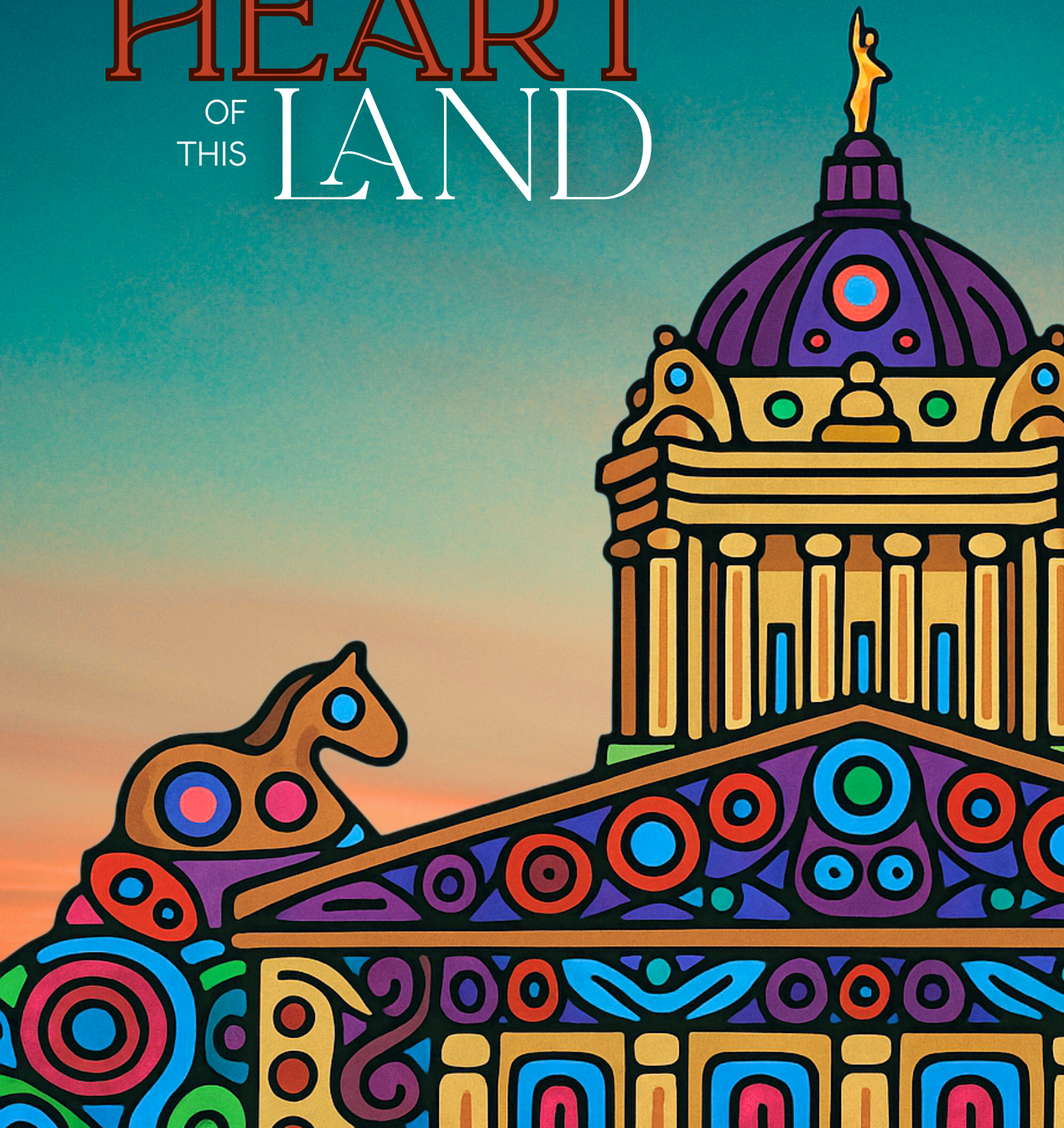


AT THE
HEART
OF THIS
LAND





This inaugural exhibition, hosted by the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, was held on Treaty One Territory. These are the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk Nations.

Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis.

Northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.



FOREWORD

At the Heart of This Land invites a reclamation of space and an amplification of Indigenous voices within the Neoclassical context of the Manitoba Legislative Building. Winnipeg, known as the heart of Turtle Island, serves as a powerful backdrop to this initiative, symbolically and physically placing Indigenous art at the heart of Manitoba's legislative institution.

This project is an early step in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly's commitment to ongoing, meaningful Reconciliation and the decolonization of institutional spaces. We seek to highlight the deep Indigenous connections to the land on which the building stands.

The pieces selected for this exhibition each tell their own story of this land and those who inhabit it. Blending traditional and contemporary styles, seven Indigenous artists voice stories of land, loss, resurgence, and kinship. We invite you to hear their stories and carry them with you.

EXHIBITION OPENING ORDER OF EVENTS

5:00pm – Doors open

5:30pm – Optional smudging begins

*Stationed at the top of the grand staircase.

