

**Re-Inventing Art Practices:  
Indigenous Women Artists Building Community Through Art and Activism in  
Rural and Remote Manitoba**

**By  
Julie Nagam**

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
The University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**Department of Native Studies**

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**Abstract:**

This thesis documents and explores community-based and socially engaged art by Indigenous women artists. Their artwork is impacting and strengthening communities in Manitoba. The Thesis explores the use of dialogical aesthetics in performance and socially-engaged art by Indigenous women artists in rural and remote areas of Manitoba, and relates these aesthetics to the concept of activism through their art and relationship to their community. The aim of this research and this paper is to document, support and expose the work of a small pocket of Indigenous women artists in Manitoba who are acting as activists or social change agents based on their artwork. I have arrived at this conclusion first by their personal testimonies, second, by their art being socially conscious and lastly, by their art practices entrenched in the framework of dialogical aesthetics, community-based and site-specific ideologies.

## **Acknowledgements:**

I want to take this opportunity to thank Travis, mom, dad, sisters and friends for their support and unconditional love. I also want to thank my advisor and committee members Peter, Cathy, Renate and Roewan for their guidance, support, mentorship and knowledge. A huge thank you goes out to Mentoring Artists for Women's Art for the opportunity and funding to complete the research and report. I want to thank all the women who were part of my research because it is your stories and work that have graced the pages of this thesis and my life.

## Dedications

I dedicate my thesis to Travis,  
all the working people out there changing the world  
and all the future Indigenous women artists.

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## **The Beginning:**

As I sit here and think about how I arrived at this moment of time, I cannot help but think of a recent story that brought me to my proposed doctoral research. It was a cold February morning, minus 43 degrees (my car barely turning over) I am driving through blowing snow across the prairies of Manitoba to participate in an art show at the Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba. That night at the opening there was one individual who was extremely confrontational to the curator, about the content of the show. This man could not understand why the social and political content of the show was Indigenous-based since Indigenous people had all the same opportunities as himself (a Euro-Canadian) and he was tired of this dialogue and visual aesthetics. I waited until the young Métis curator responded and then I could sense her frustration and jumped into the confrontation in order to support the curator of the show. Of course the discussion grew in tone and volume. The curator and myself had the knowledge and tools to articulate our analysis of the artwork, Indigenous people and the social and political issues facing us. After a mind numbing hour and a half the man left learning nothing in the moment. However in my mind I hoped that he would ponder and reflect on what we had told him that night. It is with that hope and optimism in which I would like to continue my studies and work with Indigenous artists to bridge the cultural divide in order to articulate community concerns, address local needs and communicate their knowledge to the wider society.

Through my commitment to social justice as an academic, artist and community member, I have had the privilege to work alongside or participate in many art and community events across Manitoba. I was honored to view an interesting show in Leaf Rapids at the Exhibition Centre; local Indigenous youth were given a camera and were to photograph the way they saw their community. I was able to participate in this dialogue with the young Leaf Rapid artists and

speak to them about the importance of their work. I was invited into the homes of traditional art crafters in Cross Lake, which brought forth a discussion on the current living conditions and barriers that were impacting them and their ability to take care of their families through art production or any other means. I was asked to tour the newly built school in Norway House, to view the elders' courtyard and the breathtaking artwork of a local female Indigenous artist. I have participated in the lives of these artists, thus compelling me to expose and support their art/community work in my master's research.

I am interested in this area of study because art has a role in our global society; in western or colonial countries such as Canada the function of art has been somewhat confined to a gallery space with visual aesthetics being the primary rationale for art production. However, there is a shift in the function of art, thus challenging the way art and artists are viewed in contemporary Canadian society. This shift permits art and artists to rebel against gallery or exclusive art space to site-specific or socially engaged art, which allows people to communicate issues facing them and their communities. For the women artists I have interviewed in Manitoba their art and community work is functioning as a tool to empower themselves and the people in their community. As a scholar and an artist I feel it is vital to document and explore this community-based and socially engaged art since it is impacting and strengthening communities in Manitoba.

