

ᑭᓴᓴᑦᑭᓴᓴᑦ ᑭᓴᓴᑦᑭᓴᓴᑦ *kîsitêpowin sâkâhikan* *Cooking Lake*

We chose to nominate ᑭᓴᓂᐱᑦᑐᓄᓐ ᓇᓕᓐᓴᓐᓴᓐᓴᓐ *kísitêpowin sâkâhikan Cooking Lake* because of it's many compelling attributes but also because of the stories it tells. Shillinglaw has strong personal memories of playing in the lake shore and foraging for berries there with her family as a child. These shores have changed significantly since that time and the artist is determined to further her research into the affects of climate change on her ancestral home. This wall work is one of four mixed media panels exhibited at the Alberta Craft Council Discovery Gallery in May 2022. This number of panels echoes the Medicine Wheel, an important symbol encompassing the four seasons, cardinal directions, elements, stages of life, and aspects of the individual: mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The metaphor of the Medicine Wheel is used in many ways to teach several things, including interdependence and balance.

Before developing this body of work, for her exhibition ᑕᓴᐅ ᓇᓇᓂᐱ *miyotamon nananis - it is a good road in all directions*, Heather Shillinglaw listened to stories of her mother, elder Shirley Norris-Shillinglaw from the Le Goff Indian Reserve with the Cold Lake First Nations. Norris-Shillinglaw provided teachings of the creation story: ᑭᓂᓯᓴᓂ ᑭᓯᓵᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂᓴᓂ Ministik Mihkinâhk - turtle island Nehiyaw cahkipewasinahikewin. This statement echoes a glimpse of future works;

"I believe land is like us: connected conceptually to the land, our bodies & mind are like neurons with electrical pulses. The flower stems and leaves connecting, ghost rivers and lakes interweaving the North Saskatchewan River. With the eagle eye view stitched into deer hide, paint, ribbons, fabrics, blending hand beading, yarn tufting, and thread painting, I assemble them to encourage us to remember, remember, remember... the land as it once was and my ancestors and how they lived within the landscape." H.S.

Making the works for this exhibition, Shillinglaw began to link her objects with her mother, familial ancestral harvesting within the landscape, and ethnobotanical knowledge; sharing how the ancestors survived the bush, and linking to the turtle island theorem. Cultural & intellectual property, such as recipes, teaching, preparation of medicines etc... travel through stories, and stories preserve the culture, honouring the collective ancestral memory. Shillinglaw's inquiry began from the stories of the her mother and then led to additional layers of research. She connected with her friend Ruth McConnell, former assistant curator of ethnology with the Royal Alberta Museum, to research the ethnology & genealogy of Dene papers. This aided the navigation of her family's recorded history, of where they lived, where they traveled and where they

crossed the landscape to harvest for food sources, economy, scrip, and land squatting. Some mysteries were resolved and for the most part the recorded history matched her mother's stories. Shillinglaw's archival research took her to the Alberta Archives, Hudson Bay Archives, and the City of Edmonton Archives. The multiple research aids examined, included arial photographs and maps showing the "trade routes" referred to as "Old Indian trails". These routes and family harvesting sites were highlighted in red lines throughout the landscape's panels. Comparing these multiple resources became a wholistic way of looking at the land. She took in other perspectives of the land on foot and in the sky by helicopter. Her goals were to envision the landscapes from eagle-eye perspectives and to recreate the landscapes through time. Through these idyllic drawings, she recognized the disappearing lakes, the ghosts of rivers, creeks, and ponds sewn in white fabrics and ribbons.

