

“Best Work is 6 Feet Under, Ceremony in the Dirt”

By

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Abstract

The importance of the sacrifices in artistic creation, highlighting the deep emotional and spiritual journey involved reflects on the balance between personal loss and the fulfillment of contributing to others' lives through reflection of journey moccasin bundle making. The exploration of cultural identity, spirituality, and personal growth, guided by ancestral connections and the mentorship of seeking knowledge from outside sources while embracing one's own heritage (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990) and research preparations (Kovach, 2021, 56 - 57) is profound. An ancient practice symbolizing sacrifice, transformation, and data collection through moccasin bundle makers approach in beadwork uses sources of strength and inspiration in creative endeavors. Through beadwork, and spiritual practices, they express their full identity and affirm their place in the world, guided by the teachings of ancestral knowledge (Walker, 1982, 107). The creative process is a continuous cycle of reflection and opportunities for growth. It navigates a path and ultimately decides what practices will serve the development of spiritual journey moccasin bundles. The journey moccasin bundle maker's work is a profound intersection of personal and cultural history, spiritual purpose, and emotional resonance, with a commitment to supporting others and honoring traditional practices of beadwork. The exchange is a multifaceted process involving spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional elements, deeply rooted in tradition and respect for ancestral knowledge. It culminates in a meaningful connection between the journey moccasin bundle maker, the journey moccasin bundle, and the journey moccasin bundle keeper (Robertson et al., 2024, 147, figure 7.9).

Acknowledgments

The greatest acknowledgement is to the Creator of life, thank you for giving me this life and I am forever grateful for giving me the ability to make and support others through the work created.

Thank you to scholarship from Indspire and Delaney Family for your financial support during my pursuit in higher education.

Dedication

Deepest dedication to the Creator of life, thank you as you are the real journey moccasin bundle maker of life through all creation and I get to be the needle and thread, together we weave stories for others to receive and pray with.

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Paulete Poitras

***Beverly Poitras, The Trade*, 2023**

Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins

13 $\frac{3}{8}$ ' x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ ' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



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Image 3.

Paulete Poitras

Angus Prosper, Poplar Tree: Hang The Offerings, 2022

Mixed Media - Quilled Journey Moccasins

14 ½' x 17' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 4.

Paulete Poitras

Harley Memnook, Cody's Little Brother, 2024

Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins

12' x 15' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Artist Statement

Hàn Mâtàkíyàpì, mìjà Dakota sáhàyàh, Ó-ēyâh-wákân-wī īmâkīyâpī, Mùthpīyà-skà īmâkīyâpī, mìjà wīnktê wákán, chántē wàstè.

Greetings my relatives, I am Dakota Cree, my spiritual name is sacred voice woman and spiritual name is white cloud, I am a 2 Spirited with a good heart.

My government name is Paulette Poitras from Muscowpetung First Nation located in Treaty Four. I use mixed media and Indigenous epistemologies specific to Dakota and Cree. While working with the in-between of contrary spiritual practices and wīnktê methodologies in practice and design. As a Dakota Cree wīnktê Identified hill stitch traditional beader, it was vitally important to bring forward my journey as a beader. Pay respect to my mentors, the late Grace Peigan from Wood Mountain Lakota Nation, late paternal grandfather Calvin Poitras Sr. from Muscowpetung First Nation, and my late maternal grandfather Warren Kay Sr from Kawacatoose First Nation. Journey moccasin bundle making is important work to be speaking about.

I wanted to showcase growth, persistence, perseverance, Indigenous spirituality, embrace ancestral knowledge and practices with my beadwork. The most important is to showcase the importance of life and death. I used Dakota and Cree epistemologies of how both honour the importance of journey moccasin bundle making. This work is meaningful, purposeful and necessary. I pray that my work is received in a good way and I respect the content that is deep seeded in difficult conversations about death. My intention is to bring forward healing and connection to the creator of life who is the ultimate journey moccasin bundle maker.

Body of the Document

Introduction

This research delves into the dual epistemology of being both Dakota and Cree, while understanding the in-between of spirituality and physical labour of being the journey moccasin bundle maker (Robertson et al., 2024, 147). Dakota roots from paternal side in Muscowpetung First Nation and Cree roots from maternal side in Kawacatoose First Nation. Beading mentorship from Wood Mountain Lakota Nation. Contrary in-between spiritual teachings from both Dakota and Cree roots. Winktē wākān oyātē meaning 2 Spirited sacred people in Dakota language, also shares teachings of in-between ancestral knowledge.

“Beadwork functions as a powerful form of storytelling through Indigenous frameworks of spiritual connections that creates data by weaving together past, present, and future narratives. Journey moccasin bundles are moccasins that are custom hand made designed specifically for the person who requested them to be made. Each pair of journey moccasin bundles have a deep spiritual and metaphorical connection with the recipient called the moccasin bundle keeper. The journey moccasin bundle keeper is the person who requested the moccasins to be made for either themselves or someone else. In this document the other person that the journey moccasin bundles are being requested for is a deceased relative who has passed. It's the deceased relative's responsibility to find a moccasin journey bundle maker, to make journey moccasin bundles for the deceased person (Poitras, 2025).”

