

***Pawaatamihk* Artist Feature**  
**Claire Johnston**

Compiled by Jennifer Markides

Vol. 2, Issue 2 (2025)



Figure 1. *How do you use your medicine?* Claire Johnston, 2025, mixed media sculpture (black canvas, neon spray painted wooden beads, acrylic beads, nylon thread, climbing rope, ribbon). The sculpture measures 6 ft x 8 ft. Photo provided by the artist.

***About the Art***

With community members as collaborators in September 2025 at Nuit Blanche Winnipeg, Claire facilitated active participation of stringing glow-in-the-dark beaded fringes onto a giant tobacco bag. As the evening continued, the artwork slowly gained hundreds of beads. While Nuit Blanche tends to be a highly sensory experience, Claire's work was designed to be contemplative, slow, and intentional—teachings integral to Métis beadwork. In the creation of this large-scale beaded piece, Claire spray painted 3/4" wooden beads in neon colours and hand-stitched them onto a black canvas tarp.



Figure 2. *Inspiration*. Claire Johnston, 2025. The artist holding the miniature version of the tobacco bag in front of the giant version. Photo credit: George Gibson.

### ***About the Artist***

Claire Johnston is a Red River Métis and settler visual artist based on Treaty 1 Territory in Winnipeg. Heavily inspired by the aesthetics of historic Métis grandmother beadwork pieces, Claire engages in creating slow and meticulous floral beadwork that responds relationally to both past and present. As a teacher and learner, they believe strongly in supporting Métis material art traditions, which are often laboriously sustained by Métis women and Two-Spirit people.

Claire's artwork has exhibited locally, nationally, and internationally, including Urban Shaman Gallery (Winnipeg, 2025), Le Musée cantonal d'archéologie et d'histoire (Lausanne, 2025), Rosemary Gallery (Winnipeg, 2024), Tangled Arts (Toronto, 2022, 2024), Festival du Voyageur (Winnipeg, 2024), Venice Biennale of Architecture (2023), and The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art (Vancouver, 2022).

Claire has created public artwork celebrating Métis matriarch Annie Bannatyne (Winnipeg Arts Council, 2023) and most recently showcased an interactive large-scale glow-in-the-dark beaded Métis tobacco pouch at Nuit Blanche Winnipeg (2025).

As part of Canada's official entry to the 2025 Venice Biennale of Architecture, Claire was selected for the Canada Council for the Arts Venice Fellowship to research Venetian seed beads and their connection to Métis beadworkers.

Claire is a Sundancer, a parent in a blended family, an auntie, and an MMF citizen with membership in the Two-Spirit Michif Local.