6:00pm – Formal programming begins

Pipe Ceremony – Dave Shuttleworth

Qulliq Lighting – Elder Gayle Gruben

Opening Remarks – Knowledge Keeper Lucy Antsanen

Remarks from the Legislative Assembly – Dave Shuttleworth

Remarks from the Curator – Claire Normandeau

Sashing Ceremony – Shay Jolicoeur, Elder Norman Meade

Closing Remarks – Elder Norman Meade

Honour Song – James Shuttleworth , Jackie Cook

7:00pm – Exhibition viewing & public opening





*Dave Shuttleworth (Northern Clouds Coming)
of the Wolf Clan, Child of the Bear Clan*

PIPE CEREMONY

The pipe ceremony is a deeply sacred practice among many First Nations, carrying spiritual, cultural, and communal significance. Historically, the pipe was used to open gatherings and negotiations, creating a space for “good talk” grounded in truth, respect, and accountability.

The pipe carrier is the keeper of the pipe and its sacred bundle, entrusted with the knowledge, responsibilities, and protocols required to conduct the ceremony properly. Through prayer and the offering of blessed tobacco, the pipe carrier calls upon the four directions, the spirit world above, Mother Earth below, and the center of all living things, affirming the interconnectedness of life.

Beginning an event with a pipe ceremony sets a spiritual foundation, inviting honesty, unity, and mutual respect among all present. It acknowledges the Creator, honours ancestral teachings, and reminds participants of their shared responsibility to one another, the land, and the intentions that guide the gathering.

The pipe carrier for the At the Heart of This Land Indigenous art exhibition is Northern Clouds Coming (Dave Shuttleworth), accompanied by Snow Owl Man (James Shuttleworth) of Ebb and Flow First Nation, and Red Rising Woman (Jackie Cook).

QULLIQ LIGHTING

**Transcribed remarks of Elder Advisory Committee Member, Gayle Gruben*

The Qulliq is a traditional oil lamp used by the Inuit, specifically by the women. It is used to heat up the tent, the igloo. It was used to heat water, to cook the food.

Many women used it as a guide for childbirth. Tending to the Qulliq involves many steps. Traditionally, we would use seal blubber or whale blubber, but today it's kind of hard to find in Winnipeg, so we use Crisco.

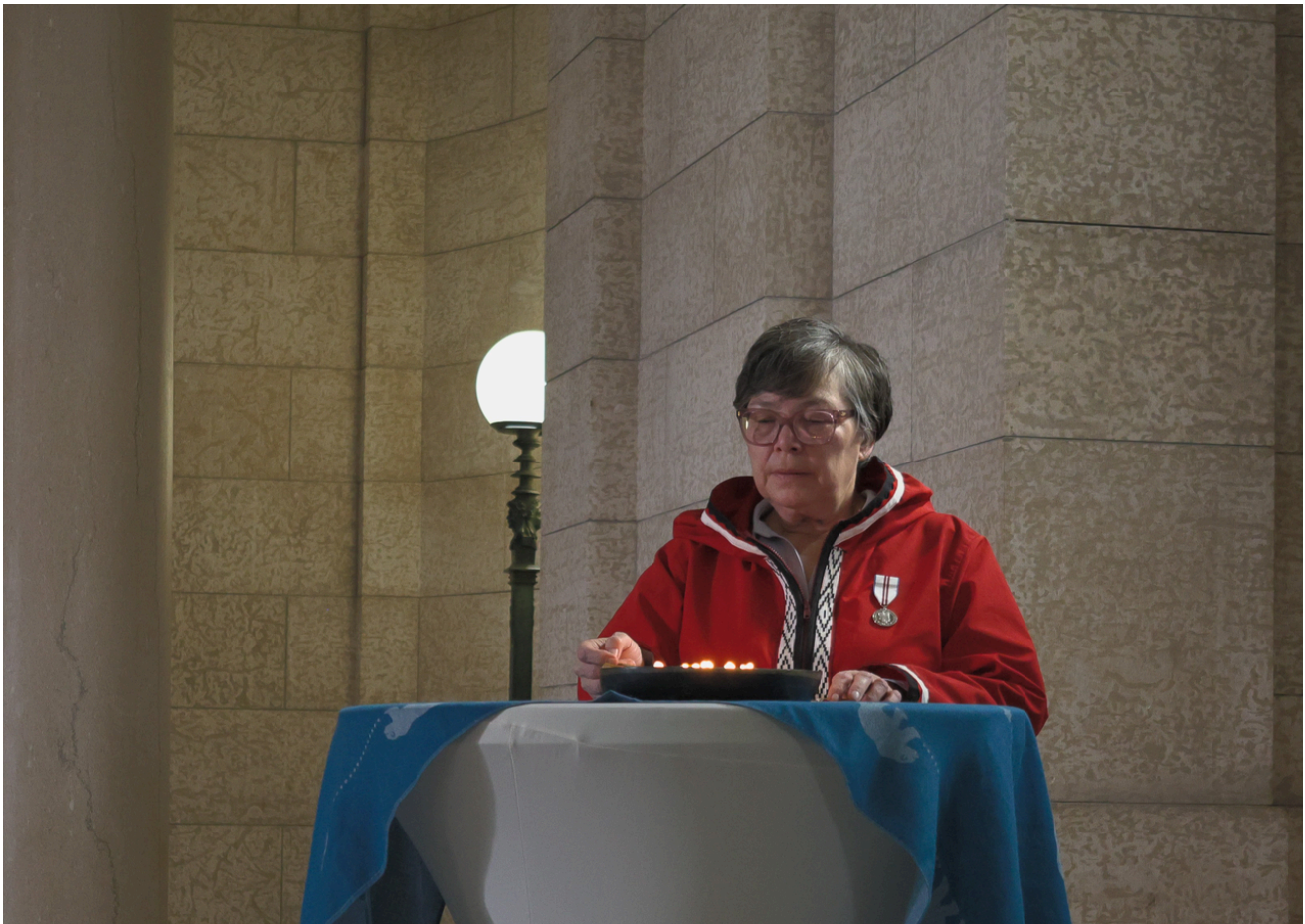
The wick, we gather arctic cotton, I get it from my home community, Tuktoyaktuk in the Northwest Territories.

