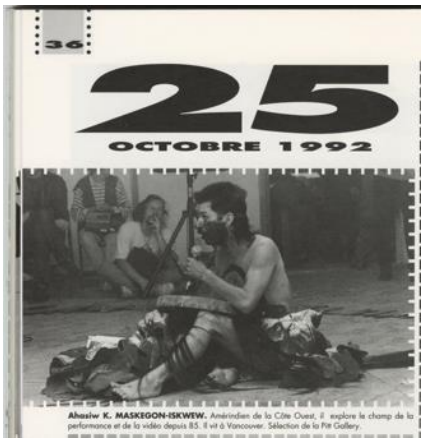
[128] Lindsay Nixon, "Lindsay Nixon: On Curation, Mentorship, and Indigenous Art," interview by Brandi Bird, Room Magazine, 2019, https://roommagazine.com/interview/lindsay-nixon-curation-mentorship-and-indigenous-art.
[129] Adrienne Huard, "Curating Care," filmed March 18, 2020, video, 2:26, https://vimeo.com/398664387.
[130] Lindsay Nixon, "2S2X: Living Archives," (April 16, 2019), https://aabitagiizhig.com/2019/04/16/2s2x-living-archives/.
[131] Lindsay Nixon, interview with author, July 13, 2020.

Public and private gatherings and events were organized for participating artists to engage in dialogue and action with one another. This resulted in the sharing of resources, cooking food for one another, taking time for collective self-care, and strategizing to help one another "survive creative industries for a minute" as Black and Indigenous Two Spirit, Trans, Gender-variant, Queer and women artists and curators.[132]

An exhibition of work completed by artists during the residency was held at Articule, and an invitation-only fundraiser on the eve of the opening with performances by Adrienne, Dayna Danger, Arielle Twist, and DJ Frankie Teardrop. The residency was closed with a *Bead and Bitch* session at Articule led by Nico Williams, Dayna Danger and invited guests. As well, during the residency Adrienne and Lindsay conducted a research intervention into the Artexte collection, entitled *2s2x: Living Archives*. They researched Indigenous art criticism from the 1980s onwards, and questioned the nature of The Archive, advocating for multiple archives, and probing what a living, orgasmic Indigenous archive could be.[133] Their findings were presented at SBC Gallery as a performance and intergenerational conversation to animate the texts. *Cumming Commons* featured Arielle Twist, Léuli Eshraghi, and Kite, and the intent of this component was, "With our olders, Elders, mentors, ancestors, and all those who paved the way for us ever in our hearts and minds, we will locate the "queer," "trans," and "sexy" in the Indigenous art archive that have been restrained for too long."[134]



[132] Lindsay Nixon, "2S2X," (April 16, 2019).
[133] "Cumming Commons," Artexte, April 27, 2019, https://artexte.ca/en/2019/04/cumming-commons-a-research-intervention-by-lindsay-nixon-and-performance-presented-in-the-context-of-2s2x-living-archives/.
[134] "Cumming Commons," Artexte, (April 27, 2019).

Figure Nineteen: Ahasiw K. Maskegon-Iskwew : Interzone. Québec: Les Éditions Intervention, no 55/56 1993. p. 36.

The incentive for gijiit was to make culturally, physically and spiritually safe spaces for Black and Indigenous queer and trans artists with *Creative Kinship and Other Survivalist Tendencies*. The variety of events, encounters, and activations in several respects provided responses to questions posed by Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson in *As We Have Always Done*. When discussing radical resurgence she asks, "How do we set up Indigenous processes to deal with these violences within our movements and in our communities? How do we ensure every Indigenous body, honoured and sacred, knows respect in their bones?"[135] By centering the voices of Black and Indigenous Two Spirit, trans, gender-variant, queer and women artists and curators, gijiit germinated dialogue, knowledge-sharing, creative kinships, and ignites the radical resurgence Simpson speaks of.

Figure Nineteen: Installation image of *Creative Kinship and Other Survivalist Tendencies*, Articule, 2019. Photo credit: Guy L'Heureux.

Adrienne reminds, "there is within us a level of understanding of where we're from, where our ancestors are from, and how we relate, and the kinship ties between us. I want to believe they are embodied, and we were drawn together just because of how our communities and ancestors have related too."[136] The work of gijiit reminds how Indigenous peoples stand on

[135] Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, *As We Have Always Done – Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota press. 2017), chap. 3, Kindle.
[136] Adrienne Huard, interview with the author, July 13, 2020.

the shoulders of our exceptionally resilient ancestors, and those of us who have had access to cultural teachings and opportunities, carry a responsibility to those who have not. It entails commitment to make good relations with other Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies in ways that don't compromise knowledge systems, and make them vulnerable to cultural homogenization or appropriation. It also involves recognizing what is learned from those who have had limited exposure to their culture, language and art, yet kindle their cultural kinship ties with remarkable vigor. Lastly, it requires paying close attention to those who channel and ignite knowledges in ways which provide a remedy to communities that continue to be guided by colonial structures that discriminate against Two Spirit, trans, gender-variant and queer kin.

Re-Orientation and Codification with IKS

When exhibitions are guided by IKS the premise, layout, and design are re-orientated to create a space of knowledge transmission and decolonization. In 2013 Dr. Heather Igloliorte (Heather) was hired to develop a new permanent exhibition at the Museé national des beaux-arts du Quebec (MNBAQ), with the donated collection of over 2600 works of Inuit art by Raymond Brousseau and his wife Lyse.

Dr. Heather Igloliorte is an Inuk scholar and independent curator who holds the University Research Chair in Indigenous Art History and Community Engagement at Concordia University in Montréal, QC. Heather serves as the Co-Chair of the Indigenous Circle for the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and is the lead curator of *INUA*, the inaugural exhibition of the WAG's new national Inuit Art Centre, Qaumajuq, opening in March 2021.[137] Her scholarship, curatorial work and community engagement provides Inuit perspectives and counterbalance to Eurocentric engagements with Inuit art and culture.

The title of the exhibition at the MNBAQ, *Ilippunga: I Have Learned,* is the result of intergenerational knowledge transmission, provided to Heather by Elder Piita Irniq. Instead of following the conventional exhibition practice of displaying Inuit art within a context that privileges the voices of Qallunaat (non-Inuit) collectors and curators, Heather took the knowledge system of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) as the basis for understanding Inuit artistic

[137] *INUA* features the work of almost 90 Inuit artists, and the curatorial team led by Igloliorte includes Krista Ulujuk Zawadksi, Kablusiak, and Asinnajaq, with the support of the WAG Assistant Curator of Inuit Art, Jocelyn Piirainen.

production. The Inuktitut phrase encompasses a complex matrix of Inuit environmental knowledge, societal values, cosmology, world views, and language.[138]

Heather approached the collection with concern about how the entirety of Inuit art in the western art milieu has been framed primarily by non-Inuit, and how there is an Inuk perspective missing. She notes that "Because there are so many Qallunaat [non-Inuit] people working with Inuit art collections, it creates a situation where we haven't had our own perspective as equally represented."[139] Heather looked to the six principles found in IQ that guide Inuit in how they interact with their ontologies, and their human, animal and non-human relations. She presented these in the show thematically as: Respect for Animals, Respect for the Land; Importance of Family and Respect for Motherhood; Oral Histories of the Arctic, and Cultural Resistance through the Arts. The majority of the works are sculptural, and some themes on first glance quite familiar and representative of Inuit art. Guided by IQ, Heather provides different readings of those works. She explains, "when western audiences look at a sculpture of a 'dancing bear,' the word whimsical is often used."[140] But when Inuit look at it, "they might see how a bear sniffs the air when it's hunting or how it stands on one leg to catch a scent."[141]

Heather paid close attention to ensuring a seamlessness in how audience members moved in the exhibition space and themes. This provided the public with better exposure to IQ and ensured that its interrelatedness and complexities were evident with their chosen directional paths and physical movements in the exhibition space. Included with the collection pieces were the images and words of contemporary throat singers, dancers, and storytellers. This created a space for personal and collective memories and presented additional expressions of cultural continuance and continuum found in Inuit art and culture.

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[138] Heather Igloliorte, "Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Inuit Knowledge in the Quallunaat Art Museum", in *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice,* ed. Julie Nagam et.al, (Winnipeg: ARP Publishing, 2020), 155.
[139] Heather Igloliorte, as quoted in: https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/finearts/2018/06/heather-igloliortes-new-project-radically-increase-inuit-participation-in-the-arts.html
[140] Heather Igloliorte, as quoted in: https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/finearts/2018/06/heather-igloliortes-new-project-radically-increase-inuit-participation-in-the-arts.html
[141] https://www.concordia.ca/cunews/finearts/2018/06/heather-igloliortes-new-project-radically-increase-inuit-participation-in-the-arts.html

Figure Twenty-One: Installation Photo of *Ilippunga: I Have Learned*, 2016. Photos provided by MNBAQ.

In *Ilippunga: I Have Learned,* Heather presents Inuit art as bundles that transmit oral histories and record knowledge that was discouraged or forbidden. She is a- tuned to how Inuit made work about ceremonies, angakkuit (shamans), the spirit world, tattooing practices, and connection to the land for Inuit, and not for collector's value systems. Heather shares that "By embedding that otherwise forbidden knowledge in their artworks, Inuit artists expressed the principle of qanuqtuurungnarniq, being innovative and resourceful to solve problems by using the means available to them – art making – to cleverly safeguard Inuit knowledge for future generations."[142] Heather is not positioning herself as someone who carries a deep knowledge of Inuit philosophies. Regardless, by privileging Inuit voices and seeing deeply into the art with an Inuk lens and sensibility, Heather was able to help decolonize the MNBAQ, and not only restore, but amplify IQ inherent in the Brousseau collection.

Concluding Thoughts

Dana Claxton and Tania Williard remind us:

> The body of knowledges that exists within contemporary Indigenous artistic practices can be nurtured, germinating seeds to form roots… Indigenous knowledges and aesthetics can be integrated into a new institution of life, not just art. The moment we connect our hands and our hearts to the land around us: this is what our ancestors would call art. These acts are interconnected relationships to the land where we live. Our languages are here in the earth, the rocks, the trees,

[142] Heather Igloliorte, ""Curating Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit", 164.

and our art is here, too.[143]

The exhibitions discussed in this chapter expose the multiplicities of IKS and their continuous existence despite colonial interference. The curators who organized them dream the future immersed in IKS. Although discussion about these exhibitions are framed by specific tenets of IKS - land, language, kinship, and IQ, I recognize the curators of these shows as guided by d'leau pimiihchiwan. They tuned into the gently flowing waters which move below the surface into other tributaries, linking bodies of knowledges, continuous and in existence because ancestors past, present and future carry knowledges, resurgence and resilience forward. Without them and all those who uphold IKS and space, Indigenous Littoral Curation is impossible to locate, name, and dream.

[143] Dana Claxton and Tania Willard, "Imperfect Compliance: A Trajectory of Transformation," accessed July 15, 2020, http://arcpost.ca/articles/imperfect-compliance.

Chapter Four

Washagay Peywinwa: The Merits of Discourse about Littoral Art, the Paracuratorial and Curating Care in Naming Indigenous Littoral Curation

Theories about littoral art, curating care and paracuratorial practices has greatly impacted my understanding and temporary naming of Indigenous Littoral Curation (ILC). They are tributaries to discussion about collaborative and dialogue-driven curatorial practices, and help further lead my Indigenous heart home. I deem discourse about littoral art, curating care, and paracuratorial practices as washagay peywinwa, otherwise known as beachwrack, washing onto, and maneuvering around shorelines. They are tangle and tension within the western art canon. In particular, Bruce Barber's discussion of littoral art practice, Tara Mcdowell's assessment of the paracuratorial, and Elke Krasny's naming of curating as care, are the washagay peywinwa beach for this dissertation.

Washagay peywinwa leaves markings on land that are temporary and temporal. Courtesy of the rhythmic motion of the waters and land ecosystem, it inhabits littoral spaces, permeating and providing nourishment to the shorelines' ecosystem. It then returns to the waters that brought it onshore, or decomposes and generates into something else. Verna DeMontigny points out how like washagay, washagay peywinwa moves in a circular and continuous motion. I consider the aforementioned socially-engaged art and curatorial theories to be enriching, relevant in speaking about ILC, and complimentary to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). However, they do not hold permanency, nor are they necessarily syncretic with Indigenous Knowledge Systems. At times, the interplay between Indigenous knowledges and non-Indigenous theories may be conflictual and contested. Still, identifying those who are able to disrupt the western art milieu as social change agents is important for allyship and relationship building, both of which are important aspects to IKS and ILC.

In this chapter I present theories and praxis about littoral art, the paracuratorial, and curating care/as care. I begin with a detailed description of littoral art practice, relying on Bruce Barber and Grant Kester. I then rely upon Yi-Fu Tuan to provide a working definition of "community", and how socially-engaged artistic and curatorial practices are driven by the desire to belong to, or facilitate community. I disrupt these descriptors by identifying them as located within colonized spaces, and probe how Barber and Tuan locate curators in their work. I define

paracuratorial practices with the writing of Miwon Kwon, Tara McDowell, and Paul O'Neill, providing key details and examples of socially-engaged curatorial projects. I then turn to Elke Krasny's scholarship on curating as radical care, where open-ended conversations are necessary for feminist curatorial pedagogy and praxis which enacts care with artists, audiences, and art institutions. I conclude with naming how these art and curatorial terrains are relevant to discourse on ILC.

Littoral Art Practice

Littoral art theory names the vitality of shorelines as a metaphor for socially engaged artistic practice. Littoral art practice holds participants socially accountable, and is based on collaborations between artists and various communities and agencies. Littoral art requires that we conceive of others as co-participants in the transformation of self and society. Researching littoral art practice led me to further learn about the importance of relationship-building for curatorial practice grounded in IKS.

Halifax-based retired NSCAD Professor Bruce Barber is a main contributor to littoral art discourse. He is an interdisciplinary media artist and cultural historian whose research and writing explores the representation of art, artists and art history in film, television, literature, performance art, public and littoral art. Barber is best known for his performance work, neo-conceptual reading and writing rooms, and theoretical writing and practice with littoral art, cultural interventions, and other relational art practices.

Barber states the term littoral is "used as a trope, a metaphor to describe artists who work liminally, that is between the institution, museological gallery scene and the public sphere."[144] He recognizes littoral artists as critically-thinking social change agents, who develop both cultural and social relations in their work and rely on the skills of many contributors within and outside the perimeter of the artistic work.[145] Barber provides a comprehensive examination of littoral art in his published lectures, interviews, essays and website. Some key points he provides in *Sentences on Littoral Art* pertaining to Indigenous Littoral Curation are: (1) "Cultural interventions may lead toward social change"; (2) "In Littoral art projects social interactions

[144] Bruce Barber, "Littoral Practice: An Interview with Bruce Barber", interviewed by Don Simmons, May 23, 2004, www.donsimmons.net.
[145] Don Simmons, "Littoral Practice".

should be co-ordinated with less emphasis on egocentric calculations of success for each individual than through co-operative achievements of understanding among participants" and; (3) "Once the immediate objectives of the project are established, the course of events should be allowed to unfold organically. There may be many side effects that the artist cannot imagine or control. These may be used to stimulate and/or assist the development of new work."[146] Littoral art does not have to assume a physical form, although one can be acquired, or the work can be ephemeral or completely undetectable. In his writing Barber relies on the theories of communication by German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas.

Habermas is a philosopher and sociologist, and contributor to the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School of Critical and Social Theory. Habermas attempted to write philosophy that crossed disciplinary and thematic borders. He considers *all knowledge to be mediated by social experience* and contributes two key concepts, *"Ideal Speech Situation" and "Communicative Competence." Together these concepts assert that* all communication participants must have an equal opportunity to participate, and interaction must not be impacted by status differences such as political or religious hierarchies, elitism, or hegemony.[147]

Communicative Competence centers on our abilities to differentiate between three domains of reference: the subjective, the inter-subjective, and the objective. Being able to do so provides opportunities to contemplate how others view us, and how we become critically self-aware. Habermas proposes that artworks are not primarily "ways of seeing," but "feeling complexes", whose truthfulness involves a distinct sort of non-cognitive claim. It is in this realm that art becomes an aesthetic laboratory for the exploration of "decentred unbound subjectivity."[148]

According to Australian scholar Geoff Boucher, there are four key aspects to his claim. First, it means that artworks are rational because they stake a claim to a kind of truth. Second, it proposes a substantive, rather than a formalist interpretation of artistic modernism and the avant-garde art movements. Third, it makes possible a reflexive relation to cultural tradition that serves

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[146] Bruce Barber, Sentences on Littoral Art. 1998. www.brucebarber.ca.
[147] Roger S. Gottlieb, "The Contemporary Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas - Knowledge and Human Interests; Theory and Practice; Legitimation Crisis; Communication and the Evolution of Society by Jürgen Habermas" Review for Ethics, Vol. 91, No. 2 (Jan, 1981): 280, JSTOR.
[148] Geoff Boucher, "The Politics Of Aesthetic Affect —A Reconstruction Of Habermas' Art Theory". PARRHESIA. Number 13 (2011): 63. JSTOR.

the individual as a repository of need interpretations. Lastly, artworks bring "linguistically excommunicated" human needs into cultural debates and challenge conventional ascriptions of the sorts of personal self-realization that will satisfy (or silence) these needs.[149]

In "Littoralist Art Practice and Communicative Action" Barber makes multiple attempts to match Habermas's theory of communicative action with "crystalized" examples of littoral art practice. For example the Austrian group *6, 8 oder 11 Wochen Klausure* (6,8 or 11 Weeks of Enclosure) organized a series of informal discussions in 1993 that brought together various individuals and representatives from government and social agencies to address homelessness. The artists raised funds to purchase a multi-purpose ambulance upon learning that unhoused people did not have access to medical care, and they lobbied the government to provide a physician for the bus. Another example is *Food Bank*, an exhibition by Novia Scotia artist Kelly Lycan. In 1994 before the exhibition took place, Lycan sent out a notice requesting food donations and that people contribute personal recipes to the project on the blank card tags provided. People were encouraged to bring food donations to the opening and choose a recipe from the wall display. Lycan referred to this as a "circular gift". Her initiative raises critical issues relating to "the value of art, productive labour, the politics of reciprocity and what we can term the political economy of giving."[150] Barber suggests the work of both Wochen Klausure and Kelly Lycan conforms to Habermas' prescription for communicative action by "privileging the use of critical reason and the bonding/binding of participants throughout."[151]

University of California, San Diego professor, curator and writer Grant Kester contends that littoral art is often not grasped or considered relevant by conventional art critical methodologies that are organized around two key elements: the formal appearance of physical objects, and the judgments produced through the critic's interaction with the physical object based upon their individual, pleasure-based response.[152] He states that "it is necessary to consider the littoralist work as a process as well as a physical product, and specifically as a process rooted

[149] Geoff Boucher, "The Politics," 63.
[150] Geoff Boucher, "The Politics," 63.
[151] Geoff Boucher, "The Politics," 63.
[152] Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art – Introduction". *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, edited by Zoya Kucor and Simon Leung (Blackwell, 2005), Web.

in a discursively-mediated encounter in which the subject positions of artist and viewer or artist and subject are openly thematized and can potentially be challenged and transformed."[153]

Kester also recognizes that these works can "challenge dominant representations of a given community, and create a more complex understanding of, and empathy for, that community among a broader public."[154] He values littoral art for its potential to break conventional distinctions between artist, art, and audience, and create a relationship that "allows the viewer to 'speak back' to the artist in certain ways, and in which this reply becomes in effect a part of the 'work' itself."[155] Littoral art initiatives operate on multiple levels of meaning, but they can still be clearly analyzed at specific points, which is pertinent to the process-focused discipline.

Although Barber relies heavily on Habermas, the weaknesses of his theories in relation to art must be noted. Firstly, Habermas places a high value on modernity and the Enlightenment, and all that they encompass. Secondly, he abandoned his theories prematurely, and thereby did not put them into practice, a necessary step for social critical theory to succeed. Lastly and most importantly for a discussion about art, "for Habermas art remains at the level of representation, distanced from the material reality and 'spatio-temporal structures' of the life world, and as such, cannot be considered as ideal a site as is language - or rather speech - for the deployment of communicative action."[156] Nonetheless Barber places a high value on his somewhat underdeveloped theories, recognizing "theory and practice as conjoined, as praxiological, so that theory is thought of as an act and as such has a role in producing opportunities, potentialities, for working." [157]

Imagining Community, Audience, and Participant

Within littoral art practice, participants and instigators may mobilize under the auspices of co-creating community, guided by the perceived benefits of belonging. According to American

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[153] Grant Kester, "Dialogical Aesthetics: A Critical Framework for Littoral Art", in Variant, Issue 9 (2000), https://romulusstudio.com/variant/9texts/KesterSupplement.html.
[154] Kester, "Dialogical Aesthetics", Web.
[155] Kester, "Dialogical Aesthetics", Web.
[156] Bruce Barber. "Littoralist Art Practice and Communicative Action". Habermas Seminar Discussion Paper & Khyber Lecture Series, March 20/28, 1996.Web.
[157] Bruce Barber, Littoral Art and Communicative Action, ed. Marc Léger (Illinois: Common Ground Publishing, 2013),108.

philosopher and geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, the extended family is the prototype of all communities. In his paper "Community, Society, and the Individual" Tuan suggests that they solidify from practices used to maintain cohesion and identity, originating from the innate human need to exist with nature and cope with other humans[158]. Although community is technically no longer essential in the Western world for the physical survival of individuals, it continues to exist and be pursued because human beings want the reassurance of sustained relationships.

Tuan conveys there is a disparity between community, society and the individual that requires a restoration of balance. He suggests the word "society" is perceived as ambivalent and invoking something large and impersonal. The valuing of individualism now connotes selfishness, although in early modern times it was held in high-esteem.[159] The concept of community has thus taken precedence, which poses other problems as it glosses over or undervalues the individual and the merits of a larger version of itself, society. To an extent Kester interrogates these negative and positive dimensions of community by recognizing that collective identity is often established through abstract, generalizing principles (the nation, the people) that can regress as much as it can celebrate common experience.[160] He explores the complexities of "empathetic identification" which provide a way to de-center fixed identities through interaction with others. It aids in the formation of a solidarity based on shared identification, allowing individual subjects to form provisional alliances, or "community".[161] Art may challenge perceptions of difference within those provisional alliances but as Kester suggests, this entails denying the specificity and autonomy of others, to "make use" of them for our own emotional or psychic needs, and project onto them our own imaginary characteristics or desires.[162] However Tuan views these as attributes that nurture difference while strengthening commonality within a group, therefore encouraging communication and exchange. This is in thanks to the perception that other people are different, and may have things worth acquiring.[163]

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[158] Yi-Fu Tuan. "Community, Society, and the Individual". Geographical Review, Vol. 92, No. 3 (Jul., 2002): 309. JSTOR.
[159] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Community," 307.
[160] Grant H. Kester, Conversation Pieces – Community and Communication in Modern Art,(California: University of California Press, 2004): 15.
[161] Grant H. Kester, "Conversation Pieces," 77.
[162] Grant H. Kester, "Conversation Pieces," 77.
[163] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Community," 313.

Tuan recognizes that regardless of individual concerns or group make-ups, what is most important for art is the quality of the listening rather than the number of listeners. He states,

> ...gifted individuals are not interested in just having their say. They truly have something to offer, something worth saying. We the less gifted are unable to reciprocate in kind. Our relationship with them is thus asymmetrical, unequal. But this does not mean we cannot reciprocate. We can, and in an important way-by listening, by attending. For without an awareness (or just the blind faith) that someone out there does listen, does attend, the gifted will find it difficult to sustain their creativity.[164]

Although I would strongly argue that audiences are not lacking or unequal to artists, Tuan recognizes that reciprocal listening is required for art to have resonance with audiences and be dialogical. Therefore artists, curators and cohorts must develop the ability to listen, as well as recognize when they are being listened to, when prioritizing communities in their endeavours.

Littoral Zones as Colonized Spaces

What is lacking in both Tuan and Kester's discussion of community is recognition of its merit and workings to those who have been oppressed by hegemonic entities. For Indigenous people, colonization is a destructive force that attacks social and cultural cohesion. This includes staking claims to Indigenous lands, attempting to force assimilation through Christianity and Government laws, and pursuing genocide, all which disrupt families, communities, and nations. For Indigenous nations and individuals "community" is named and asserted as a central component to cultural empowerment, Indigenization and decolonization, and to the search for solidarity and sovereignty.

The notion of community, as imagined as it may be, is a facilitator of engagement and social change. The nuances and multiplicities of community, and the role that art and curatorial practice plays in creating cohesion and space to assert Indigeneity, should be noted when considering the merits of littoral art practice. It means recognizing that oppressors have failed to break kinship and cultural ties, and inherited relationships to the land.

As well, it's important to be cognizant that from time immemorial, Indigenous people have gathered along the shorelines for a variety of reasons including trade, feasting, and ceremony. It is a fluid space of cultural continuums sparking creativity, kinship, and friendship.

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[164] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Community," 316.

This site is of the utmost importance, as it is a space for new beginnings, of coming together, and of farewells. It is where we are able to hear our ancestors whisper in our ears, mobilize the present, and dream the future. To recognize littoral spaces as Indigenous and the merits of littoral art practice, we must tread carefully in our evaluation and remember the relationship between colonizer and colonized. This is because littoral spaces have also been the starting sites of colonization, where invaders landed and attempted to eradicate or colonize Indigenous cultures, and occupy their land. "Littoral" space should be recognized as a potential site for resistance, negotiation, dialogical exchange, and cultural assertion, but also as one of contestation.

In his writing about littoral art, Barber notes that there are ethical issues to consider when embarking on a littoral art project. He asks, "Is it unethical to presume to have some knowledge of another community when you're not of that community? Some would say yes, you shouldn't move into an aboriginal community unless you're of that community. A few hundred years of aboriginal exploitation and subordination would tend to support that theory."[165] Barber recognizes that there is a history of settlers going into Indigenous communities in authoritative ways, with disastrous results. Critical self-reflextion on the part of littoral artists is therefore needed, and "research has to be paramount and that's why they should have ethics uppermost in their minds whenever they either intervene or define a parameter around some subject or activity that they're engaged in or attempting to understand. They also have to engage in a dialogue."[166]

In Barber and Kester's analyses of littoral work, the mentioning and naming of curators is missing, even though they both recognize littoral art can occur within the art world where curators are situated. In the majority of writing about dialogical aesthetics and littoral work, recognition of a curator's role is minimal, even though the artist, community or agency is named. Both writers have contributed to curatorial practice, which makes this circumstance even more perplexing. This begs the question, is curating a contested act in the realm of littoral work? If so, what is the basis for this contestation?

Regardless, the motivation of littoral artists to make social change, create cohorts, raise consciousness, and prioritize process resonates with me for several reasons. First, it allows for a consideration of Indigenous curatorial practice that is open-ended and dialogical. Second, it

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[165] Bruce Barber, *Littoral Art and Communicative Action*, ed. by Marc Léger (Illinois: Common Ground Publishing, 2013),61.
[166] Bruce Barber, "Littoral Art", 61.

disrupts entrenched values of the western art world, and attempts to subvert power from art galleries, critics, funders, curators and artists to participants. Lastly shorelines were historically important meeting grounds for Indigenous nations, my own included. Learning about littoral art practice, allowed me to remember shorelines as historical gathering sites, consider time and space as circular and cyclical, and recognize land as kin.