Journey moccasin bundles are made specially for the deceased person who is the journey moccasin bundle keeper. These journey moccasin bundles are to support the spiritual transformation of the deceased to reach their ancestors who have come before them. This practice is part of the ancestral ways of knowing and it's vitally important for Indigenous people

to take part in this spiritual practice to prepare their deceased for the afterlife. The Dakota and the Cree people historically participated in this spiritual ritual (Laviolette, 1991, 17).

The importance of preparing the deceased for the afterlife through physical material objects is that the object weaves not only stories but prayer. The prayer is the gift to the deceased to support them in their afterlife spiritual journey to their ancestors. It is the prayer that carries them through the spiritual journey. The journey moccasin bundles are created to hold the prayers to transfer their soul through the soles of feet while wearing their journey moccasin bundle (Laviolette, 1991, 17). This practice is believed to carry them spiritually through from physical realm into spiritual realm.

The beadwork process demands profound spiritual connection, with the support of using medicine. Medicine is protection for the journey moccasin bundle maker that is creating the journey moccasin bundle. Medicine is historically used in every aspect of Indigenous teachings when creative work is being made (Kovach, 2021, 59). Powerful forms of storytelling about my *Inner Dialogues* as described from the passage (Poitras, 2025) come from Kovach Methodologies in Indigenous Framework and conversations with the Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2021, 136 - 155). Medicine has generous teachings that come with years of journey moccasin bundle making. These teachings can not be shared but experienced and transferred from one journey moccasin bundle maker to another. This transfer of knowledge is earned and given rights to create. The journey moccasin bundles are very sacred to create and therefore rights to make them have to be transferred in order to create.

Beadwork is detailed with representations of history of lineages, connection to Indigenous roots, and spirituality. Through the process of making journey moccasin bundles, a repetitive spiritual

act of praying creates a representation that each bead is a prayer (Peigan (nee LeCaine), 2008 - 2010). The choice of materials used while making custom pairs of beaded journey moccasin bundles have evolved throughout the years. This is a constant evolution throughout time based on affordability and practicality. The use of smoked moose hide has become the most used material in the process that has been adopted because of the durability it offers when using it.

Moccasins are the first step to connection to spirituality and positive influence on any person's experience receiving them. Indigenous methodologies specifically Dakota and Cree knowledge significantly shapes the purpose and intent of the journey moccasin bundle making. Beadwork transcends mere skill set, serving as a spiritual practice that bridges journey moccasin bundle maker with the community and ancestral knowledge. The most deeply meaningful beadwork is created for the deceased, designed to accompany them on their spiritual journey. This work is for all those that are reaching for a deeper connection and for those who have passed and given any moccasin bundle maker the opportunity to make journey moccasin bundles (Walker, 1982, 73).

Methodology

Methodology is Indigenous epistemologies specific to Dakota and Cree, while understanding the in-between ancestral knowledge of spirituality. Dream and vision support the work as guiding principles (Walker, 1982, 99). Indigenous frameworks of spirituality are the fundamental core research insights. Each piece is a "journey moccasin story bundle," encapsulating past, present, and future (Robertson et al., 2024, 147). Beadwork functions as a form of storytelling and knowledge preservation. Powerful forms of storytelling sharing *inner dialogues* benefit from Kovach theory on Methodologies in Indigenous Framework and conversations with the Indigenous communities within all ancestors in all (Poitras, 2025) documented (Kovach, 2021, 136 - 155). Customization and spiritual resonance in each creation is uniquely tailored, fostering

a profound spiritual and psychological connection with the recipient. Colors are interpreted as speaking directly to the "keeper" of the work (Walker, 1982, 54).

Materials are integral, influencing the spiritual intent and outcome of the work. Moccasins as spiritual protection of both the physical "sole" and the spiritual "soul." Moccasins facilitate spiritual transitions and journeys (Walker, 1982, 100).

Beadwork is a reciprocal relationship, a form of spiritual exchange. Beadwork as prayer and connection as each bead becomes a prayer, creating a collective spiritual offering. The process demands patience, kindness, and a deep love for the skill set of beading. Spiritual dimensions of creation. Beadwork transcends physical creation, entering metaphysical and spiritual realms (Denmore, 1992, 305-309). The work is particularly powerful in creating pieces for the deceased, aiding their spiritual transition. The work is divinely inspired, and transformative.

The exploration of the journey moccasin bundle maker's identity and role within the creative process. The significance of ancestral knowledge and Indigenous methodologies. Beadwork is a profound spiritual practice that transcends physical and metaphysical realms, necessitating deep intentionality and an intimate connection between the creator and the recipient (Thompson Denig, 2000, 176). Through mixed Indigenous identities the challenges faced as a moccasin maker of bundles is self identity. The specific epistemologies of being both half Dakota and half Cree mixed heritages has both its challenges as explanation of technique and skill set. The duality of being both half Dakota and half Cree also has its benefits as both heritages support the beadwork being created (Kovach, 2021, 59).

