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THE GREAT SPIRIT OF THE FEMALE SIDE OF LIFE OF ALL THINGS

KCI-NIWESQ

NATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF CANADA MAGAZINE

ISSUE 12

ARTISAN ARTS



ROSE MOSES

THE HEALING POWER OF INDIGENOUS
DOLLS

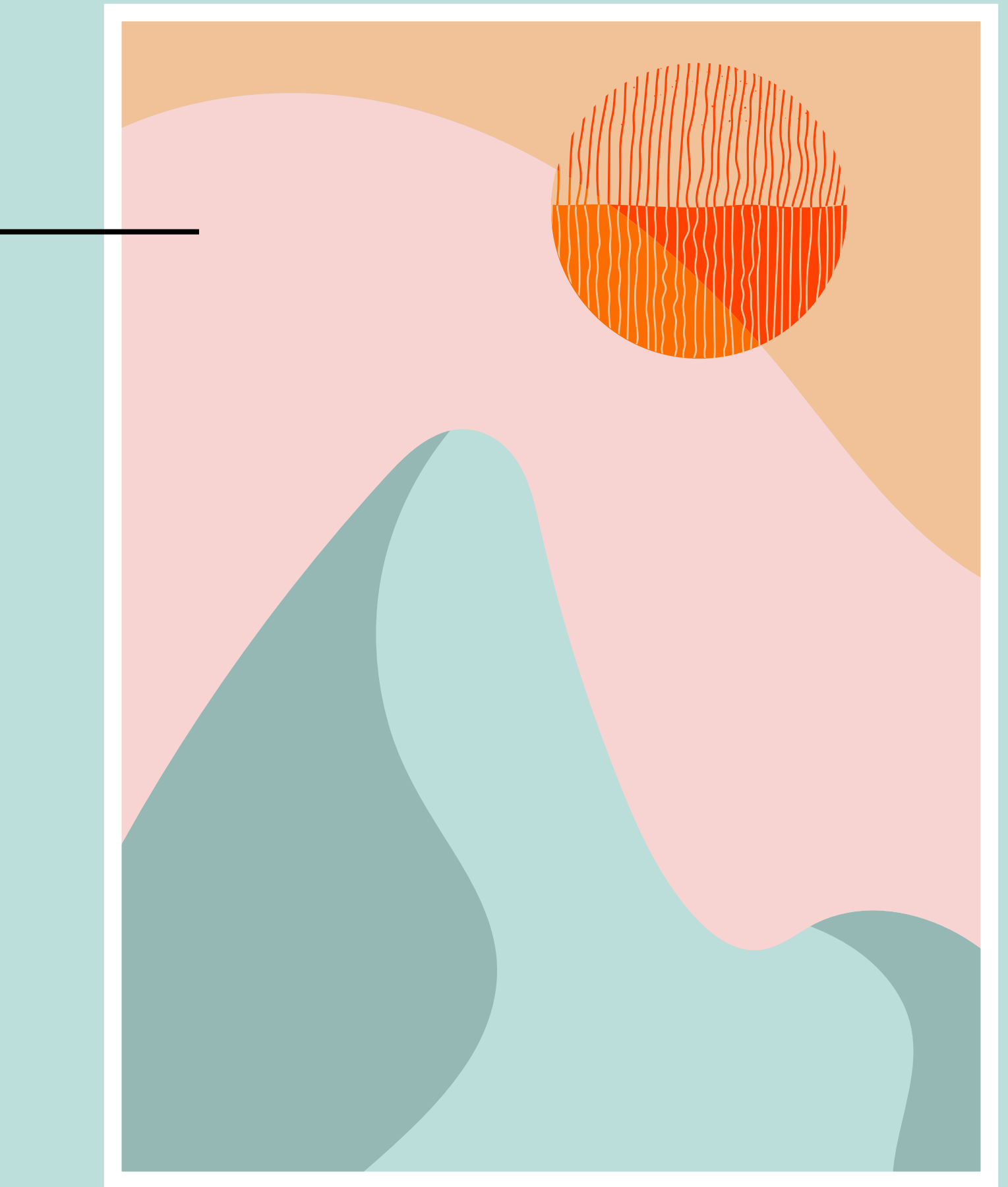
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ONE BEAD AT A
TIME





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THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POWER OF ARTISAN PRODUCTS:

NWAC'S VIRTUAL CLASSES OFFER A PATHWAY OUT OF VIOLENCE INTO INCOME SECURITY

An online space created to relieve isolation of Indigenous women during COVID-19 has become a pathway for healing and economic opportunity.

In the early days of the pandemic, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) recognized a need to connect First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, says Lynne Groulx, NWAC's Chief Executive Officer. The organization began to offer online workshops, where skilled artisans would teach their skills.

"We thought the crafting would be a good way to gather (online) and to do healing at the same time," says Ms. Groulx. Economic potential was also immediately apparent.

"In our communities, there are a lot of women who have micro businesses," says Ms. Groulx. "And we know that a lot of them are selling their artisan products online, through their social media accounts such as Facebook, on Etsy, or at powwows."

Teaching Indigenous women to create to bring in an income while helping them to connect with others in a healing environment seemed like a win-win situation, she says.

Workshops started in a robust manner with the help of COVID-19 funding from the federal government. NWAC began running three workshops a week, then quickly increased that number to five because the demand was so high.

Workshop participants are taught by a wide range of expert artisans in many different types of arts. Beading, moccasin-making, drawing, painting, doll-making, and sewing have proved to be some of the most popular offerings.

By May 2022, more than 12,000 people had taken part in an NWAC workshop.

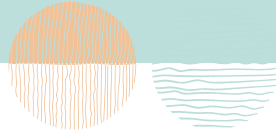
"We are taken aback," says Ms. Groulx. "When we announced the workshops, some of them were filled in a matter of minutes."

NWAC provided participants with free kits containing all the needed materials to take part. Some kits, like those for making moccasins, cost nearly \$100 apiece. Others, like those for beaded earrings, cost about \$20.

NWAC limits participants to between 10 and 35 participants as the workshops are also meant to be circles for connecting and learning from Elders. If there are too many people, some will not get a chance to actively participate.

Many of the women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people attending workshops are doing it for the opportunity to gather with other Indigenous people. Learning a craft can become an income generator, which also increases security for Indigenous women—many of whom remain targets of a genocide, according to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.