Community Focused and Dialogue-Driven Paracuratorial Practices

The exhibition *Culture in Action,* curated by American curator and scholar Mary Jane Jacobs strongly aligns with the models of engagement as laid out in Barber and Kester's littoral art discourse, Tuan's complicating notions of community, and naming the need for active listening and dialogue for art to resonate. Miwon Kwon's text *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004) locates four different types of interaction that speak to or create community, relying primarily on her case study of *Culture in Action*, curated by Jacobs in 1993. Kwon does so to reveal the numerous inconsistencies and contradictions in the field of participatory site-specific art, however perhaps inadvertently, she recognizes the curator as operating in embryonic and discursive ways.

Culture in Action included eight projects dispersed throughout the city of Chicago which were structured as community collaborations. Artists chose locales or organizations to work with to conceptualize and produce art, resulting in wide-ranging public art. The four types of interactions between artists and community partners Kwon identifies in Jacob's curated project are: community of mythic unity, sited communities, temporary invented communities, and ongoing invented communities.[167] Each category defines a different role for artists that pose alternative renditions of the collaborative relationship. Suzanne Lacy's contribution to *Culture in Action, Full Circle* is an example of Kwon's first described over-generalized and abstract notion of community. Working with a local coalition, Lacy placed one hundred large limestone boulders bearing the names of important, but not well-known local women around a neighbourhood to express (perceived) coherent unity. This work is most problematic to Kwon because "the specificity of each woman's life drops out to a large extent, because diversity and difference are emphasized only to the degree that they can be overridden by a common principle

[167] Miwon Kwon. One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 188.

theme of unification."[168] For the next theme, sited communities, Kwon discusses the work of Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio, who teamed up with members of a local confectioner's union, which upon the artists approaching them to produce a four-ounce chocolate bar, already had clearly defined identities and a shared sense of purpose.

Temporary invented communities consist of a newly constituted community groups or organizations that are rendered operational through the coordination of the art work itself. For example, Daniel J. Martinez's project involved coordinating a new community group to organize a carnival-like parade through three West Side neighbourhoods in Chicago. Projects like these rely heavily on arts administrators, and they are only in operation for the duration of the project. Ongoing invented communities as a category is an offshoot of the third, but these communities are sustained beyond the art exhibition context. Kwon describes Haha's project as an example, which involved creating a hydroponic garden to produce and distribute food to AIDS patients, and ended up also providing a place to educate the community about AIDS. The sustainability of this sort of project relies on the artists' direct knowledge of the neighbourhoods they are entering, and pre-existing personal ties. They have "a home team advantage", but this does not mean collaborations by local artists are bound to be more successful or meaningful than those by artists coming into a site from elsewhere.[169] There are various benefits and shortcomings to all these types; they temporarily provide collectiveness which humans yearn for, yet can also create power imbalances between artists and communities that gloss over an artists' motivations, or differing community priorities and value systems. Kwon's thoroughly-researched writing about notions of community in site-specific work, presents how notions of community were employed earlier on in paracuratorial practice.

In "Emergence" curator and artist Paul O'Neill and artist/educator Mick Wilson expose the validity of curatorial discourse as an "engine of emergence" for work incorporating the dialogical negotiation of artworks through "organic, open-ended co-production and conversation between artists, curators, artist-curators and other stakeholders."[170] They suggest that curatorial discourse creates a site for dialectical opposition to the status quo, and that within the array of

[168] Miwon Kwon, "One Place," 119.
[169] Miwon Kwon, "One Place," 130.
[170] Paul O'Neill & Mick Wilson, Emergence. Curating is a very corrupt discourse. Blog. (2008): https://archive.ica.art/bulletin/emergence.

curatorial discourse, possibilities have opened for curators to forge practices of creative contestation and cultural dissent. This occurs both within and outside of gallery and museum walls.

This idea is further explored by Tara McDowell in "The Post-Occupational Condition". Here McDowell describes paracuratorial practice as discursive, self-reflexive, exploratory, expansive, and with ability to generate "new relationships and processes."[171] McDowell identifies how the paracuratorial employs specific methodologies that speak to context and places. She names feminist, Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies as productive "pollution" in discursive curatorial practice (I prefer the word "pollination"). McDowell notes that there are questions which should be posed when employing these methodologies in curatorial practice. They include: "What modes of conviviality and sociality should be engaged? How would language be mobilized? What infrastructural basics, not to mention institutional operations and policies, would need to be rethought and reimagined?"[172]

McDowell looks to Paul O'Neill in her investigation into the properties of paracuratorial practice. O'Neill sees value in the paracuratorial to disrupt the hegemony found in the exhibition proper. For example, curator Elena Filipovic defied expectations of what constitutes a travelling retrospective with *Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Specific Objects without Specific Form* (2010-2011), initiated and organized by WIELS (Brussels, Belgium). Halfway through its duration at each tour venue, the exhibition was taken down and re-installed by a guest artist whose practice is influenced by Gonzalez-Torres. Artists added and removed artworks, changed labels, layout, and lighting, effectively making a new version of the exhibition. Gonzalez-Torres who died young from AIDS-related causes, was known to engage institutions as collaborators, and entrusted them with the remaking of his work during exhibitions. By asking artists to intervene in the carefully constructed retrospective, Filipovic ensured that their activations and her curatorial premise were informed by Gonzalez-Torres' artistic priorities and exhibiting processes.

O'Neill draws lines between curatorial practice provoked by critical theory and self-reflexivity, and more conventional curation he considers "regressive"; exhibitions in which the display of object-based artworks is the primary product, and therefore devoid of "real" social

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[171] Tara McDowell, "The Post-Occupational Position," in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, 16:1, (2016), 25.
[172] McDowell, "The Post-Occupational," 25.

change. Although I don't agree with him that curation privileging object-based artwork is regressive (nor does McDowell), his assertions and McDowell's readings of his pedagogy, widens what curatorial practice can, and should, entail.

In a similar vein to littoral art, paracuratorial praxis privileges disruption, collaboration, and social engagement. It exists in part because of how paracuratorial curators turn to specific methodologies, including Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies. Rarely in curatorial discourse, are the strategies and values of Indigenous curators and artists named in discussions about socially-engaged curating, or art-making. This suggests, within the paracuratorial there are potential openings which don't necessarily exist in other discourses, where in the future, Indigenous and non-Indigenous curators may be able to "bring the knowledge systems closer together and encourage them to develop mutual respect, understanding, and eventually cooperation."[173]

Curating Care, Curating as Care

In the text "Making Time for Conversations of Resistance", Liza Fior, Elke Krasny, and Jana Da Mosto identify conversation-driven curatorial practice as beneficial to making social change, and a form of "caring activism". Citing Mikhail Bahktin's coining of the term "dialogic", they recognize that dialogic conversations are not about finding common ground. Instead, they suggest that through the process of exchange, people may expand their understandings of others, without achieving resolutions. This is a departure from O'Neill, who names the importance of dialectical engagement, which does not exclude the dialogic, and indicates a more oppositional encounter.

Krasny in particular foregrounds the concept of care, curating's literal core, more strongly within contemporary practice. She draws on feminist care theory emphasizing "the ontological and political levels of co-dependence and interrelatedness between non-humans and humans," in this case meaning objects exhibited or presented in art institutions, and members of the public who visit them. [174] She recognizes the shift from curator-as-carer, to curator-as-

[173] Kerstin Knopf, "The Turn Toward the Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the Academy". In Amerikastudien / American Studies, Vol. 60, No. 2/3 (2015): 183, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44071904.

[174] Elke Krasny, "Caring Activism- Assembly, Collection, and the Museum," in Collecting in Time (2017), 3. http://collecting-in-time.gfzk.de/en,2017.

author, an association of gender roles which parallel caretaking labour found in private domestic spaces, often hidden from the public realm. She states, "the historically gendered, sexed, and racialized divide between public and private, visible and hidden, valued and un(der)valued provides a clearer understanding of why the curator-as-carer was transformed through the 20th century into the curator-as-author."[175] Krasny advocates a contemporary redressing and return to the curator as a facilitator of care, actively engaged with artists and communities, and responsive to contemporary contexts and situations as they arise. *Circuit Training – a retrospective in becoming. Konsthall C15 years 2004-2019*, curated by artists/curators Malin Arnell and Mar Fjell, is one such example of caring activism.

Konsthall C is situated in Hökarängen, Stockholm. It is an art centre developed in cooperation with artists and art institutions from around the globe, driven by values of diversity, equality and solidarity. Investigation, discussion, and collaboration are essential to the centre's exhibitions and activities, geared towards engagement with social structures, community, democracy, and utopianism. *Circuit Training – a retrospective in becoming. Konsthall C15 years 2004-2019* was a six-week collaborative endeavour, guided by Arnell and Fjell, guest artists, theorists, architects, curators, and the local community. It was presented as a "circuit training" program with seven stations geared towards concepts like "decoloniality", "home works", and "sustainability". For example, *Station #2, decoloniality* curated by Camila Marambio in collaboration with the Brown Island artist collective, invited conversation partners to collectively practice community and manifest a space where people of colour (PoC) could gather to support one another, in deep consideration of the word "no", to them an opening for intergenerational, multilingual, and anticolonial exchange. *Station #4, home works*, continued to prioritize decoloniality, as invited architect Sandi Hilal activated space for conversations "about how we can live and make life possible in a world filled with forced displacement and migration, often with the consequence of a loss of agency."[176] *Station #6, sustainability* was instigated by the group General Sisters, who reached out to a local public garden and asked if they could work

[175] Krasny, "Caring Activism," 4.
[176] Malin Arnell and Mar Fjell, "Curators Statement," for Circuit Training – a retrospective in becoming. Konsthall C15 years 2004-2019, http://www.malinarnell.org/files/circuit-training-english.pdf.

together to help put the garden to rest for the winter. This included harvesting, a participatory ritual for the dormant growing boxes, and clearing the plant beds for Spring planting.

In addition to making space for dialogue and active listening, the curators of *Circuit Training* organized multiple events constituting care, including a walk in the local forest, a print-making workshop, poetry-readings, and a performative lecture about the vitality of tuning into sleep for productivity. However, in the early stages of the project, their plans were drastically altered due to conflict within the organization. It was revealed there were significant labour and board disputes at Konsthall C which were deemed to be racially motivated. In particular Samuel Girma, a curator and co-founder of the anti-racist, intersectional, and feminist movement Black Queers Sweden, was not allowed to keep their contract with Konsthall C. This was interpreted to be the organization not living up to its mandate and Ashik Zaman, the only PoC (Person of Colour) board member resigned, with several others following suit in solidarity. Shortly after, Brown Island withdrew from the exhibition and took down their work, and CinemAfrica cancelled its planned participation.

Malin Arnell and Mar Fjell stood in solidarity with the PoC artists, board members and Samuel Girma. They dedicated the final program, *Station #6, internal work routines, methods and structures, part 2*, to a public call out to the board and administrators of Konsthall C. They accused them of being blinded by their own good will and ambitions, and ignorant about the deep and long-term impact of structural racism. The curators demanded answers about actions taken and their negative impact on PoC contributors, and the overall organization. Their final curatorial activations were to scrub the gallery clean of any trace of *Circuit Training*, leaving it sterile and white, a commentary on the organizations' structure and deep-rooted discriminatory attitudes. They also expressed gratitude to all those involved with the organization, past, present and future, and suggested that their final station become an instigator of repair and evolution for Konsthall C.[177] *Circuit Training* is exemplary of curating as caring activism. The curators valued dialogue, were responsive to community concerns, and used their temporary platform to demand Konsthall C do better by PoC artists, curators, and communities, when it was required they do so, despite their curatorial thesis or negative impact on their exhibition plans.

[177] Malin Arnell and Mar Fjell, "Curators Statement," for *Circuit Training – a retrospective in becoming*.

Perceiving art institutions as sites of possibility for particular forms of activation, curators who turn to feminism, dialogue and notions of care, provide remedies and tinctures to the gallery proper. Krasny's consideration of curating as socially driven "care" is threaded to littoral arts practice, albeit expanding the focus on artists and communities, to include socially-engaged curators. Conversation-driven curating as caring activism is an extension of paracuratorial practice, deviating slightly by privileging dialogic, over dialectic experiences. It is in her naming the interrelatedness between human and non-human worlds, where li nakishkamohk is made between curating as caring activism, and Indigenous Littoral Curation. Valuing relationality between human and non-human realms is also necessary for ILC, however it is informed by Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and not the engagement occurring between art objects (non-human world) and humans (gallery visitors).

Concluding Thoughts

Dion Million shares, "theoretical narratives mobilize boundaries of what can be thought and acted upon."[178] She also recognizes that theories may colonize. Therefore, they require the reorganization of boundaries that are active and embodied narrative practices, which travel or migrate across certain kinds of knowledge domains. This reorganization and mobilization can help provide context and develop littoral curatorial strategies. For example it's valuable to identify artistic or curatorial initiatives from within a western art construct, that attempt to dismantle it and activate social change. As washagay peywinwa, they can help break the confines of the western art milieu for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous arts practitioners and stakeholders, who value community-focused cross-cultural and intercultural exchange.

By aiming a critical lens at theories about littoral art, paracuratorial practice and caring activism, and without attempting to synthesize or locate commonality, we can locate more expansive and nuanced understandings, strategies and relationships. This doesn't remove curators from Indigenous knowledge and practice, but allows for critical contemplation of the art world in which we operate, while further leading our Indigenous hearts home. As Dr. Richard

[178] Dian Million, "Intense Dreaming: Theories, Narratives, and Our Search for Home" in American Indian Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 3, Special Issue: American Indian Studies Today (Summer 2011), 321.

Hill aptly states, “If we want to be Indigenous in the present, we need all the tools available to us. And the courage to use them.” [179]

[179] Richard William Hill, “Is There An Indigenous Way To Write About Indigenous Art?” in Canadian Art (May 25, 2016), https://canadianart.ca/essays/indigenous-way-write-indigenous-art/.

Chapter 5

Miyeu Pimaatshiwin: The Tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation and Select Examples[180]

Indigenous Littoral Curation (ILC) is a means to facilitate enrichment for Indigenous cultures, nations, and knowledge systems. It is pedagogy and praxis that a); disrupts conventional curatorial practice by centering dialogue and fluid processes, b); activates art and culture in generative ways to build relations and transmit knowledge, c); employs the littoral as a metaphor for interdisciplinary approaches to curatorial practice, d); merges lived experiences with theory about the need for dialogue-driven and care-based artistic and curatorial encounters, and e); occurs when curators activate and embody their respective knowledge systems through collaboration, dialogue, and "generous reciprocity".[181]

The purpose of this chapter is to present key identifiers and examples of ILC. I begin by listing ten working tenets which frame ILC as pedagogy and praxis. The tenets also provide criteria for critical engagement with dialogical and socially-engaged curatorial practices. I then present six projects which exemplify this type of curatorial practice. These examples were chosen as a result of deep contemplation on the makeup of ILC, thorough research into recent and previous curatorial practice and contexts, activation of washagay, and enriching dialogue with curators discussed in this chapter. I have viewed, witnessed or participated in most of the six examples with the exception of Missy Leblanc and Lisa Myer's expansive curated projects. I present BUSH gallery as its own unique entity, by discussing several key divergent projects which generate a wholistic and traversing approach to curatorial work. This is a departure from how I discuss other examples, where I hone in on one key project containing multiple iterations or expansions, stemming from the same theme. I present these case-studies as stand-alone "inserts," providing key details about the exhibitions, descriptors of the curatorial premise, artworks and activations, and conversation excerpts taken from one-on-one or collective dialogic encounters. I end this chapter with concluding thoughts about the naming of ILC as a particular

[180] Miyeu Pimaatshiwin is a core Michif concept, and something I and other curators strive for in our practices that are based on collaboration and open-ended processes.
[181] "Generous reciprocity" places emphasis on being of a generous mind first and foremost, to ensure a type of reciprocity founded on equitable and mutual respect for stakeholders.

type of curatorial practice, a receptor and transmitter of knowledges, and instigator of critical discourses.

These inserts are arranged in a constellatory format, meaning that I present them as interrelated tributaries towards a cohesive naming of ILC. I frame each example with relatable Michif terms and concepts which guided my engagements, contemplations and understandings of these curatorial projects. By doing so, the chapter as a whole presents a cohesive constellation of core Michif concepts and value systems applied to this work. Although I name them in my language, I do so with the hopes of encouraging others to consider their own knowledge systems as a framework for naming and critically engaging with Indigenous Littoral Curation.

The Ten Tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation is influenced by Bruce Barber's "Sentences on Littoral Art", discussed in Chapter Four. This list provides teachings and guidelines for littoral art practice, including its theoretical terrain, relevant social and cultural value systems and contexts, and the possibilities littoral art carries to enact social change.[182] I also rely on Adam Gaudry's naming of the four key ways insurgent research is rooted within existing methodologies. These include: (1) by employing Indigenous world- views; (2) by orienting knowledge creation toward Indigenous peoples and their communities; (3) by seeing the responsibility of researchers as directed almost exclusively toward the community and participants and; (4) by promoting community-based action that targets the demise of colonial interference within our lives and communities.[183] Barber and Gaudry's writings are beneficial when naming curatorial work geared toward community, nurtured by reciprocal relationships, and responsible toward collaborators and participants first and foremost. I consider these to be working tenets, open to critical responses, revisions and new additions by others. As the name "Indigenous Littoral Curation" is a temporary placeholder for Indigenous dialogic curatorial practice, so are the ten tenets. They list process, possibility, and space, but I employ them with the understanding these will shift through time, responding to the circular, fluid and rhythmic motion of washagay.

[182] Bruce Barber, "Sentences on Littoral Art," in *Littoral Art and Communicative Action*, ed. by Marc Léger (Illinois: Common Ground Publishing, 2013), 35.
[183] Adam Gaudry, "Insurgent Research". *Wicaso Review*.(2011), 113.

The Ten Tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation (Subject to Change By, or With Others)

1. When curating within an Indigenous paradigm, curators and artist/curators provide flint for others to spark Indigenous Knowledge Systems in themselves and others, especially when their work stems from dialogue and deep commitment to communities.

2. ILC is the result of curators prioritizing their own engagement with their respective IKS.

3. ILC flourishes when curators recognize it as radical restructuring and care, steeped in intergenerational inclusiveness and generous reciprocity among all stakeholders.

4. ILC requires paying close attention to current and past discourse about decolonization and Indigenization, and how it relates to curatorial pedagogy and praxis.

5. ILC washes up long the shorelines when curators self-reflect and share personal narratives. This helps with relationship building and disrupts western, conventional curatorial structures.

6. ILC is a participative, dialogue-based practice, saturated with meaningful experiences for the artists, curators, and other stakeholders involved.

7. ILC welcomes non-Indigenous theories, while recognizing how Indigenous praxiologists successfully create strong pasts, presents, and futures.

8. ILC curators don't just organize, they engage with all that presents itself and respond accordingly. This may lead toward expanding iterations, and forging new relationships, roles, and responsibilities to human and non-human entities.

9. ILC encourages critical dialogue and considers it a gift, securely tied to a base made of humility and receptiveness.

10. ILC involves the honouring of others on their terms and in deep ways. It also requires curators to push the boundaries of others, as well as their own.

Chikishkaytaman[184]

1). *In Dialogue*

Curated by John Hampton

Artists: Raymond Boisjoly, Raven Davis, David Garneau, Carola Grahn, Native Art Department International (Maria Hupfield and Jason Lujan), Nicole Kelly Westman, Tanya Lukin-Linklater, Amy Malbeuf, Peter Morin, Nadia Myre, Krista Belle Stewart

Co-produced by the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, and the Carleton University Art Gallery:

University of Toronto Art Centre: September 6-October 7, 2017

AGSM: January 25 – March 24, 2018

Carleton University Art Gallery: May 14-August 19, 2018

The touring exhibition *In Dialogue* emulates the structure of private discussions happening between the artists, curator, and other Indigenous individuals in their circle. Included were performance, installation, painting and video artworks presented in modes built upon this reciprocal and dialogic exchange. These assembled conversations offered audiences opportunities to engage with expressions of the artists' lived experiences as they navigate contemporary notions of Indigeneity.

John Hampton (Chickasaw) is a curator, artist, and administrator who currently holds the position of Interim Director and CEO of Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina, SK. His curatorial practice is guided by self-reflection, conversation, scrutiny of colonization, and devising opportunities for relationship-building. Hampton strategizes collaboratively with artists to create spaces of affect to confront, engage and embrace difficult dialogues.

Hampton expresses, "Tribes, nations, and cultures emerge when individuals gather to speak and something larger begins to form. This process is not always tidy and it is never complete; it involves varying degrees of self-articulation, imposition, allowance, enforcement,

[184] "Chikishkaytaman" means obtaining knowledge to carry forth and offer others, which extends beyond teaching or learning. It surfaces when curators make space for knowledge transmission.

disenfranchisement, agreement, and policing."[185] Two years before the exhibition first opened, Hampton and the artists began carrying out conversations about individual and collective identities. Some of those were directed by Hampton's discomfort with privilege they are afforded as a white-passing male who is removed from his home territory. While recognizing the value and need for this uneasiness, Hampton encourages active listening, and welcomes the opportunity to learn from others and collectively improve shared environments.

Raven Davis' contribution to *In Dialogue* parallels their own lived experience with the loss of inherited lands and waters in Indigenous communities. Davis is a Tkaronto-based, Anishinaabe, mixed-race and Two-Spirit multidisciplinary artist. In their work they speak back to colonial histories and assert presence in the face of perceived absence. Before Christian indoctrination, ancestors honoured Two-Spirit transgender persons and their contributions to ceremony and communal living. However the penetration of Christianity resulted in the unintentional repression of Two-Spirit transgender individuals in their own communities. In an intimate conversation with Hampton, Davis reflects how "One of the tragedies of losing our languages is losing the teachings and understandings of different and, for the most part, more progressive and expansive understandings of gender and sexuality that were clouded by, denied by and discredited by the church and during colonization."[186] Davis' included works, *Wiigendaagok Biintood Aki (A Severe Loss of Land)* and *Wiigendaagok Biintood Nbiish (A Severe Loss of Water)*, locate parallels with the loss of inherited rights to land and water, with their own experiences of loss when gender binaries proliferate. The large-scale depictions of a pregnant Two Spirit individual who Davis painted and photographed, carry a powerful presence, encompassed further by the linear drawings of Thunderbird, who holds space for future possibilities.

[185] John Hampton, *In Dialogue*, exhibition catalogue (Ottawa: Carleton University Art Gallery, 2018), 6.
[186] John Hampton, "In Dialogue," 6.

Figure Twenty-One: *Wiigendaagok Biintood Aki (A Severe Loss of Land)* and *Wiigendaagok Biintood Nbiish (A Severe Loss of Water)*, Ravin Davis, 2014, Acrylic on canvas print, Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott, Carleton University Art Gallery. Image downloaded from: https://agsm.ca/dialogue/.

Carola Grahns' work *Horizon of Me(aning)* is a metaphor for the process of initiating, engaging and building from difficult discussions. Grahn is a New York based artist of south Sámi descent, whose work "constructs and deconstructs humans' relations with each other and with nature to understand our given roles and how they relate to individual self-image and influence society."[187] In each touring gallery, local Indigenous folks were asked to help stack woodpiles. As the artist worked side by side with local volunteers, conversations were purposely struck about topics of identity, their ties to the land, and personal and collective hopes and struggles. The stacked wood became a carrier of these interactions, and a testimony to the labour required to collectively nourish shared space.[188]

[187] Carola Grahn, "My Name is Nature," accessed June 15, 2020, https://artii.fi/artists/carola-grahn/.

[188] When the exhibition was held at the AGSM in Brandon, MB, Grahn was unable to attend, so then Hampton was invited to work with local interested individuals to stack wood and engage in purposeful, and at times risky or uncomfortable talk. Over the course of the exhibition run, the wood stack was depleted and used for sweat lodges conducted by the Brandon Friendship Centre. This depletion did not represent a void, but the securing of relationships and potency of the art.

Figure Twenty-Two: *Horizon of Me(aning),* Carola Grahn, 2017, Stacked birch firewood. Left: Installation shot. Centre: Detail of work. Right: *In Dialogue* artists, members of the ICC and local knowledge keeper Barb Blind stacking wood. Photos taken by John Hampton at the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, 2018.

Nadia Myres' *A Casual Reconstruction* presents a 30-minute clip of a recorded two-hour unscripted dinner conversation. Myre is a Montréal-based interdisciplinary artist and Algonquin member of the Kitigan Zibi Anishnabeg First Nation.[189] Her work address issues of resiliency, knowledge, displacement, desire, and loss. *A Casual Reconstruction* invites viewers to sit in provided chairs and actively listen to Myre's recorded conversation with friends about Canada's assimilationist policy and feelings about being of mixed-race. The chairs are placed in a circle, mirroring how sharing circles are structured. The work provides proof that intimate and challenging conversations are possible when everyone is willing to partake.

Figure Twenty-Three: *A Casual Reconstruction*, Nadia Myre, 2015, Chair installation with audio recording, Photo credit: Toni Hafkensheid, Art Museum at the University of Toronto.

[189] Nadia Myre, "About Nadia", accessed October 12, 2020. http://www.nadiamyre.nethttp.

While Myre's work offered opportunities for viewers to hear rich dinner conversation from the outside listening in, Nicole Kelly Westman's piece *I felt you listening through the tenderness of your fingertips* provides opportunities to share space and manifest care with corporeal participation. Westman is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and arts administrator of Métis and Icelandic descent. As part of her performative installation work, she sat in a darkened, partially enclosed space, meditatively and quietly holding space with invited viewers. Placed in the installation space were listening instructions, folded wool blankets, and a wooden comb designed from the tracings of her mother's hands. Guests engaged in dialogue and enacted care, combing her long hair with the wooden comb provided. The work was a space for refuge, tender moments, connectivity, and care.

Figure Twenty-Four: *I felt you listening through the tenderness of your fingertips*, Nicole Kelly Westman, 2017, benches, wool blankets, carved wooden comb, listening instructions. Photo credit: Justin Wonnacott, Carleton University Art Gallery. Image downloaded from: https://agsm.ca/dialogue/.

The exhibition began with an artist panel discussion at the University of Toronto. *Opening the Dialogue* was an opportunity for the invited artists and Hampton to further their private conversations in a public space. Audience members witnessed the panelists sitting in a circle on a stage, where they conversed amongst themselves in a more intimate manner. At the AGSM a public discussion on the state of contemporary Indigenous curation was held in partnership with the ACC. This event followed a more conventional panel structure. At the CUAG, the annual Stonecroft Symposium created a forum for conversations instigated by the

artists, Hampton and invited guest speakers. The final panel "NDN White Fragility" presented opportunity for attendees to fully experience discomfort, confrontations and reminders of the need to embark further, hone our listening skills, and uphold others.

As Elisabeth Fast and Margaret Kovach note, "From an Indigenous perspective, we do not think alone. Whether we are imagining the universe in relation with the spirit, nature, or group, we are perpetually in-relation. For Indigenous knowledges, the valuing of many truths cannot be divorced from collective knowledge."[190] Together with other included works, the art created by Davis, Grahn, Myre and Westman pieced together the multiplicities and the intricacies of dialogic encounters. As Hampton notes, "This gathering of work embraces the wildly individualistic tumble of connections and contradictions that constitute contemporary Indigenous identities, in open dialogue—between artists, audiences, and the interconnected mesh-works woven between all our relations."[191]

Conversation Excerpt

Hampton and I first met to engage in critical dialogue in November 2016 in Brandon, MB. We continued to informally discuss key topics from this initial conversation, constructed as a Métis Kitchen Table Talk. We debated the effectiveness and generosity of presenting a private conversation among artists that audience members were not allowed to respond to with questions, formal presentations, or antidotes. The following are excerpts from that conversation, intertwined with follow-up ones.