"I can recall going to my grandparents' home in Kawacatoose First Nation (Spiritual Spear of Chief Kawacatoose, 2023, 6). It was north of Muscowpetung First Nation where I was raised. I can recall as far as

I could remember my late Mushum Warren Kay Sr. greeted me and talked to me in Dakota and in Cree. He knew multiple languages as he was a translator like his late Daddy Bob Kay Sr. So, he would have his rough hands down my face starting from my forehead to my chin. He would say “Half Cree and..” slide his rough hand across the left side of my face gently and then say “Half Dakota.” His rough hands would slide across the right side of my face roughly in a playful way. It was his way of connecting with me and showing me his Cree humor (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990). I was enough for him and for me that was important. Some of my best work is in floral work from my Cree side (Kovach, 2021, 49 - 51), it just takes longer, but I feel my connection to my material side. When I bead in Cree stitch it teaches me to slow down and appreciate the gift I was given by the Creator of life and that life itself is the real journey in life. My Cree side reminds me to find the joy and laughter in everything I do. Although I do prefer the hill stitch, also known as Sioux Stitch, Lane Stitch (Robertson et al., 2024, 147) or as western Europeans racistly named it “lazy stitch.” I myself love that stitch in beading and it comes so naturally and quickly for me. I love making Dakota style moccasins (White, 2013, 47 & 52) and this has been the majority of styles of moccasins that I create (Poitras, 2025).”

Chapter I: *Journey Moccasin Bundles - Why are Journey Moccasin Bundles important to have?*

Journey moccasin bundles is a tool that can be used to create connection and purpose. Beadwork can intrinsically create a path of freedom of the burdens of life and connection to identity (Robertson et al., 2024, 145). Achieving true empowerment and change is the goal of the process. Focusing energies on the internal growth of self, and understanding the cultural teachings, and trusting spiritual journey, a person can achieve real empowerment, and enact real change in their life, and the world around them. In essence, advocates for a shift from seeking external validation to cultivating internal strength and meaning (Walker, 1982, 120).

Personal growth highlights the idea that true power is cultivated through self-improvement, learning, and expanding one's understanding of oneself and the world. Journey moccasin bundle

making and cultural practices are recognized as potent sources of empowerment. Journey moccasin bundle making allows for self-expression, emotional processing, and the exploration of complex ideas. Cultural practices connect individuals to their heritage, community, and shared values (Pond, 1986, 86).

1. i) *Real Power:* "Real power" is characterized by internal strength, personal development, and engagement with meaningful activities like journey moccasin bundle making and cultural practices. This form of power is intrinsic and fosters genuine change (Pond, 1986, 82).

“The memory takes place in Kawacatoose, First Nation, during a family gathering, likely around Easter. The grandfather would wake up at 4:30 AM to tend to his chickens, collect eggs, and bring them to the grandmother who was already making breakfast. The morning was filled with the smells of sweetgrass, bannock, and coffee, and the grandfather would start his day with prayer and sweetgrass. He was a humble, kind, and hardworking man who taught the importance of prayer and connection to the Creator by example. The grandfather shared a deep understanding of the world, teaching about the relationship with nature and ancestors, referring to trees and weather as older siblings. The family valued experiences, language, and understanding of the world over material wealth. The grandfather's teachings emphasized gratitude and the interconnectedness of life and nature. His teachings were the power of prayer, that real power was in that prayer, connection to Creator, that we were part of creation. Many of my methodologies of Indigenous understandings were through him and his teachings (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990).”

1. ii) *Logistical and Systemic Obstacles by Navigating Challenges:* Extensive commutes and complex registration processes, demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness through determination and community networking. This helps expand the knowledge of skill set processes. Time only is the largest contributor to really owning one's own process as a moccasin bundle maker. Trial and error as a moccasin bundle maker helps support the maker in what works for them and what doesn't (Pond, 1986, 31).

1. iii) Personal Transformation Through Journey Moccasin Bundle Making: The narrative exemplifies the transformative power of learning how to make journey moccasin bundles. The journey moccasin makers' expression in discovering purpose, cultivating self-empowerment, and navigating personal challenges. Challenges that transform beadwork and these teachable moments shared with other beaders become a blueprint for others to overcome when faced with similar challenges. Beadwork is a tool to look for support externally (Pond, 1986, 35). That support is community and beadwork helps build the gaps of support within communities.

1. iv) Trusting the Process: Spiritual journey points to the journey moccasin bundle maker often face internal and tangible aspects of real power. This work of the in-between comes with a spiritual awakening. A connection to the unknown of spirituality that suggests that genuine change is rooted in a deeper connection to oneself and, potentially, to a higher purpose (Denmore, 1992, 157).

“Influence of Grandfather's Rituals. The narrator's grandfather, Calvin Poitras, was a Dakota elder who lived nearby. He practiced a daily ritual of waking up early, maintaining a wood stove fire, and making offerings. He spoke the Dakota language and focused deeply on prayer, a tradition passed down from his childhood. His practices emphasized the power of prayer and the importance of starting everything with prayer. The grandfather shared Dakota ancestral knowledge and spiritual teachings, influencing the narrator's modern life. The grandfather's dedication to prayer and Dakota traditions profoundly impacted the narrator, instilling a strong foundation of faith and cultural identity. (Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990)”

Chapter II: Sacrifice - The Sacred Exchange: Sacrifice and Service in Journey Moccasin Bundle Creation

2. i) The Profound Sacrifices and Spiritual Intent Embedded in Journey Moccasin Bundle

Makers Service: The journey moccasin bundle maker reflects on the personal cost of their work

(Poitras, 2025), acknowledging their missed moments with family due to the demanding nature of these creative endeavors. Acknowledging sacrifices that are being made at the moment to support others is acknowledging the responsibility the journey moccasin bundle maker has when they are tasked to create a pair of custom journey moccasin bundles. There is a real responsibility to focus time and energy into making journey moccasin bundles that take real spiritual work. This work is being generously shared. This is important as there is a transfer of sacrifice and importance of ceremonial work in making (Mails, 2012, 34).