"When we have an income, we're more likely to have a safe place to stay. And we're more likely to not be in harm's way," says Ms. Groulx. "So, for us, finding a way for Indigenous women to have an income and a revenue stream, even if it's a partial revenue for themselves and for their families, is a pathway to ending violence."

Those workshop participants who want to turn their craftwork into income are invited to take advantage of NWAC's #BeTheDrum program, which connects them with mentors who can help with marketing, financing, budgeting, and social media. NWAC is also offering another set of workshops to teach the fundamentals of setting up a business.

In addition, it is offering a venue for sales.

"We plan to have our own centralized trading post," says Ms. Groulx. "We plan to have an online boutique, which is about

to open, as well as an in-person store. So, we want to become a central place where Indigenous women can sell their products."

NWAC is planning to purchase artisanal crafts made by Indigenous women and sell them throughout Europe and the Americas. "We plan to go really far with it and to get as many women as possible doing trade, even between countries."

It has now been two years since the onset of COVID-19 lockdowns—when NWAC began offering virtual workshops—and even with the reopening of public gatherings, NWAC's online workshop series continues to grow. And, they will continue to grow, says Ms. Groulx. There is a demand for it and NWAC can reach many more people virtually than in person.

However, in-person workshops will also begin at NWAC's new Social and Economic Development Centre, in downtown

Gatineau, Que. There will also be specialized courses, which will include up to 10 sessions, "So you can develop the craft in a more significant way," says Ms. Groulx.

"It's about much more than the workshops," she says. "They are just one piece of a much larger plan to help Indigenous women become significant participants of the economy."



**WE WANT TO BECOME A CENTRAL PLACE
WHERE INDIGENOUS WOMEN CAN SELL THEIR
PRODUCTS ... AND BECOME SIGNIFICANT
PARTICIPANTS OF THE ECONOMY.**



- LYNNE GROULX, NWAC'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



THE INDIGENOUS ARTISAN WOMEN'S BUSINESS NETWORK:

A 'LIFE-CHANGER'

THOUSANDS OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE ARTISAN ENTREPRENEURS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY GROWN THEIR BUSINESSES AND SKILLS THANKS TO THE INDIGENOUS ARTISAN WOMEN'S BUSINESS NETWORK.

The Indigenous Women's Business Network: Drawing a Roadmap for the Future, is a project funded by Indigenous Services Canada, and led by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), which brought together artisans and entrepreneurs from across Canada to strengthen skills and provide opportunities for economic growth. The goal was to ignite unrealized or unutilized artistic abilities through workshops, as well as transform microbusinesses into successful entrepreneurship. Alongside this initiative, and contributing to these successes, was the program: #BeTheDrum, which is funded by the Economic Development Agency of Canada.

"Art is a door to community engagement," one participant of the Indigenous Artisan Symposium said.

To establish the Indigenous Artisan Women's Business Network, we built upon what we learned in NWAC's Maker Space Program to gather recommendations and set a roadmap for the creation of this network. NWAC's economic development department held two engagement sessions to collect information: One in-person and one virtually, to identify needs for improvement and how to overcome barriers. NWAC also held a virtual symposium to provide space for Indigenous artists to network, discuss business initiatives, and support participation in domestic trade and international business initiatives.

From there, NWAC developed a roadmap for the network, identifying five next-steps focus areas: networking, workshops and training, mentorship, financial support, and marketing.

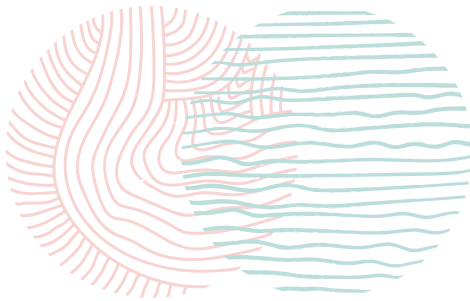
NWAC has leveraged its partners—such as the Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurs, the Businesswomen's Network of the Americas, and the UN Women and the World Indigenous Business Network—to promote and ensure the success of the network and its participating artisans, both in the past and into the future.

The result has been life-changing for thousands of people—not just for Indigenous artists, but also for their families, communities, and even non-Indigenous customers who support their art.

Many participants describe their craft as a way to process and heal from past traumas. With more tools and techniques offered to them through the Indigenous Artisan Women's Business Network, it has given space for more healing and connection.

In this edition of Kci-Niwesq, we spoke with six artists who have benefited from the Indigenous Artisan Women's Business Network offered through NWAC—a doll maker, a painter, a moccasin maker, a sewer, a beader, and a ribbon skirt maker.

THE INDIGENOUS ARTISAN WOMEN'S BUSINESS NETWORK HAS BEEN LIFE-CHANGING FOR THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE—NOT JUST FOR INDIGENOUS ARTISTS, BUT ALSO FOR THEIR FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND EVEN NON-INDIGENOUS CUSTOMERS WHO SUPPORT THEIR ART.



Rose Moses, who grew up apart from her Indigenous roots, has reconnected to her culture through the art of dollmaking. Self-taught, she offers unique teachings with each of her dolls. She teaches dollmaking any chance she can, hoping to reignite a sense of play that was taken from Indigenous children who attended residential schools.

Crystal Semaganis reclaimed her cultural identity by practising Indigenous art, especially painting. She is a Sixties Scoop survivor who has spent a lot of time on her own due to a failed adoption, but has always found healing through her art. Now, she teaches art to share skills and healing with others.

Roberta Anderson, a renowned beader and moccasin maker, has created moccasins for the King and Queen of Bhutan, former Prime Minister Paul Martin, and Sophie Gregoire Trudeau. Despite being forbidden from practising her craft when in residential school, her skills remained intact. "This is one thing they didn't take away from me. Even though I couldn't do it back then, I'm doing it now. And it's part of who I am," she says.

Ingrid Brooks' sewing is bringing her to Paris this fall for the second time, where she will show some of her traditionally inspired designs using natural materials. Sewing is a way for her to connect to her culture and her ancestors. "Gathering the sweet grass, harvesting the birch bark, cleaning up porcupine quills ... those are the same steps my ancestors took," she says.

Niquita Thomas comes from a long line of renowned beaders but still worked hard, over many years, to learn the skill her family is so well known for. Now, she takes pride in teaching others to bead through NWAC workshops in an effort to preserve the ancestral craft.