My thesis work is an investigation of links by Indigenous women artists in rural and remote areas of Manitoba to activism through their art and relationship to their community. The aim of this research is to document, support, expose and empower the work of a small pocket of Indigenous women artists in Manitoba who are acting as activists or social change agents based on their artwork. Current political performance or gesture discourse theory would position these women as socially and politically engaged. I have arrived at this conclusion first by their



personal testimonies, second, by their art being socially conscious, and lastly, by their art practices entrenched in the framework of dialogical aesthetics, community-based and site-specific ideologies. These concepts will be discussed later in the thesis.

The thesis is rooted in four substantial themes. First, I will continue the critical dialogue dealing with Indigenous women's relation to, comprehension of and relevance for concepts such as feminism, tribalism, and activism. Second, it will reflect on the selected artists' relationships within their communities. This will include a critical analysis of the selected participants' artwork and how it is perpetuating or resisting the dominant western systems of knowledge and cultural production. Third, it will cogitate around concepts such as dialogical aesthetics, performative or gestural art practices and site-specific and socially engaged art. Lastly, it will analyze the manner in which the selected artists are creating socially engaged art, which could be challenging western traditional art aesthetics.

This research grew out of a project commissioned by Mentoring Artists For Women's Art (MAWA). Selected as the principal researcher for the project, I produced and published the report, MAWA's Rural and Remote Assessment: A Developmental Strategy For MAWA on Rural and Remote Women Artists. The objective of this project was to examine, assess and document MAWA's membership opportunities within current organizational strategies and programs involving women visual artists living in rural and remote areas in Manitoba. However, the thesis, it is worth emphasizing, is focused specifically on remote Indigenous women artists, with a broader research agenda.

The first section of the thesis will be grounded in my location, identity, disability, and the conceptual underpinnings of my embodied discourse. This will frame my "situated location" and my motivation in this research, which will provide the opportunity to communicate how my

thoughts and reflections are embedded in current cultural and feminist theory (Mohanty 2002), (Kadi 1996), (Anderson 2000), (hooks 2000), and (Roy 1999). The introduction will thereby provide the reader with an opportunity to understand the basis and foundation of this research project. This insight will frame the epistemologies, methods and methodologies of this research. The foreword will construct the background knowledge and explore its limitations for the thesis, allowing the readers to locate themselves and to understand the contribution to academic scholarship.

The second section will provide a background to the MAWA's Rural and Remote Assessment, which will further ground this research project. It will discuss the methods used in collecting the data. As well, this chapter will provide the demographic locations and information about the rural and remote areas of Manitoba selected for this project.

The third section will reflect on critical dialogue dealing with Indigenous women's relation, comprehension and relevance to concepts such as feminism and activism. The terms activist and feminist appear in current Indigenous/cultural theory (Brant, 1994), (Ouellette 2002), (Anderson 2000), (Deerchild 2003), (Farris-Dufrene 1997) and (Mihsuah 2003). Many of these Aboriginal women theorists are committed to parts of feminist ideology; however, there are complications in their Aboriginal identity. This chapter will also deal with the concept of activist and social change agent. Thus, I am stating that it is useful to continue a dialogue surrounding feminism and identity since in my view activism is linked to these concepts, which are rooted in the struggle to end oppression.

The fourth section will reflect on the selected artists' relationships within their communities. It will include a critical analysis of the selected participants' artwork and how it is perpetuating or resisting the dominant western and capitalist systems of knowledge and cultural

production. The concepts that will be explored are development, capitalism and art production in the non-urban areas of Manitoba. This will frame the research through the interaction of these concepts in the main argument. Our current neo-capitalist society allows success to be measured in monetary terms, which affects artists that choose to or not to participate in the Canadian economy. In particular this affects Indigenous artists because there is a lack of “employment opportunities” in non-urban areas of Manitoba. Thus, western constructions of economic success hinder past and current structures of social organization of Indigenous families. (Kocur & Leung 2005), (Kester 2004), (Nancy 1991), (Suleiman 1998), (Anzaldúa 1990 & 2002), (Khagram et al 2002), (Weiss 2000), (Farris-Dufrene 1997) and (Agamben 1993).