2. ii) *The Preciousness of Time and The Gift of Journey Moccasin Bundle Making:* Emphasize the irreplaceability of time and frame their journey moccasin bundle creation as a deliberate gift to others, requiring significant personal sacrifice. Journey moccasin bundle making as a spiritual and ceremonial act. The creative process is portrayed as a sacred, deeply spiritual, and ceremonial practice, involving intense emotional and spiritual investment (Walker, 1982, 23-24).

“Influence of Grace Peigan (nee Lecaine Wood Mountain) on Beading. Grace Peigan (nee Lecaine) was a Lakota beadmaker from Wood Mountain, living in Pasqua First Nation. Her home had a distinct smell of sweet grass, smoked moosehide, and cigarettes, and was always welcoming. Beading connected Grace to her Lakota heritage and ties to famous Lakota leader Sitting Bull. She inspired others not through direct teaching but by sharing stories and her own experiences. The practice of beading is tied to Indigenous spirituality and ancestral knowledge. Grace emphasized the importance of being proud of one's identity and the spiritual connection in creating for others. Grace Peigan (nee LeCaine)'s influence extended beyond beading techniques, instilling a deep sense of cultural pride and spiritual connection in her students. Her teachings emphasized the ancient Indigenous methodologies and the importance of understanding one's heritage. (Peigan (nee LeCaine), 2008 - 2010)”

2. iii) *The Internal Conflict of Personal Desires vs. Collective Calling:* The journey moccasin bundle maker experiences a profound internal conflict between pursuing personal desires and

answering the call to create meaningful work that serves a greater purpose (Touchie, 2010, 29). Making journey moccasin bundles are part of these collective callings as they serve to make for community and support others by providing wearable journey moccasin bundles (Laviolette, 1991, 17). The choice to serve as a sacrifice as an act of support for the community. The act of creation is presented as a conscious choice to support others, with the sacrifice of personal time and energy being a fundamental aspect of this service.

2. iv) *Journey Moccasin Bundle Making as a Gift of Prayer and Intentionality:* The journey moccasin bundle maker views their work as a gift imbued with prayers and intentionality, further emphasizing the spiritual dimension of their creation. The meaning of sacrifice is knowingly giving up a comfort to make spiritual dedication to complete a journey moccasin bundle. Through worthiness for both journey moccasin bundle maker and recipient of the work. Sacrifices are not seen as mere losses but as vital components that engage both the creator and the recipient with a sense of meaning and worthiness of receiving journey moccasin bundles (Walker, 1982, 40).

Chapter III: *The Breaking Point - Breaking Points and Breakthroughs*

3. i) *Navigating Through The Inevitable Breaking Points Within The Creative Process:* The breaking point considers the external process as a culprit of challenges that the journey moccasin bundle maker may face when making and having things to consider (Kovach, 2021, 127). This negates that the journey moccasin bundle maker will face challenging moments with the materials, the journey moccasin bundle and it may change the way the work is being created. This might challenge the methodology or have the journey moccasin bundle maker challenge themselves in pushing past what would break the mold of how they once created. The journey

moccasin bundle maker gives away all their energies into the work as they leave it all on the line of the journey moccasin bundle, a historical act of love and honourable way for a Dakota and Cree of living (Elias, 2002, 117).

3. ii) *Facing Trauma Head-on While Journey Moccasin Bundle Making:* The creative process as a confrontation with internal trauma emphasizes that the creative journey often necessitates confronting and processing deep-seated internal traumas and past hurts. Simultaneous challenges and the burden of completion reflects on the experience of managing multiple, often conflicting, challenges while striving to complete a creative work. The journey moccasin bundle maker is challenged not only on a personal level but a spiritual one. These challenges can support the journey moccasin bundle maker in having a deeper understanding of the struggles the deceased faced while in passing away. The journey moccasin bundle maker connects on a deeper spiritual level to support the deceased by listening to what needs are happening internally. Messages from spirit happen through the work and the creative process supports the Dakota and Cree methodologies. Everything happens for a reason and it's not to question but to accept and pray through the process (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990)(Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990).

“Oftentimes when I would make journey moccasin bundles for the deceased I would feel a presence while I cleared my space to embark on a difficult task of making journey moccasins. I would often feel these clear emotions throughout the process indicating the struggles that the deceased would experience. I couldn’t explain it, I could only feel it. It’s hard to explain but I would trust that I was supporting the deceased in their journey to the spiritual realm that these were struggles they faced while passing. Some were fearful feelings, some were just desires they wanted like having a spiritual funeral. I would just share what would come to mind. I would sometimes have flashes of images in my mind of what they experienced prior to passing or what they were feeling. I’ve made journey moccasins bundles for people who struggled with substance abuse and their fears that they didn’t intentionally want to die. I would share these insights with

the families and it would provide closure for them. I could see this is truly a gift and that I take it very seriously the work I need to do in just four days. It's emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually draining. Prayer and medicine is what would fill me back up and help me regain focus on the task at hand. But it's always worthwhile. I know real healing was occurring and real medicine work was being completed. I'm grateful for this way of life, I'm grateful for being Indigenous, I'm grateful for my mentors before me, I'm grateful for these gifts and abilities. Healing is possible and through it all I serve the community in this small generous way (Poitras, 2025)."