CM: I'm interested in whether you think about reciprocity or notions of community grounded in Indigenous knowledge in your work. It's important for people to recognize other's individual experiences, thoughts and ways of being as a contributor to a collective. Everyone who contributed to *In Dialogue* come from different cultural backgrounds, geographic locations, genders, and intuitions as Indigenous folks… Within those conversations it's not the same experience for everyone involved in dialogue, right?

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[190] Elisabeth Fast, Margaret Kovach, "Community Relationships Within Indigenous Methodologies", In *Applying Indigenous Research Methods: Storying with Peoples and Communities*. Ed Windchief Sweeney, San Pedro Timothy, (Routledge, 2019), 25.
[191] John Hampton, *In Dialogue*, exhibition catalogue, (Brandon: AGSM, 2018), 1.

JH: The idea for the project began from general conversations… to talk through challenges or issues pertaining to navigating Indigenous identity in what we call the art world. So sharing those experiences and talking about how we present and navigate our own identities, while they're being commodified and defined under this increased scrutinization and legislation. Where those relationships exist within that conversation, is they impact self-determination as it exists within specific nations, but also in this concept of Indigeneity we're using… as the artists involved in the exhibition understand it. The exhibition presents those voices, that collective body, and comes to some terms and understandings. It helps enact some of the principles or curatorial methodologies, and consider what conversations are just for us and which the public can be privy to.

CM: You started conversations by thinking personally about something to untangle, and then being really candid and open about it. You address what goes out, and what comes back in, and how things move along the shoreline, or washagay.

JH: We framed these conversations as being about the complexities inherent in Indigenous identity, and how everyone has their own things they're wrestling with and trying to articulate. Everyone participating in that project had something they were navigating. One of the things I came with and was working through was how access to whiteness interacts with Indigenous identity. That definitely was helpful for me in trying to untangle some of those complexities that can't be done alone. For me the topics moved… I think I came to a resolution of comfortability, of my own sense of self and how I can properly honour my non-Indigenous mother as well.

CM: I think our ancestors were so theoretical and philosophical, and recognized the individual within the collective, and this openness to threads of thought and doing, is often what we're trying to do as curators.

JH: The need for a collective body to come to some terms and understandings can help enact some of the principles or curatorial methodologies I was trying to put into work and to define.

Paashchipew[192]

2.) *Taskoch pipon kona kah nipa muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew/ Like the winter snow kills the grass, the summer sun revives it*

Curated by Missy LeBlanc

Artists: Joi T. Arcand, Richelle Bear Hat, Susan Blight, Tsēmā Igharas, Michelle Sylliboy, and Alberta Rose W./Ingniq

November 1 – December 14, 2019
TRUCK Contemporary Art, Calgary, AB

In *Taskoch pipon kona kah nipa muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew* Missy Leblanc (Missy) gathered artists from each of the major geographic regions of Canada who create work incorporating their Indigenous languages. With performance, installation, sculpture, tapestry, and video, the artists expose their languages as knowledge transference bound to the land. The multi-faceted exhibition participates in language revitalization and reveals how languages interconnect with Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Missy Leblanc is a curator and writer of Métis, nêhiyaw, and Polish descent born and raised in amiskwacîwâskahikan (Edmonton), and now based in Mohkinstis (Calgary). She is currently the Inaugural Emerging Curatorial Resident at TRUCK Contemporary Art in Calgary, AB. Other curatorial projects include *Tina Guyani/Deer Road* (2019) and *Reverberate* (2018). LeBlanc is also the winner of the 2019 Middlebrook Prize for Young Canadian Curators.

Missy divulges that, "this exhibition on language was something that I've been thinking about for a while because I don't know Cree, and I don't know Michif. I can pronounce some words. My paternal grandmother spoke Michif, Cree, French, and English. My maternal

[192] "Pashchipew" names the natural overflowing waters which merge with other branches of moving waters. It can symbolize cultural continuity, knowledge transmission and relationship building. It is a reminder of the ancestor's presence; continuous and moving beneath the surface for generations now and those to come.

grandmother spoke Cree and English. But none of those were ever passed down to my parents as a way to protect them from the Sixties Scoop."[193] This narrative of grandparents not carrying on the language to younger generations for fear they will be penalized by colonial society is familiar to many. Residential schools, Church-led initiatives to convert people to Christianity, and government policies of assimilation took their toll on several generations of speakers. As languages are often learned intergenerationally while spending time together on the land gaining life skills and insight about epistemologies, the lack of language transference creates several layers of disconnect.

While working on the project Missy came across a statement from Statistics Canada that there exists 100 or so Indigenous languages in what is now called Canada, but within the next 100 years, only three of them are going to survive: Plains Cree, Inuktitut, Ojibwemowin.[194] This statistic assumes Indigenous people will not connect back to their languages, or be provided opportunities to learn them.[195] This statistic exposes colonial thinking and lack of awareness for the resilience of Indigenous peoples. There are many who remember their language and are teaching others, who then become language carriers themselves.

Language revitalization helps secure Indigenous peoples to the land, while revealing vital knowledges around kinship, spirit, and reciprocity. Missy states, "What I noticed was that a lot of artists were using their languages within their art practices as a way to learn them and be consistent with learning. But also as a way to reconnect or connect better with the specific epistemologies and ontologies of their specific nations."[196] Missy conducted research on epistemologies found in languages, how they are interwoven, and currently being recovered. She then located artists working within their languages including Anishinaabemowin, Komqwejwi'kasikl, Nitsiipowahsiin, nēhiyawēwin, Tāłtān, and Uummarmiutim. The artists provide artwork exposing how language revitalization is intergenerational and a form of personal and collective nourishment. Works featured in the exhibition expose the intimacy between teachers and learners, and the strategies employed to reconnect to the land through language.

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[193] Missy LeBlanc notes that, "Another problem with this statistic was that they didn't bother naming the languages in their respective languages or they used umbrella terms for many different dialects found within." Correspondence with author, October 31, 2020.
[194]Interview with Missy LeBlanc, July 13, 2020, Zoom.
[195] Interview with Missy LeBlanc.
[196] Interview with Missy LeBlanc.

Figure Twenty-Five: *ēkāwiya nēpēwisi (don't be shy)*, Joi T. Arcand, 2017, Neon Channel Sign. Photo credit: Elyse Bouvier

Joi T. Arcand's (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation) neon sign piece *ēkāwiya nēpēwisi (don't be shy)* is part of the "Wayfinding Series". According to Cheryl L'Hirondelle (Métis/Cree/French/German/Polish), "The ancient art of wayfinding has been described as being both a process of calculating one's position in time-space by estimating distances travelled, and of being deeply attuned, watching for signs and visualising what lies ahead."[197] The neon sign in syllabics embodies past practices of tagging public spaces with syllabics to help others on their journeys. Arcand's piece welcomes visitors into the gallery space, and encourages them to be bold in their engagement with inherited languages whether they are carriers, first-time learners, or are being exposed for the very first time.

Nitssapaatsimaahkooka (she shared with me) (2019) by Richelle Bear Hat is a two channel video piece featuring audio and memojis of collaborator and grandmother Alona Theoret and herself during a session of Nitsiipowahsin learning. Bear Hats' shyness, and Theorets' encouragement exposes the intimacy between teacher and learner, and how intergenerational connections are secured through the process of learning language. The work also reveals the savviness of teachers who use tools relevant to a younger generation, in this case social media apps like memojis.

[197] Cheryl L'Hirondelle, "Joi T. Arcand's Wayfinding, a continuum of old and new school tagging and teachings", in *Blackflash* (November 5, 2019), https://blackflash.ca/2019/11/05/joi-t-arcands-wayfinding/.

Figure Twenty-Six: *Nitssapaatsimaahkooka (she shared with me),* Richelle Bear Hat, 2019, Two-Channel Video. Photo Credit: Elyse Bouvier

On the Occasion of our small gatherings by Susan Blight, is an ongoing series of hooked rugs with phrases in Anishinaabemowin. The blue bubbles encasing white text is a mixture of light-hearted statements or more political commentary. The familiar blue bubble signifies iPhone messaging text, a reference to how language is shared through technology and social media. Anishinaabe ways indicate the value of something is enhanced by how much it is shared, an important and applicable teaching for language revitalization. Blight states how the series "also alludes to a near future in which our languages are spoken and texted, as regularly and casually as English."[198] The series considers how contemporary formats of communication are aids in generating value and knowledge and imagines a hopeful future.

[198] Susan Blight, personal website, accessed August 1, 2020. https://www.susanblight.com/on-the-occasion-of-our-small-gather.

Figure Twenty-Seven: *Giminotaagoz, indinawemaagan! (you sound good, my relative) & Mii geyaabi maa ayaayang (we are still here)* from the *On the Occasion of our small gatherings* series, Susan Blight, 2019-ongoing, hooked rug, Photo courtesy of TRUCK Contemporary Art

Tāłtān for Reclamation 2 , Es-gha-nana by Tsēmā Igharas is a single channel video projected onto hide that responds to a quest for the appropriate term for "reclamation" in the Tāłtān language. In this work Igharas visualizes the land calling out to industrial sites of trauma with the word "esghanānā," meaning "give it back to me" in English. In the video the word is cut into hide and sprayed onto stone as an assertion for land to be reclaimed and returned to a natural state post-development. Another layer of engagement with the word "esghanānā" occurs when the video is projected onto the hide the word was cut into and worn by Igharas in the video.

Figure Twenty-Eight: *Tāłtān for Reclamation 2, ES-gha-nana*, Tsēmā Igharas, 2019, single channel video, caribou hide, Photo courtesy of TRUCK Contemporary Art

Michelle Sylliboy's piece *The Whale is Great* is the result of multi-faceted collaboration with her family and community. Sylliboy rescued bones of a beached whale with her brother's help, and then incorporated words and thoughts from community members into the piece, carving them with the komqwej'wikasikl glyph-based writing system. This written system is misunderstood and considered to be close to extinction. Sylliboy holds up to her community the continued existence of the writing-system, their role in its continuation, and how language is tied to the land and all its beings.

Figure Twenty-Nine: *The Whale is Great (detail)*, Michelle Sylliboy, 2018, whale bone. Photo courtesy of TRUCK Contemporary Art.

Alberta Rose W./Ingniq's performance on opening night, *ilihaqtunga (I Learn)*, spoke to how the loss of language may create feelings of alienation, but simple acts to maintain connection are profound in revitalizing language and culture. Ingniq wrote the words she knows in Uummarmiutun, a dialect of Inuvialuktun in charcoal, and English words in pencil/graphite around TRUCK gallery. The process of learning and retaining was manifested physically as she moved around the gallery to write words in her language, sometimes struggling to reach high up to place text on the walls. As audience members watched, they slowly moved out of the way when needed to make space for her to take over, recover, and imbue the shared space with Uummarmiutun.[199]

[199] Missy notes that, "Alberta is ambidextrous, but writes best with her left hand. She utilized her left hand to write the Uummarmiutun words and her right the English. For her, the use of her

In addition to the exhibition, a catalogue was published privileging the languages of contributing artists as well as Missy's inherited languages. The text discussing the artists' work is in their languages. Missy's essay in English is found in the back, and presents her personal engagement with their work and language during the project. By not providing translations into English, and only locating her writing in English at the end, the catalogue asserts Indigenous languages as a signifier of resilience and inherited rights to language and land. As well, the placement of the curatorial text at the end of the catalogue, instead of the beginning, shifts the priority often placed on the curators' voice within exhibition publications.

According to Missy, "TRUCK has a history of doing offsite exhibitions away from the gallery, partnering with other institutions in the city, and working with local emerging artists, so I wanted to do something to that respect as well. That's where the *Mother Tongues* exhibition came from. I wanted to pay respect to the languages of this territory. That would be Blackfoot, Stoney Nakota, Tsuut'ina, and then Cree. I wanted to work with four emerging artists, one to represent each of the individual languages, which is a big ask."[200] This adjoining exhibition was curated by Missy and presented in partnership with the Calgary Central Public Library. She writes about this component,

> *Mamanaw Pekiskwewina | Mother Tongues* brings together emerging artists from four Indigenous language groups of the Treaty 7 region, who incorporate Nakoda, nêhiyawêwin, Nitsiipowahsiin, and Tsuut'ina into their artistic practices. *Mamanaw Pekiskwewina | Mother Tongues* gives space back to the First Nations communities of this area, while asserting that the Indigenous lands that we occupy carry specific language traditions that root us to this land and still flow through us.[201]

The exhibition was held at the library from October 15-December 14, 2019. Cheyenne Bearspaw (Iyethkabi Nakoda) created the painted window mural *Mothers of the Oral Medicine,* representing the passing of language, medicine and prayer intergenerationally. Alyssa Duck Chief (Siksika Nation and a member of the Blackfoot Confederacy in Southern Alberta), made

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stronger hand for the Uummarmiutun is reflective of the fact that this is the language that she should have grown up and should be stronger at speaking/knowing and not English. Correspondence with author, October 31, 2020.

[200] Missy LeBlanc, interview with the author.

[201] "Mamanaw Pekiskwewina | Mother Tongues," TRUCK Contemporary Art, accessed August 1, 2020, http://www.truck.ca/current-exhibitions/2019/10/5/mamanaw-pekiskwewina-mother-tongues.

work expressing their yearning to be fluent in Nitsiipowahsiin. The title of the text-based work *Ihstaipa'pohko* translates into "dreaming about it" in Nitsiipowahsiin, articulating their yearning to know their language, and experience the liberation doing so permits. ᐊᐧᖿᒧᐣ *Wasakamon* by Danielle Piper (nêhiyaw iskwew from Cold Lake First Nations) merges a chart of characters found in nêhiyawêwin and audio containing found field recordings and beating sounds that track Piper's rhythm when pronouncing different syllables. Together the chart and audio sounds embody the knowledge systems the land offers, and presents the pulsations of land and language merging. The final piece was a collaborative endeavor between TRUCK, Stride Gallery and youth from the Tsuut'ina Nation—as part of the Gumisistiy youth art program. Artist AJ Starlight led a two-day workshop resulting in a collaborative graffiti-inspired mural, entitled *Tsuut'ina nàmó-nà dàdàsāàlīn gútsītł'à móghàchīnīyāà?ò īgúł.* This phrase means "We are all Tsuut'ina warriors, even when we are afraid", and was inspired by the tenacity of local elders. During the exhibition Alyssa Duck Chief led a zine-making workshop with youth as part of a Gumisistiy workshop.

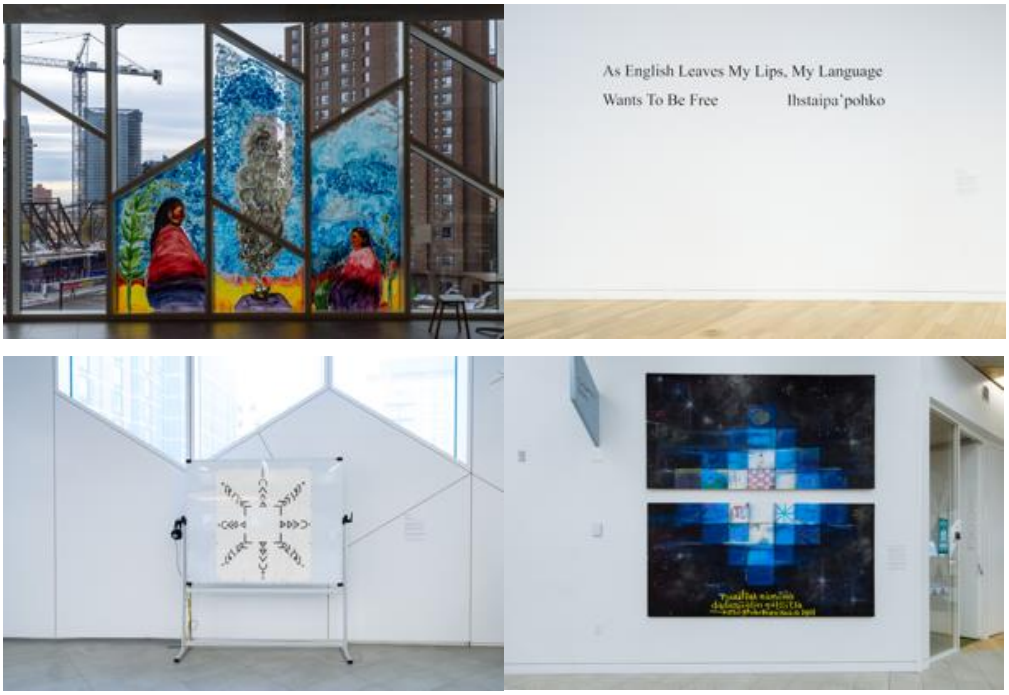

Figure Thirty: Mothers of the Oral Medicine (Cheyenne Bearspaw, 2019), Ihstaipa'pohko (Alyssa Duck Chief, 2019), ᐊᐧᖿᒧᐣ *Wasakamon* (Danielle Piper, 2019), Tsuut'ina nàmó-nà dàdàsāàlīn gútsītł'à móghàchīnīyāà?ò īgúł (AJ Starlight and youth from Tsuut'ina Nation, 2019). Photo Credit: Elyse Bouvier.

Missy mentions that one reason for partnering with the Calgary Central Library was to ensure there would be as much exposure to these emerging artists' work as possible. She states, "I wanted to have these languages in a very public format so people understood they were on Indigenous land, and these were the languages of the land. The Central Library has thousands of people going through there each day, so these works would have been highly seen."[202]

There was also a full-day symposium held at the library, also titled *Mamanaw Pekiskwewina/Mother Tongues*. This day-long gathering featured artists from *pipon kona/nepin pesim* in dialogue with local knowledge keepers and community organizers from Siksika First Nation and Tsuut'ina First Nation. It also included a tour of *Mamanaw Pekiskwewina/Mother Tongues* guided by Missy. The first community roundtable discussion centered on gathering and community and the second on healing and kindness. Participants did not have to adhere to those themes, and conversations branched out to community activism, food sovereignty, and engaging with community intergenerationally in ways that center language and art.

Missy writes, "learning your ancestral language opens up the knowledge that has been known since time immemorial of ways to take care of one's self, of others, and of the land…"[203] The symposium exemplified this and expressed the intricacies of how relationships are formed with language revitalization. The participants were all in various phases of knowing their language and shared their experiences openly. Some were tentative in speaking words or introducing themselves in their languages, while others did so more confidently. Family members, teachers and community members were present, and some audience members shared their language with the audience. The gathering was organized with much consideration for participants well-being. The panels were only an hour long each. There were two-hour breaks in between in case participants needed to decompress. Food was made available by an Indigenous caterer, and the symposium was free and open to the public. Missy shares,

> Having it in the library made it so people who just happened
> to in the library could join us at any point they wished. It was really
> lovely to have these conversations for people to stumble on, listen a bit,
> and then find a chair to sit down. Because even though their intention wasn't
> to spend three hours at the library, some of them did.[204]

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[202] Missy LeBlanc, interview with author.
[203]Missy LeBlanc, *Taskoch pipon kona kah nipa muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew*, exhibition catalogue, (Calgary: TRUCK Contemporary Art, 2019).
[204] Missy LeBlanc, interview with author.

The exhibition will be touring to other locations including Edmonton AB, Saskatoon SK, Oshawa ON, and Halifax NS. Métis artist Audie Murray will be joining the artist cohort for the tour component. Missy's choice of tour locations happened in dialogue with the artists. She gave artists a list of potential places to choose from: where the artists currently live, or are the closest city to their own home territories. The framework for the travelling component includes "paying respect to the languages of that land and territory, as well as presenting it in a public place to reiterate to people they are on Indigenous land, and we're still here."[205]

The tour will require hosting galleries to collaborate with local Indigenous communities. Missy has requested that each gallery hire a local Indigenous curatorial assistant to conduct research on local languages. As well, the galleries must host an iteration of *Mamanaw Pekiskwewina/Mother Tongues,* featuring local emerging artists. Although Missy will be involved for final decisions and to provide guidance, hosting galleries are expected to invest more than normally required for a touring exhibition. Missy sees this as an opportunity for galleries, especially ones that don't have good relationships with Indigenous communities, to "start actually building those relationships and show local Indigenous peoples they actually do care."[206] This can include drop-in language workshops or full-length courses during the run of the exhibition, and other initiatives to bridge gaps, build and sustain long-term relationships between galleries and communities. In each hosting locale, *pipon kon/nepin pesim* will look different, and will take into account what local communities needs and wants are for language representation.

As Mercedes Webb (Haida and Kwakwaka'wakw) reminds us,

> Language reclamation can be an intimate, relational, intergenerational act of resistance and care that provides healing from settler-imposed genocide through connecting us more deeply to the land and our ancestors. It can also be painful, exhausting, disheartening and frustrating—a constant reminder of that which was forcibly taken.[207]

[205] Missy LeBlanc, interview with author.
[206] Missy LeBlanc, interview with author.
[207] Mercedes Webb, "My language, my dreams - Indigenous language revitalization, practices, and epistemologies," inRungh Magazine, vol.7, no.1, (2020): https://rungh.org/my-language-my-dreams.

Taskoch pipon kona kah nipa muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew/ Like the winter snow kills the grass, the summer sun revives it presents the complexities Webb reveals in her review of the exhibition project. It is a forum that is responsive to artist, community, and gallery needs. Missy notes in the catalogue how "To share time and space with your ancestral language can be an act of self-care."[208] The project is grounded by this, and carries key elements of Indigenous Littoral Curation. It is dialogic, collaborative, open-ended and an intergenerational site of knowledge transmission, cultural continuity and relationship-building. It speaks to the interconnectedness of land, language, and resistance, and shows us that our languages are carried forth by pashchipew, coursing right beneath the surface, ready to be remembered, uttered, and shared by generations now and those to come.

Conversation Excerpts

This excerpt is from a conversation Missy LeBlanc and I had over Zoom in early Summer, 2020. During this dialogue we discussed the loss created by not knowing language, how it can be accessed now and the obstacles with that, and the intricacies of curating with community in mind. We also spoke about our families, and how they impact our cultural senses of self.

CM: When you were speaking about the naming of the exhibition in Michif and sharing your experience with your language, I noticed it is similar to mine. My grandparents spoke their languages and then didn't pass them on. When I found out English wasn't their first language, I was shocked. Then when I started learning Michif, I found it familiar somehow. I recognized how some of our mannerisms and intonations or accents stem from my grandparents carrying inherited languages. So I'm wondering if there was anything on more of a personal level, organizing this exhibition project meant for you?

ML: I guess what this meant for me was kind of a first step in prioritizing my languages, and in prioritizing Indigenous languages. There are so many artists and friends I know who do prioritize it and I have very deep respect for this, because it's not been something I've been able to do. Because there's a lot of unpacking you have to do on top of just going to a language class.

[208] Missy LeBlanc, "Taskoch Pipon," unpag.

There’s the unpacking of why you have to go to a class to learn your own language in the first place. Like why don’t I just know this language already? So this exhibition was the first step of that unpacking, and in seeing what language classes are available. But also in locating what revitalization practices are happening, and how I can go about it in a healthy way for me, and where I'm paying respect to these languages.

CM: I think about my languages, and how the ability to communicate fully in them is lost for me. I'll never be able to do it to the extent I would like. But I think there's really strong ties between visual languages and spoken languages. They're interlinked. So it's almost like we embody or contribute to language even when we can't verbalize it. I think a lot of what you're saying and the way you talk about the exhibition suggests exhibitions and artworks can become language portals. Even if we don’t have a full and cohesive understanding. The languages are still apparent and existing, more than we even realize. Does that make sense?

ML: Totally. But because the languages are so tied to the land, without the land, you don't get that extra layer of knowledge. You're missing something. A word might refer to something which doesn't actually physically exist anymore. Maybe a word meant tree, but it meant more than just tree. There was so much more to spoken language, and we lose a layer of knowledge and how to know what we know.

CM: One thing I have been thinking about is how curating, in spite of colonization and the blockades put up for us, is cultural continuance and continuum. Amongst our ancestors, there were individuals who took care of art makers and art. So for me, we embody this now in a contemporary, curatorial format. When I think about it in such a way, I see opportunities for self-reflection and for curators to engage with their languages, as part of their own resurgence or cultural growth. This is one of the tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation. Your exhibition/project is creating generative sites of knowledge transmission, and it is branch-like in how it reaches out to others. It’s pretty exciting.

ML: For me, language revitalization is not only about reclaiming our ancestral languages, rather, it is also about recovering our ways of knowing and being that were stolen from us as Indigenous

people. The muscle memory of our ancestors flows through us, it isn't lost, but work needs to be done to uncover that knowledge. Hard work, tender work, work that should not have to be done, but work nonetheless. This project was the first step in this work for me, working closely with translators not only from the artists ancestral languages, but from my own as well. Coming across statistics based on the expectation of the success of the colonial project here in so-called Canada was hard. But at the same time, it made it apparent that the work that I was doing with this exhibition, the work the artists were creating, and most importantly, the work of the language holders and knowledge keepers is needed more than ever.

Li Nakishkamohk[209]

3). *Post Script*

Curated by Lisa Meyers

Artists: Rebecca Belmore, Susan Blight, Melissa General, Luke Parnell

June 1- 30, 2018

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, ON

Post Script was cultivated from Rebecca Belmore's instrumental artwork *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*. The exhibition was curated by Lisa Myers (Lisa) for the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, and featured new and recent works in dialogue with Belmore's sculptural piece, emphasizing interlaces found between the body, land and voice. Myers conceived the exhibition as a continuation of conversations struck in her previously curated exhibition for KWAG, *Carry Forward* (2017).

Lisa Myers (Beausoleil First Nation) is an independent curator, artist, and Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change at York University in Toronto, ON. Her art mediums include printmaking, stop-motion animation and participatory performances. In Lisa's curatorial practice she "works with the artist(s) collaboratively to investigate the curatorial premise or thesis of an exhibition. In this way, I value the reciprocation of ideas and research between the artist(s) and curator throughout the planning of an exhibition."[210] General themes found in her curatorial interests include food as material, geography, and customary and cosmological value systems situated in Indigenous contemporary art.

The term "carry forward" alludes to tallying gains and losses. Some are traceable through documents and documentation while others are intangible, revealed in stories, knowledge systems, personal and collective memories, and place. *Carry Forward* presented the works of Maria Thereza Alves, Marjorie Beaucage, Deanna Bowen, Dana Claxton, Brenda Draney,

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[209] "Li Nakishkamohk" describes a bridge, or the points of connection that make a bridge. It is a descriptor of how curators locate points of connection between institutions, artists and communities.

[210] Lisa Meyers, "Curatorial Statement," accessed July 18, 2020, https://lisarosemyers.com/news.html.

John Hampton, Jamelie Hassan, Mike MacDonald, Nadia Myre, Krista Belle Stewart and Maika'i Tubbs. Myers states, "*Carry Forward* reveals how excavating documents in all their manifestations embodies the liveliness of histories, of telling and retelling, of redacting and uncovering. In foregrounding these processes, the artists within the exhibition reveal tensions in how documents and documentation—and the values they encode—are differentially rendered legible and legitimate. Both are means to carry forward experiences, histories, and knowledge."[211] *Carry Forward* gages the perceived authenticity and authority documents and documentation carry. Additionally it implores the importance of carrying forward knowledge and history to living and future generations.