Winter Aputi Doxtator can appliqué just about anything onto a ribbon skirt. She was a panelist in one of NWAC's Indigenous Artisan Business Network workshops, which was a career-altering experience for her, leading her to become a successful, full-time entrepreneur today.

The network—and its roadmap—is giving Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse artisans like Rose Moses, Crystal Semaganis, Roberta Anderson, Ingrid Brooks, Niquita Thomas and Winter Aputi Doxtator a greater opportunity to network through a centralized artisan hub across Canada and internationally.

As a result of these endeavours, several gatherings—both in person and virtually—are taking place monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, and annually. These gatherings provide continuous learning and mentoring opportunities for Indigenous artisans.

Looking ahead, NWAC will continue to support Indigenous artisans through workshops, training opportunities, networking, and sharing circles at local, regional, national, and international levels.



FOR CRYSTAL SEMAGANIS, EVERY ART PIECE TELLS A STORY

Crystal Semaganis' art can be found on her website and on her social media platforms:

@CrystalSemaganis (Facebook)

@Lil_Cree777 (Twitter)

@seven_wolves (Instagram)



Crystal Semaganis says that being a Sixties Scoop survivor left her without an identity, which is why she feels it's important for her artwork to be distinctly Indigenous.

"WHEN PEOPLE LOOK AT MY ARTWORK, I WANT THEM TO ... KNOW THAT IT WAS DONE BY AN INDIGENOUS WOMAN, OR AN INDIGENOUS PERSON, WHO HAS A STORY TO TELL,"

- MS. SEMAGANIS

Though Crystal Semaganis and Michelle Cameron are, physically, the same person, Ms. Semaganis says their identities are extreme opposites. The latter is her adoptive name, which to her is a constant reminder of a fraudulent identity, a robbed childhood, and the theft of her culture.

"I didn't really have a lot of cultural identity," Ms. Semaganis says. "When I look at my legal name, Michelle Cameron, it doesn't hold a lot of personal value. It's a remnant of a genocidal process of the Sixties Scoop, and also a reminder of a failed adoption," which included sexual and physical abuse.

Crystal Semaganis is her birth name, which she has recently reclaimed.

"I wanted to reclaim who I was originally meant to be, even though it may have been denied to me. ... This is who I was supposed to be, and this is who I want to be," she says.

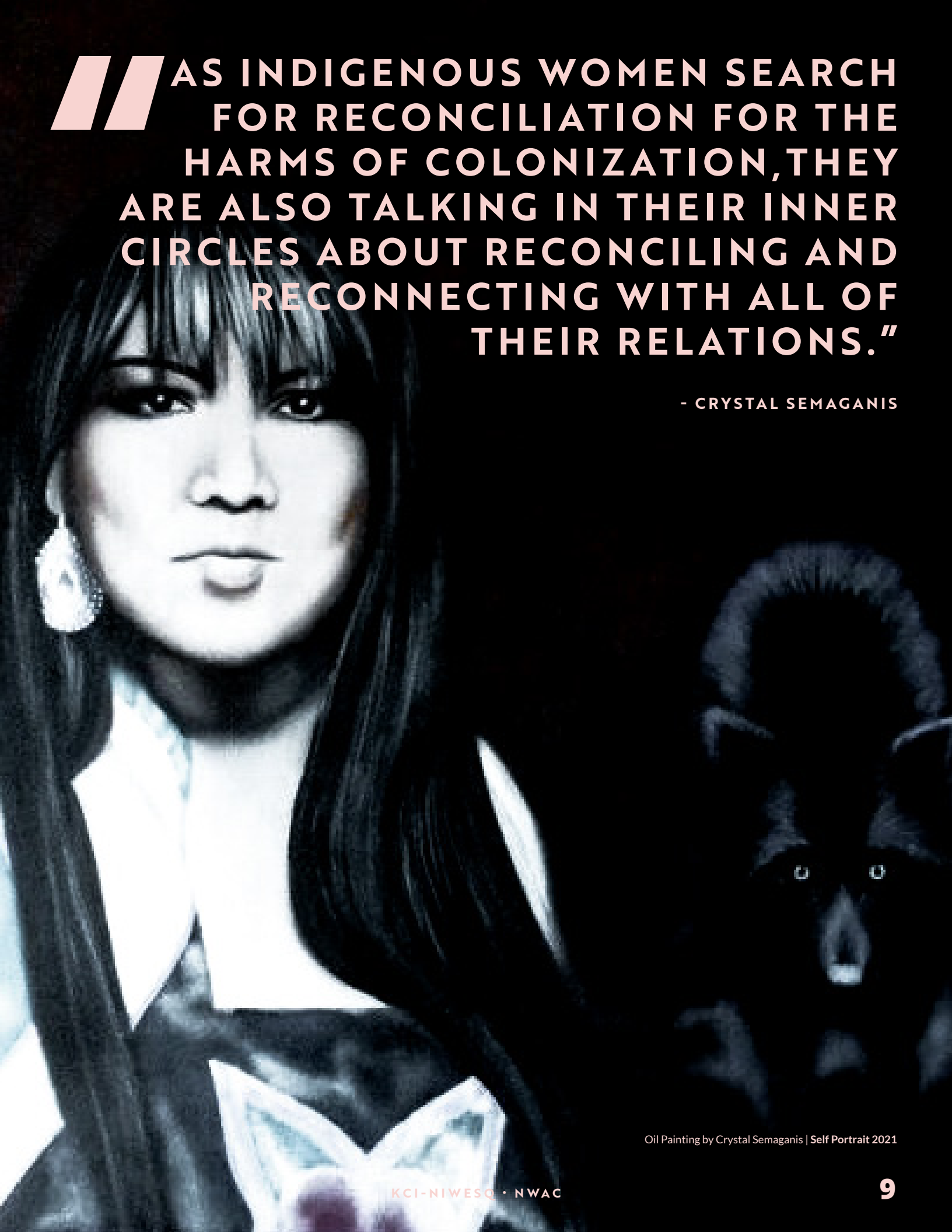
But one unwavering constant in Ms. Semaganis's life since she was a child has been art. An artist of all medias, she expresses herself through paint, beading, pyrographics, photography, sewing, and more.

"Art is one of the gifts that the Creator gave me to navigate life. I didn't realize how special, or how sacred, it was until later in life," Ms. Semaganis says. She describes it as a "transformative gift" from the Creator, which has allowed her to "process" challenges and traumas. She didn't make sense of this realization, or calling, until recently—around the time that she took back her Indigenous name and identity. Even before drawing this connection, she always felt that her art gave her a strong sense of calm, safety, security, and comfort.