Chapter IV: *Choose the Hard - The Sanctuary of Journey Moccasin Bundle Making Through Personal Turmoil*

Challenges are simultaneously making life happen throughout the process of making a moccasin bundle and experiencing research fatigue (Kovach, 2021, 125). Indigenous methodology is what brings balance throughout the processes because prayer and spirituality is priority throughout. Nothing is permanent but through creating it supports discovery not only for the work, the journey moccasin bundle maker and the journey moccasin bundler keeper.

Nighttime solace and journey moccasin bundle maker's escape through the night provides a sanctuary where the journey moccasin bundle maker can immerse themselves in their passion for beadwork, free from distractions and external demands. Spiritual and therapeutic creative process through journey moccasin bundle maker practice is a deeply powerful tool for healing, self-discovery, and emotional processing. A connection to solace and spirit as creative works need time to generate communication to ancestral knowledge (Robertson et al., 2024, 95).

Beadwork can bring forward connections internally and externally as communities gather together through the freedoms that the journey moccasin bundle provides (Robertson et al., 2024,

153). Journey moccasin bundles as a grounding and purposeful force despite the challenges, creating art keeps them present, grounded, and provides a profound sense of purpose.

This is a raw, powerful, and deeply moving expression of your internal struggles and journey moccasin bundle making process. It's a testament to the emotional and spiritual weight a journey moccasin bundle maker has to carry, and the profound connection with the beadwork (Robertson et al., 2024, 161). Here's a refined version, focusing on clarity and impact, while retaining the essential emotional core (Kovach, 2021, 268 - 270):

"Choose what will be hard, and then make the choice to pursue it." I've never been granted the privilege of grieving as a human should. Life relentlessly pushes forward, responsibilities pile up, and all I crave is the solace of bed and tears. Instead, I must choose. I must choose what my heart will endure today, what challenge I will confront, what energy I will focus.

I never choose myself. My choices are always for others, ensuring their well-being before my own. Perhaps that's why my creative process unfolds at night, in the quiet solitude where no one demands anything. It's the only time I'm left with myself, the spirit, and the gift of beading.

The familiar rhythm of the needle piercing leather, the sifting of beads, finding those precise eight beads, the colors that speak to me – it's a symphony of voices, a cacophony of responsibilities, yet I still never choose the path of my own passion.

I'm aware of this internal struggle, this journey of self-discovery, unearthing gifts, purpose, and intention. The rhythmic dance of needle and thread guides my hands, toughening my fingers, as I reflect on what I've lost. I think of the people I've lost, the "best work" buried six feet under, unseen, unappreciated.

The late-night sessions, the bowl of beads, the silence that roars – it's a communion with spirits. It's a different kind of journey moccasin bundle making, devoid of Western theory, built on prayer. How do I

explain to an institution that my home, my sanctuary, is where I find healing, not just for myself, but for others?

Perhaps this is my way of choosing myself.

Yet, a disconnect persists. The closer I get to the journey moccasin bundle making title, the further it feels. The pressure, the energy, the constant need to choose my heart, to define what is important – it's overwhelming.

The one constant is the present moment, the act of making. It grounds me, reminds me of who I am. In this space, there is calm, there is good, there is safety, there is intention, and for that, I am grateful (Poitras, 2025).”

Chapter V: *Undoing - Transforming Mistakes into Creative Insight*

Praying, and using medicine to smudge the work supports the process as it's being created. This practice embraces Indigenous methodologies and prioritizes clarity while creative works are being done. Through dreams and visions (Laviolette, 1991, 39) creative insight is shared with the journey moccasin bundle maker and this spiritual support helps the ideas to come to life. The journey moccasin bundle maker has to understand that the tools that they use while they make are going to be interacting with a material that is spiritually seen as spiritually alive. This interaction will depend on prayer and the use of medicines to smudge with (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, 73).

“It's not until the needle and thread begin to interact with the smoked moose hide. The smoked hide is intoxicating and fills the room with its scent. I was taught that the materials we use either as materials for the journey moccasin bundles, and the tools we use scissors, pliers, needle, and thread, are all living objects. Spiritually these objects are made from materials that are stone, steel, and the smoked moose hide is considered living because it has a spirit that rests with them. When I include my own spirit into the

combination of all these objects that are living they need to connect and work together. I understand and know when I make mistakes, mistakes are bound to happen. Perfection isn't the goal but the goal is to support the insights gifted through dreams and visions. It's a spiritual journey of listening through the tools. Following the lead of the materials. If I were to describe it is that I am the machine and creator of life is the maker, using me as a machine to create these works. I always say I am the needle and thread that supports the work being created. Mistakes and failures are an indication that life is happening simultaneously. Mistakes are part of human experiences we learn from embracing our mistakes. We take ownership of our own signature on the work as we are not designed for perfection because life itself is a perfect dynamic to interact in the creative process. Mistakes as catalysts for innovation. They bring the human experience into the bundle and that's part of the love given to the journey moccasin bundle. The mistakes are not failures but rather natural and essential components of the creative process, often leading to unexpected interpretations and innovative directions (Poitras, 2025)."

