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Cover art by
Heather Shillinglaw
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MEET THE COVER ARTIST

INTRODUCING COVER ARTIST

HEATHER SHILLINGLAWwww.heathershillinglaw.com

Heather Shillinglaw is a mixed-media artist who uses art collage to explain her familial oral histories and storytelling within her work. She is an Appetogasan, her ancestors were Newyhin/Cree, Dene/Chipewyan, Salteaux/Ojibwe and Scots/French. She was born in Daysland, AB, and grew up near Cooking Lake, AB.

In 2009, Heather was invited to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to talk about how plants are culture. She explained how art can refine a deeper meaning of the natural world through using mixed mediums of paint and collage methods. The Canadian Ambassador to Argentina sponsored Heather's travel to Mendoza, Argentina, to meet anthropologist Olga Rodriguez of Universidad Nacional de San Juan and Universidad Nacional de Cuyo. Heather toured villages and saw how traditional indigenous art practice used plants as a method to create art, thereby providing sustainability. Later that year, in the Amazon jungle of Paraguay, Heather worked with a medicine woman, Inocencia Rivera, who protects all residents in her village with the use of plants, trees and natural medicines. Communication was clear even though translation was needed for English to Spanish, and then Inocencia's native tongue of Tupi-Guarani. Of the experience, Shillinglaw says:

(Inocencia) offered her medicine basket while examining and talking about healing plants... we both understood each other without the translations. I think it was because in our hearts we spoke from the same place, and that it felt like she was speaking to her Nohkom (grandmother from long ago, great grandmother in Newyhin/Cree). After this experience I began creating panels for Nohkoms Quilt.

In 2016, when traveling to the *Budapest Environmental Exhibition* in association with the Hungarian National Art Gallery, Heather's philosophy was born: Metis Ecological Arts Message (MEAM). When teaching or sharing her art, Heather progressively shares how to create messages about reducing the environmental footprint.



Nohkoms Quilt with Heather Shillinglaw pictured bottom, centre.

The MEAM collaged into each panel of *Nohkoms Quilt* has an antique toy (1960s Cowboys and Indian toy) woven in as a message to explain how the 60s scoop changed Heather's family in their environment, both physically and culturally. Heather's works speak to residential schools, how integral healing plants are, how they can heal family and others from within and are created to help remember what used to be commonly known. The toy also hints at how the medicine is used and the environmental concerns of the plant. This series is also inspired from the traditional harvesting ground of the plants Heather's mother remembers harvesting and/or collecting when she was young with her kookum (grandmother). This land—now lost to the Cold Lake First Nations—is currently known as the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range. Both series of Heather's work, *Nohkoms Quilt* and *Seeds from the Past...*, are created using her ongoing land-based learning. Principal

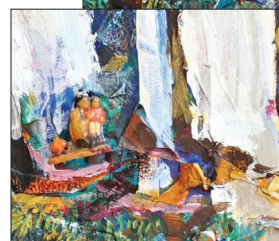


Moove Over Tiger Lily with cow toy detail inset

to these teachings is Heather's mother, elder Shirley Norris Shillinglaw from the LeGoff Indian Reserve, inclusive in knowledge, keepers/elders and the sweat lodge. Heather says of her work on *Seeds from the past...* series:

"...within, the stitchery consoled my soul of the change of land with the desire to link my ancestors through the bead work. In this series titled, Seeds from the Past..., through sewing I imagine the seed beads are how the land connects me to the past and in wonder, to preserve their memory. Art has a voice and lives on, activating the past, present and future to preserve our culture and our land."

Some of Heather's work can be found in commercial galleries, Rowles and Company Gallery in Edmonton and Alberta Gallery of Art - Art and Rental Sales. ♥



Healing a Family - Ghostpipe with Indigenous family toy detail inset