In the early days, they rubbed two flint stones together create the fire and we watch that carefully to ensure the flame never went out.

The spiritual meaning, the role of being the flame keeper, also signifies that women are the life carriers. Women use the Qulliq to take care of the families, their babies. Women gave birth to the light of the Qulliq.

The Qulliq represents strength and tenderness of the Inuit women. The role of the Qulliq today, as we all know about..., it's just custom to light the Qulliq before ceremonial events. Many special events throughout Canada start with the lighting of the sacred Qulliq, and is another way of passing down the traditions of their ancestors.

I would like to add that like many Indigenous cultural ways, the Qulliq has survived colonization because of brave elders.



Research states that the seal oil lamp, like the Qulliq, have been found in the north dating back 3,000 years. During colonization, the missionaries tried to ban many cultural acts, the lighting of the Qulliq being one of them. Thanks to Inuit elders, who have passed on their knowledge to their daughters and continue to pass on the knowledge to this day.

I'll just say it, the Inuit community does consider me an elder because I'm over the age of 60. I feel like I have many years yet to evolve into an elder but I can appreciate that they support me in this role.

(Remarks in Inuktitut) I am originally from Tuktoyaktuk in the Northwest Territories, I've been a resident of Manitoba since 2021, I am currently the CEO for the Manitoba Inuit Association and some of the files I've had with the association, include Director Missing and Murdered Inuit Women, and the Missing Inuit Children of Residential Schools.

With that, I will make my way over to the Qulliq.

OPENING REMARKS

**Transcribed remarks of Elder Advisory Committee Member, Lucy Antsanen*

(Remarks in Denesuline) My name is Lucy Antsanen, I am from Northlands Dene First Nation. I would like to invite everyone to be here who are here. The Elders and Elder Advisory Committee, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Before I begin, I want to thank Shay Jolicoeur for the smudge, and Dave Shuttleworth for the pipe ceremony and for the drum and his son doing the drum. Thank you to Gayle for lighting the way. Mah'si, Thank you for starting us in a good way, in an uplifting, heartwarming prayer, that brings a sense of security and joy to the mind and soul. Mah'si.

I want to acknowledge the land we are on, Treaty One territory. Manitoba is also located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the Anishnaabeg, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk, and Inuit nations, and is also the birthplace and the homeland of the Red River Métis people.

On behalf of the Elder Advisory Committee, it is my honour and privilege to welcome you to the first Indigenous art exhibition event here at the Legislative Building. As we are celebrating the first Indigenous art exhibit, I want to ask – what is it Indigenous art, and what does it mean to us Indigenous people? Here is my understanding and my thoughts. Our art is authentically and uniquely local, specifically to this area that we live in, in this case, Manitoba. Indigenous art encompasses a diverse range of traditional content and creative expressions produced by Indigenous peoples. Art is deeply rooted in local culture's history and spiritual beliefs. Art is vital, involving narrative tool. When we paint, carve, create our clothes, and do beadwork, we are connected to the land, we celebrate our identity, and maintain our cultural practices.



*Lucy Antsanen, Denesuline Knowledge Keeper & Elder,
Manitoba Legislative Assembly Elder Advisory Committee Member*

OPENING REMARKS

Art is storytelling. It preserves history and traditions and shares and honours our unique practices and perspectives. Art is connected to the land through natural materials such as stone, hide, bone, wood, fur, to name a few. It reflects a deep relationship with the environment which we are connected to. Art comes in diverse forms. It ranges from ancient rock paintings, totem poles and pottery to modern photography, sculpture and multi-media art. Art is symbolism. Patterns on our mitts, jackets and moccasins and many pieces carry specific meanings connected to spiritual, social and historical contexts. Art can be traditional and contemporary, and sometimes the two blend together, often bridging generational gaps by combining traditional techniques with contemporary personal and political themes. Indigenous art is not just a historical stagnant tradition. Art is a living, evolving form of expression, that asserts identity and resistance. Art is healing, art is reconciliation, art is medicine, art is a memory, art is the soul of the community.

