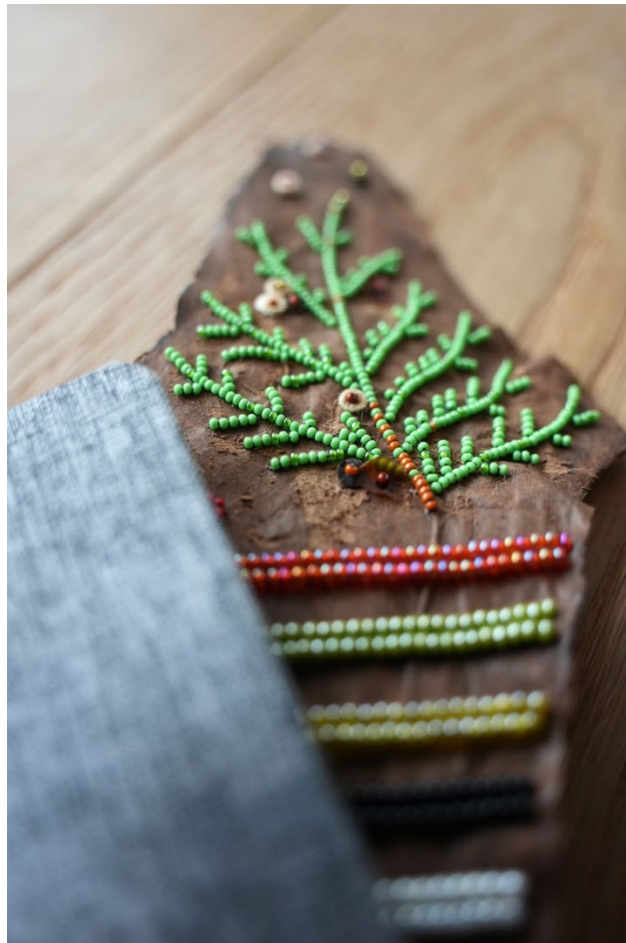


Beading Witness: Notes on (S)kin

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Artist Statement

Beading Witness: Notes on (S)kin serves as a mnemonic memory mapping device—a visual record of my reflections from the 2024 Mawachihitotaak conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Through beadwork on home-tanned fish (s)kin leather, I translate my notes from the field into a visual language that holds layers of meaning while honouring Trinh T. Minh-ha’s concept of *speaking nearby*¹ instead of *talking about* (Chen, 1992, 86–87). With each bead, colour, material, and design choice, I embody feltness² (Springgay, 2022), concealing stories and knowledge within a visual code that requires keys to unlock (Garneau, 2012). While those who attended the conference may recognize deeper nuances within this piece, its meaning remains partly veiled for those not present, inviting them into a conversation that cannot be fully explained. This work intentionally enacts refusal (Simpson, 2007), honouring that not every story should be retold, while simultaneously holding space for those stories, preserving the sacredness of shared moments between conference participants and presenters.

Inspired by the work of Métis scholar and artist David Garneau, particularly his paintings titled *Aboriginal Curatorial Collective Meeting* (2011) and *Aboriginal Advisory Council Meeting* (2011), I draw on Garneau’s use of visual language as a way of documenting relationships and exchanges while refusing to provide literal translations. Garneau’s large-scale paintings, covered with comic book speech bubbles but no text, create a coded language that represents the

¹ The concept of “speaking nearby,” as articulated by Trinh T. Minh-ha in her 1992 conversation with Nancy N. Chen, refers to a mode of engagement that resists objectification and direct representation. Rather than “speaking about” a subject from a detached or authoritative position, “speaking nearby” invites an approach that remains close to the subject without claiming to fully capture or define it (Chen, 1992).

Since I participated in the 2024 Mawachihitotaak conference as a participant, I respect that the stories and presentations that I witnessed are not mine to share. I can speak nearby them; however, I refuse (Simpson, 2007) to speak about them, especially those which are personal.

² Stephanie Springgay’s concept of feltness invites an approach to artmaking grounded in touch, affect, relationality, love, and responsibility. Feltness disrupts traditional structures, reimagining learning as an embodied, relational process that questions dominant knowledge systems while valuing artistic expression (Springgay, 2022).

atmosphere of specific gatherings. What is unique about my offering, in contrast to Garneau, is that I pair photographs of the work with quotes from the Mawachihitotaak conference, thus providing small glimpses into the room. However, the quotes are not translations of the beadwork but rather fragments that offer potential context, inviting the viewer to interpret the work without decoding it entirely. This idea was inspired by Michelle Porter's conference presentation on memory mapping whereby the storyteller is needed to guide you through the creative map (Porter, 2024).

These beaded notes from the field stitched into (s)kin embody relationality, both within the Mawachihitotaak Métis community of artists, thinkers, and knowledge keepers/seekers, as well as with the world around us and all our relations. From a fish that nourished me and my family, I transform (s)kin into a relational artistic expression of knowledge, memory, and community, serving as a bookmark in time.

Key words: Métis, beadwork, notes from the field, autoethnography, memory mapping

*“The pandemic was sent to us by Creator to teach us how to honour one another,
respect one another, and care for one another.”*

Kohkom Charlotte Nolin



“Reciprocal acts of kindness is how we get things done.”

Sherry Farrell Racette

"It was easier to be bad at being a woman than being queer."

Danielle Marie Bitz



"Forced protocols hurt community when they don't consider 2SLGBTQIA+ kin."

Danielle Marie Bitz



"I have always belonged, but so have all of you."

Megan Lindell

“Are you a man or a woman?”

Anonymous child



“I may look like a man, but inside, I’ve always been a woman.”

Kohkom Charlotte Nolin



“What if our ancestors had access to the materials, tools, and knowledge we do?”

Krista Leddy of Beaded Chickadee

“The spirit of our work hasn’t changed, but we have lost some of the stories.”

Krista Leddy of Beaded Chickadee



“Under what circumstances would someone give this away?”

Sherry Farrell Racette



“Beadwork is a relative you sit and have tea with. Beads are relations not objects.”

Kisha Supernant

Photo credit: all photos courtesy of the artist, 2024–2025

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Biography

Marissa Magneson is a Cree–Métis (Red River Métis) and Norwegian–Canadian artist and educator. As a resident of Tkaronto, she is a registered citizen of the Métis Nation of Ontario. Marissa holds a BFA (honours) and MA in Canadian and Indigenous Studies, focusing on beadwork as visual storytelling. Through community and educational partnerships, Marissa facilitates artist talks and workshops for diverse audiences, from elementary school students to post-secondary learners, as well as for those outside of formal educational institutions. As a Vanier scholar, she ranked second across the nation for her PhD research on beadwork as pedagogy at York University in Education: Language, Culture, and Teaching. Marissa acknowledges the work of her late Métis grandmother, Elaine Jessop (Prescott, Desjerlais, Pelletier, Fleury...), whose lifelong work on supporting Indigenous women's rights inspires her own journey.