Section five will reflect on the concepts such as dialogical aesthetics, performance or gestured, site-specific and socially engaged art, but will deploy them by, analysing Aboriginal women artists in non-urban areas of Manitoba who are creating socially engaged art. In the process, I will argue that these women are challenging western traditional art aesthetics. I will explore the dialogue that is taking place in localized areas of rural and remote Manitoba, creating new kinds of knowledge and ways of educating people about social issues. I will continue to frame the ideologies of performance, political performance or gesture, socially engaged and site specific art. These concepts will, lead into a conversation about contemporary art and critical theory, which will reflect different situated knowledge and art practices. Therefore a critical analysis of social structure and the concept of community in this present day, will allow for reflection of the consequences of socially engaged art since the community must be involved. (Kester 2004), (Bial 2004), (Jones 2003), (Gagnon 2002), (Kester 1998), (Schechner 2002), (Kocur & Leung 2005)

Section six will wrap up all of the background chapters and the body of the research This will allow for the limitations and success of the research to be further analyzed and will provide the opportunity to discuss the possibilities that may be to built off this project.

**My Being:**

Images and constructions of home, identity, location, community and family have haunted my thoughts since my childhood. In the back of my mind, I was always wondering where I was from, since everyone was asking. In relation to issues of history and my link to colonialism and 'discovery', I remember my first Native Studies course, the narrative around treaties, fur trade, government legislation, and thinking: where is my family in this? I never had a sense of knowing I was part of this chronicle we call his/herstory. That story was one of the colonizer and the colonized or in Freire's terms the oppressor/oppressed. My family was deeply implicated in the creation of our Canadian nation. My mother's family is French, with Aboriginal heritage on her mother's side, erased from her narrative because she was adopted into a new family. How could I translate this story into my narrative; what meaning does it have? I feel little connection to a culture I have never practiced or even identified with (embedded in colonial practices of assimilation). However, I connect to Indigenous writing, struggles and issues surrounding self-determination and decolonization. The complex struggle to locate myself is further complicated by my father's grandparents, who immigrated into Canada in 1903 from Syria (the next U.S. government target) and on his mother's side Germany. Where do I stand in the mapping of identity and home?

My location complicates my work as an artist, activist and scholar since I constantly have to justify my thoughts and position in the world of academia based on my lived experience. On the one hand, it allows for a richer and more nuanced view in my writing and my art since hegemony or identity totalization is impossible. These issues play a huge part in my abilities as a writer and scholar based on the social and political systems in academia. A large part is learning that my voice is needed, valued and important in current academic discourse. In addition, I have

a learning disability, which makes me work twice as hard to perform the same type or better writing than an average graduate student. However, I find strength and sometimes agency in my current position and build on my ability to write because I want to prove to myself, that I can continue to succeed and grow as an academic writer.

The idea of home or belonging is a binary of love/distrust since I grew up with unconditional love from parents, who were abused by theirs'. My physical home was always a source of embarrassment, marking as it did my economic situation, however at the same time was a security blanket of love and anger. I was unaware my language, actions and worldview would be markers of my class, not merely my physical home. As I learned to speak the language of the working/poor, I have always understood that I am a worker, not an intellectual (as I struggle to spell the word). I did not have the 'tools' to "deconstruct my own stupidity"<sup>1</sup>; I possessed the tools of a carpenter's daughter and the tools for women's work. My destiny was with shovels, saws, wood, brooms, dishcloths and back/foot pain for the rest of my life. There was no retirement fund, no dental plan, no trips, no getaway cabin, thus my only 'free' visits were the doctor's office, which I exercised on a regular basis. I saw the lens he viewed my family with his glasses told a different story than the truth of hard working people without a break. He would have to tell himself something "Stupid. We are too stupid to study, learn, think, analyze, critique. Because working-class people are stupid. So much energy goes into the social lie that poor people are stupid; capitalism needs a basic rationalization to explain why things happen the way they do" (Kadi 40). I never understood when my dad had problems with getting work, compared to his competitors, why people always ripped him off and never paid; I thought it was his fault. I thought he was a bad producer. I thought if he tried harder we would be better

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<sup>1</sup> See Joanna Kadi's chapter "Stupidity Deconstructed" in Thinking Class Sketches from a Cultural Worker. Boston: South End Press, 1996.

better off, I believed the social lie of capitalism founded on the backs of poor/working class people like my family.