Artists shelter us, clothe us, fed us, transported us, and quenched our thirst with the tools that were made by our ancestors. As you view these art pieces, reflect on the many hours it took to create these art pieces, the love that was placed in them, and think of all our ancestors and the gifts they left us, their knowledge, their skill, and their craft. I want to thank the artists for creating such powerful, exquisite pieces. Your art truly brings your talent to life, and adds a beautiful unique perspective to the first Indigenous art exhibition.

I also want to acknowledge from the Advisory Committee: Norman Meade, Ed Azure who cannot be with us, Sharon Copenace who also cannot make it, Gail Gruben, Douglas Flett, Joe Bunn, and myself, Lucy Antsanen. I want to take a moment to sincerely thank the planners for organizing such a wonderful event: Claire Normandeau, Shay Jolicoeur, and Dave Shuttleworth...

Thank you. This event has brought us all together in such a meaningful way and I deeply appreciate the effort you have put into making this a success.

Chii'Miigwetch, Mah'ischo. Thank you.

REMARKS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Boojoo, Keewatinong Peetonikook, meegwetch Kitchi Manitoo. Good evening, honoured guests.

The name the grand beings having given me is Northern Clouds Coming, I am from the Wolf Clan, son of the Bear Clan and member of the Red River Métis. My Christian name is Dave Shuttleworth and I am the Sergeant-at-Arms for the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, and it is my honour to welcome you to the opening of the Legislative Assembly's inaugural Indigenous Art Exhibition.

Tonight, we are doing more than celebrating the remarkable artists whose skill and vision fill this space. We are also recognizing the Legislative Assembly's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation—expressed here through art, education and storytelling.

In my role as Sergeant-at-Arms—and, more specifically, working with Claire and Shay—I've had the privilege of watching this project grow from a simple idea into a reality. After six months of dedicated work, this exhibition stands as a significant step in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly's Truth and Reconciliation journey. While we are still early on that path, our commitment is long-term, sincere, and continually evolving.

As we gather in this undeniably colonial building, we are choosing to create space for Indigenous presence, creativity, and fortitude. This building has long represented systems that have marginalized Indigenous peoples and limited their voices; and yet, here we are—sitting together in ceremony, At the Heart of This Land, on Turtle Island, close to the Forks, a historical gathering place of first nations to meet, celebrate and exchange stories...a place Indigenous peoples have always known as sacred.

We recognize that reconciliation is a long road, requiring meaningful and often difficult conversations, but we are prepared to walk that road in collaboration and consultation with Indigenous peoples.

REMARKS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

and consultation with Indigenous peoples. We want Indigenous peoples to have a positive relationship with the Legislative Assembly, and to know that this building—the people's building—is for them.

So tonight, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly is proud to welcome and honour these talented Indigenous artists whose work now fills this space with life, culture, and story.

We hope that your participation in this evening's celebration is only the beginning, and that you join us as we continue this journey.

I would like to take a moment to thank our elder advisory committee members, Anishinaabe Elder Sherry Copenace, Dakota Oyate Elder Joseph Bunn and Anishininewuk Elder Douglas Flett who sadly could not make it this evening, Denesuline Knowledge keeper Lucy Antsanen, Métis Elder Norman Meade, Nehethowuk Elder Ed Azure, and Inuit Elder Gayle Gruben.

The Legislative Assembly, as well as our exhibitions team, is incredibly grateful for your contributions and your extensive collection of cultural knowledge. We sincerely appreciate your time and willingness to be part of this project.

Additionally, I would like to thank some others who have directly supported this initiative, including the Assembly's digital media branch who are responsible for the production of our artist video. As well, I would like to thank the honourable speaker, Tom Lindsey and the Clerk of the Assembly, Mr. Rick Yarish for their unwavering support and assistance throughout the project.

We look forward to working with and learning from you as we continue to advance in our reconciliation journey.

Thank you. Merçi, Maarsii. Miigwetch. Hiy hiy

*Dave Shuttleworth, Sergeant-at-Arms
Manitoba Legislative Assembly*

REMARKS FROM THE CURATOR

Good evening, everyone. I'm Claire Normandeau, curator of this exhibition and Manager of the Visitor Tour Program with the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and I am proudly Red River Métis.

Bon soir à tous, je m'appelle Claire Normandeau, réalisatrice de cette exposition et gérante du programme des visites guidées avec l'assemblée législative du Manitoba, et je suis fièrement métisse de la Rivière Rouge.

I've spent nearly a decade working in this building, interpreting its symbols, stories, and histories. While I and the public I've shared these stories with have appreciated this building's striking beauty, its impressive works of art, and its state-of-the-art craftsmanship, a glaring absence was always felt. How could this building, standing on Treaty 1 territory, not voice the stories of Indigenous peoples?