The exhibition is inspired by Mi'kmaq/Beothuk/Scottish artist Mike MacDonald's documentary-style video art practice. Lisa included MacDonald's seminal video installation piece *Electronic Totem* (1987) in the exhibition. It is made up of five videos configured in totem formation. The work was created the same year that Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en collaborated to challenge the provincial B.C. government to legally establish their land title. Although denied, the bands successfully altered Canadian law, and governments are now required to expand legal definitions to include oral history as evidence, and carry a duty to consult First Nations on projects impacting their inherited rights. Collectively MacDonald's scenes of berry-picking, fishing, waterways, and sounds of Gitxsan language and song, document the process of challenging an oppressive system, while affirming Gitxsan knowledge systems and relationships as secured to their territory.

[211] Lisa Meyers (Ed), *Carry Forward, Post Script*. (Kitchener: Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, 2021). Unpag.

Figure Thirty-Two: *Electronic Totem*, Mike MacDonald, 1987, Video installation, 5:20 minutes. Photo credit: Robert McNair, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery. Image downloaded from: https://kwag.ca/content/carry-forward-curated-lisa-myers.

Nadia Myre's work *For those who cannot speak: the land, the water, the animals and the future generations* (2013) pays homage to the Grandmothers who stand up for the land and future generations. The large-scale photograph detailing beads sewn into symbolic design, speaks to wampum belts as official documents meant to be read and absorbed. Beaded wampum belts carry emblematic patterns that were "talked into" when a treaty was made. Lisa notes, "Although the symbolism of wampum is a visual language, its material—each shell bead—is also encoded with meaning and legible to a wampum reader."[212] Important belts were preserved and entrusted to a hereditary keeper versed in their interpretation, and thus their significance was retained. The designs serve as reminders of significant events, and are explained at 'reading of the archives' ceremonies. Wampum also "confirms connection between dodem or clan relationships to territory."[213]

Lisa's work is in response to the words and actions of Algonquin Kokums (Grandmothers) who read a declaration during an #Idlenomore demonstration on Parliament Hill

[212] Lisa Myers, Lisa Meyers (Ed), *Carry Forward, Post Script*. (Kitchener: Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, 2021). Unpag.
[213] Darlene Johnston, "Connecting people to place: Great Lakes Aboriginal history in Cultural Context" (paper prepared for the Ipperwash Inquiry, July 2004), as quoted in Lisa Myers, "Carry Forward, Post Script," Unpag.

in January 2013. The Kokums demanded greater respect for Indigenous peoples and spoke for those who cannot speak, including the land, future generations, and animal and spirit beings. This work provides li nakishkamohk between MacDonald's video work and Marjorie Beaucage's film *Speaking to Their Mother* (1992), which documented Rebecca Belmore's embedment of *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother* at the Earth Wiggins Bay Blockade in Northern Saskatchewan during the summer of 1992.

Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother is Rebecca Belmore's response to the Oka Resistance of 1990. It is a six by seven feet, sound installation made of wood and other organic materials. It is conical in shape and operates as a large megaphone for people to speak directly to the land. The work was first spoken into by Belmore, after it was carried through the woods and assembled in a meadow near Johnson Lake in the Bow Valley at Banff, AB. As she communicated with the land by speaking into the conically-shaped installation, "her words echoed through the mountains and, she hoped, reached Mother Earth."[214]

Figure Thirty-Two: *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother*, Rebecca Belmore, 1991, Sculptural installation. Photo courtesy of the artist.

The installation was first debuted in the 1991 exhibition *Between Views and Points of View* at the Walter Phillips Gallery, and afterwards was taken to political demonstrations across Canada so others could also use it to speak to the land. Belmore states, "I was particularly

[214] Sara Frizzell, "Creative Voices: 1991- Rebecca Belmore Gave the Voiceless a Megaphone", posted May 26, 2016, https://www.banffcentre.ca/articles/creative-voices-1991-rebecca-belmore-gave-voiceless-megaphone.

interested in locating the Aboriginal voice on the land. Asking people to address the land directly was an attempt to hear political protest as poetic action."[215] Over three days Beaucage captured Belmore's artistic process and reasons, and documented community reaction to her work. Poignantly captured were some of the land protectors speaking to clear-cut land in Cree, reminding us how language is a connecting force to the land, where knowledge systems are imbedded. The documentary infers the land as a readable document impacted by the redaction of life-sustaining resources, and Belmore's piece as a mnemonic aid for resistance. Lisa notes, "If we think of land as a document that can be read, imbued with meaning and understood, then every extraction, every trespass, every indelible mark left on its surface impacts how it is to be read in the future. More than 25 years later, this documentary and Belmore's sculpture highlight how voice and action speak to land."[216]

Post Script is an extension of the exhibition *Carry Forward,* with *Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother* as the footing of this process-based exhibition. "P.S." or "post script" is additional information placed at the end of an already composed written text. It may be an afterthought, or lead to following actions stemming from topics discussed in the written correspondence. After the *Carry Forward* exhibition was over, Lisa was "then compelled to consider more closely the spoken, aural, and oral aspects of communication and conveyance."[217] With the encouragement of Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery Senior Curator Crystal Mowry, she pursued the next iteration of *Carry Forward,* called *Post Script,* held in June 2018. Lisa points out how Mowry "didn't just invite me as a guest curator to do one show. She kept opening up spaces so I could continue these ideas. Crystal really opened up space for me and *Carry Forward* wasn't 'just ticking the box' that an Indigenous show happened. She kept making more space."[218]

In addition to Rebecca Belmore, artists invited to participate were Susan Blight, Melissa General, and Luke Parnell. Lisa shares that their work "turns to voice and sound, plants, water, and trees as entities that carry knowledge of shared histories. Although not documents in the conventional form, I propose that these elements are readable, understandable, and legible."[219]

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[215] Sara Frizzell, "Creative Voices: 1991- Rebecca Belmore Gave the Voiceless a Megaphone."
[216] Lisa Myers, "Carry Forward,"…
[217] Lisa Myers, Ibid
[218] Lisa Myers, interview with author, July 20, 2020.
[219] Lisa Myers, "Preface," *Carry Forward, Post Script,*…

The exhibition was laid out in a fashion that centered Belmore's piece as the instigator of conversations, and began with Belmore's work holding space in the Main Gallery. Then every Monday in June another artwork was added, allowing for the exhibition to build incrementally.

Melissa General's work *Kehyá:ra's* (2016) was the first to be placed in dialogue with Belmore's work. The video installation presents General collecting water with her mother's Mason jars in the Grand River, a significant waterway to her personally and culturally. It was used as a marker defining territory promised to the Haudenosaunee in the Haldimand Proclamation (1784), for their alliance with British forces during the American Revolution (1775-83). Much disagreement occurred between the Haudenosaunee and British Crown over the meaning of the Proclamation, and who held title to 10 km on both sides of the Grand River. The land transfer never did happen, resulting in the Six Nations Reserve being much smaller than what the British promised. The video documentation of General repeatedly entering the river is accompanied by recordings of her soaking in a medicine bath, conveying water as a vessel for carrying memory, healing, and the sovereignty of Haudenosaunee people.

Luke Parnell created *Remnant 1* in 2016 while on residency at Stewart Hall in Point Claire, Que. Carved into wood are two stacked figures, the lower area representing his family crest with an image of a beaver and a broken stick, while the upper area declares his membership in the Eagle Clan. Parnell marked a middle line between the two figures, then later cut the pole in half with a chainsaw. This action asserts the wealth of knowledge he builds on as an artist, and his ability to make another pole, despite colonial government legislation to prevent such actions. His video piece *Remediation* (2018) was included, documenting Parnell carrying his severed eagle carving while exploring sites where past totems were stolen by historians and institutions. Lisa placed his severed carved work in two adjacent rooms, with the beaver half carrying charcoal pieces in its hands and around the base.

Figure Thirty-Three: *Remnant 1*(2017) & *Remediation* (2017), Luke Parnell, Wooden sculpture and Digital video, 11min 48 seconds. Image downloaded from: https://kwag.ca/content/post-script-curated-lisa-myers.

Susan Blight's piece *We Will Be Heard* (2018) was the last to be added to *Post Script*. Underneath a glowing UV light was a potted bearberry plant on a plinth, known as a hardy medicine and symbol of Anishinaabe connection to land and place. It was positioned in front of a wall carrying the words "Giga-noondaagozimin". Blight claims the KWAG for Indigenous people by inserting Anishinaabemowin into its physical space, while introducing Anishinaabe beliefs to audiences. One such concept Lisa refers to as "tenets of reciprocity", which involves giving back to the land before taking. The work also reminds that our survival depends on active listening to all living things, including plant life. *We Will Be Heard* expresses how the land hears words and songs, and that being heard, is central to survival.

Figure Thirty-Four: *We Will Be Heard* (2018), Susan Blight, Vinyl lettering, Potted bearberry plant, wooden plinth, UV light, vinyl lettering. Photo credit: Robert McNair, KWAG. Images downloaded from: https://www.cafka.org/cafka18/post-script-rebecca-belmore-susan-blight-luke-parnell-melissa-general.

By deviating from *Carry Forward*'s focus on sanctioned documents and documentation, *Post Script* presents natural materials and elements as important carriers of knowledge. The exhibition enhances earlier interchanges and magnifies the importance of voice, listening and language. The execution of the exhibition in increments mirrors the process of engaging in open-ended conversations carried, enhanced, and mobilized by others. Lisa continued to look to plants as readable and legible medicines in *Post Script*, and expands dialogue and thinking birthed in *Carry Forward.*

In 2020 Lisa curated another thread of these exhibitions, entitled *Mike MacDonald: Planting one Another*. It features two "re-plantings" of medicine and butterfly gardens by Mike MacDonald. In the 1990s MacDonald planted more than twenty butterfly gardens across Turtle Island, seeing them "as sanctuaries for butterflies in the face of environmental degradation, but also as a call to pay attention to Indigenous knowledge and honour traditional ways of living with plants."[220] The gardens are comprised of plants indigenous to the Americas and firmly establishes plants and seeds as carriers of knowledge. *Planting one Another* is a partnership between KWAG and the Woodland Cultural Centre, who created and cared for the gardens as a testament to their coexistence. The third iteration of Lisa's curatorial work around documents and documentation confirms the gallery's commitment to open-ended and on-going relationships with herself, the artists she collaborates with, and whose work is the flint for her curatorial work.

[220] Katherine Ylitalo,"Mike MacDonald's Butterfly Gardens- The Little Garden that Could," in *Intertwined Histories: Plants in their Social Contexts*, edited by Jim Ellis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2019), https://prism.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/handle/1880/110196/9781773850917_chapter06.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y.

Figure Thirty-Five: *Mike MacDonald: Planting one Another*, Lisa Myers (Curator), 2020, KWAG. Image downloaded from: https://kwag.ca/content/mike-macdonald-planting-one-another.

Lisa's curatorial priorities and work is exemplary of Indigenous Littoral Curation. *Post Script* and the exhibitions preceeding and following, unsettle conventional relationships between independent curators and art institutions. Most often, galleries will hire independent curators for only one project, yet due to the on-going dialogue between Lisa and Mowry, the initial exhibition was morphed and mobilized in new ways. To effectively work in this manner, she had to prioritize conversations and viewing her work as a collaboration between the KWAG, herself and the artists. Lisa provided linkages to IKS in ways that are considerate and grounded in what she calls "tenets of reciprocity." By engaging in conversations, teachings and actions guided by medicinal plants and seeds, she reveals how curators can participate, build bridges, and create space for knowledge transmission and offer a form of care.

Conversation Excerpts

I spoke with Lisa Myers in July 2020 on Zoom about Postscript and the interlinking projects. During this session we discussed the specifics of her curatorial work, the merits of non-Indigenous socially-engaged art and curatorial theories, and the makeup of ILC. Before this one-on-one conversation Lisa participated in several public and closed MKTT sessions, and it was clear there are connections between her curatorial pedagogy and praxis and my own.

CM: When I first read your statement on your website about your curatorial priorities, I noticed that you are very specific about how you consider your work to be conversation-based and a form of collaboration with artists.

LM: I chose artists who were doing work similar to the theme of the show, but then of course they responded to the particular theme as well. So there was this dialogue in what they made and then what the show is about. There was this back and forth. I worked so closely with the artists to produce their work for the show. And their works were brand new, or built for the show…

CM: It's that sort of curating where you're engaging in conversations and finding artists you think might engage with a theme, and then just walking through the theme with the artists. I think that's a different strategy than a lot of curators do.

LM: Like there's generosity and a way to creating spaces of sustenance for people.

CM: You just said it right there.

LM: I think with *Carry Forward* Mike McDonald's work offered some direction and kind of an idea or concept. I learned so much from *Electronic Totem* and his practice more broadly. Right now, we're working on revisiting his gardens. It has now grown into a two year project where we're going to plant eight different gardens and each one is going to be one part of a star, like an eight pointed star. It's become a complex and big idea with community involvement. It's just at the beginning stages, but I think of it as a curatorial project that is in conversation with his gardens, and the relationships all around those gardens.

…And that the gardens themselves are knowledge systems and they also convey relationships. I'm interested in the relationships developed around those gardens, and the ones that are completely continuing.

CM: It's an ongoing visitation and expansion. When you think about conventional curating, it's about one show around one theme, some adjoining programming, and one catalogue. Then a

curator will move on. Maybe you'll work with the same artist again, but there seems to be more of a finite ending. What you're describing and doing is something different. To me it’s a good example of ILC. This one art piece that was about knowledge and the land as inheritance became an instigator for dialogue and conversations. It's a different sort of relationship. In your projects, there seems to be a priority of dialogue, open-endedness, and a willingness to build upon.

LM: From *Carry Forward*, to *Post Script*, to the gardens, those things all inform each other…

Miyeu Pimaatshiwin[221]

4.) SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut

Curated by Heather Igloliorte

Artists: Chantelle Andersen, Dinah Andersen, James Andersen, Peggy Andersen, Michelle Baikie, Sarah Baikie, Fanny Broomfield, Heather Campbell, Andrea Flowers, Chesley Flowers, Emily Flowers, Vanessa Flowers, Violet Flowers, Billy Gauthier, Gilbert Hay, Mark Igloliorte, Susannah Igloliorte, Jason Jacque, Josephine Jacque, Samantha Jacque, Ephraim Jararuse, Sarah Jensen, Josephina Kalleo, Michael Massie, Maria Merkuratsuk, Shirley Moorhouse, Tabea Murphy, Davidee Ningeok, Sophie Pamak, Jacko Pijogge, Sem Pijogge, Barry Pottle, Derrick Pottle, Druscilla Rich, Garmel Rich, George Rich, Chris P. Sampson, Doris Saunders, Elias Semigak, Inez Shiwak, Jane Shiwak, Jason Shiwak, John Terriak, Rhoda Voisey, Jennie Williams, Nellie Winters, Ryan Winters

Organized by:

The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, St. John's, NL
October 7, 2016 - January 15, 2017

Touring Host Galleries:

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, NS
June 17, 2017 - September 10, 2017

Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, MB
May 25, 2018 - October 14, 2018

Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, SK
February 16, 2019 - May 20, 2019

Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor, ON
October 19, 2019 - January 26, 2020

[221] Miyeu Pimmatshiwin is a core Michif concept, and names the way to living a good life, and how one may lead a good and enriching life. It is something I and other curators strive for in our practices, based on collaboration, reciprocity, and open-ended processes.

SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut was an expansive and ambitious curatorial project and testament to Heather Igloliorte's commitment to her home region of Nunatsiavut (Labrador, NL). Recognizing the vast talent in Nunatsiavut and the trials artists there experience, she embarked on an intensive, multi-dimensional and intergenerational initiative guided by regional artists. This included a community pop-up exhibition and sale, a large nationally touring exhibition, and a website and exhibition catalogue.

Dr. Heather Igloliorte (Heather) is an Inuk scholar and independent curator who holds the University Research Chair in Indigenous Art History and Community Engagement at Concordia University. She serves as the Co-Chair of the Indigenous Circle for the Winnipeg Art Gallery, and is the lead curator for the inaugural exhibition of the WAG's new national Inuit art centre opening in March 2021. Her scholarship, curatorial work and community engagement centers on providing Inuit perspectives as remedy to Eurocentric engagements with Inuit art and culture.

SakKijâjuk is an Inuttitut word meaning "to be visible" in the Labrador dialect. Nunatsiavut is the smallest and only self-governing of the four Inuit regions, containing five communities - Nain, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet. In addition there are two large populations of Nunatsiavummiut in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and North West River. In this region there is a rich artistic practice constantly adapting to societal and cultural shifts. Despite this continuity, Newfoundland joining Canada in 1949 had negative effects on art-making in this region. The newly formed province of Newfoundland and the Canadian government both refused to extend rights to the Inuit, NunatuKavut, Mi'kmaw, or Innu Nations. Artists from this region were thus omitted from government sponsored initiatives, gallery and museum exhibitions, public and private collections, and documented art histories. This has resulted in a lack of recognition and understanding of artistic practice among the Nunatsiavummiut.[222]

With funding from the Mobilizing Inuit Cultural Heritage SSHRC Partnership Grant, Igloliorte travelled between 2014-2016 over 35 times to Labrador and elsewhere with a project team to visit Nunatsiavummiut artists in their home communities. While visiting with artists they asked them what challenges they face, what kind of art they wished to make, and what barriers and possibilities exist for them. Heather shares,

We heard at first artists didn't have access to good quality materials, or any

[222] Heather Igloliorte, "The Rise of Nunatsiavut Art," *The Walrus*, February 17, 2017, https://thewalrus.ca/the-rise-of-nunatsiavut-art/.

> access to them at all sometimes… as there aren't any art supply stores in Labrador. So when people would order, say from a furrier, they would often get the scrappy fox tails or something that couldn't really be put on a parka.
> The suppliers knew when they sent something up the coast to Labrador, it would cost $100 to get there and then it would cost $100 to return it. So artists were just kind of making d0. So, we said to them, 'If you could do a project and you knew you'd get the best materials and money would be no object, and you'd have lots of time to work on it, what would you do?'[223]

The second time she and the project team visited Labrador they brought forms for artists to fill out and share what they would make if money and time were not major constraints. They were told to dream as big as they wanted and list all the materials they would need. The artists' materials were then purchased with the SSHRC funding and delivered on Heather's third visit. Upon arrival, announcements were made on local radio stations for artists to come to a designated location and pick up their supplies. After the first distribution requests were filled, artists who were initially skeptical asked if they could also participate in the project. Heather and her team obliged and repeated the process, providing over $35 000 worth of materials to Nunatsiavummiut artists.[224]

Heather then organized a community exhibition held at the Kinsmen Community Centre in Happy Valley- Goose Bay in 2015. Artists in the region noted during their visits that they didn't have opportunities to show their work to other regional artists, and requested that an exhibition and sale take place. Sponsorship was secured from an airline and the Nunatsiavut government to bring 75 of the participating artists to the community show which was held over four days. Heather mentioned during our private kitchen table talk how "everyone who wanted to have a work in the show was included, and got to include up to three pieces. We had video arts, photography, kamik and other items made with sealskin. We brought in art historians, critics, curators and gallery reps from all over the country to come and see what Nunasiavut has to offer."[225] 172 art works were featured in this iteration of *SakKijâjuk* , and $12 000 in sales were made in the four days the community show was held, with 100% of the profits going to the artists.

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[223] Heather Igloliorte, "Sparking *Miyeu pimatishiwin:* Metis Methodologies for Indigenous Littoral Curation and Critical Discourse," November 29, 2017, University of Winnipeg, 1:20:42, Private recording.
[224] Heather Igloliorte, in discussion with the author, July 16, 2020.
[225] Heather Igloliorte, in discussion with the author.

The exhibition and sale was purposely held during the first ever Indigenous Arts Conference in Newfoundland, "To Light the Fire". Organized in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council, ArtsNL, the conference took place in Happy Valley and gathered Indigenous people from all over Newfoundland and Labrador. There were community-led workshops on drum-making, carving, and a presentation by filmmaker asinnajaq. As well, invited guests such as curator and scholar Ryan Rice gave presentations on how to pursue opportunities in the larger art milieu. An opening was held at a local pub near the exhibition venue and in conjunction with the conference, became a large event with storytellers, performances and music. Heather's aunt Miriam also lit a qulliq and provided teachings about "what it means to light the lamp, and to start off things in good spirit."[226]

Heather selected works from this first iteration of *SakKijâjuk* and incorporated them with art borrowed from public art collections for a large touring exhibition. It was first presented by The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery in October 2016 in St. John's, NL. The exhibition opening was associated with *iNuit blanche circumpolar night festival* 2016, and presented during the Inuit Studies Conference at Memorial University. *iNuit blanche* transformed the city with multi-site exhibitions, music, dance and art performances, installations, and film screenings.[227]

The touring exhibition (circulated by The Rooms) part of *SakKijâjuk* featured 47 artists working in painting, photography, sculpture, textiles and video. It provided culturally grounded programming, multivocal exhibition tours, a catalogue, website, and multimedia oral history video installation, created by Heather and Matthew Brulotte. Recognizing the contributing artists as belonging to four generations, the exhibition was fashioned with groupings of Elders, Trailblazers, Fire Keepers, and the Next Generation.[228]

[226] Heather Igloliorte in discussion with the author, July 16, 2020.
[227] Inuit Blanche, accessed July 16, 2020, http://www.inuitblanche.com/about.html.
[228] SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut, accessed May 1, 2020, http://www.sakkijajuk.com/about.html.

Figure Thirty-Six: Installation images of *SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut.* Photos courtesy of The Rooms Gallery.

Some examples of included artists are: James Andersen (1919-2011), a storyteller, photographer and filmmaker. He chronicled life in the Labrador coast for over fifty years. Andersen, known commonly as "Uncle Jim", created more than 10 000 photographs and videos in his lifetime, providing an intimate perspective to where his heart lie, the Inuit community of Makkovik, NL.[229]

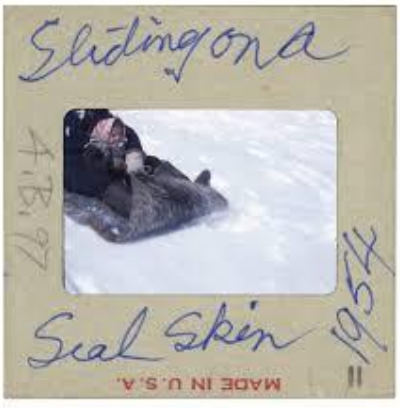

Figure Thirty-Seven: *Sliding on a Seal Skin,* James Andersen, 1954. Slide transparency, printed. The Rooms Art Gallery, The Nunatsiavut Government, Andersen Collection.

Fanny Broomfield (b.1938) is a grasswork artist living most of her life in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. She began grass sewing in the late 1980s under the mentorship of Garmel Rich. During her lifetime she garnered commercial success by producing hundreds of intricately embroidered

[229] Mark David Turner and Tom Gordon, "Final Report for 'The James Robert Andersen Archive, A Contribution to the Development an Practice of the Cultural and Political Activities of Nunatsiavut, NL',", The Harris Centre- Memorial University: Newfoundland, 2012-2013, https://www.mun.ca/harriscentre/reports/arf/2012/12-13-ARF-Final-Gordon.pdf.

baskets made with harvested sea grass.[230] Impressively, Fanny Broomfield created 600 pieces for one commercial exhibition, and today her work can be found in many public, private, and family collections.

Figure Thirty-Eight: *Grass Basket with Purple,* Fanny Broomfield, 2004, grass, embroidery thread. The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Collection. Photo: Ned Pratt Photography.

Michael Massie is a mixed media artist who fuses symbolism, oral history, lived experience and wittiness in his sculptures and coveted teapots. He is based in Kippens, NL and has garnered much accolade, having his work exhibited internationally and purchased by many collectors, including The National Gallery of Canada.[231]

[230] SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut, accessed May 1, 2020, http://www.sakkijajuk.com/about.html.
[231] Inuit Art Quarterly, accessed July 17, 2020, https://www.inuitartfoundation.org/iad/artist/Michael-Massie.

Figure Thirty-Nine: *Boa Tea,* Michael Massie, 1996, sterling silver, ivory and tulip wood. The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery, Memorial University Collection. Photo: Ned Pratt Photography.[232]

Jennie Williams (b.1981) is a photographer based in Nain, Nunatsiavut, NL. Similar to Andersen, Williams captures Inuit in their everyday environments, creating a visual record that highlights and celebrates Inuit culture. In the series *Nalujuk Night* she captures the vitality and continuance of cultural traditions. Williams shares, "The photographic series *Nalujuk Night* was shot in the community of Nain, where I live. On January 6 each year, the community gathers to await the *Nalujuit* (plural for *Nalujuk)*—masked figures who represent startling characters said to come inland from the Eastern sea ice. Dramatic and lush, these photographs are a rare and remarkable glimpse into 'performances' that are truly unique."[233]

Figure Forty: *Nalujuk Night,* Jennie Williams, 2016, Digital Photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut is the first nationally touring exhibition of Nunatsiavut art and art history. Heather's pedagogy and praxis embodies Adam Gaudry's insurgent research methodologies in a variety of ways and is exemplary of ILC. She began by recognizing existing voids and their impact on artists' lives in Labrador. She employed cultural understandings and ways of being from the start to the end of the project. Dialogue, visiting and

[232] Images Thirty-Seven, Thirty-Eight, and Thirty-Nine were downloaded from: https://www.cbc.ca/radio/sunday/april-23-2017-the-sunday-edition-with-michael-enright-1.4076347/sterling-silver-teapots-digital-photos-and-wood-carvings-as-inuit-art-1.4076372.
[233] Jennie Williams, Artist Statement for the Resilience Project , curated by Lee-Ann Martin. https://resilienceproject.ca/en/artists/jennie-williams.

nurturing on-going relationships was fundamental to her pedagogy. Although Heather held a leadership role, her actions were directed by artists and community first and foremost. She engaged with them continuously on their terms, and in doing so the project expanded and became far-reaching. In asking questions and pursuing solutions and opportunities collaboratively, the project stemmed from an Inuit paradigm which values dialogue, servitude to community, and humility.

Conversation Excerpts

During the last several years, I have had several opportunities to engage in dialogue with Heather about this work. I heard her speak publicly about SakKijâjuk: Art and Craft from Nunatsiavut at the *Aabakwad (it clears after a storm) conference at the AGO in 2018, and she was an invited guest to a MKTT I led at the University of Winnipeg in 2017. In July 2020, Igloliorte and I conversed further over Zoom. We discussed the specifics about this project, as well as the expectations, roles and responsibilities which come with ILC, driven by creating radical care for communities.*

CM: When I heard you speak about *SakKijâjuk* in the past, I noticed you operate differently than a lot of curators might, because you started this exhibition by visiting artists in their homes and asking what they wanted and needed, and then curated your response to their answers. This seems to be quite opposite of more conventional curatorial practice, where a curator already has themes, and chosen artists and artworks in mind before making contact.

HI: I did not bring the small team I was working with [to Nunatsiavut] with the intent of producing an exhibition, but decided to go and discuss things with artists first. We would then see if there is a way to solve an issue, or many ways to solve an issue. It just happened that having an exhibition was really important to the artists, because they wanted to be seen outside of Nunatsiavut and for many it had been so long since they had.

When you're curating with community, you just let the community speak. The community doesn't know how to curate, you're supposed to work with them to see their vision through… the curator has to bring that to life. And it requires a complex negotiation. I would never make

myself invisible in this process or say it is totally shared community authorship. It's shared, but it's not sole community authorship because I am also bringing something to the table.

CM: One of the core parts of ILC is operating with generous reciprocity. Meaning curatorial work is about reciprocity and reciprocating. It seems this is what the project is about. In thinking about the give and take and what comes with it, what did you take away from this project?