When she first took back her name, it was to protect herself, her rights, and reclaim her cultural heritage. However, she found that her creativity, too, experienced an awakening.

"My best work comes from times when I am traumatized, and when I'm feeling something emotionally intense," says Ms. Semaganis, reflecting on the correlations between her creative self and her journey to reconnect with her identity and culture. It's not only helping her process her past, but has also steered her toward her future—guiding her where, and who, to become. "My art was able to do that for me. My art opened doors that I was unable to find myself."

Through art, Ms. Semaganis has reclaimed her identity and reconnected with her biological family and culture. Still, she finds herself in a sort of limbo, orphaned state. Much of her biological family has passed on, while others are not ready to make amends.

A self-portrait by Crystal Semaganis. The artist is a woman with long, dark hair and bangs, wearing a white collared shirt under a dark jacket. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, there is a faint, dark, and somewhat ethereal image of a person's face, possibly a historical or indigenous figure, which adds a layer of depth and cultural context to the portrait. The lighting is soft, highlighting her features against the dark background.

**// AS INDIGENOUS WOMEN SEARCH
FOR RECONCILIATION FOR THE
HARMS OF COLONIZATION, THEY
ARE ALSO TALKING IN THEIR INNER
CIRCLES ABOUT RECONCILING AND
RECONNECTING WITH ALL OF
THEIR RELATIONS."**

- CRYSTAL SEMAGANIS

Oil Painting by Crystal Semaganis | Self Portrait 2021



FOR MS. SEMAGANIS, ART IS THE DEPENDABLE CONSTANT IN HER LIFE.

"I have found my identity," she says. "I don't have access to family. My adoption failed so I don't have my adopted family for support. It's pretty much just me and my art."

Her art has guided her to reconnect with herself, her culture, her heritage, and her family. Through a CBC investigative podcast series Finding Cleo, Ms. Semaganis was able to unravel the heart-wrenching story and death of her sister Cleo, who was one of her six siblings, all of whom were taken as children during the Sixties Scoop.

In recent years, Ms. Semaganis has led artisan workshops through NWAC to help other Indigenous women and gender-diverse people tune into their creative selves. She says it's a process that's both healing for her and for those who participate in the workshops.

"Participating in these workshops provides a lot of sacredness, I think, to the gift of creation that we all share," said Ms. Semaganis. Even though all participants arrive as strangers, there is a common understanding that everyone is carrying trauma from the same lived experiences, which brings people together in a safe and comfortable space to explore themselves through creativity.

"It's a very sacred circle," she added. "It's really important that we support each other. I think NWAC workshops have really done that. They have provided the support for both the instructors, like myself, and the participants."



Oil Painting by Crystal Semaganis | Kehewin Water is Life



I WANTED TO RECLAIM WHO I WAS ORIGINALLY MEANT TO BE, EVEN THROUGH IT MAY HAVE BEEN DENIED TO ME ... THIS IS WHO I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE, AND THIS IS WHO I WANT TO BE.

- CRYSTAL SEMAGANIS



INGRID BROOKS'

JOURNEY TO FASHION'S WORLD STAGE

FROM INDIAN
ISLAND

FIRST NATION IN NEW
BRUNSWICK TO PARIS



Pictured: Ingrid Brooks' fashion

From Indian Island First Nation in New Brunswick to Paris: Ingrid Brooks' Journey to Fashion's World Stage

Ingrid Brooks will be in Paris this fall. It is the second time that the Mi'kmaq designer will show her traditionally inspired designs in France.

Her fashion designs are making a mark at home and abroad, and she is living the life she dreamed of as a young child.

"WHEN IT ALL COMES TOGETHER, AND I SEE IT COMING DOWN THE RUNWAY, I GET GOOSEBUMPS," SAYS MS. BROOKS, A RESIDENT OF INDIAN ISLAND FIRST NATION, NEW BRUNSWICK. "THAT IS OUR MI'KMAQ WEAR, OUR TRADITIONAL DESIGNS. I AM SO PROUD TO REPRESENT MY CULTURE AND TO INSPIRE EVERYONE ELSE TO DO THIS STUFF. IT GOES TO SHOW YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN AND NEVER TOO OLD TO GET OUT THERE AND GET ON THE WORLD STAGE."

Ms. Brooks grew up with an understanding of the fashion trade. Her grandmother and great aunts worked in garment factories in

Waterbury, Connecticut. Her aunt Annie Barlow was a foreman at one of those plants and an expert in pattern making. So, it is natural that Ms. Barlow was the one Ms. Brooks turned to, as a young girl, for advice about making regalia.

"I wanted to learn how to make a jingle dress, so she taught me," says Ms. Brooks. "And then, later on, I wanted to learn how to do dresses and gowns and she really just followed me, step by step, and showed me how to make patterns, how to put in zippers, and what to do with hems."

Many times, her aunt told her that her work was not up to snuff. "She'd look at it and she would say, 'OK, do you want to sell something for \$50? Or do you want to sell something for \$500?'" says Ms. Brooks. "I would say I want to make something for \$500. And she would say 'OK, take it all apart. We're going to start again.' It was a nice way of telling me you're going to do it over."

Those instructions from her aunt went on for many years. Even now, Ms. Brooks

consults her aunt when she is trying out a new pattern.

"I spend the whole day sewing, then I call her over and she'll say: 'You did it just right.' And then she'll tell me: 'You must have had a good teacher.'"

Ms. Brooks' primary interests have always been artistic. When she was young, she took courses in basketry and porcupine-quill art and, for a year, studied photography and Native studies at the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design, in Fredericton. Even then, she says, "I would kind of pop into the fashion section, and I'd be like, 'Wow, I would really like to learn that.'"

"I noticed there were no Mi'kmaq fashion designers," says Ms. Brooks. "I would get online, and I would see designers from Arizona, New Mexico, out west in Saskatchewan, Alberta. I saw Vancouver designers and then Ontario designers. But, none from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or PEI. I was like: 'Where's ours? Nobody's representing us.'"



So, she learned how to appliqué beads and started to craft Mi'Kmaq designs like the double-curved, eight-point star, which she attached to regalia and then to gowns and dresses.