Simply put, this building is a symbol of colonial legacy. It is therefore crucial that we, the Legislative Assembly, work to rethink this space and what and who it represents.

One incredibly important milestone in this journey is the election of the first First Nations premier. While we as representatives of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly are non-partisan agents, distinct from the building's political side, it is vital to recognize this in reflecting on this building's history and legacy.

While we, the legislative assembly, are removed from policy, we act as stewards of both this institution and the land on which this building stands. It is our responsibility to ensure that all Manitobans, Indigenous, settler, and immigrant, see themselves in this building, and by consequence in this institution.

The idea for this exhibition stems from this discourse. We look to celebrate this land and to amplify the voices of Indigenous artists from on this land.



Currently, we are gathered very close to the longitudinal centre of Canada. Below us, the Pool of the Black Star marks the central point of this building. When standing in the very centre of the star, voices become amplified and echo through the building. This seemed a fitting space to celebrate these artists and to share their message.

We view art as a universal and accessible means of communication, where everyone is encouraged to bring their own experience to a piece, and take what they need from it.

I'd like to thank each of the talented artists, Sandra Cook, Lily Gautron, R.F.J. Noel, Justine Proulx, Fredrick Lyle Spence, Jedrick Thorassie, and Matthew Vukson, for sharing so much of themselves with us through their art. Thank you also to our Indigenous advisory committee for your continued support and input throughout this project.

This is but one step on a long journey toward meaningful Truth and Reconciliation. We look forward to continuing to develop reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities through more projects to come. Thank you for being here, we hope you enjoy the show.

Merci. Maarsii. Miiigwetch. Hiy hiy.

*Claire Normandeau, M.A Curatorial Practices
Exhibition Curator*

SASHING CEREMONY

The Métis sash is a brightly coloured, finger-woven belt that stands as a powerful symbol of Métis identity, cultural heritage, and practical ingenuity.

Historically, the sash functioned as a versatile, multifunctional tool. It could be used as a belt, towrope, towel, saddle blanket, first-aid wrap, and more, making it an essential and adaptive item in Métis daily life. Its practicality and durability reflect the resourcefulness of the Métis people.

Today, the sash remains a visible and meaningful emblem of Métis identity. The interwoven colours and threads are understood to represent various cultural, historical, and symbolic attributes, collectively expressing continuity, strength, and connection.