HI: I think what really did come together during the process of creating *SakKijâjuk* was finding out how I can work for people. The value of leadership is to serve. So the idea that whatever I'm doing, if I'm going to make a contribution, it has to be through the service to others; I can't be a leader if it's not benefitting others. So it really does place you in a reciprocal relationship. While I was there and taking up a space of authority by serving and creating this exhibition, I formed relationships with people; and they now know I am going to be here for them. It's important to keep up my end of what that agreement was, and be here to support artists. It can be advice, or talking to someone's daughter about her artist portfolio, sourcing art materials, or providing grocery money in an emergency…anything. It is all an ever-perpetuating circle of understanding, and it does go on. If I had come and just done one thing, then I would have broken their trust.

Nasasyee/Nii Nasasyee[234]

6). *Insurgence/Resurgence*

Curated by Jaimie Isaac and Dr. Julie Nagam

Artists: Barry Ace, KC Adams, Joi T. Arcand, Dee Barsy, Scott Benesiinaabandan, Jordan Bennett & Dee Barsy, Heather Campbell, Bruno Canadien, Hannah Claus, Dana Claxton, Dayna Danger, Earthline Tattoo Collective, Bracken Hanuse Corlett, Tsêma Igharas, Ursula Johnson, Casey Koyczan, Kenneth Lavallee, Duane Linklater, Tanya Lukin Linklater, Amy Malbeuf, Kent Monkman, Caroline Monnet, Tiffany Shaw-Collinge, Frank Shebageget, Amanda Strong, Joseph Tisiga, Coyzyn van Heuvelen, Asinnajaq, Linus Woods

September 23, 2017- April 22, 2018

Winnipeg Art Gallery

The exhibition *Insurgence/Resurgence* exemplifies how curatorial practice carries past actions forth and facilitates cultural continuums. Curated by Jaimie Isaac (Jaimie) and Dr. Julie Nagam (Julie), it featured the work of 29 artists at various stages of their careers, and included 12 new commissions. It was the Winnipeg Art Gallery's (WAG) largest-ever exhibition of Indigenous art. The exhibition provided a snapshot of current priorities of Indigenous peoples across the land, the ways in which we mobilize, and how the continuance of active resistance stakes place for individual and collective resurgence.

Jaimie Isaac (Sagkeeng First Nation) is the Curator of Indigenous and Contemporary Art at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. She is also an interdisciplinary artist, writer and co-founder of The Ephemerals Collective. She places a high priority on familial ties noting, "my matrilineal family – my mother and grandmother – are significant collaborators in knowledge generation, connecting our culture and language by honouring intergenerational knowledge networks and demonstrating decolonized ways of being."[235] Jaimie's curatorial practice stems from

[234] Nasasyee is a name for the partners or collaborators who hold a bond with one another. It evokes the sorts of collaborations and partnerships occurring with other Indigenous curators and artists. These are seeped with Indigenous knowledges about relationality, kinship, and survivance.

[235] Jaimie Isaac et al., "Indigenous Collaborations Through the Gallery, as a Site for Self-Determination and Social Change". In *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial*

community, collaborations and partnerships, and is informed by working with her family, Indigenous-based organizations and employing Indigenous worldviews as a conscious curatorial praxis.

Dr. Julie Nagam (Métis) is a curator, writer and interdisciplinary artist. She is the Canadian Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, Collaboration and Digital Media, and an Associate Professor in the department of Art History at the University of Winnipeg. Julie conveys, "Much of the focus of my work and energy over the last 20 years and as an academic over the last 10 years has been on building relationships with the Indigenous community, arts organizations, and the arts community."[236] She is the Toronto Nuit Blanche artistic director for 2020-2021, and a member of the GLAM Collective.

As co-curators, Jaimie and Julie sought to create space which acknowledged past and present efforts to resist oppressive and exclusionary political and cultural forces, without entering into dichotomous Indigenous/colonizer narratives. This is particularly noteworthy as the exhibition opened in 2017, the year of Canada 150, when the nation-state of Canada extensively celebrated confederation, with little regard to the impact of this on Indigenous peoples. Instead, their curatorial premise was to create a multivocal space for gathering, honouring, and imagining the future with the past and present in mind.

Recognizing the need for a radical shift in understandings of Indigeneity and Canada, Jaimie and Julie included work about intergenerational knowledge transference, land-based practices, language revitalization, kinship, and identity formation. Artists representing the Anishinaabe, Dene, Cree, Mi'kmaw, Métis, Inuit, Innu, Tahltan, Hunkpapa, Lakota, Haudenosaunee, and Wuikinuxv nations permeated, dismantled, and transformed the WAG into a space for chikishkaytaman, restoration, and connectivity. With mediums including tufting, tattooing, painting, sculpture, photography, beading, and site-specific installation, the "lines and

Practice. Dr. Julie Nagam, Carly Lane, Megan Tamati-Quennell (ed). (Winnipeg: ARP Publishing, 2020), 121.

[236] Julie Nagam et al., "Indigenous Collaborations Through the Gallery, as a Site for Self-Determination and Social Change". In *Becoming Our Future, Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice*. Dr. Julie Nagam, Carly Lane, Megan Tamati-Quennell (ed). (Winnipeg: ARP Publishing, 2020), 120.

patterns seen throughout this exhibition establish the long thread of intergenerational knowledge and cultural memory."[237]

For example Algonquin artist Caroline Monnet's sculptural piece *Shield* speaks to the multiplicity of worlds we walk between, perceptions we carry about time and space, and how generations of Indigenous peoples are a protective shield within collective consciousness. Joi T. Arcand's intervention of gold-foil-vinyl Plains Cree syllabics placed highly visible on stone steps, reminds us that the WAG is situated on Indigenous lands, and there is an on-going uphill battle for language revitalization. Lindsay Nixon describes Arcand's work as "land and spirit medicine (maskihki), taking up space and commanding presence in materiality, form and location."[238] *Cloudscape* by Hannah Claus evokes Haudenosaunee creation teachings about the physical and metaphysical. Consuming the WAG's ground gallery space, the suspended installation conveys floating cloud clusters as carriers of embodied knowledges and experiences, reminiscent of woven wampum belts and beadwork.

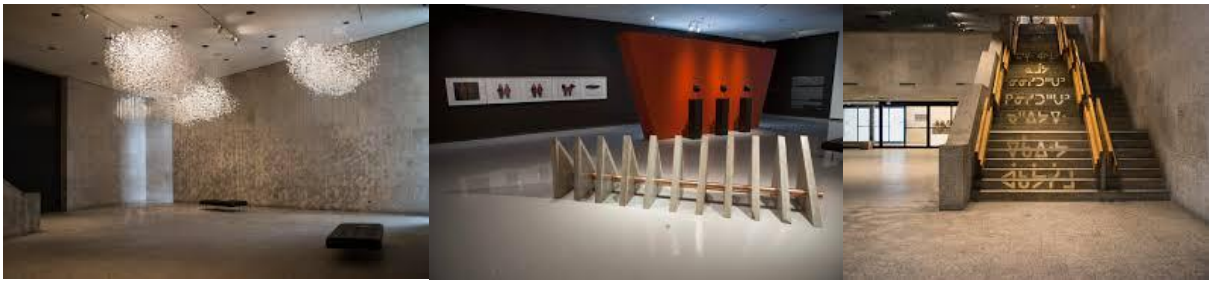

Figure Forty-One: Installation documentation of *Insurgence/Resurgence*, Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2018. Left Photo: Serge Gumenyuk, Center and Right Photos: Scott Benesiinaabandan. Photos courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

Earthline Tattoo Collective designed a tattooing studio as an installation and performative space, to bring awareness and education about traditional and cultural tattooing practices. During the opening and following day, Dion Kaszas, Amy Malbeuf and Jordan Bennett tattooed chosen guests in the installation, offering audiences opportunities to witness them create skin stitch and

[237] "Insurgence/Resurgence", accessed September 8, 2020, https://glamcollective.ca/INSURGENCE-RESURGENCE-Co-curated-with-Jaimie-Isaac-Winnipeg-Art.
[238] Lindsay Nixon, "Our Languages Live Within Us," in *Canadian Art* (February 28, 2019), https://canadianart.ca/features/our-languages-live-within-us/.

hand poke tattoos as a form of cultural revival. This performance modified the WAG into a site of renewal, enrichment, and resurgence in action. The artists moved in the installation space with care. As they were observed by hundreds who visited the WAG on opening weekend, participants tuned into the moment, and responded with reciprocal generosity, gifting the tattoo artists in recognition of the knowledge they are igniting and imparting.

Figure Forty-Two: Jordan Bennett of Earthline Tattoo Collective tattooing curator Julie Nagam. Photo provided by Julie Nagam.

Insurgence/Resurgence became li nakishkamohk between institutions, artists and communities. Some of its strengths were the partnerships, collaborations, and events that transformed the WAG into a multivocal site ignited by the artists, curators and those informing their practices. Throughout its' duration, the WAG held family-centered events, artist workshops, panel discussions about related topics, and public artist talks. The exhibition hosted different events in Winnipeg, including *Nuit Blanche*, the Red Rising Magazine launch of a special two-spirit issue, a film screening and talk by Kent Monkman, and the Initiative for Indigenous Futures symposium, a gathering with artists, community activists, curators, and scholars who dream the future, guided by Indigenous innovation and digital media.
These events were critical components of the exhibition. In a co-authored text with Jarita Greyeys and Heather Igloliorte, Jaimie and Julie assert, "exhibitions, outreach, programing, and various pedagogical and community interventions such as film screenings, forums, and symposia, all offer art as curriculum, giving us an opportunity to reflect on and inquire into the uses of art to develop new ways of seeing and remembering Indigenous relationships to space

and place."[239] It is by relying on orality, performativity, and embodied knowledge that the curators mobilized and helped to transform the WAG, grounded by Indigenous theory, knowledge, praxis and pedagogies.

Insurgence/Resurgence announced permanent changes to the institutions' priorities. In November 2018 the WAG announced that it was creating a Winnipeg-based Indigenous art biennale, to be curated by Jaimie. In Summer 2021, *To Draw Water* will launch as the first iteration of the biennale. This curated project will reflect on "issues of sustainability, climate change, and the environment," and features emerging, mid-career and established artists based in North America, Australia and New Zealand.[240] In March 2021, the Inuit art centre, Qaumajuq, will officially open with an inaugural exhibition curated by a team of Inuit curators, led by Heather Igloliorte. The WAG holds the largest collection of Inuit art, and this centre will house the collection in accessible, innovative and storied ways. As the WAG prioritizes hiring and working with Indigenous curators, writers, designers, educators, and communication reps, it is proving that *Insurgent/Resurgence* was a taste of what will come. It is now centering Indigenous art permanently, and there is no going back. As our ancestors once gathered on the location where the WAG is situated, it has been ignited as an Indigenous site of resurgence, built on action, commitment and love.

Tania Willard names the space Jaimie and Julie helped to facilitate as "divergence". She conveys, "Divergence is the space between insurgence and resurgence, the space of continuum and reinvention, where ideas can cross-pollinate amidst the specific cultural aesthetic practices of distinct Indigenous nations."[241] The exhibition from start to end generated interchange, relationships, and helping to bring, or keep Indigenous hearts home. The connections Jaimie and Julie hold with one another, the land, and those they claim as human kin, seeped into the crevices of the exhibition. The result was an energized space, intimate in ways that reflected their quiet contemplation and massive acts of resurgence, made possible by generations of artists, curators, and other social change agents.

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[239] Nagam et.al, "Indigenous Collaborations Through the Gallery", 128.
[240] Leah Sandals, "New Indigenous Biennial Launches at Winnipeg Art Gallery", *Canadian Art*, (November 8, 2018), https://canadianart.ca/news/indigenous-art-winnipeg-art-gallery-nov-2018/.
[241] Tania Willard, "Reading Divergent Indigenous Art Through the River of my own Blood Memory", *Insurgence/Resurgence*, exhibition catalogue, (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2017), 122.

Conversation Excerpts

Presented here are interwoven conversations from multiple gatherings. Included are excerpts from one-on-one conversations on Zoom and by phone from 2018-2020, as well as public MKTT events between 2017-2020, where both Jaimie and Julie were guests or co-hosts. During these dialogues both shared the importance of engaging with community, immersing their practices in IKS and dialogical aesthetics, and building relationships of care. They stressed the importance of having ni nasaysee to enhance and uphold their curatorial pedagogies and praxis.

CM: There is a current in curatorial practice I am trying to name, a type of dialogic, knowledge-based pedagogy and praxis…

JI: I really like the idea of thinking more from a position of intersectionality. I think intergenerationally, and in terms of the interconnections between disciplines and categories of thinking. There's many different points and touches of connection within that intersection. I think Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies unpack that in a beautiful way. In ways which aren't discipline-specific as they might be in a European construct.

CM: Jaimie, when I think about embedding knowledge systems into curation to connect people in ways which are embedded with cultural signifiers and grounded by family relationships, I think of how your mother and Nana often guide your work. I'm thinking in particular of when your Nana spoke at the *Insurgence/Resurgence* opening. In her introduction of self she shared she is a survivor of residential school, and then provided generous and thoughtful insight into the importance of that moment, in that space. Prioritizing family in your curatorial work makes me think about how our families are a catalyst for what we do.

JI: Working with my Nana and my mom has been enriching and humbling, as a curator working within an institution to creating a multivocal-intergenerational space, by forming partnerships

with community or an Elder's or cultural councils for exhibitions or decolonial methods for the gallery. Working with different bodies of knowledge bring into an exhibition a whole way of thinking, rather than one curator's perspective and sole authority. I think it's really imperative to involve your family if you're speaking about intergenerational knowledge, to be able to enact it, awaken it, and to live your scholarship, as it is nourishing but holds you accountable and responsible to care for its continuum.

JN: I also think a kind of transformation has to take place at galleries; but it doesn't only take place within the curatorial office. It's so much bigger than that. It happens at security, at education, the management level, and at the board level and with volunteers… It's been really amazing to have Jaimie as my co-conspirator, as I am hers. I don't know if we'd have been able to accomplish what we have without each other.

Wahkootowin[242]

6). *BUSH gallery*

Nii nasaysee: Tania Willard, Peter Morin, Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill, Jeneen Frei Njotli, Secwépemc land, human and non-human guests

Established 2013 in Secwepemculewc

Event Locations: Winnipeg,Whitehorse, Yukon, and Toronto

Forged by friendship, community engagement, and deep commitment to the land, BUSH gallery is a trans-conceptual gallery space. It was sparked by the land and Tania Willard (Tania) in 2013 during the Reconsidering Reconciliations residency in Kamloops, BC. Tania invited participating artists onto Secwépemc land to discuss the possibility of creating an Indigenous-led, land-based, experimental and conceptual gallery. From this initial dialogue BUSH Gallery was formed and became an ongoing project. According to the BUSH Gallery Manifesto, "BUSH gallery contributes to an understanding of how gallery systems and art mediums might be transfigured, translated and transformed by Indigenous knowledges, traditions, aesthetics, performance, and land use systems."[243] Since 2013 it has organized and hosted artist and writing residencies, curated exhibitions for public galleries, and collaborated on site-specific installation and performative works. Programming and events include *Staking Claim(s) #Bush*, *yahkaskwan mikiwahp* ('light' pole tipi), O*ur Home is our Gallery*, and *Site/ation*.

BUSH gallery was first named and identified as The New BC Indian Art and Welfare Society Collective (NBCIAWSC) by artists and curators Tania Willard, Peter Morin (Peter), and Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill (Gabrielle). This name is a reaction to the B.C Indian Arts and Welfare Society, established in 1951. According to Peter, "this society was able to steal Indigenous art forms because of the Potlatch Ban, appropriate them, present their versions in

[242] This is a Cree and Michif concept that acknowledges kinship ties we hold with other Metis, family members, and animal and non-human beings. It secures ourselves to our land base and one another. Contemplation of, and engagement with one's own kinship, is a key step for participating in Indigenous Littoral Curation.

[243] "The Bush Manifesto", written by contributors to NBCIAWSC, *C Magazine*, issue 136, Winter 2018, editorial. https://cmagazine.com/issues/136/bush-manifesto.

pamphlets, and sell them to Euro-settlers to raise money to support the welfare of Indians."[244] Tania, Peter, and Gabrielle reclaimed the name, and instigated opportunities for artists in BC to define its purpose on their terms, subverting the power and assimilationist goals the original Society held. BUSH gallery as it is now called, is grounded in collaboration and the sharing of roles and responsibilities. It erases any existing demarcations between artists, curators, institutions and communities. As such, the collective challenges what constitutes art or curatorship, and expresses art-making and art-caretaking as a concerted and fused effort. BUSH gallery understands the gallery as a space of flux, transformation, and potential renewal. It also carries a keen awareness and concern for the lack of representation or spaces for learning and engaging with contemporary art on reserves in Canada.

Tania states, "I consider our land bases, both traditional territory and reserves, to be strongholds of culture where language and aesthetics circulate outside of gallery systems."[245] Together with nii nasaysee, she began curating installations, events, and performances on her reserve in Secwepemculewc. One of the goals of BUSH gallery is "to articulate Indigenous creative land practices, which are born out of a lived connection to the land."[246] These were the outcomes of conversations with artists about land-based systems and how they inform their work. The result has been experimental performance, photography, site interventions, video projections, and tattooed drum skin-making.

Staking Claim(s) #Bush (2014), was a performative work created in the context of Tania's home reserve. Its target audience was "the grasshoppers, bees, hawks and whoever else may have been watching."[247] Nii naysasee marked the land on her reserve with survey tape and landmarking paint, purposely purchased at a site that serves local land surveying and development projects. The work references land displacement instigated by geological surveys of Canada, and their larger impact on Indigenous ties to the land. Tania shares how this work helps to "be creative and think of different ways to use these materials and to develop different ways of

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[244] Peter Morin, personal communication with author, August 31, 2020.
[245] Tanya Willard, "Reading Divergent Indigenous Art Through the River of my own Blood Memory", *Insurgence/Resurgence*, exhibition catalogue, (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2017), 121.
[246] "Site/ation", Plug-In ICA, accessed August 20, 2020, https://plugin.org/exhibitions/bush-gallery/.
[247] "BUSH gallery," Tania Willard Artist Website, accessed August 20, 2020, https://www.taniawillard.ca/gallery/bush-gallery.

thinking about them and embodying them in a story."[248] The landscape and locally sourced materials intertwine with history and contemporary experiences in familiar and visually symbolic ways.

Figure Forty-Three: *Staking Claim(s) #Bush*, 2014, Site installation/gallery. Secwepemculewc. Photo downloaded from: https://www.taniawillard.ca/gallery/bush-gallery.

In 2015 Cheryl L'Hirondelle and Joseph Naytowhow of the Kiy Collective were invited to Secwepemculewc to mount their collaborative performance, *yahkaskwan mikiwahp* ('light' pole tipi). In this performance, individuals are asked to hold handheld spot beams and sage smudge sticks pointing skyward while standing in a circle formation on the land. With collaboration and self-organization a tipi is formed with the interaction of light beams and smudge smoke in the air. Tipis symbolize our Grandmothers standing firm on the ground and reaching for the heavens, and together with the light beams and smell of sage, intimate intercultural and cross-cultural sustenance is provided.

[248] Tanya Willard, "Curating with Community", panel presentation at Aabaakwad (It Clears After a Storm), Art Gallery of Ontario, September 15, 2020.

Figure Forty-Four: ***yahkaskwan mikiwahp*** **('light' pole tipi), Cheryl L'Hirondelle and Joseph Naytowhow of the Kiy Collective, 2015. Photo downloaded from: https://www.taniawillard.ca/gallery/bush-gallery.**

BUSH gallery continues to be a collective effort prioritizing wahkootowin in Secwepemculewc. However it has since morphed into a sprawling and shape-shifting entity, hosting residencies, exhibitions, performative events in other Indigenous territories, on reserve, and in cities and towns. O*ur Home is our Gallery*, which was held at the Yukon Art Centre from September 8 - November 26, 2016, is one such example. The exhibition was the largest convening of local Indigenous art in this Northern region.

Our Home is our Gallery considers the gallery as a place to visit with artwork and be in relationship to creative practices. Instigated by Jeneen Frei Njotli, this multifaceted group exhibition redefined the Yukon Art Centre with family and local Indigenous communities in mind. Works chosen from the Yukon Government's Permanent Art Collection were presented in conversation with art by invited contemporary artists. BUSH gallery shares, "The exhibition honours and is deeply respectful of cultural tradition, story and territory in the North and the diversity of Indigenous practice, influence and inspiration in these lands. *Our Home is our Gallery* imagines the opportunity to stand inside the heartbeat of the culture traditions."[249]

The visual work included presented skills-based aesthetic practices, including beading, weaving, and tooling. Art made by local artists such as Fanny Charlie, Annie Henry and Keith

[249] Press release for *Our Home is Our Gallery.* Provided by Peter Morin, May 2020.

Wolf Smarch was displayed on long wooden tables, similar to those used for fish-gutting in the region. By placing artworks in this manner, conventional art installation practices were undermined, and the gallery was transformed into a more inviting and familiar space to locals. Looking down to examine the artworks on the "fish-gutting" tables was a physical manifestation of how generations have moved their bodies while harvesting, providing sustenance, and visiting with wahkootowin.

The exhibition provided additional opportunities for multigenerational and intergenerational interactions. For example Jeneen Frei Njootli collaborated with her brother to create a portrait of their father, while their grandmother Essie Njootli's beadwork was included and presented on one of the tables. The exhibition also featured Jim Logan's entire painting series *A Requiem for our Children*. Completed in 1990 these paintings are a testimony to the Residential School experience in the Yukon, and honour survivors, as well as those who did not make it home. Also included were new performance works by Jeneen Frei Njotli and Louise Profeit-Leblanc during the *Kwǎn Mày Dáyè Dàátth'i - Sit by the Fire* Gathering, organized by the ICC with local coordinators Shelby Blackjack, Teresa Vander Meer-Chase, Jessie Stephens, and Jennifer Bowen-Allen. It centered on celebrating regional artists and knowledge keepers, and followed a talking circle format. Instead of formal panels, space for intergenerational dialogue, witnessing, visiting and interaction between all attendees was provided. The intentions of the conference complimented the curatorial premise of *Our Home is our Gallery*, and the two events were strengthened by their interconnectedness.

In 2018 BUSH gallery led Plug-In ICA's Summer Institute. This is an annual international artist and cultural workers research program held at Plug-In ICA in Winnipeg, MB. This initiative provides opportunities for participants to work in a nurturing and collaborative environment, and includes group activities, guest lectures, workshops, and pop-up exhibitions. Titled *Site/ation*, the intensive program led by Tania, Peter, and Gabrielle, used art as a strategy to "guide resources and value Indigenous led spaces that acknowledges the land as the first gallery."[250] Included participants were: Lacie Burning, Jane Harms, Liz Ikiriko, Audie Murray, Joseph Naytowhow, Dana Qaddah, Christian Vistan, Daina Warren, and Bo Yeung. The design of *Site/ation* was to push "a radical approach to curating and art making, born from active

[250] https://plugin.org/summer-institute-ii-bush-gallery/.

engagements and lived experiences on the land, land marking, contemporary art, the reserve, and the gallery. Using Indigenous methodologies to build an open, welcoming and transformational space for everyone, BUSH seeks to de-centre the gallery, and the city as epicentres of contemporary art."[251]

Site/ation began with a public lecture and introduction to Treaty 1 by Dr. Niigaan Sinclair. There was a medicine walk with Elder Carl Smith and a visit to the Broken Head Pow Wow. Participant Joseph Naytowhow who is a recognized elder, guided the group throughout, teaching them songs in Cree and leading berry-picking sessions. Other activities during *Site/ation* included video projections onto trees and makeshift screens, a performative lecture by Tania, Peter, and Gabrielle with the involvement of Willard's children, an open-studio exhibition, and a basketball game played at Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre, which is located beside a historic painted mural by Oji-Cree artist Jackson Beardy. The activations and experiments were collaborative, open-ended, diverse, and responsive to their surroundings, whether they be on the land or in the city.[252] During the three week residency, "BUSH gallery participants camped, laughed, made, ate, and conjured ideas and dreams that fed the ancestors."[253]

Figure Forty-Five: *Site/ation* participants feasting on the land, Summer 2018. Photo credit: Aaron Leon. Photo downloaded from: https://plugin.org/summer-institute-ii-bush-gallery/.

[251] https://plugin.org/summer-institute-ii-bush-gallery/.
[252] I was fortunate to be invited to present a talk, called "Indigenous Art History in the BUSH." During this talk I spoke about this dissertation, and invited audience members to dance the Red River Jig with me at the end, as a way to ignite wahkootowin in Plug-In ICA's physical space.
[253] https://plugin.org/exhibitions/open-studio-bush-gallery/.

According to Helen Wong, BUSH gallery "stands as a microcosm of how art systems can be altered to adapt to varying ideologies surrounding what is included in the Western canon of art."[254] It is a trans-conceptual space, born within Indigenous and western epistemological conditions. It provides new understandings of how gallery systems and art might be transformed by Indigenous aesthetics, performance, land uses, and knowledge systems. It doesn't attempt to replace gallery systems, but to recognize, mobilize, and create other models which are responsive, flexible - considerate of the land, and how it remembers us.

BUSH gallery incarnates wahkootowin. It is experimental, conceptual, collaborative, and activated by inclusive and radical acts and art-making and art-caretaking. It's criteria includes respect for local Indigenous knowledges past present and future. In generous and expansive ways, Tania, Peter, Jeneen and Gabrielle, with other nii nasasyee (including galleries and arts organizations), remind how the land is the first gallery, and should be centered in pursuing other models of being and doing. Trans-conceptual spaces like BUSH gallery require our bodies to be in a constant state of flux. This is imperative, because as Tania reminds, "To see movement, to feel connection, to remember belonging, creates relatability."[255]

Conversation Excerpts

The following excerpts are a tessellation of public and private conversations with Tania Willard and Peter Morin. I take from Willard's public talk at Aabaakwad, as well as our one-on-one conversation over Zoom. During these sessions Willard spoke about BUSH gallery, curating in her home community and on the land, and her current curatorial pedagogy and praxis. Morin and I have engaged in dialogue about the premise of this dissertation over several years, and in different formats. These include his participation in a MKTT held at the AGSM in 2018, lunch meetings, phone conversations, and text messaging. The breadth of these conversations include the importance of working with kin, the barriers galleries will often put up for Indigenous curators and artists, and the importance of embedding art exhibitions with IKS and relationality.

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[254] Helen Wong, "Tania Willard: Balancing Act, Between an Outsider and an Insider," in *BlackFlash* (May 9, 2018), https://blackflash.ca/2018/05/09/tania-willard-balancing-act-between-an-outsider-and-an-insider-by-helen-wong/.

[255] Tania Willard, "Reading Divergent Indigenous Art Through the River of my own Blood Memory", *Insurgence/Resurgence*, exhibition catalogue, (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2017), 125.

TW: Many of us who started curating in the 1990s and early 2000s pursued curating as a form of activism.

CM: I can agree with that.

TW: But curating wasn't satisfying to me, and it wasn't speaking to my community. There's so many things that displace us from community. So BUSH gallery was my response – to show Indigenous artists in "our galleries." To show what's possible. It comes from wanting to respond to the field of curation. But not in a curator-centred, repairing the practice sort of way. It's more about collaboration… a type of "world-building", as Leanne Simpson says. I base my curatorial practice on intuition and reflexive feelings. I also try to build interest centered on our communities.