In 2018, Ms. Brooks successfully applied to show her creations at Indigenous Fashion Week in Toronto. She borrowed back some of her dresses from clients to ensure that she could put on a good display. Then she and two friends, who served as her models, jumped in her SUV and headed east.

All of the big names in Indigenous fashion design in Canada were there, says Ms. Brooks. "I sat with Helen Oro. She's from Saskatoon. And I asked her every question, and she gave me all my tips, what to do, how to collaborate."

A year later, Ms. Brooks was invited to attend Indigenous Fashion Week in Paris where her designs were included in a show at the Eiffel Tower.

"That was a beautiful trip," she says. "I met Indigenous designers from Australia, New Zealand, United States, New Mexico, Arizona, Alberta, Vancouver, Saskatchewan, everywhere ... it was two

nights up there in the Eiffel Tower and that was a lot of fun. And we went all over Paris. It was just a dream trip for everyone."

Upon her return, Ms. Brooks enrolled at a private sewing school in Moncton to hone her craft.

In the meantime, she was continuing the porcupine-quill art that she had learned as a young woman, and for which she had become well known. When her models wear her evening gowns, they often have her porcupine-quill earrings dangling from their ears.

"I like doing it because I'm doing the same work my ancestors did," says Ms. Brooks. "Gathering the sweet grass, harvesting the birch bark, cleaning up porcupine quills, those are the same steps my ancestors took."

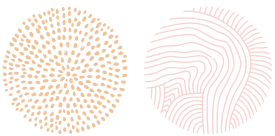
A large set of her porcupine-quill jewellery is on display at the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine. She also designed a dress for the Grammy Awards for mezzo-soprano vocalist Rhonda Head.

Ms. Brooks also recently completed work with two other artists to recreate a 200-year-old Mi'Kmaq coat, which will

hang in the Metepenagiag Heritage Park in Red Bank, N.B. The original, from the early 1840s, is on display at the Canadian Museum of National History, in Gatineau, Que.

But most of her time is devoted to creating lavish evening wear and prom dresses that incorporate traditional Mi'Kmaq designs. And she is preparing to return to France in the fall for a second show in Paris.

"I'm really into the clothing because I'm hoping it's going to inspire other young Mi'Kmaq women to get into the fashion world," says Ms. Brooks. "I had to leave fashion school, but I still found a way to learn. I learned from the best workers—my aunt and the teachers at the private school in Moncton. I came back and I learned how to do it."



//
I'M DOING THE SAME WORK MY ANCESTORS DID.
GATHERING THE SWEET GRASS, HARVESTING THE BIRCH
BARK, CLEANING UP PORCUPINE QUILLS, THOSE ARE THE
SAME STEPS MY ANCESTORS TOOK. //

- INGRID BROOKS



Pictured: Ingrid Brooks' fashion



NIQUITA THOMAS:
IF YOU WANT SOMETHING, YOU
HAVE TO WORK FOR IT

ONE BEAD AT A TIME

PRESERVING THE ANCESTRALCRAFT OF BEADWORKING

NIQUITA THOMAS

PRESERVING THE ANCESTRAL CRAFT OF BEADWORKING ... **ONE BEAD AT A TIME**

If you want something, you have to work for it—and that's exactly what Niquita Thomas did to acquire her skill of beadworking.

Ms. Thomas comes from a long line of beaders. She is a great-niece to award-winning beader Samuel Thomas, a great-granddaughter to renowned beader Lorna Thomas-Hill—and both her grandmother and aunt became successful bead workers—so one might assume that beading would come naturally for Ms. Thomas. But that wasn't the case.

She took an Indigenous beading workshop during her post-secondary studies in Indigenous Community Support Worker. She

described herself as “horrible” in the class, having taken nearly the whole two-hour session just to thread her needle.

But she didn't let that stop her. If anything, the challenge only ignited her determination to learn the skill even more.

“You can grow your skills. You can do tutorials and you can learn it. We didn't come into this world knowing everything, we had to learn it,” Ms. Thomas says.

A couple years ago, Ms. Thomas spent countless hours visiting her grandmother in

hospital, who was unwell leading up to her passing.

“She was still beading at the hospital ... so I'd go there, and we'd bead together, me and my aunt and grandma. We were just spending time together, doing what my grandma enjoys doing. Then it became a hobby for me, too,” Ms. Thomas says.

She says it's “very fulfilling” being able to now provide for herself through beading—a craft that has been central in her family for generations.

“It's something that connects me to culture and heritage through Shared Knowledge and teachings,” Ms. Thomas says.

Her long road to discovering her gifts through craft ironically parallels the widespread resurgence of Indigenous generations of bead workers who are also “reviving their patterns.” It's slow, hard work that is gaining momentum and making an impact.

Ms. Thomas says she has friends studying patterns in museums to help bring lost bead knowledge back to Indigenous culture.

“THESE INSTITUTIONS, SCHOOLS, MUSEUMS, ALL THESE PLACES HOLD OUR ARTIFACTS OF ART, BUT THEY [INDIGENOUS BEAD WORKERS] ARE TAKING IT BACK. THEY MAY NOT BE TAKING IT BACK PHYSICALLY, BUT THEY'RE WORKING ON THAT.”

Ms. Thomas says everyone can do their part in sharing bead knowledge to bring back the craft, even if you don't consider yourself skillful.

“Once you learn a skill—you may not be the best at it—you can either choose to keep moving forward with it, or you can share that knowledge with someone else,” she said.



Photo by: Amanda Saudino | Magic Girl Photography
Pictured: Niquita Thomas

Ms. Thomas is a Lower Cayuga woman from Six Nations of the Grand River. She was born and raised in Ottawa and works to use Indigenous teachings and knowledge to bring healing to others. One way she has done this was through the Indigenous Women's Artisan Business Symposium where she participated as a speaker. She has also led two virtual workshops for NWAC on traditional beading with porcupine quills.

In each of these opportunities to share knowledge and inspire others, Ms. Thomas encouraged participants not to focus on perfecting their craft, but to focus on being present and connect to their culture. For some, that may include beading a product; for others, that may mean spectating and retaining knowledge for another purpose.

"Take the supplies and knowledge and share it with someone," Ms. Thomas says, who speaks from first-hand experience having come to trust the sometimes slow process of learning a new skill. For some, a cultural connection must come before the skill can grow; for others, the skill comes easy. Ms. Thomas says it's important not to rush, or force, the creative process.