Journey moccasin bundle makers incorporate mistakes to reflect diverse perspectives, cultural teachings, and the inherent imperfections of life. This isn't something that speaks to the work but allows space for natural mistakes to take place. Letting go is an important part of creative energies, letting go of what no longer serves the spirit and inserting teachings of "Keyam (Ahenakew, 1995, 53)." Keyam means to let go in Cree and was a huge teaching in prayer displayed and generously shown through Cree grandfather Warren Kay Sr. (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990).

The creative process is characterized by a dynamic cycle of making and undoing, learning and unlearning, emphasizing the interesting nature of bundle making development. It was important to lead this work through ancestral knowledge of Dakota and Cree epistemologies because it brought a clear path of what exactly needed to be achieved. Indigenous methodologies of understanding and adapting to different cultural practices can significantly influence and shape one's journey moccasin bundle making approach (Kovach, 2021, 99).

The journey moccasin bundle maker's choice to either preserve or reflect. Beading journey moccasin bundle makers must make deliberate decisions about whether to preserve or rectify mistakes, based on their impact on the narrative and the overall journey moccasin bundle making vision using a spirit based approach (Kovach, 2021, 189).

Chapter VI: *Weaving Ancestral Strength: Resilience and Heritage Through Beadwork*

6. i) *Cultivating Resilience and Ancestral Connection Through Cultural Practice:* Beadwork is a necessary and living link to ancestry. The beadwork serves as a tangible and spiritual connection to their ancestors, mirroring the regalia of past generations and embodying their cultural heritage. Beadwork is for accessing "ancestral," allowing the speaker to connect with the wisdom and experiences of their ancestors through the act of creation (Denmore, 1992, 54).

6. ii) *The Discipline and Dedication of Cultural Practice:* Mastering beadwork, particularly with diverse cultural techniques, demands patience, dedication, and a deep respect for the journey moccasin bundle making. Spiritual fortitude that happens through ceremony and ancestral guidance using spirit based research (Kovach, 2021, 189). Finding strength, guidance, and spiritual solitude through ceremony, prayer, and a profound connection to their ancestors.

6. iii) *The guiding principle of "Chàntē Wàstē" by my late grandfather Calvin Poitras Sr (Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990) (Kovach, 2021, 268 - 270):*

"I am guided by the teachings of their grandfather, particularly the principle of "chàntē wàstē" (good heart), which inspires them to act with purpose, intention, and compassion. To walk in ceremony in the practice of traditional beadwork and prioritizing ancestral knowledge as they move forward in art practices. Listening and following the voices of ancestors that lead every detail in their life purpose with love, compassion, truth, help, and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing. Perseverance and cultural identity in

adversity. The speaker emphasizes the importance of perseverance and maintaining a strong connection to their cultural identity despite adversity, ensuring the continuity of their heritage (Poitras, 2025).”

Chapter VII: *Breaking the Chains: Creativity as a Path to Liberation and Self-Reclamation*

7. i) *The Transformative Power of Creative Expression:* Confronting a significant struggle with paralysis, anxiety, and procrastination, particularly in the moments leading up to creative engagement. These challenges are personal tests that are significant to the process. This changes the journey moccasin bundle and beadwork. The challenges that I experience prior to making a journey moccasin bundle is to start with a ceremony through prayer. Prayer is the most important part of the creative process (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990) (Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990).

The creative process of beadwork becomes a journey of breaking through both personal and intergenerational barriers, liberating oneself from limiting beliefs and patterns (Robertson et al., 2024, 161). Journey moccasin bundles and making journey moccasin bundles serve as powerful tools for reclaiming personal power, rewriting narratives, and redefining one's identity on their own terms. The journey moccasin bundles become healing to the journey moccasin bundle maker and the journey moccasin bundle keeper.

Looking through own historical ancestry and reviving ancestral knowledge through the journey moccasin bundle maker's practice of beadwork. Leaning on ways of knowing through ancestral ties and ceremonial protocols called Indigenous theorizing (Kovach, 2021, 182 -183).

Chapter XIII: *Intersecting - The Living Beadwork: Weaving Journey Moccasin Bundles, Spirit, and Legacy*

8. i) *Journey Moccasin Bundle Making as a Sacred Contract of Support:* The journey moccasin bundle maker's work is understood as a spiritual contract, a commitment to support others in attaining journey moccasin bundle marketing skillset fostering creative empowerment and self-discovery. The beadwork are divine messages from the Creator of life who supports the process of making to the journey moccasin bundle makers tools of needle and thread (Robertson et al., 2024, 151). Together they weave a story for the journey moccasin bundle keeper to support their journey in life and death.

8. ii) *The Contract is Undertaken When Provided With Tobacco to Begin The Spiritual and Sacred Contract:* The tobacco acts as a truth telling medicine that ensures the work will be completed but so will the messages from the Creator of life be shared with the moccasin bundle keeper from the moccasin bundle maker. Incorporating a spiritual contract in Indigenous ways of knowing and Indigenous frameworks of Indigenous epistemologies (Kovach, 2021, 268 - 269). The importance of not only sharing the messages but also the care of the journey moccasin bundles that the journey moccasin bundle keeper will have to participate in after receiving the transfer of the journey moccasin bundle.