I am the first person in my entire family to attend university and this is a very difficult position because I have to balance elitist academia with what my family and friends have taught me, the working class values that they have provided me. Before post-colonial reading, I would refer to my identity as hybrid since that was the only word, I felt, that could describe my situation. However, I see it is more complicated since hybridization translates into being a part of white mainstream society or the erasure of any identity rooted in struggles of race. As LaRocque argues “we may all be ‘post-colonial’ but we are not all placed on the same rung of privileges in the vertical mosaic of Canada” (49). However, my experience has differed from people who cannot and do not want to blend into dominant Canadian society. I have enjoyed privileges rooted in my history being erased by my assimilation into dominant Canadian society at the same time dealing with sexist and racist comments from friends and family because of their own internalized “struggles with self-rejection/acceptance” (LaRocque 45) or perpetuating the dominant racist, sexist and classist/elitist attitudes in Canadian society. People are perpetuating this ideology since I find myself embedded in ‘dialogues’ with misinformed people once I walk out of my front door. I have argued with my own parents, family, friends and random people. Therefore beginning the decolonization process on a practical and everyday level. These ideologies are deeply anchored in our ‘post-colonial’ or neo-colonial capitalist Canadian society, which need to be deconstructed and discussed in every parts of my life. Since, my location is affected and reacts to racism, sexism, classism and colonization. It is important to understand this complex relationship to comprehend the layers of colonization. This thesis is embedded in

decolonization discourse and colonization needs to be discussed in order for me to be able to deal and understand my research's impact on the people and communities involved.



### **Methods and Methodologies:**

When researching there “are multiple ways of both being an insider and an outsider” (Smith 137) and I am placed in different locations allowing for reflectivity in ‘situated knowledges’ as insider (community member, learning disability, woman, mixed heritage) and outsider (researcher, post-secondary education, geographic location, economic situation). I am part of the geographic community of Thompson and the Springfield area however my working situation and education commitment does not allow a place as a committed member of either community, labeling me as an outsider/insider. Being a woman does not allow an immediate insider status because I am married and do not have any children. Many women of my age and situation have a family. I am a student in graduate school, have a dual income from someone who works at INCO (a large mining company). Therefore, I feel the urgency to break down power differences between ‘researched’ and ‘researcher’. Once this process begins, it comes to involve a rejection of western constructions of objectivity by being aware of my location and biases<sup>2</sup> as the researcher, while at the same time understanding that I will participate in the ‘researched’ peoples’ lives and become embedded in the research.

My parents taught me to fight back and to stand up for myself, not to be embarrassed of my poor/working class background. I am not sure I want to work for systems (university) that oppressed my family and made me feel not worthy as a student with poor/working class background and a learning disability. I would feel stupid and “not good enough” for this university institution, as I didn’t have the language or the supports to succeed. However LaRocque argues that, “we are creating a space and place to be able to enter into the particular

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<sup>2</sup> Further discussed later but this is grounded in Elabor-Idemudia, Patience. “Participatory Research: A Tool in the Production of Knowledge in Development Discourse”. Feminist Post-Development Thought: Rethinking Modernity, Post-Colonialism and Representation. London & New York: Zen Books, 2002.

discourse of western thought without having to compromise our personal and cultural selves” (65). This argument gives me hope that I can negotiate my past realities into my present day goals within the academic system, engaging in research “which draws on what may be called ‘embodied discourse’”(LaRocque 69). At the same time I have to “live with the consequences [of my research] on a day-to-day basis for ever more, and so [does my] family and communities” (Smith 137). My ‘embodied discourse’ will be further impacted given that I will be aware of my research outcomes on a regular basis since I live in the same community as one of the participants and have friendship and working relationship with the other two. Therefore people in my community will be aware of my work. When I grocery shop or go for a walk I will be reminded of my everyday position, which will force me to be very self-reflective. Thus, self-reflectivity is important as I want my work to be respectful, to “enable people, to heal and to educate” (Smith 128) everyone involved.

There is a call for the voices of Indigenous writers, artists, activist and scholars to be heard, which becomes a counter-narrative that raises “questions about who can/should speak for whom [when people are engaged] with issues of power and the politics of knowledge that [need to be addressed in this] present-day feminist and other postcolonial, contexts”(Code 14-15). I want to move past this counter-narrative and demonstrate that the participants are creating their own narrative outside the dominant Canadian society. Therefore the result is a dialogue with these Indigenous artists and activists that rejects the

universalizing narratives while at the same time taking a firm political stance, affirming real people [Indigenous people] and their needs for social justice while at the same time destabilizing or disrupting categories that are socially constructed. In order to reveal the working of power [and systems in place, creating a space to] make it possible to imagine alternative ways of thinking that will generate less oppressive ways of relations (Ristock and Pennell, 7).