CM: Tania I noticed at Plug-In you involved your kids in the panel talk, which often doesn't happen in those arenas. Is that a way to challenge those spaces, and operate more intergenerationally?

TW: In Indigenous communal spaces, intergenerational engagement is the norm. It's pervasive and important to involve elders and kids.

PM: I was thinking about this space of the curatorial as a heart. And that the artwork is how we move into the heart of the culture. We are talking about this kind of relationality…at least that's how I'm sort of understanding what you are putting on the kitchen table.

With *Our Home is Our Gallery* we were trying to think through how Northern people experience artwork. They don't go to the art gallery because they don't have to, as the art gallery is in their home. It's the things their aunties made they have been looking at their entire life. So I asked them if they could lend their art gallery, meaning what is displayed in their homes. They brought things from their home gallery and we put them in the Yukon Art Centre. I borrowed a pair of

my great uncle's snow shoes from my uncle Dave who lives in town, and included them in the show. My family was pretty happy he was being acknowledged as an artist. Some artists made new artwork, and Tania and I were afforded the opportunity to pull from the Yukon government's collection. And this also meant we had access to collected local residential school items. I designed the space thinking about it as a heart. And part of the heart is the residential school story, and I didn't want to ignore that. Even though it's a hard story, there's so much heart, right?

CM: Your work talks and responds to the pulsations of the land and to widening circles. I really appreciate the BUSH gallery Manifesto you all wrote during a residency in Secwepemculewc. These assertions really spoke to me:

- BUSH gallery includes all Indigenous languages (within BUSH gallery, we understand that Indigenous languages are spoken with hands, with the movement of bodies, with the tongue, with the movements of mouths, with laughter, with tears, and with righteous anger).
- BUSH gallery talks big, dreams bigger and doesn't bother to walk its talk, we send our talk straight up to the stars and the sky, on the wings of eagles and hawks…
- BUSH gallery works toward Indigenous resurgence.
- BUSH gallery is radically inclusive-all bodies and lands and kids and dogs and bears are welcome.[256]

TW: For me (living in Secwepemculewc) has opened up language learning, cultural teaching, and land-based family relationships. It has been absolutely instrumental in my work and in thinking through what I do. BUSH gallery is part of showing what's possible.

PM: And also, bear medicine is powerful…

[256] "The BUSH Manifesto" in *C Magazine*, Issue 136 (2018), https://cmagazine.com/issues/136/bush-manifesto.

Concluding Thoughts

Indigenous Littoral Curation is dialogical, relational, a receptor and transmitter of knowledges, and instigator of critical discourses. It is experimental, open-ended, instinctual and iterative. ILC is a pedagogy and praxis that is complementary, built upon, and a tributary to IKS. Curators who operate in this manner gear their premises towards helping keep or bring Indigenous hearts home. With that comes specific roles and responsibilities to all stakeholders, before, during, and after a project has reached some sort of ending.

There are many obstacles when curating in this manner. The western gallery system is predicated on linear notions of time, rigid funding systems, strict deadlines, projected exhibition goals, and anticipated outcomes. Curators are often at the mercy of this system, which are both an impediment and necessity for ILC. With willing participants, collaborative efforts, and strong allyship within institutions and funding agencies, the sort of care ILC curators pursue is achievable.

As Tania Willard notes, "We have commonalties and places we gesture to in our practices, whether home communities, spirituality, cultural practices, language, or other aesthetic systems outside the gallery in cannons of art -they branch beautifully from a common origin."[257] The six examples of Indigenous Littoral Curation are complementary and derivative of other curatorial strategies and initiatives. They are reflective of projects centered on cultural resurgences and curating care within institutions and our communities, whatever their makeup may be. These elements are threaded in Indigenous curation in continuous and varied ways. What perhaps makes the six examples discussed in detail here different, is that the contributing curators embark on their exhibitions and projects explicitly centering knowledge systems, dialogue, being in service to others, and curating care. These are common goals for curators and many have attained them when pursuing curation as methodology. However, those discussed in this chapter recognize their work as curatorial pedagogy and praxis which requires activations constellatory in nature.

[257] Tania Willard, "Reading Divergent Indigenous Art Through the River of my own Blood Memory", 122.

Chapter Six

Washagay: Michif Curatorial Pedagogy and Praxis – A Jig in Three Parts [258]

Métis ancestors would often welcome visitors to their territory along riverbends and shorelines. These littoral zones were sites of pageantry, gathering, and negotiation. There visitors would be greeted by li Michif wearing their best beaded clothing, lovingly made for them by community women. The bead designs they displayed to visitors mapped our land-base, depicted natural medicines, and secured kinship ties. The worn art could be construed as beaded armor and a sign for visitors to tread carefully, or a declaration of its wearer proudly being Indigenous to this land. When those encounters happened along the shorelines, guests were often danced onto the shore by li Michif as a welcoming gesture, and danced back out into the waters when it was time to depart.[259] While gathered together on shorelines, they became in sync with one another, the land, and the patterns of its ecosystem.

Littoral spaces as a metaphor for dialogic and socially-engaged art and curatorial practice resonates with me deeply. In part this is because of my cultural encoded knowledge; shorelines were a vital gathering sites for my ancestors, and a core concept in our knowledge systems. I consider my curatorial practice as a tributary to the Michif values of washagay, miyeu pimaatshiwin, and wahkootowin. Making it so requires that I engage with Métis histories, self-reflect, remember, and pursue Michif ways of being. I attempt to do so with art engagement as integral to these processes. This involves "growing into" the Michif language, beading, organizing kitchen table talk sessions with artists and curators, and sharing personal narratives about my lived experiences as a Michif curator.

In this chapter I provide a mapping of how I pursue Indigenous Littoral Curation by employing a Michif cultural paradigm. I begin by discussing encoded cultural memory, and advocate for its use with dialogical approaches in remedying conventional curatorship. I then discuss three exhibitions which impacted my eventual pursuance of naming and framing ILC. I frame them with teachings provided by Verna about three main cultural concepts: washagay,

[258] Washagay names the physical region where the land and waters meet. It speaks to the importance of shorelines and how they were once gathering sites. It aligns with littoral art theory and praxis that names shorelines as instigators of dialogic, socially engaged art.
[259] Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette, in conversation with the author, May, 2017.

miyeu pimaatshiwin, and wahkotoowin. Next, I discuss a series of Métis Kitchen Table Talk events I co-curated and hosted as a form of washagay nimaa. These best reflect my experiences with curators, artists and various stakeholders within ILC, the ways in which I pursue Michif knowledges, and operate from a Michif paradigm. I end with concluding thoughts about the key facets to all of the curatorial projects discussed in the chapter.

I discuss and contemplate my own work not for self- promotion, nor because I think any of the projects discussed here are examples of "best practices" of Indigenous Littoral Curation. ILC work cannot be formula-based or ego-driven, and these things would define their failure, not their success. I do so because I want to contribute to on-going pedagogy and praxis encouraging curators to name how they represent their own kinship, knowledge systems, and strategies for curatorial care. To effectively contribute, it is necessary to engage in self-critique and interrogate my own intentions, interactions and experiences with artists, communities, and gallery workers. By making myself vulnerable and incorporating personal motivations and reflections, I can energize and mobilize that which is encoded in me, and hopefully, contribute to Indigenous art histories and critical discourses in a good way.

The Surfacing of Encoded Cultural Memory

The Métis hold specific ties to the land, and as an Indigenous nation are constantly navigating around, and within the nation-state of Canada. These encounters with colonial forces create stigmatized families, who at times bear the burden of attempted assimilation, internalized racism, and lateral violence. We are a people, whose existence is constantly questioned and challenged by mainstream Canada. However, like other Indigenous nations, there are remedies constantly performed to declare, re-instate, and acknowledge who we are as a people. As our ancestors did, we stand strong, and we mobilize.

Métis culture consists of intricate kinship structures, language (with multiple dialects), collective histories, political systems, art, culture, music, dance, and spiritual practices and beliefs. Despite having limited contact with kin and my territory in my youth, I was still exposed to Michif artistic practice, ways of being, and knowledge systems grounded in reciprocity, resilience and resurgence. Beading, visiting around the kitchen table, and hearing stories about our family, guided me towards curatorial practice. However, it took time to navigate the western art milieu and Michif values and cultural ways of being I encountered when with family. It is

because of the encoded cultural memory I carry, transmitted through stories, artistic activations, and the land as a carrier of memory, that I am able to name and activate my practice from within a Michif paradigm.

Remedying Conventional Curatorship with Dialogue and Employing Encoded Cultural Memory

In the past, I would think in terms of exhibitions as activated and dialogical spaces, but would self-silence my own engagement with art, because I thought that's what curators do in order to support artists. Yet I have always conceptualized exhibitions by first having conversations with family, friends and artist colleagues. Right from the beginning of my curatorial practice I prioritized spending time with artists outside of the gallery construct, on walks in forests, in coffee shops, at home with family, in movie theatres and bars. The conversations in these situations were vital to how we engaged within the gallery construct.

Writing curatorial essays often began by jotting down personal narratives connecting myself in some way to the art and artist. I would leave those stories in written rough drafts until I was ready to submit the essays to editors. Then I'd erase all or most of the personal narrative, believing I needed to limit the trace of my existence from the curated project and writing as much as possible. I firmly believed curators need to stand beside or behind artists, and never in front. I still believe this, however now recognize the distinction between standing behind and hiding behind an artist and their art. As a curator, making oneself vulnerable and available in similar ways that artists do, creates a stronger foundation to stand in solidarity with them and community.

Sharing personal narratives can lead to self-reflection about why we curate the way we do, and for whom. It helps create a space for critical dialogic art engagement grounded in humility. It's how we can keep or bring our hearts home. I have been fortunate to have family, artists, and community culturally ground me. I attempt to operate as a conduit for them, and negotiate curatorial space in useful and productive ways that cannot be misused or extracted in harmful ways. This is the responsibility of revealing encoded cultural memory in curatorial work, instigated by conversations and pursuing core knowledge systems. For myself, these involve the knowledge and value systems of washagay, miyeu pimaatshiwin, wahkotoowin, and washagay nimaa.

***Blanked(ed)* – an Accidental Manifestation of Washagay**

Washagay is a root word for mobilizing and movement, and a descriptor for where the land and waters meet. It suggests circularity, roundness and ongoing movement. According to Verna DeMontigny it relates to everything we know about our culture because it's circular, continuous, and land-based knowledge. It is a core concept in Michif knowledge systems, in sync with littoral art theory and praxis, and central to naming my curatorial practice, and the tenets of ILC.

I experienced my first art-and-community-driven experience of washagay, when co-curating the cultural exchange and exhibition *Blanket(ed)*. This project took place between 2001 and 2002, and was a partnership between Urban Shaman Gallery (USG) in Winnipeg, MB, and Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in Sydney, Australia. I secured funds to travel to Australia with three local artists, and then bring three artists from Australia to Winnipeg, Brandon, and Regina. This exchange would result in new work by artists based around a common theme, an exhibition and related programming at USG, a series of workshops and events, and a published catalogue. I first contacted the Director of Boomalli in Winter 2001 with a request for an artists' collaborative exchange with US to take place, and they agreed to collaborate. Within months Colleen Cutschall (Lakota), Lita Fontaine (Sagkeeng First Nation), Roger Crait (Cree/French) and myself, travelled to Australia for two weeks of planned gallery and museum visits, dinners, panels, meetings to select artists to come to Canada, and participate in interactive artists' workshops.

As soon as we arrived, our hosts informed me they were not interested in following the schedule I requested, and thought the over-arching curatorial theme I proposed, *Dream State(ments)*, was inadequate. They shared that since I selected which Manitoba-based artists would participate in the exchange, they did the same for their community, and they were Elaine Russell (Kamileroi), Adam Hill (Dhungatti) and Joyce Abraham. They also provided a co-curator representing Boomalli, Jonathan Jones (Wiradjuri, Kamileroi). My first concern was fulfilling the funding requirements for the grants I had secured, and the expectations that came with. They told me not to worry, and following the schedule I submitted to granting agents wasn't a priority in what we were attempting to do.

During our time in Australia, we did visit a few galleries, and hosted an artist-talk session. However the majority of our time was spent visiting, being invited into the homes of

artists' family members, and walking the land with them and their knowledge keepers. Most of this happened in small Indigenous communities, and far outside the gallery construct. We engaged in thoughtful, and at times humorous dialogue while en route to those communities, where we were generously welcomed. Nii nasaysee, our collaborators and partners, ignored "the square", and hosted us in full recognition of "the circle" which is Indigenous art engagement. There were challenges in travelling and spending two weeks with strangers who all had varying ideas of how to host us, and what this exchange should be and become. There were also a couple of scheduled events I wish we would have done, and one major regret I have is cancelling a collaborative art-making session with local artists who weren't part of the exchange.

When the artists and curator from Boomalli came to Winnipeg in November 2001 for phase 2, I worked with USG to follow and expand the model created by our hosts in Sydney. However, we gathered primarily in urban settings, and not in smaller Indigenous communities. Jones noted that during our time in Australia, conversations arose about the type of blankets used in residential and mission schools, the blanketing of Indigenous cultures by colonization, and blankets representing the warmth derived from familial and community love. The theme of the exhibition therefore became blankets, and the title of the exhibition and exchange, *Blanket(ed)*.

Artists created new works based on this theme, which were exhibited at Urban Shaman Gallery. The opening for *Blanket(ed)* was packed and the gallery was filled to capacity mostly by Indigenous people, and a few ally supporters from the Winnipeg art scene. Adam Hill played the yadaki (digeridoo), and The Aboriginal Writer's Collective presented poetry on the theme of blankets. Although we scheduled key events like a weekend artist gathering at the St. Norbert Arts Centre, we kept the schedule open, in case local organizations were interested in hosting the Australian artists. This happened a lot. Artists were invited to local elementary schools where they taught children about their cultures. They were given a tour of the Aboriginal Centre, a beacon for urban Indigenous people, and were invited for tea by Lorraine Freeman at the Métis Culture and Education Resource Centre. Art City held workshops led by the artists, and our guests shared a meal there with other artists, youth, and their families. In Winnipeg, Brandon and Regina, there were impromptu collective drawing workshops, guest lectures in university classes, music jam sessions, and visiting. Although one of the initial goals USG and I held was to attract attention and respect from the local Winnipeg art scene (overall the response was tepid),

Blanket(ed) was an introduction to the priorities and potential of USG as a contributor to Indigenous non-arts based communities and organizations.

Figure Forty-Six: Documentation of *Blanket(ed).*Top Left: Roger Crait, Colleen Cutschall and Troy Russell on a walk for "Bush Tucker." Top Right: *Ration Day* by Elaine Russel, acrylic on paper, 2001. Bottom Left: *The Unequator*, Colleen Cutschall, acrylic on unbleached linen, 2001. Bottom Right: Photo of poet Marvin Francis reading to audience at Urban Shaman Gallery, 2001. Photo credit: Lita Fontaine, personal collection of the author.

During *Blanket(ed)* I learned the importance of dialogue, getting to know the loved ones of artists I work with, the importance of developing strong negotiation skills, and accepting guidance and direction from others. I learned to value fluid processes, and to disregard curatorial goals and anticipated outcomes (to an extent). It was for me the beginning of moving outside the square, and into the circle. The project pulled at the threads of established criteria of curatorial practice, and helped me disrobe the expectations that came with conventional understandings of the curator-as-author. It helped me find my place along the washagay where my ancestors gathered to welcome, engage and dance with one another and their guests.

***Frontrunners* – Locating Miyeu Pimaatshiwin in Personal and Collective Histories**

Miyeu Pimaatshiwin is the Métis term for living a good life and involves generous reciprocity, a valuing of art, and the sharing of knowledge. According to Verna, miyeu pimaatishiwin

embodies many things, including a) spiritual ways of being, b) how one works for community and family, c) how one respects and engages with the land, d) values art and culture, and e); works hard to have an abundant life. It can also mean being wealthy and having lots of things. It's important to pursue the type of miyeu pimaatishiwin that creates relationships, not things or monetary wealth. For myself miyeu pimaatishiwin includes dialogic engagements between artists, curators and communities. It also requires self-reflection about lived experiences, IKS, and individual curatorial purposes and processes. Considering how to live in a good way, as per Verna's teachings about miyeu pimaatishiwin, has led me to recognize humility as a site for critical discourse, and criticality as a gift to curators, artists and all other stakeholders.

In Spring 2011 *Frontrunners*, a three-year curatorial initiative I organized came to fruition, pursued in the spirit of dialogue-driven community engagement, decolonization, and exploration of littoral art practice as washagay peywinwa. This initiative was meant to recognize the impact of the Professional Native Indian Artists' Inc**.** (PNIA), specifically in Winnipeg and Manitoba (they are also known as the 'Indian Group of 7', a term coined by the media). Their story, and the context and time in which it happened, is a starting point for discussing the history of artistic and political action within Winnipeg by artists of Indigenous ancestry. It included three exhibitions, a performance, a panel discussion, workshops for youth organized by Ndinawe Youth Centre, and a feast and entertainment event, both organized by a selected host committee. The overarching goal was to give PNIA a metaphorical "homecoming" through multiple channels, events, and considerations. In my *dreaming*, a project honouring PNIA was a starting point to discuss the history of artistic and social change action within Winnipeg by artists of Indigenous ancestries and the effective role Urban Shaman Gallery continues to have. By partnering with Plug-In ICA, an institution with a contentious history of excluding local Indigenous artists before the arrival of Director Anthony Kiendl, *Frontrunners* provided a space to acknowledge the complicated history, impact, and positions created from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of contemporary art in the early 1970s, and the ground-breaking actions of the PNIA.

In recognition of the legacy left by the PNIA in Winnipeg, it was fitting that an exhibition featuring work by the seven PNIA members be held at Urban Shaman Gallery in May 2011. Artwork in the exhibition included paintings, drawings, sculpture and prints from the 1970s revealing their seminal roles as the first incorporated professional Indigenous artist-run

organization, and their artistic sensibilities and the ways in which they affirmed their cultural presence. The narratives about the PNIA are paradoxical and expose the complex positions they and their art were placed in by settler audiences. Many non-Indigenous audience members perceived the PNIA artists as survivors or revivers of a 'noble savage' past, representatives of the political and cultural shifts taking place in Canada in the late 60s and early 70s, or the creators of a lucrative art market. However, Indigenous audiences and supporters consider PNIA members knowledge keepers, cultural revealers, instigators, talented artists, social change agents, and overall dreamers. Some see their art as "traditional" spiritually-grounded emblems of cultural survival. It was therefore important to present the diverseness, yet interconnectedness of the seven artists' work to show their social and cultural sensibilities and collective search for visual sovereignty. Doing so removed the discourse from a western art historical-canon and avoid binaries between 'traditional' and 'contemporary', 'artist' and 'social change agent', 'fine art' versus 'folk art'.

Figure Forty-Seven: Installation shot of *Frontrunners* – Iteration #1, Urban Shaman Gallery, 2011. Photo credit: Aaron Pierre, personal collection of the author.

To give the artists a sincere homecoming, dialogues and contemplation of their contributions happened in multiple venues and formats. An exhibition featuring new work by Winnipeg-based Anishinaabe artists Jackie Traverse, Darryl Nepinak, Lita Fontaine, and Louis Ogemah also took place at Urban Shaman Gallery at the same time. These artists were chosen for their artistic talents, willingness to engage in critical dialogue, and commitment to making social change by working with Indigenous communities and social agencies. Importantly, they value the PNIA artists for their individual and collective contributions.

Over the course of a year the four artists and myself gathered regularly to discuss the project at the Nook Coffee House in West Broadway. Conversations focused on our personal reflections about PNIA, updates on the project and their art, the past and present Winnipeg art scene, frustrations and challenges as artists living in Winnipeg, and what the actions of PNIA have meant, or could mean to them with further investigation. They then created artworks based upon their own engagements with PNIA's art and actions, and our discussions. Their works imagine the PNIA members' existences as a collective of artists in the 70s, while also honouring their artistic paths, cultural sensibilities and impact. By visually recognizing them as social change agents who challenged an exclusive art world and affirmed their cultural and artistic presence, these four artists' works contemplate P.N.I.A. Inc. as *the* frontrunners for contemporary artists.

As Nepinak, Traverse, Fontaine and Ogemah were asked to create new works for the project based upon our on-going conversations, we did not operate in a standard artist – curator format. I did not choose work from their repertoire I thought matched the curatorial thesis, and the dialogical process was as relevant as the physical objects they created. We often worked simultaneously, and in concert with one another in our artistic and curatorial development for *Frontrunners.* I did not know what their finished works looked like until they were brought to US to be installed. Through a commitment to welcoming home the PNIA and the dialogical process, their art became the framework that held PNIA's work up for contemplation. With painting, mixed media, and video, they created provocative, culturally grounded contemporary contributions fused with political commentary, humour and spirituality.

Figure Forty-Eight: Installation shots of iteration #2 of *Frontrunners*, May, 2011. Top Left: Louis Ogemah, Top Right: Lita Fontaine, Bottom Left: Jackie Traverse, Bottom Right: Darryl Nepinal. Photo credit: Aaron Pierre, personal collection of the author.

At Plug-In ICA a solo show of Alex Janvier's work also took place in May 2011. During his long artistic career Janvier mapped Indigenous and non-Indigenous engagement with the land. The residuals of those encounters are expressed in his painting with fluid line, bold colour, and abstracted landscapes inspired by quillwork and bead design. Hidden in his diagrammatic paintings are symbols and overt expressions affirming Indigenous connection and rights to the land, while documenting colonial encroachment.[260] The solo exhibition contained expressions of Janvier's overt politicized sensibility that were recently made, or had rarely been seen publicly. In addition, work was chosen with hopes of challenging Plug-In ICA as an institution with a limited history of working with Indigenous artists and curators. For example, *Nehobetthe* (1992) which emulates Janvier's public mural work, was chosen in part because it's not the typical work Plug-In ICA usually presents. I was interested in seeing if perceptions and value systems had changed and what quickly became obvious was that they had, as the painting garnered appreciative responses by young artists and Plug-In ICA employees and volunteers. They were open to engaging in critical dialogue with the work, remedying the history of exclusion, and in part altering my perception that an interventionist strategy was required.

[260] Cathy Mattes, "Frontrunners" (curatorial statement, Plug-In ICA, 2011). https://plugin.org/exhibitions/frontrunners/.

Figure Forty-Nine: Installation shot of iteration #3, *Frontrunners – Alex Janvier*, May 2011, Plug-In ICA. Photo credit: Aaron Pierre, personal collection of the author.

Joseph Sanchez created a new performance for the opening of Janvier's exhibition that juxtaposed Indigenous philosophies, oral history and experience with modern "artspeak". His alter ego Indio Dali, who is very opinionated and critical of current descriptions of fine art, provided what he called a "rant" about ecology, valued aesthetics, art themes, and the role the PNIA played in challenging hegemony in the Canadian art world. While Indio Dali sat on a chair in the middle of the room with an audio piece and video projection playing behind him, the audience sat around his feet, as he kind-heartedly spoke (as opposed to ranting) to past and current artistic struggles and achievements. Sanchez's presence, tone and generosity created a space that generated and transmitted knowledge, while Indigenizing the gallery space. Indio Dali morphed it into a metaphorical, energized and temporal meeting ground, similar to washagay.

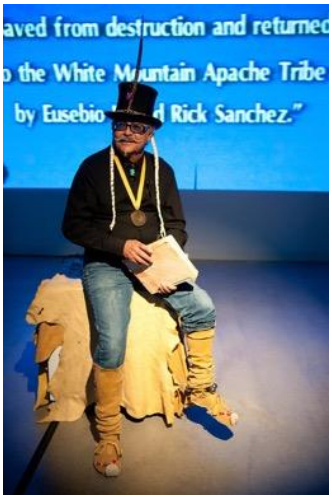

Figure Fifty: Indio Dali in performance (Joseph Sanchez), Plug-In ICA, May 2011. Photo credit: Aaron Pierre, personal collection of the author.

Frontrunners began with a series of youth-focused workshops spearheaded by artist and curator Niki Little (Anishininew/English). These took place at Ndinawe Youth Centre in Winnipeg's North End in March 2011. Contributing artists conducted workshops individually, and then held gatherings where they collectively painted with youth and other participants. The end results were paintings reflecting personal visual narratives, cultural concepts, community cohesiveness, and various levels of experience.

A host committee was created to organize additional cultural events to honour PNIA. The committee consisted of local poets, musicians, filmmakers, actors and an Urban Shaman board member. They heralded from different artistic backgrounds, with different and connections to community, and contributed their knowledge, creativity, contacts and contemplation of Indigenous artistic actions in Winnipeg. They organized a very well-attended feast (twice as many people showed up as anticipated) to honour past and present contributors to Urban Shaman, the Group and *Frontrunners.* In concert with the Indigenous Writers Collective they organized a poetry slam and musical performances by local talent, including Jason Tuesday (Anishinabe). It was an emotional gathering for some who remembered PNIA members as having a profound impact in their younger years.

Jackson Beardy's son Byron was an active participant in *Frontrunners.* He was positive about the project and eager to involve his family. He offered stories, encouragement, and a performance at the entertainment event, when he drummed and sang with two of his children, while his teenage son hoop danced in regalia. As Jackson Beardy's grandson Jackson III danced his ankle bells fell off one after the other. He completed his performance, and then unexpectedly burst into tears. Together he and his father explained to the audience how he had inherited the bells from his name-sake grandfather, who started dancing before his untimely death. They had been part of his own regalia since he was six, and had never fallen off before. The Beardy's believed this meant the spirit of Jackson Beardy was present, and encouraging his grandson to gift the ankle bells to Alex Janvier and Joseph Sanchez. Together with his family Jackson III said goodbye to them and gifted them to the two stunned and appreciative artists.

Afterwards each member of the Beardy family got up and spoke about Jackson Beardy, sharing how the art displayed on US's walls brought back memories about their artist father and

husband. Beardy's daughter, who spent part of the night examining his work closely and searching for traces of her father in his painted lines, shared how walking into US awoke memories of her father bringing her to his own studio space in Winnipeg's Exchange District in the late 1970s. She described in detail the scent of the old building, creeks heard when walking up the stairs, and the physicality of her father painting while she waited for him to finish, so she could be rewarded for her patience during these studio sessions.

These occurrences showed that there was something more meaningful at play than displaying art, exploring littoral art discourse, or co-organizing and co-hosting events to provide a metaphorical homecoming. *Frontrunners* provided a space for the Beardy family to be recognized for their sacrifices and contributions to the field of Indigenous contemporary art, while affording them the opportunity to connect and re-connect with artists, and witness their father's artistic legacy in action. The Beardy family gifted us with reciprocal generosity and many of us took their guidance and looked to the art and their actions with a new lens, affirming that our individual liberation is bound up in our collectivity. Through their responses to *Frontrunners* we were given opportunities to contemplate our own Indigeneity, humanity and emancipation experienced with art. No curator can predict, organize or take credit for this sort of affirming experience, nor should we want to.

Figure Fifty-One: *Frontrunners* events and activations. Top Left: Collaborative painting workshop at Ndinawe Youth Centre, Top Middle: *Frontrunners* Feast, Top Right: The Beardy Family closely examining Jackson Beardy's work, Bottom Right: Jackson Beady III while hoop-dancing, Bottom Middle: Jason Tuesday performing with Jason Burnstick

Bottom Right: Byron Beardy and children singing an honour song, May 2011. Photo credit: Aaron Pierre and the author, personal collection of the author.