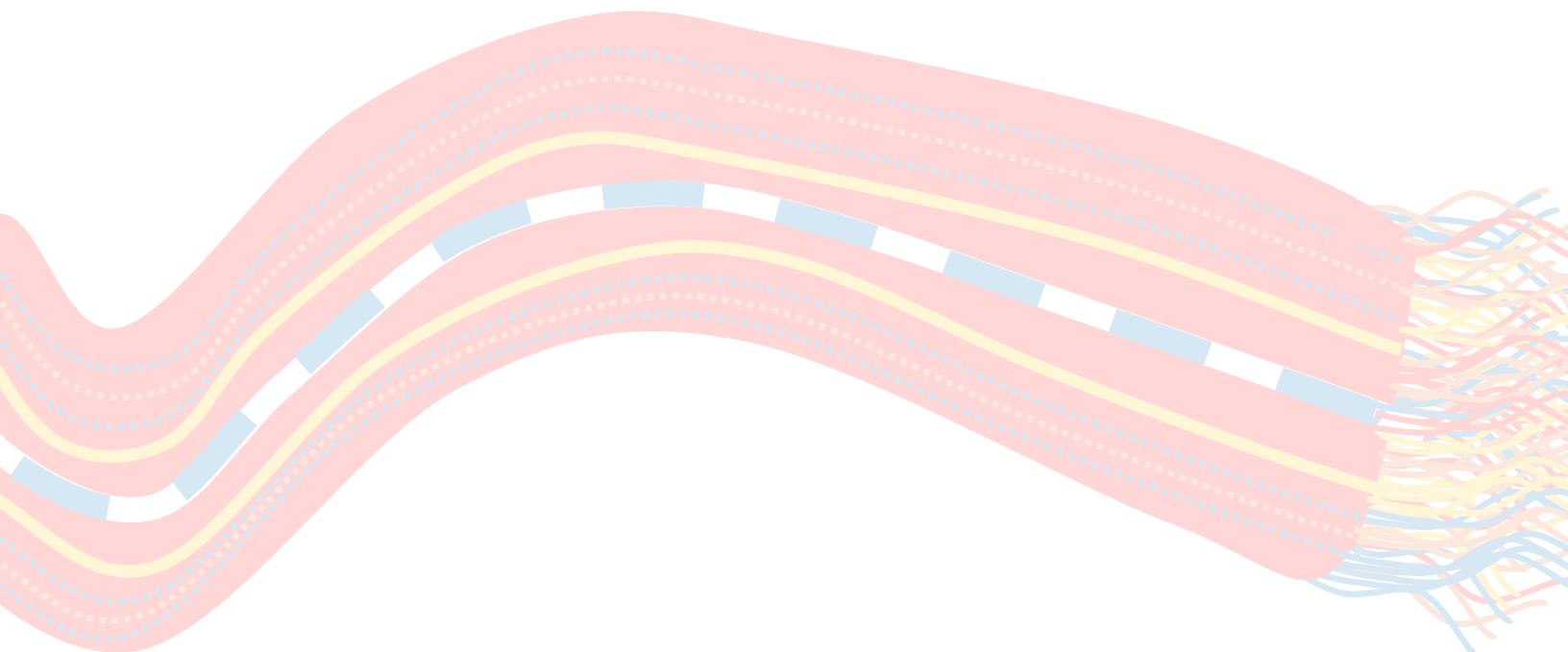
SASHING CEREMONY

Formal sashing ceremonies may take place anywhere and at any time and are regarded as a profound honour. During these ceremonies, sashes are presented to individuals in recognition of exceptional leadership, community service, or the completion of a significant achievement.

Exhibition curator Claire Normandeau was presented with a sash during the opening ceremony of *At the Heart of This Land* in recognition of her graduation from the Master's in Curatorial Studies program at the University of Winnipeg and for her role in conceptualizing and creating the first-ever Indigenous art exhibition held at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Reflecting on the presentation of the sash, Elder Norman Meade stated:

"When our young women stand with our older women and put the sash on them, we are told that this is one of the most precious and honourable things we can do—to honour the work you have done to bring us together."





CLOSING REMARKS

**Transcribed remarks of Elder Advisory Committee Member, Norman Meade*

Okay, I just want to make sure that we don't forget about the teachings of the one who was recognized as the first Premier of Manitoba, that being Louis Riel. I want to make sure that we acknowledge when we offer a sash and when we come together the way we do, that we honour his words. He has spoken to us, he says "my people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who will give them their spirits back". That is important for us to remember.

He also said, "I have nothing but my heart to give, and I have given it long ago to my nation" – the words of Louis Riel. So when we think of coming together tonight my friends, and are reminded of our ancestors that went on before us, and stood up when they had to stand up for our country, our nation. We have to, with our young people, do that same thing and carry on that legacy.

CLOSING REMARKS

I pray today as an Elder, as a Métis Elder of the Red River Métis Nation, for strength for each and every one of us that comes together tonight in a way that we can carry on that work that we are left with.

You know the Chief Dan George had said to us, to his children, to his grandchildren, he said “when I get old, my ears don’t hear as good, my eyes don’t see as good, I can’t feel as good as I’d like to, and I hope you, my children, my grandchildren, will pick me up what you understand and hear the teachings of our people, of our ancestors”.

This is what he left us with. That’s why it’s important that you when we come to something tonight like that’s as precious and important as tonight is that we help our young people, we help you that are here tonight, and I want you to also respect our Elders that are here with us tonight, because without our Elders it would be difficult for us to continue the work that we need to do. Our knowledge keepers, our grandmothers and our grandfathers.

The last thing I will say is this: when we are really feeling down, low in spirit, weak in spirit, who do we turn to? We turn to our grandmothers, we say “grandma, can you help me, can you help me?”, and they’re always there for us. I would like to acknowledge our grandmothers in a special way today, and all of the women that are here today. I acknowledge each and every one of you for bringing life into this earth. This very vest that I am wearing tonight, my mother’s last gift to me, before she got weak and couldn’t see, couldn’t use her hands anymore, she made this vest for me. And when she put it on me she said “my son, I’m gonna put this vest on you today”, and I put it on with love. “So that when you go out and you’re doing work that you are doing in life, you will wear it, and you’ll feel that love that I’m wrapping around you this morning.” That’s a number of years ago, twenty years ago. I still think of her love. That’s what grandmothers do for their children. I say miigwetch, maarsii, thank you.

HONOUR SONG

The Honour Song is a tradition which pays tribute through musical expression, often with a hand drum. These songs are oral transmissions of Indigenous histories and worldviews carried and shared intergenerationally. The Honour Song is commonly sung to pay tribute, memorialize, or celebrate moments in life and in community.



James Shuttleworth (Snow Owl Man), Ebb and Flow First Nation





Justine Proulx is a mural and tattoo artist whose work centres on themes of nature, kinship, and spirituality. *Creation Story* is part of Proulx's *Returning to our Roots* art installation on the RBC convention centre. This panel representing Summer, depicts the Anishinaabeg tale of the Creation Story. In the version of the story familiar to Proulx, there is a flood on earth, and the only surviving creatures are those who can swim or fly. Nanabozho, a spiritual being, guides the surviving animals to create Turtle Island, which requires earth from the bottom of the water to be planted on the turtle's back. Countless animals attempt to gather this soil, but none are successful. Finally, the underestimated muskrat successfully emerges, bringing to the surface the earth that would become Turtle Island.