8. iii) *Healing Through The Intersection of Trauma and Process:* The intersection of trauma and the creative process is recognized as a powerful catalyst for healing, benefiting both the journey moccasin bundle maker and the journey moccasin bundle keeper through shared emotional experiences. Both the journey moccasin bundle maker and the journey moccasin bundle keeper might have their traumatic experiences of their life surface to transform and create space for healing through multiple beading stitches (Robertson et al., 2024, 155). The transferring of the journey moccasin bundle will bring to the surface trauma that both may experience and a huge release of this energy happens during the transformation process. The letting go of internal

dialogue that does not serve the human spirit occurs and healing takes precedence. This is important to acknowledge but not dwell as it rewrites the internal dialogues that both may have had but then can sit in a space of healing.

8. iv) *Honoring Ancestral Traditions and Teachings:* The journey moccasin bundle maker's practice is deeply rooted in respect for ancestral traditions and teachings passed down through generations, ensuring the continuity of cultural knowledge. The work is intentionally created to support future generations, continuing a legacy of connection, kinship, and cultural preservation. Guided by honesty, love, compassion, and integrity. The journey moccasin bundle maker's intention is driven by core values of spiritual connection honesty, love, compassion, and integrity, imbuing their work with profound ethical and emotional depth (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1992, 150). The power of giving, making, and sacrifice. The emotional resonance of the journey moccasin bundle makers work with others underscores the importance of giving, making, and sacrifice as fundamental elements of journey moccasin bundle makers expression and connection.

Chapter IX: *The Exchange that Happens in the Sacred Circle: A Holistic Exchange in Creation*

9. i) *Spirituality as The Guiding Frequency:* Spirituality operates as a vital high-frequency energy, guiding the journey moccasin bundle making process and honoring the wisdom of ancestral knowledge. Honoring ancestral connection through offering. The exchange involves offering tobacco to spiritual ancestors, establishing a natural cycle of respect, insight, and reciprocal connection to walking the red road (Stampoulos, 2010, 85). Beadwork will always support spiritual work and they collectively work collaboratively.

9. ii) Continuous Exchange From Concept to Completion: The key is knowing when to release.

The journey moccasin bundle maker must discern when to disconnect, allowing the object to signal its completion, acknowledging that while additions are always possible, a sense of wholeness must be recognized in (Robertson et al., 2024, 152). There is always room to add additions onto the journey moccasin bundle. The journey moccasin bundle maker needs to be able to let go of the concept of personal need vs. what the journey moccasin bundle wants. Usually it's very simplistic in its completion and this speaks volumes in the final work.

Chapter X: Medicine is Ceremony - Story of Sacrifice and Transformation

10. i) The Spiritual Significance and Transformative Power of The Medicinal Burning: The burning of medicine is a deeply rooted ceremonial exchange, connecting practitioners to their ancestral traditions and spiritual lineage. The intention is to clear the energies prior to making anything and prior to praying. Both go hand in hand and work together. They bring balance and purpose to the work being accomplished. Life is given to the moccasin bundle through the sacrifice and death of the medicine that burns. The medicine gives up its life source and burns so that the creative space can be clear of negative energies, allowing for positive energies to flow and intention to settle into the journey moccasin bundle making (Spiritual Spear of Chief Kawacatoose, 2023, 125).

10. ii) Medicine as a Sacred Agreement: Medicines possess a spiritual story and purpose, chosen and cultivated in agreement with the Creator, imbued with divine intent. The cycle of growth, offering, and sacrifice. The process involves a sacred cycle of growth, offerings, and sacrifice, where the medicine's life is offered for the greater good of the community. Honoring the medicine's spirit. Ceremony includes singing, prayers, and offerings, acknowledging and

honoring the medicine's enduring spirit and life force. Even after being harvested, the medicine retains its inherent spirit and purpose, continuing its sacred journey (Laviolette, 1991, 16). The transformative act of burning. The burning of the medicine is a transformative act, releasing its spirit and facilitating clarity, spiritual cleansing, and healing.

Chapter XI: *Footsteps of Healing: Journey of Cultural Reflection and Personal Transformation*

11. i) *Complex Relationships Between Personal Needs vs. Communal Responsibilities:* Journey moccasin bundle making experiences a distinct difference in motivation when creating for oneself versus others, highlighting the complex relationship between personal needs and communal responsibility. The truth is that inventory of the people surrounding the struggles will show either support or a test. It's important to surround oneself with a community who believe in the gift of creative process and provide space for intentional motivation to create (Kovach, 2021, 139 - 140).

“I knew she was getting more and more sick as time passed. It was challenging. Years prior she asked me to make her some moccasins, I hesitated in making them for her. I knew that if I did them and completed them, they would end up being journey moccasins. This haunted me. One day after going to university classes I went to her house to visit. I sat with her and she said “Polly I want some moccasins made by you. I am not getting any older and well I know when I pass away I want you to make them for me. I know you pray and I know you only start things with tobacco.” She reached on the table in front of her and grabbed one smoke from her pack. She said “Here! Take this and you can not refuse. The truth is I am not well and I need you to make my moccasins. I'll give you one month to get them done.” Reluctantly I took the smoke she offered me and put my head down. I knew what this meant, she was getting ready to leave this place, the earthly realm. I said “Well aunty what are you gonna trade me for?” She smiled and said “Look behind my couch there is a large mirror behind there not put up.” Sure enough when I looked behind her couch there was a large mirror sitting there. She said “Take it home and hang it up.” We visited and talked and I