The process, research, and development of *Frontrunners* were dialogic and process-based. This meant participating in reciprocal dialogue without ever assuming an authorial or authoritative role, having preconceptions of how dialogue should go, or striving for particular outcomes. This required challenging traditional curatorial roles when they crept up, which at times was difficult. I was faced with conflicts of wanting to be valued and recognized as an authorial curator by the institutions and audiences I was working with, and wanting to operate with the love Paulo Freire suggests is necessary for true emancipation. In actively pursuing a dialogical process with littoral art discourse in mind, I learned that there needs to be more work done to ensure curatorial processes be understood as holding relevance and resonance in larger Indigenous communities. For myself, this in part involves employing curatorial strategies of care, nourished and ignited by wahkootowin.

Forging Wahkootowin in *Inheritance – Amy Malbeuf*

When curating exhibitions, gatherings and projects, I try to operate on a nation-to-nation basis and recognize Indigenous sovereignties as guided by wahkootowin. According to Métis scholar Brenda MacDougall, this important IKS is "a worldview that privileged relatedness to the land, people, (living, ancestral, and those to come), the spirit world, and creatures inhabiting the space."[261] Métis poet and knowledge keeper Maria Campbell also shares, "…Wahkotowin meant honoring and respecting those relationships. They are our stories, songs, ceremonies, and dances that taught us from birth to death our responsibilities and reciprocal obligations to each other."[262] Our Métis ancestors shared these values with our Cree kin, which entered into their engagements in the 19th century with fur trading companies, the Canadian government, and the Church. These values were not reciprocated by colonizers, which greatly impacted several generations of Métis in continuing and strengthening wahkotoowin. We are now finding our way back home.

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[261] Brenda MacDougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 3.
[262] Maria Campbell, "We need to return to the principals of wahkotowin," *Eagle Feather News*, November, 2007, https://mgouldhawke.wordpress.com/2019/11/05/we-need-to-return-to-the-principles-of-wahkotowin-maria-campbell-2007/.

In 2016 I was invited by the Kelowna Art Gallery (KAG) to curate an exhibition featuring an establishing Indigenous artist. I asked Métis artist Amy Malbeuf (Amy) to work with me and *Inheritance: Amy Malbeuf*, opened at the KAG in 2017. The exhibition was an exercise in igniting wahkootowin for ourselves and other Métis with art and dialogue. It featured previous and new work incorporating passed-down ancestral items like trapping equipment and china to expose cultural continuums found within Michif families when one looks closely. Referencing beading and moosehair tufting, and using tarp as a symbolic material of resistance and being on the land, Malbeuf further navigates and resists constricting colonial dressings. Presented together in the context of this exhibition, her art was both gentle encouragement and reminder that nurturing revolution can be traced and located in family, community, and the artistic actions taking place in the larger Indigenous art world.[263]

As the exhibition was an exercise in wahkootowin, I invited Amy to visit me in Brandon and spend time with my family, students, Métis community, and the local Indigenous arts community. Based on previous conversations about our upbringings and struggles with feeling accepted in the larger Métis nation as contemporary artist and curators, I organized a public Métis Kitchen Table Talk session at the Manitoba Metis Federation-Southwest office. I was confident the local Métis community were open-minded and would welcome Amy with open arms, which they did. The MMF-Southwest office staff became our co-hosts, providing the space which they decorated nicely, and promoting the event widely. We sent a poster around to local organizations inviting people to visit with us. In it we encouraged Métis community members to bring with them an inherited object to share and discuss with other guests. We provided examples such as family photographs, teacups, musical instruments, sashes, and beadwork. We presented the gathering as an opportunity to share our individual and collective experiences as Métis people.

[263] Cathy Mattes, "Amy Malbeuf: Inheritance," online exhibition catalogue (Kelowna: Kelowna Art Gallery, 2017), https://kelownaartgallery.com/inheritance/curatorial-essay/.

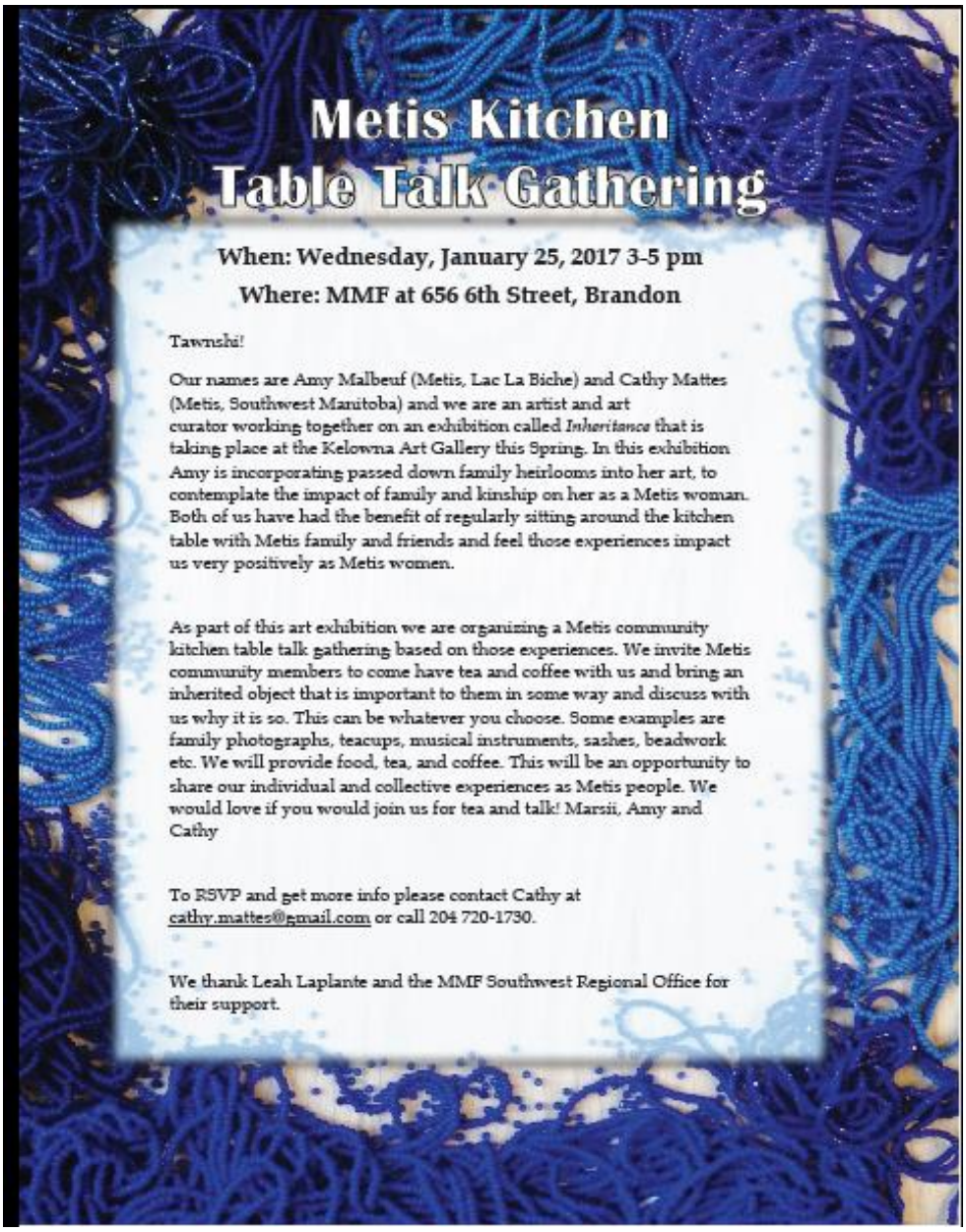

Figure Fifty-Two: Poster for the Métis Kitchen Table Talk Gathering, January 25, 2017, MMF-Southwest Office, Brandon, MB. Image provided by author.

The kitchen table talk session was well attended and helped instigate wahkootowin for Métis participants. The thirty-plus guests brought items ranging from tea cups that carried important family narratives, bibles, fiddles, newspaper articles, photographs, and a Father's Day card gifted to a single mother by her child. I brought my grandfather's fiddle and my beaded interpretation of a story my mother shared with me about her picking flowers with my grandfather and aunties. Once everyone was seated and had food and drink, we asked for

volunteers to present their inherited object. We noticed that although there were plenty of items brought, some guests were uncomfortable in sharing the stories connected to them. Dr. Darryl Racine, a writer and professor in the Department of Native Studies at Brandon University, then spoke words which helped provide a safe space to share personal narratives. He gently reminded Amy and I that not everyone had access to cultural items, experiences around kitchen tables with loved ones, or opportunities to learn how to make art. However, contained in all our hearts and minds are a wealth of stories, which are the core of wahkootowin. After his words, guests began generously sharing narratives. They did so as an offering to Amy as a visual artist, who in return valued their presence and generosity. Any existing or perceived gaps between guests and hosts temporarily closed in those brief moments.

What became evident was how land is a catalyst for Métis storytelling and knowledge transmission. Jason Hrychiuk, a student of mine at the time, presented his painting conveying how hunting solidifies his Métis identity and ties to the ancestors. Guests responded by sharing stories about hunting, fishing, and personal experiences on the land. This was done in response to his painting and words, and was a gifting of knowledge and encouragement to continue his artwork, and securing ties to the land and his ancestors.

Figure Fifty-Three: Documentation of the Métis Kitchen Table Talk Gathering, January 25, 2017, MMF-Southwest Office, Brandon, MB. Images taken by author.

The day after the exhibition opened at the KAG, Amy and I held a public conversation about the exhibition, Métis culture, and our inheritance. The event was well-attended, but carried

a very different feel than the gathering in Brandon. This was in part because the event was not held in the familiar space of a community centre, but in the western gallery construct. Wanting to further ignite wahkootowin, and guided by personal narratives shared between Amy and myself, I asked that we end the event by collaboratively dancing the Red River Jig. My mother was a competitive dancer in her youth, and my grandparents often held kitchen parties complete with fiddle music and dance. I had access to knowledge of this dance from her and opportunities to learn in several Métis dance workshops. Amy was not afforded the same opportunities, but I requested she help me lead the dance nonetheless. Knowing the steps, or even being a decent dancer didn't matter in this exercise. It was about mirroring the ways our ancestors gathered along washagay, to dance our guests out as our ancestors once did theirs, and ignite wahkootowin. The MKTT held for *Inheritance – Amy Malbeuf,* and the willingness of Amy and guests to our public conversation to collaboratively dance the Red River Jig, was flint for co-curating more kitchen table talk gatherings, and animating spaces by washagy nimaa.

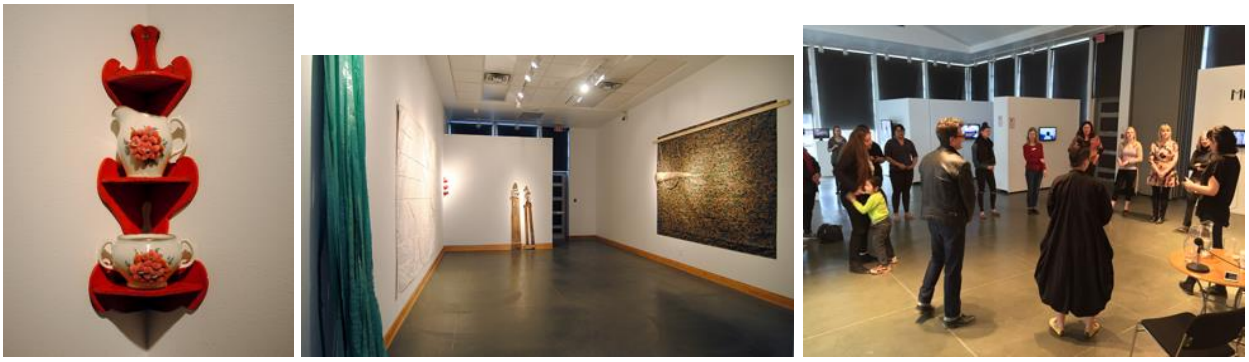

Figure Fifty-Four: Left: *Cream and Sugar,* 2017, Middle: Installation shot of *Inheritance: Amy Malbeuf,* Kelowna Art Gallery, Right: Preparing to collaboratively dance the Red River Jig, Kelowna Art Gallery. Images downloaded from: http://kelownaartgallery.com/inheritance/works-in-the-exhibition/.

Washagay Nimaa - Métis Kitchen Table Talk – A Curated Affair

Washagay is the name given to shorelines and washagay-nimaa is the term for round dance, often known as jigging or square dancing. Verna confers that since shorelines are not linear but circular in shape, then square dances aren't 'square' at all, but instead are round. When she first shared this, my understanding of littoral spaces, the purpose and motivation of Métis dance, and the naming and activating of space was rocked to the core. It made me think about how as a curator, I have at times wanted the circle, but operated as if it were a square. After Verna relayed

this during a weekly beading session with the BU Beading Babes, I went home and danced in contemplation of heartbeats, wave crashes, and pageantry. I now consider washagay the foundation for curatorial practice rooted in Michif knowledges, value systems and lived experiences. Washagay nimaa is the activation of this space directed by the rhythm, patterns and continuous movements carried along circular shorelines. It manifests in multiple and varied ways, and can be experienced around the kitchen tables of Métis peoples.

Historically in Métis households the kitchen table was the center of the home – it is where loved ones were fed, clothing mended, beadwork and embroidery completed, and where political and cultural scheming occurred. The kitchen was the warmest room in a home since it was there that the stove, often the only source of heat, was located. This meant the majority of domestic tasks happened there – bathing, cooking, gathering, and preparing to go out into the world. However it's important to not relegate the kitchen to solely being a gendered site of domesticity. For many Indigenous peoples, kitchen tables are an electric and activated space out of necessity.

The connection to my Métis identity often arose around the kitchen tables of my mother, aunties, and cousins and my family rarely sat still when we gathered there. They would be drinking coffee, tapping the cup with their spoon, drumming their fingers on the table, smoking, eating, laughing with their whole bodies, playing crib, shuffling cards, and sometimes there may be a guitar in the hands of someone. I learned how to bead at age 20 from my aunty Jean Baron-Ward sitting around my parent's kitchen table with my mother Darlene and sister Leslie present. It was the very first time we collectively and consciously immersed ourselves in culturally-based arts practice. As my aunty taught us to bead, I felt culturally tuned-in for the first time in my young life. Later on, kitchen tables became a site where I would pick my kin's brains for essay titles, feedback on curatorial theses, and receive stories and knowledges which would impact my work. As a result of the nourishment I received around kitchen tables and wanting to facilitate similar experiences for others, collaborative and public Métis Kitchen Table Talks **(**MKTTs) surfaced first in my research methodologies, and then in my curatorial pedagogy and praxis.

Figure Fifty-Five: Left: My grandfather Patrick Ward, uncle Tommy, and auntie Rita playing cards at the kitchen table in my mother's childhood home. Right: My father Ken Mattes beating my mother Darlene Mattes in a game of crib on Christmas Day, 2019. Also sitting at the family kitchen table are my sister Leslie Mattes and nephew Evan Hawkins. Photos credit: Darlene Mattes and the author.

In addition to the MKTT organized for *Inheritance – Amy Malbeuf* and those for my dissertation research, I co-curated, participated, or hosted a larger series of on-going public Métis Kitchen Table Talk (MKTT) gatherings between 2017 and 2020. These were held at scholars symposiums, universities, art galleries, and Indigenous community centers. They were collaborative efforts from their start, instigated by invitations from colleagues and friends whose own scholarship or curatorial interests prioritize the dialogical, being of service to others, and their respective knowledge systems and lived experiences.[264] Several hundred artists, academics, knowledge keepers, family members, allies, arts administrators, students, and curators from around the globe have participated, and I am so thankful to them all for everything they brought to the tables.

Public MKTTs are a collaborative endeavor and their success lies with nii nasasyee. Co-organizers have included Dr. Julie Nagam (University of Winnipeg, 2017 & 2020, Concordia University, 2018), Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette (Native American and Indigenous Scholars Association Symposium, Honolulu, Hawaii, 2017), the Indigenous Curatorial Collective staff

[264] I am indebted to Dr. Julia Nagam from the University of Winnipeg, Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette from the University of Regina, The Indigenous Curatorial Collective, Dr. Erin Sutherland and the Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre for their generosity and collaborative efforts.

and board (AGSM in Brandon, and the Halifax Friendship Centre, NS, 2019) , and Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre (Edmonton, AB, 2019, with Sherry Farrell Racette). In addition to the involvement of my own family and co-organizers, there are many helpers who facilitate the MKTTs. They have often been students, curators and artists who express interest in enhancing how they culturally ground themselves and contribute to community. The contributions of all nii nasasyee are vital, and their experiences, knowledges, and insights often lead the direction of the MKKTs.

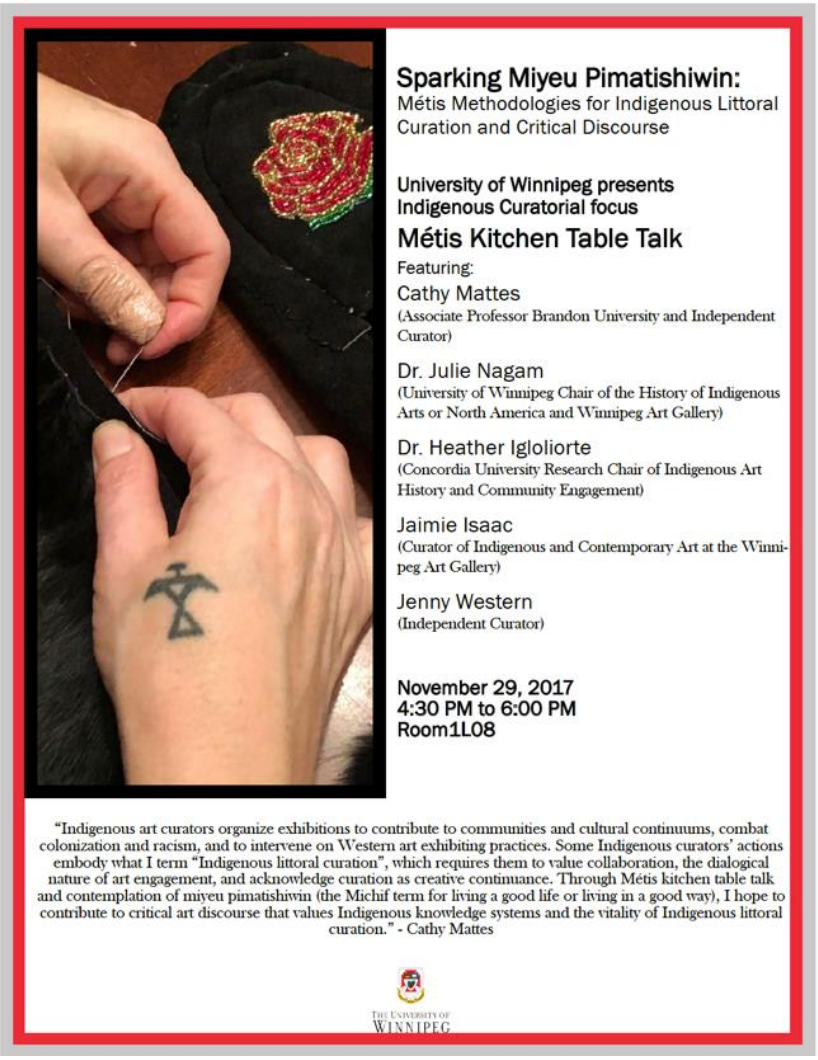

Figure Fifty-Six: Poster announcing one of the earlier MKTTs, University of Winnipeg, 2017. Image provided by author.

Tea and food made by family or community members is offered to guests when they first arrive to the public MKTTs. This gesture is essential, as it is how we first welcome guests into the home. I introduce myself in my grandmothers' language to honour her, and for the Métis participants who have never heard our language spoken before this moment. I also speak Michif as an act of defiance, since several generations of Indigenous people were severely penalized in schools and churches for speaking their language. After introductions are made and guests are settled, they are encouraged to separate the pile of mixed colored beads, placed on a piece of felt in front of them. Separating beads with a single needle is often the first step of learning how to bead. Teachers will request this so that first time learners become familiar with the different colors and shades of beads, how to hold a small needle, and most importantly, how to develop patience and respect for the tiny objects. I include this teaching because moving beads with our hands is meditative, and allows time for self -reflection and collective contemplation. It is another type of enactment of washagay nimaa.

Figure Fifty-Seven: Elke Krasny's completed pile of separated beads on felt from our private MKTT, April 10, 2018, Vienna, Austria. Photo taken by author.

Beading has been present in my life since before I became an art curator. However only recently have I begun employing it as a curatorial strategy for culturally grounded and dialogue-driven practice. This is in part because the western art world has impeded contemporary Indigenous artists and curators' ability to build relations through art-making and art-caretaking as

our ancestors once did. We are relegated to artistic divides of "traditional" or "contemporary" art, and artist versus curator. Yet learning about my culture with beads has been foundational for my curatorial goals and practice. Those moments of collective and collaborative bead actions and personal growth became a motivation for co-organizing and hosting Métis Kitchen Table Talks.

Specific guest artists or curators are invited to help ignite conversation, by sharing stories about themselves and their practices, and whatever else they wish to discuss. Topics have included the impact of their kinship ties, critical thoughts about art and theory, shows they are working on, or obstacles they face in the western art milieu and academia. Guests who know how to bead bring items they are working on, including medallions, clothing, jewelry, beaded paintings, and sculptural works. On occasion they offer to quietly teach other guests how to sew beads while relevant topics are discussed. Everyone's hands move in a calm manner as we sew ourselves into relation. There is much laughter, debate, and the occasional discomfort that surfaces in MKKT. However, there are also quiet, potent moments of encouragement, personal reflection, remembering, and activated listening. Sometimes a collective exhale can be felt, and the pulsations of IKS are ignited.

Figure Fifty-Eight: Left: Dr. Heather Igloliorte beading, Right: Collaborative beading detail shot at *Sparking Miyeu Pimaatishiwin: A Métis Kitchen Table Talk*, facilitated by Dr. Julie Nagam, Thursday, February 6, 2020, University of Winnipeg. Photo provided by the University of Winnipeg.

It is important MKKT is an embodiment of washagy nimaa, and not a cultural performance. Gatherings are meant to provide agency and affirmation to Indigenous collaborators and guests, first and foremost.[265] I co-organize, and host them with the hopes

[265] Fran Hebert-Spence (Sagkeeng First Nation), in conversation with author, March 17, 2020.

participants feel empowered to continue with caretaking strategies specific to their communities, lived experiences, and their own engagements with IKS. This includes ensuring non-Indigenous guests understand their participation as witnesses and activated listeners. They are invited to separate or sew beads as a strategy for reconciliation, self-reflection and transformative growth. If there is any derailment from that, a host or organizer must address it swiftly and in a good way, so there is minimal disruption to other guests around the table. This is all part of attempting to ignite IKS and curating care for Indigenous people, in solidarity with non-Indigenous allies.

At the end of the gatherings, I share the story of when I first learned about washagay nimaa, and went home and danced to my own heartbeat in contemplation of shorelines and wahkootowin. As I share this teaching, I ask everyone to simultaneously beat their hands over their hearts in tune to their own heartbeats. I then dance basic steps of the Red River Jig which I imagine were danced along shorelines a long time ago. As many of my stories and actions during these events are geared towards and guided by Métis co-curators, helpers and guests, I ask they all come by me and help me lead everyone in dancing the Red River Jig to fiddle music. Knowing the steps, being a decent dancer, or having lived experiences with encoded cultural memory doesn't matter in this exercise. It is about mirroring the ways our ancestors gathered along washagay, and to dance our guests out as our ancestors once did theirs. In that moment, with the help of all our guests, we remember, and dance our hearts home.

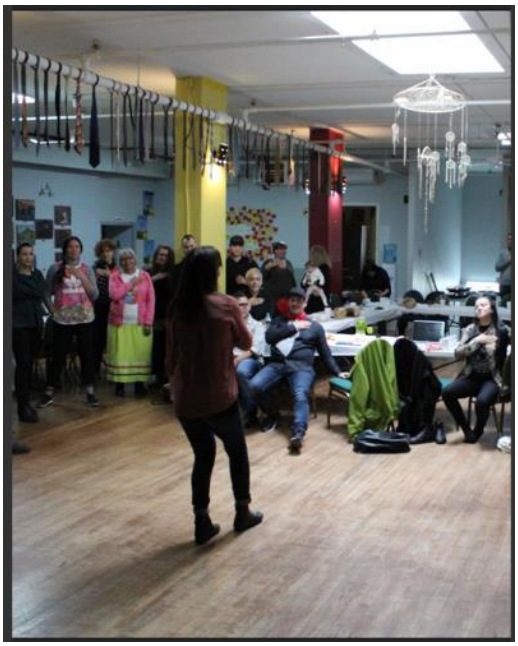

Figure Fifty-Nine: Igniting Washagay at Pjilita'q Mi'kmaki: L'nuite'tmukl tan wejkuwaql naqwe'kl International Gathering Welcome to Mi'kmaq territory: Utilizing/Using Indigenous Thought for the coming days/future, Hosted by ICC, October 10-13, 2018, Halifax, NS. Photo courtesy of ICC.

Concluding Thoughts

Visiting and active listening informs my curatorial goals to engage with communities in a collaborative and dialogical approach. In process-based curatorial work I take the heart of the love I found around the table, and attempt to create opportunities to fill perceived voids with actions that ignite wahkootowin, stem from miyeu pimaatshiwin, and contain Indigenous movement and lateral love. I do so because there exist challenges for Indigenous curators to find and negotiate spaces that allow for personal transformation in ways which do not shroud the artists' process, or the experiences of communities and the larger public. By organizing exhibitions centering on community engagement and empowerment, and by co-organizing and hosting Métis Kitchen Table Talk that includes collective and collaborative bead actions, I attempt to curate care. By looking to those who beaded and strategized around the kitchen table to ensure that we can now live as Indigenous people, I hope to return the generosity I have received from other curators, artists, colleagues, community, and kin. For although I named myself as a cultural conduit, it is only because of the generosity, lived experiences, and knowledge carried by others, that my heart was brought home to washagay.

Chapter 7

Washagay nimaa: Dancing Guests Out and Reflections for Continuance and Continuums

The motivation behind this research was to create space to contemplate, critique, and name the actions of curators who fuse Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), open-ended dialogue, and collaboration with artists, communities, and art organizations. Referring to their stream of curatorial practice as Indigenous Littoral Curation (ILC), I approached identifying ILC with the following series of questions: How can a curator contribute to Indigenous communities and nations in ways that are participatory, collaborative, open-ended, and dialogic? Can models of Indigenous Littoral Curation help move art criticism and curatorial and artistic development forward? How do Indigenous research methodologies and knowledge systems benefit curators, artists, and their audiences? How do we best operate within and beyond the western art world from Indigenous paradigms? While considering these questions I traced the lineage of Indigenous curatorial and artistic practices starting in the late 1960s. I examined how curators present Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in select exhibitions, and extended my contemplations to a brief analysis of socially engaged artistic and curatorial practice as redress of the western art construct. I then provided in-depth descriptions of six curatorial initiatives which embody Indigenous Littoral Curation. In doing so I document the rich history of Indigenous curatorial practice, locate and name ILC, and provide a critical framework for examining this type of curatorial pedagogy and praxis.