Justine Proulx
Red River Métis, Anishinaabeg, Nehethowuk
Creation Story, 2025
Acrylic on canvas

Jedrick Thorassie is a visual artist largely inspired by northern landscapes, historical and contemporary culture, and portraiture. Purely by fluke, Thorassie once leaned a painted dream catcher to dry onto a canvas, and when separating them, the canvas was marked with the print of the dream catcher, ultimately inspiring this piece. *Mother* is indicative of the artist's reconnection with his own Indigenous culture and history, having grown up disconnected from these ties. In this piece, Thorassie represents a fracture with the land and with Indigenous worldviews through colonial interventions. A saddened Mother Earth is depicted cradling an island in her arms. We are invited to reflect on these ruptures amongst kin, both human and non-human.

Jedrick Thorassie
Sayisi Dene
Mother, 2024
Acrylic on canvas





Lily Gautron is a two-spirit and disabled beadwork artist and student, whose work is largely inspired by grandmother pieces, queerness, and their beadworking community.

Modeled after a fire bag, *harmonized* centres a heart, surrounded by florals, motifs common in grandmother pieces.

The heart at the core of this piece acts as an anchor for the artist's unstructured, contemporary take on florals. This motif expresses both the beauty and chaos of love. All relationships, between human beings and with the land, are not without friction. These ties are non-linear and move through moments of joy, loss, tenderness, and pain, but in community we recover and repair. Gautron's creation process revolves around family and community, uniting their practice to the themes expressed through their work.

Lily Gautron
Red River Métis
harmonized, 2025

Contemporary glass beads, pellon fabric, backed with commercially tanned deer leather





Felix Noel is a carver who independently sources his materials from Manitoba and surrounding land, which inspires much of his artistic process. In addition to the natural world, family and traditional teachings are at the heart of his work. *Bison Chief* engages with the loss of a vital and vibrant natural world, “when the earth would thunder and shake, [a]nd sing with the beat of a million hooves. Strength could be felt down to your bones through your spirit, echoing the truth of unity and family,” says the artist. This piece recalls a time when human and non-human kin lived as one. The figure of the Chief, from one angle frowning, reminds us of this entangled legacy of loss. From another perspective, he grins, reminding us of the beauty of this connection and the hope for its resurgence. This piece calls on contemporary leaders and community members alike to remember and engage with this practice of unity.



R.F.J. (Felix) Noel
Nisichawayasi Nehethowuk
Bison Chief, 2019
Winnipeg stone, Pipestone

Healing and traditional spirituality are at the heart of Fredrick Lyle Spence's work. *A Piece of My Heart* is born from the artist's loss of a friend. The wooden base carries the form of a kneeling person, holding a braid. This represents the traditional practice of cutting one's hair in times of grief, as a form of release. The arms double as a functioning smudge bowl. When medicines are ignited in the figure's arms, their plumes are carried to the heavens by the eagle. The figure and the eagle are bridged heart to heart by copper expressions of love and loss, heal[ing] and pain. The eagle carries prayers and intentions from the figure to the Creator. A heart rests at the centre of this bridge, shattered then reformed by the artist, it is forever changed. This piece engages elements of the land in guiding traditional forms of healing.

Fredrick Lyle Spence
Anishinaabeg
A Piece of My Heart, 2024
Soapstone, copper, elk antler, wood





Matthew Vukson is a beadwork artist and teacher, largely inspired by land, kin, and politics through time and history. Colour equally plays a central role in his work, as reflected in *Orbital Station No. 2*. At the centre of the piece, a colourful circle represents power, legacy, and the universe. From the top left corner of the piece running clock-wise, Vukson depicts a Thunderbird, space, or the universe, a hunting land map, canoers, a water lynx, and a sweat lodge. This piece invites a reflection on time and space in relation to the people, animals, tales, and traditional practices so deeply intertwined with the land we call Turtle Island.

Matthew Vukson
Tlicho Dene
Orbital Station No. 2, 2021
Czech, Miyuki, vintage beads, wool and fabric backing



Sandra Cook is an artist from Churchill, Manitoba. Cook's work reflects a deep connection to the land and to kin, human and non-human. "If every painting that I create touches just one person and helps one person to connect and to see that we're all related – the flyers, the swimmers, the ones who walk on four legs and two – we're all related," says Cook. "... I['ve] won." *The Polar Bear's* gaze reminds us that we are stewards of this land. She, as Cook characterizes the portrait's subject, conveys a motherly ferocity, vulnerability, kindness, and knowing. By centering the bear in portrait, Cook reinforces the interconnectedness of human and non-human beings. Cook's four-legged subject is given space and voice.

Sandra Cook
Anishinaabeg
The Polar Bear, 2020
Acrylic on repurposed canvas



Following the conclusion of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly's inaugural Indigenous art exhibition, the Honourable Tom Lindsey, Speaker of the House, opened the first day of the Spring Sitting of the 3rd Session of the 43rd Legislature on March 4, 2026 with the following statement (excepted from Hansard, the Assembly's official verbatim transcript).