These ways of thinking might also generate less oppressive ways of producing knowledge. As Smith argues “What makes ideas ‘real’ is the system of knowledge, the formations of culture, and the relations of power in which these concepts are located” (48). Therefore the documentation of Indigenous artists and activists have to be validated by understanding how they relate to the existing “development of complex social structures, [and if their way of thinking appears] to be [connected to this idea of the] universal truth and [meet the criteria to be part of western understanding] of civilized society” (48). Indigenous people do not need to reject the universal Western narratives, they need to struggle “to make sense of our [Indigenous] own world while also attempting to transform what counts as important in the world as powerful” (Smith 39) and knowledgeable. One purpose or ethos informing my research is to disrupt the oppressive existing systems and produce new kinds of knowledge. However, this “does not mean... a total rejection of all theory or research or western knowledge. Rather it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and from our own purposes”(Smith 39).

Past work in social justice issues, has enabled me to utilize first hand insights into critical thinking and social justice frameworks, which would include community-based and participatory/empowerment methodology. The three main aspects of participatory research as stated by Elabor-Idemudia are: first, being based in political action and consciousness raising; second, having equal participation and democratic relationships in decision making and learning skills; and third, using the knowledge from participants’ everyday experiences and feelings. She continues to argue that using these core epistemologies “will ensure empowerment for all in the development process as research has the capacity to emancipate participants when certain approaches are taken” (Elabor-Idemudia 233). I would argue that altering the role of the

participants in this manner builds social change. Through this changed role people become active agents in the research process allowing them to have a dialogue about the “access to the production of knowledge and the knowledge derived from a process of engagement” (Elabor-Idemudia 232). As stated by Elabor-Idemudia “I see participatory research as embodying the praxis of critical theory and as crucial in altering the power-knowledge axis” (Elabor-Idemudia 232). By using participatory methodology participants will “make decisions rather than function as passive objects and the people being studied make decisions about the study format and data analysis” (Elabor-Idemudia 232). This methodology is thereby based on the “breakdown of power differences between ‘researched’ and ‘researcher’ and the rejection of traditional interpretations of ‘objectivity’” (Elabor-Idemudia 232), in part through my being aware of my location and biases as the researcher.

In viewing participatory research through a critical lens it is important to note that having ‘equal relations’ is idealist and somewhat impossible; however, I argue that we need to become aware of the power we have as a researcher/academic and to try and achieve ‘egalitarian relations’: “the researcher has to abandon control and adopt an approach of openness, reciprocity, mutual discourse and shared risk” (Elabor-Idemudia 233). I think this is and would be difficult. The researcher will have difficulties in abandoning control because it is ‘their career’ and ‘their research’ on the line. Although the repercussions of the researcher could be quite devastating to their career, one has to consider that the participants continue to live and function in their community and the researcher has disrupted their lives for the benefit of themselves and to contribute to the ‘greater body of knowledge’ produced by academia. I think we, as researchers/academics have to move away from this model of thinking and begin to use our talents and abilities as a vehicle for social change, to empower people and communities. Using

power “responsibly as researchers means to strengthen, not diminish, our capacity to affect the world while holding ourselves accountable for our actions”(Ristock and Pennell 10). We as researchers/academics are able to shift and change power relations but we cannot remove them. By dismissing the notion of rejecting or neutralizing power dynamics, therefore we may be better positioned to take accountability for our roles/actions and use that power responsibly.

The concept of empowerment is a highly disputed one based on unclear and misused definitions in areas of development and other discourses. Research as empowerment by the definition given by Ristock and Pennell is, “an approach to research that seeks to effect empowerment in all stages of the research process through critical analysis of power and responsible use of power” (9). This is a working definition but it gives me a framework to work from when framing my research methodologies. To further illustrate empowerment methodology,

research as empowerment fosters consensus among diverse people precisely because it affirms their connections while disrupting their assumptions. To engage in this process, researcher and participants alike need to work actively to create a milieu in which they can attend to each other’s experiences, views, differences, and uncertainties, and at the same time build a sense of mutual trust that will allow them to move forward together (Ristock and Pennell 11).