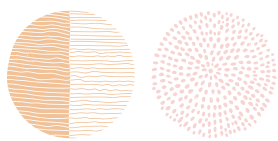
Ms. Thomas can be found online on Instagram, @qui.beads.



Beadwork Photos by: Niquita Thomas

"YOU CAN GROW YOUR SKILLS. YOU CAN DO TUTORIALS
AND YOU CAN LEARN IT. WE DIDN'T COME INTO THIS
WORLD KNOWING EVERYTHING, WE HAD TO LEARN IT,"

NIQUITA THOMAS



WINTER APUTI DOXTATOR

GROWTH THROUGH GRIT:

RIBBON SKIRT MAKER SHARES
HER JOURNEY INTO ENTRE-
PRENEURSHIP



Pictured: Winter Aputi Doxtator



GROWTH THROUGH GRIT:

RIBBON SKIRT MAKER SHARES HER JOURNEY INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

If there was one word to describe ribbon skirt maker Winter Aputi Doxtator, it would be Growth.

Growth in creating from a place of trauma to a place of balanced beauty; growth from sewing as a hobby to sewing to provide an income; and, finally, growth from a pastime, side-gig, to becoming a successful, full-time, entrepreneur and businesswoman.

Ms. Doxtator learned the basics of sewing before many kids are even potty-trained. At just two years old, she was already practising threading plastic needles and beading on mesh materials purchased from the dollar store. Between the ages of eight and 12, she and her brother started sewing with purpose to create outfits and head pieces to wear dancing in powwows. And now, about 20 years later, she is making a career out of sewing.

As children, sewing was a part of “growing up,” Ms. Doxtator said. “It was good for development.” And when they were able to create their own powwow pieces, it became a “two birds, one stone” scenario.

Later in life, when processing infertility and a miscarriage, sewing became therapeutic. She was diagnosed with endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome and was told that she would never be able to carry a child to term.

“I was sewing, really, just to get up and do something instead of just being in bed,” says Ms. Doxtator. But creating was never something to take the place of, or suppress, her trauma. Sewing was, and still is, a tool to help her feel it, embrace it, and grow through it. “That trauma is present and you have to attend to it as much as you can.”

THROUGH GRIEF AND TRAUMA, SHE HONED HER SKILLS FOR MAKING RIBBON SKIRTS, WHICH SHE IS MOST KNOWN FOR TODAY. CREATING BECAME A WAY TO EXPRESS HERSELF WHEN SHE COULDN'T FIND THE WORDS.

“There’s a lot of different teachings, backgrounds, stories, and legends, and they’re all so beautiful. Not all of them are able to be put into words though,” says Doxtator. She made a water and walleye ribbon skirt as an expression of gratitude she felt for the skill of fishing, which occupied much of her

time during her healing with depression. She felt powerfully attached to the skirt, but never wore it. She didn’t understand what the purpose of the skirt was until she met a fisherman’s widow.

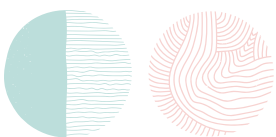
“There was a woman whose husband of 20 years had passed away. They always went fishing together. I got the skirt out and it fit her perfectly. And I was like, ‘Perfect. This is yours. It was made for you,’” Doxtator says. “She doesn’t speak English, so it was the perfect form of expression.”

With time, and healing, came two successful, full-term babies for Doxtator and her husband. And, through that, her sewing also grew with her.



Winter Aputi Doxtator, and her work, can be found on Instagram: [@thisherewintergear](https://www.instagram.com/thisherewintergear).

Pictured: Winter Aputi Doxtator



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THERE'S A LOT OF DIFFERENT TEACHINGS, BACKGROUNDS, STORIES, AND LEGENDS, AND THEY'RE ALL SO BEAUTIFUL. AND NOT ALL OF THEM ARE ABLE TO BE PUT INTO WORDS.

- WINTER APUTI DOXTATOR

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"The way I sew now comes from a place of victory and conviction and just happiness rather than the way things were before," she says.

From there, Ms. Doxtator was invited to speak as a panelist at one of NWAC's Indigenous Artisan Business Network workshops, which she says was another career-altering experience for her. She describes it as both "exciting" and "scary" and certainly something that took her outside of her comfort zone.

"People within my own circle were like, 'I never knew you were a speaker' and I was like, 'Well, I never had a chance to speak before,'" says Ms. Doxtator. She said the experience solidified her presence as a businesswoman and allowed her to speak on "some really big topics" she hadn't publicly or professionally talked about before.

"I never had a platform where I could talk about my business, or how I got started, or what makes it tick, or anything like that," she said. "It was really a big learning curve for my little league business. But I'm super happy to have had it happen."

She used the space as a panelist to talk about the challenges she has faced being a young, female, Indigenous entrepreneur, all while overcoming personal triumphs and traumas. She also spoke of her inspirations and visions for her business's future.

Her story and transparency touched many others, too, because after speaking as a panelist her business grew significantly. "I really started kind of going viral. I had a lot of orders coming in. A week and a half passed, and I was like, 'Oh, man, I'm a business now! There's no beating around the bush anymore,'" she said.

Today, she proudly sews full-time as a registered business—something she never imagined would happen when she thinks back to her days as a child, sitting in her mother's kitchen, sewing for powwows with a plastic training needle.



Ribbon Skirt by Winter Aputi Doxtator



ROBERTA ANDERSON

THE TRIUMPH

CANADA'S BEST-KNOWN BEADER,
A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR

Beadwork by: Roberta Anderson

THE TRIUMPH OF CANADA'S BEST-KNOWN BEADER, A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVOR

Roberta Anderson was not allowed to do her beadwork when she was a student at the Gordon's Residential School in Saskatchewan.

Today, as she turns 60, she says beading is her safe place. "It helps me realize who I am and not what was taken from me."

Mrs. Anderson, a Cree from George Gordon First Nation, is one of the best-known beadworkers in Canada.

She has made moccasins for the first child of the King and Queen of Bhutan. She has beaded a gown that was worn by a guest at a White House Christmas dinner. She has done work for Sophie Gregoire Trudeau and the daughter of former prime minister Paul Martin.

Her beadwork was featured as part of a Fido Mobile reconciliation campaign. She created a beaded medallion for the Toronto Blue Jays—work that earned her a special seat at a home game.