SPEAKER LINDSEY'S STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE – MARCH 4, 2026

The Speaker: *Prior to routine proceedings, I have a couple of statements for the House. First, members may have noticed some changes in the Chamber today and I'm pleased to share with the House that several Indigenous cultural items previously gifted to the Legislative Assembly will now be on permanent display within the Legislative Chamber. You may recall that we have previously had these items on display in the Chamber during session for special occasions such as Manitoba Day. As one step in the Assembly's ongoing journey towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities in Manitoba, I've decided to keep these items on permanent display in the Chamber. The beaded mace runner will hang above the Speaker's throne while the star blanket cushion will be on display in the cushion to my left. The mace runner depicts the imagery found on the Treaty medal gifted during the making of the numbered treaties and symbolizes the relationship between First Nations and the Crown and the sacred promises made during treaty making. Those sacred agreements serve as the foundation of the essential relationship we all still have and have the responsibility to honour as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the water flows. Signatories to Treaty 1 received this medal on Treaty 1 territory, which includes the lands that we are meeting on today. In the spirit of reconciliation, the star blanket is recognized as a gift to mark the beginning of partnerships and goodwill between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.*

The star blanket cushion is a symbol of honour, respect and connection, and is presented to mark significant life events offering warmth, comfort and spiritual protection of the recipient. Both of these gifts were created by the very talented Deb Desjarlais and they were presented to the Assembly in 2010 by the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

SPEAKER LINDSEY'S STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE – MARCH 4, 2026

You will also notice in the display case a polar bear carving created by Johnny Manning. Johnny is originally from Kinngait, formerly known as Cape Dorset, and now resides in Iqaluit. The carving was presented to us in 2023 by Deputy Speaker George Hickes of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. And members may know that the Deputy Speaker Hickes is the son of Manitoba's former Speaker, George Hickes. Along with the carving is a Métis sash, presented to our Assembly in 2023 by the Manitoba Métis Federation. Initially created as a multi-purpose tool, the sash has become a fundamental symbol of the Métis people, representing their unique identity and preserving their history in each interwoven thread. This specific sash was created as part of an international Indigenous initiative between the Manitoba Métis Federation and Indigenous artisan co-operative in Colombia, in the town of Guatavita, near Bogotá. This project created 15 jobs for Indigenous weavers in Colombia and a Red River Métis business in Winnipeg worked with local artists in Manitoba to add the unique patch.

To celebrate this occasion, we are joined in the Speaker's Gallery today by Deb Desjarlais, her daughter Virginia Desjarlais and Ken Daniels. We're also joined by Commissioner Loretta Ross from the Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba, Minister David Beaudin representing the Manitoba Métis Federation, the national government of the Red River Métis. We also have joining us in the gallery staff from the Treaty Relations Commission: Chantel Jackson, Brittany Thomas, Tammy Field and Emily Keough. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you to the Assembly and thank you.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you to the Assembly and thank you. I would also like to take a moment to recognize the Manitoba Legislative Assembly's inaugural art exhibition titled At the Heart of This Land. The exhibition was inaugurated at a special event on Friday, January 30, 2026, with speeches and ceremony by elders, knowledge keepers and community members. The exhibition remained on display until February 13, 2026.

SPEAKER LINDSEY'S STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE – MARCH 4, 2026

This project showcased the work of seven Indigenous artists from across and beyond the province, inviting a reclamation of space and an 'amplification' of Indigenous voices within the Manitoba Legislative Building, at the heart of Turtle Island. The pieces selected for this exhibition tell their story of this land and those who inhabit it. Seven elders and knowledge keepers from across and beyond the province were consulted in making these selections, including: Elder Ed Azure; Elder Joe Bunn; grandmother Sherry Copenace; Elder Douglas Flett; Elder Gayle Gruben; Elder Norman Meade; and Knowledge Keeper Lucy Antsanen (sic). Blending traditional and contemporary styles, the talented artists Sandra Cook, Lily Gautron, R.F.J. Noel, Justine Proulx (sic), Fredrick Lyle Spence, Jedrick Thorassie and Matthew Vukson voiced stories of land, loss, resurgence and kinship through expressions of beadwork, sculpture and painting.

This exhibition was curated by Claire Normandeau, the Assembly's visitor tour program manager. This project would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of Claire and our Visitor Tour Program Indigenous Tour Officer Shay Jolicoeur and, of course, our Sergeant-at-Arms Dave Shuttleworth, as well as many staff helpers from various Legislative Assembly branches. Claire and Shay are in the gallery today, and, of course, Dave is at his post here with us. I ask all members to show their appreciation to these three for their hard work and dedication to this project.

We also extend our sincere thanks to the Indigenous organizations and community members who made this project possible by connecting us with elders, artists and knowledge keepers.

These two projects highlight the deep Indigenous connections to the land on which this building stands. Together these initiatives are early steps in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly's commitment to ongoing, meaningful and reciprocal reconciliation and the decolonization of Indigenous-of institutional spaces. Thank you.



At the Heart of This Land exhibition opening



The Manitoba Legislative Assembly Exhibitions team extends our sincere gratitude to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly's Digital Media Branch, Chamber Branch, and Hansard teams for their steadfast support, expertise, and collaboration throughout this project.

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