I am arguing that the concept (as stated here) behind empowerment methodologies are inherent in Indigenous methodologies, therefore demonstrating Smith’s argument of building ‘inclusive’ and ‘self-reflective’ methodologies for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

The third methodology is community-based, as it “is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems” (Smith 127). This process will be respectful and will “enable people, to heal and to educate” (Smith 128) aiding in Indigenous self-determination. I am making the assumption that

the participants will “know and can reflect on their own lives, have questions and priorities of their own, have skills and sensitivities which can enhance (or undermine) any community based projects” (Smith 127). This process will allow the rural and remote women artists to explore their understanding of the discourse of local struggles and examine whether they think there is a link to the process of art making, therefore ultimately deciding if they see themselves as activists and social change agents.

**Partners, Projects and Places:**

After a breakdown of my original research proposal, I was offered a tremendous opportunity to conduct research for Mentoring Artists For Women's Art (MAWA). MAWA is an artist run non-profit organization based in Winnipeg, Manitoba with over 300 local, national and international members (MAWA). MAWA's mandate is: "Mentoring Artists for Women's Art encourages and supports the intellectual and creative development of women in the visual arts by providing an ongoing forum for education and critical dialogue" (MAWA). The programs that MAWA facilitates are Foundation Mentorship Program, Mentor in Residence, Workshops, Lecture Series, Studio Visits, Community Resource Library, Critical Reading Group and Umbrella Projects.

The project was an attempt to grasp the conditions of rural and remote women artists in Manitoba as suggested in a comprehensive internal assessment of programs and resources carried out by MAWA in 2003. In this research, I made contact with women artists in key areas throughout Manitoba in order to recommend programming initiatives and capabilities. The goal of this venture was to increase participation in MAWA programming by women artists in rural and remote Manitoba. I found and suggested key persons, throughout the province, who I thought would be best to discuss strategies for collaborations and partnerships with MAWA. In the report I documented the needs and responses voiced by practicing women visual artists living in selected rural and remote Manitoban communities. I recommended new programs that are based on current MAWA models of outreach such as mentoring, workshops, visiting artist talks, studio visits and so on. Last but not least the report indicated how these initiatives will benefit women in the visual arts who live in rural and remote communities, and for the communities themselves in terms of MAWA's mandate to encourage and support the intellectual and creative

development of women in the visual arts.

Part of the project requested my time in participating in meetings of MAWA's Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee, which was a great opportunity to network and support Aboriginal programming in Winnipeg. Some of the partners in the project included: Urban Shaman Gallery, Canadian Heritage Culture and Tourism, Manitoba Arts Council and many others.



**Project Methods:**

The overall method in this project was composed of meetings with artists from communities with established art groups. Since the concept of group was loose, this method was designed in order to support and partner with rural and remote women artists. In my opinion, there needed to be a serious commitment to creative practices, and I thought this would be the case if there were an established art group. Then artists would be really interested in furthering themselves and their community in the area of the arts.

In order to gain a general overview of the situation of rural and remote artists and collectives; I started to research and tap into existing organizations that had contact with these communities. First I met with MAWA staff to discuss and receive contact information of existing rural and remote artists MAWA members. Then I started to contact various arts/cultural organizations such as: Manitoba Arts Network, Manitoba Arts Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism, Manitoba Arts Council, past rural mentors, Rural board of directors, curators involved in rural and remote shows, art/craft stores, Mothers of Red Nation, North Central Development, Friendship Centres, YWCA of Thompson, Leaf Rapids National Exhibition Centre, Heritage North Museum, Northern Juried art committee, Manitoba Arts and Craft Council, Wah-sa Gallery, Urban Shaman Gallery, Recreation centres, Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, and Old Town Gallery. Once these contacts were made, various people from these organizations assisted in leading me to different organizations, art councils and artists.

The communities were selected based on their artists being involved in an art/creative collective, arts council, and museum or art gallery. The communities selected were: Brandon, Virden, Oak Lake, Arrow River, Thompson, Leaf Rapids, Norway House, Cross Lake, The Pas,