She collaborated with Manitobah Mukluks,—and Swarovski Crystal to create a collection of mukluks that quickly sold out.

It is a craft Mrs. Anderson learned from her mother, who made medallions, and from her kokum, who beaded florals onto velour pillow covers.

But, beading was not permitted at Gordon's, which was the last federally funded residential school to close its doors.

"THEY TOOK EVERYTHING FROM US," SAYS MRS. ANDERSON. "THEY TRIED TO TAKE OUR IDENTITY, OUR LANGUAGE, OUR CULTURE, OUR PRACTICES. BUT THIS IS ONE THING THEY DIDN'T TAKE AWAY FROM ME. EVEN THOUGH I COULDN'T DO IT BACK THEN, I'M DOING IT NOW. AND IT'S PART OF WHO I AM."

It took many years for Mrs. Anderson to become a full-time beadwork artist. Traumas of the residential school resurfaced time and again.

"It was brutal. I won't lie," she says. "I was an alcoholic. I was a drug addict. I was trying to deal with everything that happened in my life. But, at some point, you have to take back control of who you are."

Shortly after she was married, Mrs. Anderson and her new husband visited her sister, who lived out west.

"She had been bead working and my husband said: 'Do you know how to do this?'" says Mrs. Anderson. "I said: 'Yeah.' He says: 'Why don't you do it?' I said: 'Because I don't have the stuff.'"

So, he built her a craft room that "is to die for."

"My ex-mother-in-law made my first pair of mukluks for me when I met my ex-husband," says Mrs. Anderson. "She made me a pair for Christmas, and they lasted me five years. I said I was going to learn how to do that. And I sat and watched her. It took me a while to get to the point where I knew what I was doing."

Her mother-in-law's beadwork inspired Mrs. Anderson's own interest in floral patterns. Geometrics might be easier, she says, but each geometric shape has meaning and, put together on the back of a garment, they are intended to

tell a story. Because Mrs. Anderson does not know the meaning of the shapes, she says she does not feel right about incorporating them into her designs.

In addition to moccasins and mukluks, she makes gowns, jackets, and ribbon skirts, as well as earrings, bracelets, cuffs, chokers, purses, wallets, and credit-card holders.

"If I see something and it can be made, I'll come home and I'll figure it out," says Mrs. Anderson.

Although she beads in all colours, she favours the traditional reds, blues, whites, and blacks of Cree artisans. And the leaves of her floral patterns are usually green.

She does this intricate work despite being blind in one eye as a result of a childhood accident.

The designs come to her gradually, she says.

"Normally I have to sleep on it," says Ms. Anderson. "A lot of times I have a hard time



Pictured: Roberta Anderson

sleeping because these designs are going through my head. I don't want to sleep because the next design is in my head and I know if I lose it, I'm not going to get it done. So, then I get back up again and I'm drawing it out."

Some days she is in her craft room from 5 a.m. until she can't see anymore.

"There's days that I'm really tired but I know I can finish if I don't quit," says Mrs. Anderson. "And I'll sit there until it's done. And then I crash."

After fifty years of beading, and some huge successes, she is slowing down.

"I still do it. But I'm careful about what orders I take now," she says.

Mrs. Anderson is currently working on a fully beaded cape for an unnamed client, which will take her two years to complete. And, after a hiatus prompted by COVID-19, she is starting to think about resuming the in-person classes she taught to budding artisans in Ottawa, where she has lived for more than 30 years.

She is also teaching her daughters and granddaughters how to do this work.

Mrs. Anderson says she loves it when people tell her they spot her distinctive beading style on clothing or jewellery.

"As a beadwork artist, that's what you strive for. You want your stuff to be recognized by other people," she says. And, as a survivor of one of the most tragic chapters of Canadian history, "I want to be remembered for my beadwork, not for what the residential school did to me."



"AS A BEADWORK ARTIST, YOU WANT YOUR STUFF TO BE RECOGNIZED BY OTHER PEOPLE. AND, AS A SURVIVOR OF ONE OF THE MOST TRAGIC CHAPTERS OF CANADIAN HISTORY, I WANT TO BE REMEMBERED FOR MY BEADWORK, NOT FOR WHAT THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL DID TO ME."

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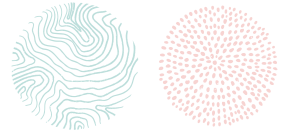


DOLLMAKER ROSE MOSES

THE HEALING POWER OF
INDIGENOUS DOLLS

Dolls by: Rose Moses

The Healing Power OF INDIGENOUS DOLLS



DOLLMAKER ROSE MOSES SAYS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS TOOK AWAY SO MUCH MORE THAN COULD POSSIBLY BE MEASURED, AND ONE OVERLOOKED ASPECT IS JOYFUL PLAY.

“When residential schools ripped everything away from us, that included the sense of play. That part has been hard to recover—that inner child, that sense of playing and laughing

and the joy that goes with that childhood—because it got ripped away. I think that’s hard to recover,” Ms. Moses says.

It’s for these reasons that Ms. Moses believes Indigenous doll makers are so scarce. While other Indigenous traditions are making a comeback, Indigenous dolls are still hard to come by.

“We’ve seen powwows come back again, dances come back, languages fighting to

come back, but doll-making has been so slow to come back and I’m not sure why. It’s such a vital part of the culture,” says Ms. Moses.

For Ms. Moses, who grew up not knowing her Indigenous culture, Indigenous dolls were her first introduction to her culture—and her true self.

After jumping from foster home to foster home, and then finding her own way to survive at the age of 16, Ms. Moses ended up in Toronto in her early 20s, which is where she first stumbled upon a piece of her culture.

“Every Saturday I had the habit of reading the Toronto Star. There was a section there on crafting and I saw this woman from Six Nations, and she made a ‘No Face Corn Husk’ doll. Oh my God, I couldn’t believe it, I was so excited because I had never, ever seen anything Native, and ... that just blew my mind,” Ms. Moses says.

She cut out the article and it stuck with her—both physically and spiritually. She still has the delicate, tarnished newspaper, 40 years later, which she keeps as a reminder of her first curiosities and desires for her culture.

“I had this article of this no face doll and I remember I was just so enthralled by it. I thought, ‘Oh my God, imagine making dolls. Imagine making Native dolls,’” she says.

“It’s all yellow and brown and survived me getting married, unmarried, having a baby. It survived so many things. And the funny part about this article is that the woman who wrote it now lives down the road from me,” Ms. Moses says, reflecting on the irony of connections.