The disappearing shorelines of Cooking Lake are depicted in her nominated work ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ *kîsitêpowin sâkâhikan - Cooking Lake*. This shoreline, like many others, has receded greatly since the time of her childhood experiences foraging with her family members and playing in the waters. Shillinglaw wondered if this was the result of climate change and or colonization. She wanted to know, where did all the water go? And what is happening to the land, animals, and plant life? Shillinglaw has incorporated the words of respected, celebrated, poet, storyteller and Metis elder Marylin Dumont, into ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ *kîsitêpowin sâkâhikan Cooking Lake* by stitching Dumont's words into her depiction of the lake. She chose the poem 'memory' to mark her work in beads. The water imagery in both the poem and the panel convey the messages of this work beautifully, shifting memories, retreating and advancing waterlines, childhood terrain, water as a material of origins, holding and abiding.

memory	this water that moves	sighing within us
	this sight trailing back	like our wake
	what is left behind	abiding
	in this water where all is born	contained
memory	this place we look back as time	dreamt
	and pull forward now	retrieved
memory	this place we can mend	over and over

As she met with Dumont and the two women talked together about their creative work, Shillinglaw came to see that their practices of writing and art making and their origin-messages; how each sees their ancestral landscapes, were shared goals. She felt that

this added another layer and dynamic for the viewer to understand the panels in ㄱㄴ ㄷㄹ **miyotamon nananis- it is a good road in all directions** and asked Dumont's permission to include her words into the works. The research incorporated the poetry of Dumont as another form of investigation.

As Shillinglaw consulted with elders Shirley Norris-Shillinglaw, Hazel McKennitt, Marilyn Dumont, she also explored the connection to Nindis – the belly button in Ojibway / ᑎᓄᓂᓴᓐ mitisiy and the importance of working with women. Considering the connection to maternal home fires, and the yellow ochre in our soil, Shillinglaw used this yellow colour, similar to soil, in the elk suede hide to mirror the amber embers in fire.

ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ *kísitêpowinsâkâhikan* *Cooking Lake* is one of the first four panels in this series which Shillinglaw is expanding. The ongoing series of wall works will be included in upcoming exhibitions taking place at Mary E. Black Gallery, Centre for Craft Nova Scotia in summer of 2023, Arts and Heritage Foundation; Art Gallery of St Albert fall of 2023 and the McMullen Art gallery at the Friends of University of Alberta Hospitals in 2024. For her research and the time to make the works, Shillinglaw received funding from The Canada Council for the Arts - Creating, Knowing and Sharing: The Arts and Cultures of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, Short-Term Projects, and The Edmonton Arts Council - Equity & Access in the Arts - Stream 3 - Major Artist-Driven Projects.

In *Īḥḥ'ḏḥ' kīsītēpowin sâkâhikan Cooking Lake* the shrinking shorelines are graphically depicted by the spare, radiating contours of the lake perimeter and the receding water rings. The trails used to traverse the landscape are depicted in red, like veiny lifelines, and the surrounding vegetation is put together with gathered and richly fabricated scraps of quilting fabric, yarn, beads and threads all stitched on to a plain piece of hide stretched on the gallery wall. The interior of the lake holds Marilyn Dumont's poem, memory. The work could be a map to show the way back in time. It is an arial view showing a large, distant area but also lavishly detailed for intimate, proximal viewing. Like all maps it appeals to the curious and makes sense of unfamiliar territory, reducing it's intimidating size to something manageable and human scaled. The resulting artwork is hauntingly *more* than three dimensional, imbued with poetry, personal and collective memories, stacked in local colonial and pre-colonial history. Shillinglaw's layers of research, documentation, stories, poems, fabric and beads are in a way like the sediment of earth and debris left behind by time and the occupants of this landscape, slowly built up and built into a crusty terroir.

For us, stories are the way forward and the way back. Through stories we learn and remember how to be human. ᐅᓯᕐᕈᖅᓴᖅ ᑭᓲᓂᓱᓄᓂᓐ ᑭᓲᓂᓱᓄᓂᓐ *kîsitêpowin sâkâhikan Cooking Lake* tells a story that is relatable to many - childhood memories, but also contains markers of a deeper more expansive history and knowledge. It seems fitting to nominate this work for the powerful story it tells and contains.

1. Dumont, Marilyn. "memory." *that tongued belonging*, edited by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, Kegedonce Press, 2012, pg. 39.