The Interweaving of Methodologies, Language, and Ways of Knowing in this Research

This research was mounted on scholarship about Indigenous Research Paradigms, methodologies, and the incorporation of knowledge systems and lived experiences into research. These include, a) Indigenous Research Paradigms defined by Shawn Wilson, b) ethical and generative participatory research strategies discussed by Adam Gaudry and Margaret Kovach, c) research as a gateway for Indigenous Knowledge Systems to flow through asserted by Kathleen Absolon and Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, d) Gerald Vizenor's work on survivance and transmotion, and e) Dian Million's teaching about the importance of dreaming. These scholars' work spoke to me most in how they provide strategies to conduct oneself and navigate beyond western academia as a researcher and writer. Because of them, I was able to embark on research

in a less prescriptive, more instinctual, and culturally-grounded manner. I immersed myself in their work and ways of being to create a multifaceted approach to research and writing about Indigenous Littoral Curation. This resulted in grounding myself in dialogue with colleagues and kin, and privileging Indigenous scholars, artists, curators and knowledge keepers firstly, while moving beyond any restrictive western constructs.

It's important to note my incorporations of this scholarship was more harmonious because there are curators whose pedagogies and praxis align with Indigenous studies scholarship. Like Indigenous studies scholars, they devise strategies to work in an approachable, intersectional, relational and praxiological manner- guiding, and guided by, Indigenous ways of being. Responding to the cultural and political contexts of their times, they activate decolonization and Indigenization in their practices. Sometimes, this manifests in large-scale exhibitions providing redress to colonial narratives, and other times, small exhibitions titled in Indigenous languages, referencing kinship and the spiritual. But with the exception of a few scholars, including Leanne Betasamasoke Simpson, Gerald Vizenor, and Dian Million, there is minimal recognition of the relevancy of art or curatorial work in the larger field of Indigenous studies. This begs the following questions: How can there be more credit, exchange and collaboration between Indigenous studies scholars, artists and curators? What actions need to occur for Indigenous studies scholars to be encouraged to examine the work of Indigenous curators, especially in how we devise strategies, engage with knowledges, and confront institutions in similar fashions? How can curators and scholars better serve Indigenous communities in our on-going interactions with knowledge systems, scholarship, and colonial institutions (with art at the helm)? Although ties to curatorial pedagogy and praxis may have not yet been secured, recent enhanced discourse on Indigenous curatorial praxis and writing (as well as there being curators who currently hold academic positions), suggests there's potential for more reciprocity, and the integration of disciplines.

By absorbing the work of the above-mentioned Indigenous studies scholars, I established for myself a Michif working paradigm, cultivated with teachings and language instruction provided by Michif knowledge keeper and language carrier Verna DeMontigny. Learning our language and land-based knowledge systems secured my research, curatorial endeavours and lived experiences along the washagay, or shoreline. It is here we are able to hear our ancestors whisper in our ears, mobilize the present, and dream the future. From there I chose specific

Michif terms and cultural concepts to frame this research and writing. Dispersed throughout the thesis I strategically placed them to describe curatorial pedagogy and praxis. I did this for the development of my own Michif working paradigm, to instigate exposure to Michif more broadly, and for further immersion into my grandmother's language.

The time commitment to learn these words, absorb and then employ them was minimal, and surfaced during informal conversations, text messages and phone calls with Verna. I share this to encourage others who are eager yet reluctant to learn an Indigenous language, or incorporate it into their work and daily lives. Although I was fortunate to have access to Verna who I have known for many years, there are other ways to expose oneself to ancestral languages – online, downloadable apps, and in community centers, peoples' homes, and university classrooms across the land. As Missy Leblanc reminds, "language revitalization is a form of cultural resurgence, continuance, and survivance."[266] And every interaction with Indigenous languages help make them exist as a living, social language.

For myself, doing this work to engage with Michif concepts in our language, helped embed them into a more culturally-immersed understanding of self and others. I found myself relying upon them for digesting the conversations held with other curators, sharing my lived experiences, and formulating the layout of chapters. As Michif knowledges never exist in seclusion, and instead are parts of a cohesive whole, I grappled with which terms to use in the body of writing. I often interchanged them while writing and editing, and struggled with feeling confident I was applying the right term. In hindsight, this was part of the process of immersing myself in their dynamism, and understanding their intricacies and purpose. By exploring their meaning, relevance to curatorial practice, and selecting which ones were applicable, a threshold to better understanding Michif knowledge systems, and my family's story, surfaced. My hope is these concepts provided in the Michif language, born on this land and radiating from our wahkootowin, become applicable common terms, used by Métis artists, curators, and scholars as they further ignite their Michif working paradigms.

Dialogue with colleagues, friends, and family formed the bedrock of this research.

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[266] Missy, Leblanc, *Taskoch pipon kona kah nipa muskoseya, nepin pesim eti pimachihew*, (exhibition catalogue). Calgary: TRUCK Contemporary Art, 2019. Unpag.

While reflecting upon personal experiences I garnered in generative gathering sites, I organized formal and informal kitchen table talk gatherings, beading sessions, and held on-going conversations with curators and scholars who shared personal narratives and first-hand accounts of their practices. These gatherings, which I term Métis Kitchen Table Talk, were inspired by time spent with my own family around kitchen tables. It is at the kitchen table where I schemed with family, immersed myself in our cultural ways, and actively listened to those offering nourishment.

Kitchen table talk for this dissertation rarely manifested around actual kitchen tables. Instead, they were held in coffee shops, universities, galleries, Indigenous community centers, Skype, and via Zoom. Sharing with participants how each session stems from time spent around family kitchen tables, I set the tone for dialogue to be open-ended, culturally-grounded, and representational of wahkootowin. Gathering in this manner also echoes the countless times artists and curators have assembled to scheme, reflect, debate, and dream the future. It is derived from the myriad of times matriarchs created microcosms for intergenerational cultivation, resilience, and resistance. Regardless of which nation from which we are born, gathering around kitchen tables is familiar. Although not specific to Métis people, the kitchen table talk sessions discussed in this dissertation embody a Métis ways of hosting, and welcoming guests into our circle with food, stories, and interchange.

As a kindling of generous reciprocity between curators, artists, community and kin, I beaded gifts for participants in this research. This was to acknowledge the offerings I have received, and to express gratitude to those who contribute to a process of securing myself along li washagay. I beaded gifts as a way to bridge the teachings received around family kitchen tables, and to weaken any obstacles placed between contemporary art-makers and art-caretakers by the western art construct. By sharing my background as a beadworker and instructor, I extended myself in ways I never did before pursuing a better understanding of ILC. The gifts beaded were often in response to personal stories shared during MKTT, interpretations of oral stories shared by loved ones, my visual response to scholarship, or being familiar with participants interests and styles. Fran Hebert-Spence suggested after one MKTT session, had my aunty Jean not taken the time to teach me how to bead when I was a young adult, we would not gather the way we do during these collaborative sessions. My aunty Jean's teachings are animated in those gatherings, and Fran's insight affirms beading is connective tissue in my

socially-engaged curating, and a way to carry forth the deep lateral love my aunty felt, and ingrained in us when she provided chikishkaytaman.

As I engaged in dialogue and researched Indigenous curatorial practice, the breadth of approaches to curating immersed, making evident the presence of d'leau pimiihchiwan. What surfaced in these conversations was a consistent pursuance of decolonization and Indigenization in curatorial work. These manifested in exhibition and project themes geared towards contesting colonial narratives, making relations with Indigenous artists around the globe, exposing gender gaps, staking claim for queer and Two Spirit folks, and asserting cultural continuance and continuums. By making space within gallery constructs, curators have been effective in making social change, and transforming institutions from the inside out. This is a result of the many exhibitions, projects, events, and positions created and held in galleries instigated by Indigenous artists, curators, educators, and arts administrators. Art institutions are starting to now morph more into Indigenized spaces. For example, the Winnipeg Art Gallery recently announced it was incorporating names in Inuktitut, Michif, Cree, Dakota and Anishnaabemowin throughout its building, to enhance their efforts in reconciliation, and create a welcoming space for all Indigenous peoples.

The activation of decolonization and Indigenization through curatorial initiatives warrants further attention, critical examination, and enhanced recognition within academic, community, and artistic spaces. There are noteworthy obstacles in achieving this. For instance, currently there lacks adequate and accessible online archives of curatorial projects. Before digital media, documenting exhibitions was costly, and the quality of imagery and types of promotions (invitations, press releases, etc.) were sometimes not properly maintained. In recent times, art organizations with a strong online presence, will often remove digital archived information on their websites to make way for new programming information. This means despite the continuous presence of Indigenous curators and artists in the western art realm, our contributions are not documented as they should be, and therefore diminished. And despite the large number of exhibitions having been curated by Indigenous artists since the late 1960s, there are a limited number of publications produced for the majority of exhibitions. Many of the exhibitions which took place at artist-run centres or small and mid-sized galleries, were only able to produce a limited number of inexpensive brochures, which have also not been properly archived or made readily available. Thankfully in recent years this has improved and there are high quality

catalogues available to the masses, when funding for this is secured. Galleries like the Kelowna Art Gallery produce web pages for exhibitions featuring curatorial essays, pertinent details of the show, and videos of artists speaking about their work. This helps secure our presence and helps leave a cartography of Indigenous curatorial practice. There is also still a lack of critical writing about curatorship, which stunts critical engagement with curatorial and artistic practices. Currently, Canadian Art magazine is remedying this, having hired Indigenous editors and guest writers over the last five years. For institutions and art organizations to fully decolonize and Indigenize, adequate archiving, quality publications, and spaces for enhanced critical writing and art engagement needs to occur. By committing to producing quality publications with critical writing, and upholding online archives for their Indigenous-specific programming, more in-depth and long-term decolonization and Indigenization will arise.

Afterthoughts and Chapter Recaps

From the MKTT conversations and secondary research, key knowledges, pedagogies and discourses appeared which I encased the chapter topics with. For example, in Chapter Two - Kenawayhta: Framing Indigenous Littoral Curation with A Brief History of Indigenous and Western Curatorial Practice, I relied on Gerald Vizenor's naming of survivance and transmotion to frame art and curatorial histories. These intertwined concepts are relevant because they are mobilized by lived experiences, ceremony, aesthetics, and the ability to move steadily across imagined boundaries. They speak to the ways artists and curators create solidarity in their collective experiences of working in a western art construct, while contributing to Indigenous cultural contexts. Importantly, they help trace the attempt to form visual sovereignty in seminal exhibitions curated by Indigenous curators and artist/curators. Incorporating Vizenor's scholarship in a written synopsis of Indigenous curation, while identifying the western art context curators and artists work within, I was able to present key initiatives, interceptions, and contexts, stemming and embodying curators as contemporary art-caretakers, and social change instigators. Providing this background to curatorial practice and applicable Indigenous scholarship, aids in framing the cultural climate Indigenous Littoral Curatorial practice stems from. Although the provided information about Indigenous art, curatorial practice, and western curatorial frameworks is far from comprehensive, it is meant to be helpful in considering how curators and artists mobilize and create space. I consider them to be part of a larger constellation

of curatorial initiatives and I consider the selection provided pollination and foundational for Indigenous Littoral Curation.

After tracing specific contexts, initiatives, and developments found in curatorial work, education systems, and Indigenous led arts and curatorial organizations, I dedicated Chapter Three - D'leau pimiihchiwan: Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Curatorial Pedagogy and Praxis, to discussing the relevance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems to curators and the artists they work with. By grounding my discussion with Dian Million's theory of "intense dreaming," I recognize particular curators as tuned in and visionary in their pursuance and presentation of IKS in art exhibitions and projects. I locate projects which took place between 2007 and 2020 that pursue, frame, or locate IKS in contemporary art and the forming of collective identities. I name their work as extensions of ancestral art-caretakers, who supported art-makers and ensured visual mappings would be left for future generations. Their work also radiates from earlier efforts made by curators and artist/curators to make good relations, and ignite IKS in different formats. When Daphne Odjig curated exhibitions in department stores and in her home, Lee-Ann Martin manifested *Indigena* from on-going intimate conversations with artist and curator colleagues, and Nation 2 Nation organized exhibitions and projects linking curators, artists and communities, they all created and activated Indigenous-led spaces for themselves and others. And as Adrienne Huard notes, "gathering in Indigenous-led spaces while engaging in ancestral knowledge systems carries a significant weight for our community: we converge in solidarity, embodying the resilience that our people have demonstrated since the creation of Turtle Island."[267]

I discuss specific topics curators pursued more recently as IKS creation and transmission including; land, language, oral storytelling, kinship and intergenerational relationality. The exhibitions discussed in chapter three expose the multiplicities of IKS and their continuous existence despite colonial interference. It is with these exhibitions, and direction of the curators discussed in this chapter, I was able to draw linkages between curatorial practice and Indigenous knowledge generation and transmission. Collectively they expose the complexities, intricacies, and value of curators and artists in IKS formation and transmission. None of the curators discussed in this chapter claim to be experts, knowledge keepers, or more informed than others. They are learners, bridge-makers, and seekers of what surrounds us. It's important to note IKS

[267] Adrienne Huard, "Converging in Solidarity: Indigenous Led Gatherings Promote Cultural and Spiritual Safety," accessed May 10, 2020. www.thisispublicparking.com.

manifest in other ways in curatorial work, in addition to the select few examples provided in chapter three. This is the beauty of IKS, they are not finite, formulaic, or static. With the curators discussed in this chapter and all those who uphold IKS and spaces for their transmission and continuation via art, Indigenous Littoral Curation is possible to locate, name, and dream.

Although it was revealed during my research phase that littoral spaces are core to Michif knowledge systems, my first observation of them as an emblematic site for dialogical and social change came from the writings of Bruce Barber. Built upon earlier investigations of dialogical aesthetics (introduced to me by Dr. Julie Nagam), I became attached to the notion that a geographical terrain could be a descriptor for socially engaged art practice. This led me towards non-Indigenous curators whose pedagogies and praxis disrupt, redress and provide care to stakeholders. In particular I responded most to the pedagogy and praxis of Elke Krasny, who prioritizes a dialogic approach to curating, in which care as a form of activism occurs. Once I was taught about washagay and its vitality for Métis culture, I began to consider littoral art and paracuratorial discourses as beachwrack, or washagay peyinwa. Metaphorically I recognized them as interim percolation along the shoreline, with traces permeating long enough to provide, and then moving elsewhere entangled in the rhythmic motions of the ecosystem.

In Chapter Four - Washagay peywinwa and the Merits of Littoral Art Discourse and Paracuratorial Theories, I present art or curatorial projects which exemplify littoral art and paracuratorial praxis. These all advocate reciprocity, relationality, self-critique and interrogation. I purposely discussed one project which exposed obstacles and circumstances which can arise within even the most progressive arts organizations. Konsthall C15 is recognized as a model arts organization with robust programming representing Black and PoC artists and curators, and for facilitating socially-engaged art. However, it quickly became revealed during its large-scale retrospective exhibition, there were unconscious biases within the organization and deep-rooted founders syndrome. The curators moved away from their initial exhibition design, and instead confronted the organization which invited them to curate the retrospective in the first place. They stood in solidarity with marginalized artists and stakeholders to reveal its underlying faults, while thoughtfully posing questions that encouraged revisiting, renewal, and organizational change. Their work exemplified curating as caring activism as defined by Elke Krasny, and it was relational, responsive, and praxiological.

This project embodies much of the criteria provided in littoral art and paracuratorial discourses. However it also exposes how when "community" is overgeneralized and its complexities disregarded in art organizations, it can instead be used to veil discrimination and uphold hegemonic structures. This is why I probed the origins of the concept of community, which I consider both complicated and convoluted. I provided a working definition of community and how it translates into curatorial work in western art constructs. My hope is this can add to discussion on how curators can better serve BIPOC artists and re-imagine "community," in ways which challenge the western art construct, reliant on active listening and self -reflexion.

I placed my discussion about washagay peyinwa in its own chapter instead of interweaving it in other locations. Although the work of littoral artists and socially-engaged curators instigated part of my research, I danced much further towards wholistic Michif understandings and ways of being during this process. I felt presenting their work on its own, instead of interspersed throughout, would affirm its value and place in my work, while privileging culturally grounded scholarship and a multifaceted approach, emulating from a Michif working paradigm. As paracuratorial praxis has become more concretely established in the larger western art milieu, I have noticed there are value systems which align with current contemplations amongst Indigenous curators about curating care. A statement by curator Megan Johnston about the importance of taking time when curating in a relational and collaborative manner in what she calls "the slow method," reinforces this:

> The notion of taking time is important, as is working in collaboration with a sense of place and alongside working artists and the community. It means promoting reciprocal relationships, open-ended proposals, and outcomes that can be decided by different people and at different times in the process. The element of control and power ebbs and flows, and self-reflection and self-evaluation are continual and an important part of the process. The slow method also connects directly to pedagogical models and does not recognize the institutional division between the notions of curatorial and educational processes and methods employed in the process.[268]

[268] Megan, Johnston, "Slow Curating: Re-Thinking and Extending Socially Engaged Art in the Context of Northern Ireland." In *After the Turn: art education beyond the museum*, *Oncurating.Org.* Issue 24, (December 2014): 26.

Some colleagues did question the value of including non-Indigenous scholarship and art and curatorial praxis in a dissertation about Michif knowledge systems, language, and dialogic curatorial practice. But to not recognize the merits and impact of their work would be extractive in nature, and contrary to Michif values, which include claiming and recognizing those who have left their mark on us. Isolating their contributions in chapter four gives readers a choice to reflect upon these discourses, or disregard them entirely and read the thesis immersed solely in the work of Indigenous curators, artists, and scholars.

Having provided a lineage of curatorial activity, examples of projects which explicitly reflect IKS, and introduced the intricacies and merits of littoral art and paracuratorial praxis, I then embarked on presenting key identifiers and examples of Indigenous Littoral Curation in Chapter Five - Miyeu Pimmatshiwin: the Tenets of Indigenous Littoral Curation and Select Examples. I begin by listing ten working tenets which frame ILC as pedagogy and praxis. These advocate for dialogic, fluid processes cultivated by intergenerational relationality, collaboration, and kenawayhta. The tenets also provide criteria for critical engagement with dialogical and socially-engaged curatorial practices. I detailed six projects which took place between 2013-2020 and characterize this type of curatorial practice. These initiatives were held in a variety of locations, including artist-run centres, museums, mid-sized galleries, and the land. These examples were chosen as a result of deep contemplation on the makeup of ILC, thorough research into recent and previous curatorial practice and contexts, activation of washagay, and enriching dialogue experienced with curators discussed in this chapter.

I presented them as case-studies and stand-alone "inserts," providing key details about the exhibitions, and descriptors of the curatorial premise, artworks and activations. I framed each example with relatable Michif terms and concepts. These guided my engagements, contemplations and understandings of these curatorial projects. By doing so, the chapter as a whole presents an interconnected arrangement of Michif concepts and value systems applied to this work. Although I name them in my language, I do so with the hopes of encouraging others to consider their own knowledge systems when naming and critically engaging with Indigenous Littoral Curation. I end each insert with conversation excerpts taken from one-on-one or collective dialogic encounters. These were assembled from multiple conversations or active listening opportunities (for example, found online or at conferences I attended), which I merged as a constellation of dialogic encounters. The conversation excerpts in part represent our time

visiting, but also how I would then reflect upon, revisit, and expand on my consideration of their practices as ILC.

I experienced some struggle when selecting which projects best embody ILC. Because I also had kitchen table talk with curators whose work I discuss in other chapters, I wrestled with where to place certain projects. I interchanged some of them between chapter three and chapter six more than once. This was not to diminish them, as I consider the exhibitions and premises discussed in chapter three to be potent, transformative and foundational in how they covertly name and embody IKS. In fact, without the array of past and current curatorial efforts discussed in the proceeding four chapters, the tenets of ILC would be incomplete. This indecisiveness was part of the process of immersing myself in the flux of washagay. It was also a response to the multifaceted approaches to curatorial practice, which are interlinking tributaries to the larger arena of Indigenous curatorial practice.

Some of the projects in chapter five incorporate most or all of the tenets, while others only embody several components. However, they are all included as inserts because they carry significant commitment to three main aspects of ILC: their processes privileged dialogic engagement, they consistently assessed their roles and responsibilities to stakeholders with humility and reciprocal generosity, and their curatorial work is pursuant of locating and embodying Indigenous knowledge systems. I consider the collected inserts as a "bundle" of examples of the merits of ILC. My hope however, is there will be deeper engagement with the tenets and listed examples, critical questioning of my choices and criteria, and future additions to the list of ILC examples.

In Chapter Six - Washagay: Michif Curatorial Methodologies, Pedagogy and Praxis – A Jig in Three Parts, I provided a mapping of how I came to pursue Indigenous Littoral Curation from a Michif cultural paradigm. I discussed encoded cultural memory, and advocated for its use with dialogical approaches in remedying conventional curatorship. This is part of my self-reflection process, and encouraging others to explore their own encoded cultural memories and how they impact their lived experiences and curatorial work. I then presented three exhibitions which reveal how I embark on naming and framing ILC. I surrounded them with teachings about three core cultural concepts provided by Verna: washagay, miyeu pimaatshiwin, and wahkotoowin. Throughout my work on this dissertation, those three were the most impactful and other included key Michif concepts like washagay-nimaa, extend from those core knowledges.

Next, I discussed a series of Métis Kitchen Table Talk events I co-curated, co-hosted or participated in as a form of washagay nimaa. These best reflect my experiences with curators, artists and various stakeholders within ILC, the ways in which I pursue Michif knowledges, and how I operate from a Michif paradigm. Although I may have instigated some of these events as research methodology, they were taken up by others as generous offerings of support and kinship-making. The contributions and igniting of MKTT by Julie Nagam, Erin Sutherland, Becca Taylor, Sherry Farrell Racette, and the board of the Indigenous Curatorial Collective, carried forth parts of this research, which unintentionally manifested into curatorial practice. This was serendipitous and spoke strongly to the merits of ILC, although I did have to resolve how to properly define the public MKTT events and our respective contributions and collaborations. By referring to them as nii nasaysee - partners or collaborators who hold a bond with one another, I was able to disrupt eurocentric coding of curators roles and responsibilities, and present how our collective identities are strengthened with dialogue and open-ended processes. I am grateful to all collaborators and participants in the public MKTTs, and purposely discussed these events in chapter six as curatorial pedagogy and praxis, in addition to the research methodologies section in the first chapter. Having relegated it only to section about research methodology would have been self-indulgent, counteractive, and ultimately weakened my advocation for the tenets of ILC.

Washagay Nimaa – Dancing this research out (for now)

There are oral stories about how Métis ancestors would greet guests to their territory, by welcoming them onto the shoreline with music and dance. While researching and writing for this dissertation, I often pictured this sight; ancestors decked out in beautifully beaded clothing, offering a fire for warmth, with food and drink nearby. They encouraged guests onto li washagay with dancing, while securing their kinship to the land and each other. Once a visit was over, they would then dance them out, their feet navigating the natural terrain, an expression of good wishes for safe travels and gratitude for their visit. If guests returned, they would welcome them and bid them adieu in the same manner, carving out their dance steps with the ecosystem, and moving rhythmically with the heartbeats, waves and ripple sounds emerging along li washagay.

Last summer while some family members and I were gathered along the shorelines at Ditch Lake, I asked if they would help me embody washagay nimaa as our ancestors did. My mother laced up my beaded belt I made as part of my research methodology, and my husband

made a fire, as it was a dark and windy morning, and the water was exceptionally cold. My mother, who spent most of her younger years jigging in family kitchen parties, at community centers, and in contests at family and community picnics, helped me choose Red River jig changes which responded to, and complimented li washagay. With family observing from a dock, I navigated the shoreline by dancing the steps carefully chosen with my mother. My cousin Kenneth tried to help me keep time with the tempo, by moving his feet for me to follow, while he sat and clapped to the fiddle tunes. Once this jig was complete, I asked my loved ones if we could do it again, but this time, I requested they match the sound of their heartbeats by drumming their chest with their hand. My cousin's partner Debbie brought her hand drum, and asked if she could instead play it while standing along the shoreline. As she began doing so, my family matched their heartbeats to her drumbeats, and I began dancing into the cold water. The dance steps became slower and more labored, as I tuned into the sound of the currents, the heartbeat and drum sounds from my family, and the cold water and washagay peyinwa. I danced deeper into the water, and moved towards my family standing on the dock, wanting to express gratitude for their generosity. As we affirmed our continuous presence on this land, secured our wahkootowin, and tuned into washagay as a potent space for li Michif, we were collectively transformed. Along the shorelines, I danced as an expression of love and physical embodiment of the Michif knowledges shared in this dissertation. I danced to dream the future, appreciate the present, while looking back to generations past. I imagined future collective activations, where curators ignite the littoral with their own movements, contemplations, and expressions of love for their kin. As they do so, their motions ignited by the heartbeat sounds of many, they will continue to help bring, or maintain Indigenous hearts home.

Kitwaam marsii,
Cathy

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Addendums

Addendum 1 – REB Approval

Addendum 2 – Consent Form Sample

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics
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PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Cathy Mattes** **(Advisor: Sherry Farrell Racette)**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kevin Russell, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol J2017:096 (HS21148)**
"Indigenous Littoral Practice as a Viable Framework for Curatorial Practice and Community Engagement"

Effective: November 3, 2017 **Expiry:** November 3, 2018

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. JFREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.*

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to JFREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to JFREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to JFREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

Funded Protocols:
- **Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.**

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Department of Native Studies

November 20, 2017

Tawnshi John!

Thank you for agreeing to participate in Metis kitchen table talk with me on November 21, 2017 in Brandon. The connection to my Metis identity has often happened around the kitchen tables of my mother, aunties, and cousins. Metis and other Indigenous peoples' experience around the kitchen table allows for flow through of experience that is dialogical and relevant in curatorial processes. These are some of the reasons why I have chosen to conduct research modeled on sitting around the kitchen table with loved ones.

To help activate our kitchen table talk, you will be provided with a bag of mixed beads, a needle, and piece of felt. I encourage you to separate beads on the felt using the needle during our gathering. Although it may sound arduous, it is a meditative process that allows for contemplation and self- reflection. If there is another act you choose to perform, such as drawing, birch-bark biting, or working on your own beadwork, please feel free to do so. Our gathering should last no more than two hours.

There are some questions I hope to answer within my dissertation that I want to share with you for your consideration before our gathering. They include:

- How can a curator contribute to healthy Indigenous communities and nations in ways that do not alienate or intimidate?
- Can models of Indigenized littoral curation help move art criticism and curatorial and artistic development forward?
- What procedures should curators follow to better operate and communicate on a nation-to-nation basis?
- Can "littoral curators" challenge the ways in which gallery curators now operate?
- Lastly, how can curators bridge gaps between arts and everyday life?

If there are specific thoughts or questions you want to bring to the table, I encourage you to do so. Please note that our gathering will be audio recorded and photographed. Only I will have access to any data collected and it may be accessed for future research around the topic of Indigenous littoral curation. It will be archived for my personal use only, and will not be shared

with other researchers for future research. Data will be kept indefinitely, and anonymity of participants who choose to remain anonymous will continue to be protected with a 'participant' designator in any publication or presentation as a result of the Indigenous Littoral Curation project. All data will be stored safely and indefinitely on a password-protected computer. After the gathering you will be provided with a synopsis of our gathering and a copy of the transcriptions for your approval and feedback. This will give you the opportunity to take out any statement you don't want made public, or if choosing anonymity, ensure there is no information that reveals your identity. You are free to withdraw from the study even after the interviews and gatherings provided it is before March 31, 2018. You may request to withdraw by contacting myself via email at: mattesc@myumanitoba.ca.

If you have any questions or concerns you wish to be addressed before our gathering please feel free to contact me via email at: mattesc@myumanitoba.ca. I look forward to our gathering and appreciate your willingness to participate.

Marsii,

Cathy Mattes
Email: mattesc@myumanitoba.ca