For a number of years, the newspaper article collected dust, while Ms. Moses was “dealing with life.” But every few years, it would resurface for her.



Pictured: Rose Moses

ROSE MOSES MAKES MANY TYPES OF DOLLS, SUCH AS MOTHER EARTH DOLLS, GOOD MEDICINE DOLLS, GRANDMOTHER MOON TIME DOLLS, JINGLE DRESS DOLLS, AND MORE.

Eventually, she came across an Indigenous puppet and purchased it so she could get a physical feel for what sparked her curiosity from that newspaper page so many years ago.

"I was immediately drawn to it," Ms. Moses says. "I bought it and I brought it home. I spent some time just staring at it and wondering if I could make a better puppet. So, I tore it apart, little by little, and then I put it back together again. I taught myself to do it."

And while she was tearing apart and resewing the puppet, Ms. Moses was metaphorically breaking away from her past and being made whole again through a revived connection to her culture.

"I think that when residential schools came, everything was out of balance. For me, to do the doll-making now is a way for me to try to make myself be back in balance again," Ms. Moses says. "Because you're in pieces from all that trauma."

It's no surprise that while Ms. Moses was teaching herself how to make Indigenous dolls, she was also connecting to her heritage on a deeper level, since art and creative expression are so important in Indigenous culture.

"Aboriginal women have always been creating and making things. We didn't call it that. We didn't call it art back then; we were just doing it. ... We didn't have studios back then, we just had life," Ms. Moses says, adding that art came through them as a form of expression and necessity. "Everything was adorned in an art. It was just part of the culture. It wasn't separate at all."

Ms. Moses' dolls have helped many people heal, just as the process has been healing for herself. She says it is not unusual to see Grandmothers have tears when they hold an Indigenous doll for the first time.

"It can be pretty heavy at times, but also very healing too," says Ms. Moses, adding that many have either not held a doll since

they were a child, or have never, ever held an Indigenous doll.

"Grandmothers were the ones who made the dolls for their little granddaughters. Sometimes I think about the little girls who went to residential schools, and I wonder if they had a little doll with them. I wonder where that doll is now."

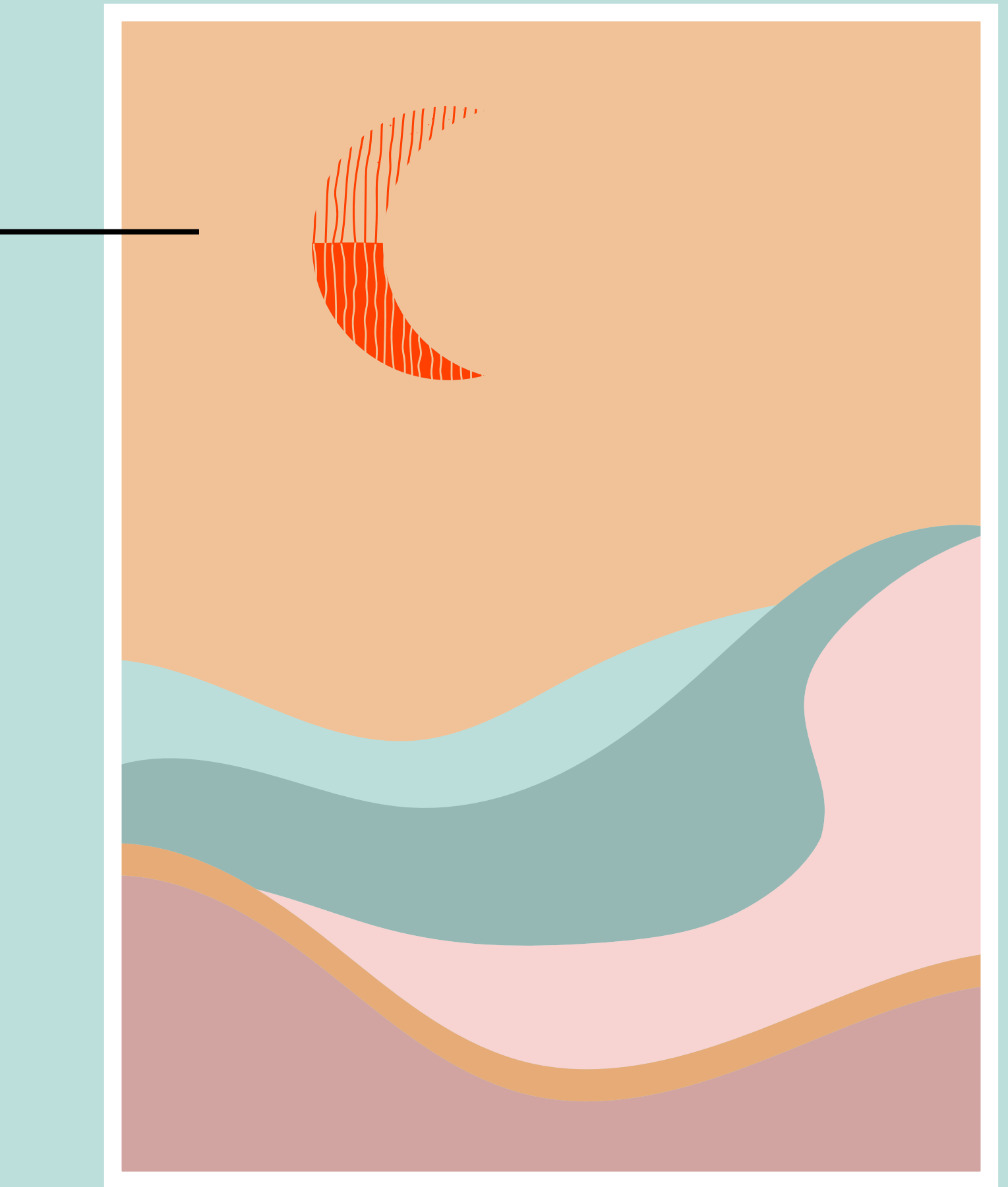


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KCI-NIWESQ

is a monthly magazine of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). Its objective is to highlight the work of the organization and to tell the stories of the Indigenous women of Canada.

NWAC, which was founded in 1974, is a national Indigenous organization representing First Nations (on and off reserve, with status and without), Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and gender-diverse people in Canada. Its goal is to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural, and political well-being of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian society.

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