told her how much I love her and appreciate all she has done for me through my education years and my entire life up to that point. She said “Oh Miss Polly Ann I love you too, and I really think the world of you. Since I first met you I fell in love with your big eyes and big curiosity. I love watching you grow into the woman you are today. You are chasing your dreams and finishing school. You will accomplish great things. One day your beading will be so important in the world. You bring healing and happiness. You are fearless and determined. You are a proud Dakota Cree 2 Spirited woman. Keep going and don’t quit until you get everything you deserve.” With tears in my eyes I gave her a kiss on the cheek and thanked her. Four months later I finished her moccasins and sure enough I completed them in time for her to make her journey to the spiritual realm as her time here in the earthly realm was done. It was difficult but meaningful and I was so deeply honoured to give her exactly what she deserves. The mirror hangs in the entry of my home and I think of her often. I miss her always and love her deeply. I talk to her from time to time when I pray, when I do beadwork for others. I thank her for encouraging me when I needed it. I am so grateful for these life lessons (Poitras, 2025).”

Journey moccasin bundle making is understood as a culturally significant practice that fosters personal growth, self-reflection, and a deep understanding of one's heritage. The moccasin bundle maker’s experiences with independent learning of traditional crafts underscore the importance of passing on knowledge to future generations, ensuring cultural continuity (Kovach, 2021, 46).

11. ii) *Community, Family, and Cultural Teachings as Foundation:* The journey of becoming a journey moccasin bundle maker requires support. A strong foundation of community, family support, and cultural teachings, emphasizing the collective nature of cultural preservation. Personal transformation and cultural empowerment. Overcoming challenges and embracing cultural heritage leads to personal transformation and empowerment, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose (Walker, 1982, 50 - 58). The connection externally and internally will

support the work of the journey moccasin bundle maker, creating safe space to make journey moccasin bundles.

11. iii) *The Overwhelming Weight of Creative Challenges:* Even in the absence of physical harm, the challenges inherent in making can feel emotionally overwhelming, demanding significant inner strength. Creation as a sacred act of remembrance. Creating for lost loved ones becomes a sacred act of remembrance, requiring deep emotional introspection and a profound symbolism to connection in relations to memory (Kovach, 2021, 47 - 48).

“I was challenged in making journey mocs for my relatives' late relatives. This was a challenge when making for a community member that has brought harm to the community. There is healing in forgiveness. The final act was making these journey moccasin bundle for them and praying for forgiveness. It was healing and necessary as I wanted to support my relative but I also felt internally conflicted. I made peace in the process and I saw through my generous actions of making this journey moccasin bundle I was able to find peace. Seeing how they helped my relative, it truly was the final act of kindness that I didn't need to provide but was happy to provide as it brought healing for everyone involved (Poitras, 2025).”

11. iv) *Beadwork as a Narrative of Emotion and Connection:* The process of beadwork becomes a storytelling medium, weaving narratives about the recipient and fostering a deep emotional connection between the journey moccasin bundle maker and own feelings during the process. The rewarding culmination of creative effort. Despite the challenges, the end result of creation is deeply rewarding, providing a sense of meaningful accomplishment for both the maker and the recipient (Robertson et al., 2024, 123 - 150).

“Transferring of the journey moccasin bundle to the journey moccasin bundle keeper gives a deep sense of accomplishment. I become attached to the whole project. But, through it all I feel that it's necessary to love what you pour into. It's part of the process. It's like taking a part of your heart and handing it over to

someone. You teach them protocol to care for the journey moccasin bundle. You let them know the messages and you let go. It's very emotional not only for me but for the journey moccasin bundle keeper. Even when I hand them off to family members who put them onto the deceased for a moment they have their relatives back. They get to have their moment to heal and let go. It's meaningful and this process is what makes everything I experience while making it worthwhile. I am grateful for these gifts to help me serve a higher purpose. (Poitras, 2025)"

Chapter XII: *Ancestral Echoes: Skill Sets Through Spiritual Dedication*

12. i) *Traditional Knowledge and Modern Understanding:* The spiritual and cultural dedication to ancestral legacy through traditional beadwork. Work as an act of ancestral honor. The work is driven by a profound desire to honor ancestors and mentors. Bridging ancestral wisdom and modern techniques in beadwork. The journey moccasin bundle maker grapples with the challenge of integrating ancestral concepts into contemporary beadwork, seeking to bridge traditional knowledge with modern understanding (Kovach, 2021, 69 - 70).

"When I'm in the midst of drawing the journey moccasin bundle onto paper, it's here when the spiritual door to my ancestors opens. I can feel spirits near me. I smudge, I begin to pray and they are there beside me showing me pictures inside my mind's eye. I allow for the design to slip onto the paper. I let go and allow for the work to begin. Sometimes it's an urge or surge of energies inside me pushing my thoughts to do something. Or an image in my brain I can't unsee. I trust there is purpose and reason behind everything. I let go and listened to the ancestors. From the paper to the act of beadwork being performed the dance is similar. Then when I'm done, I share this knowledge in the transfer. It never makes sense to me but for the journey moccasin bundle keeper I transfer to or their relatives who receive them on behalf of them. It will always make sense to them. This is where I take the tobacco either before or after the process is completed and I put out my offerings of tobacco to support my ancestors for trusting me and showing me ancestral knowledge. (Poitras, 2025)"

12. ii) Skill Sets That Support the Practice of Beading for Journey Moccasin Bundles:

Spirituality as the guiding force. Spirituality and ancestral guidance serve as the guiding forces behind the creative process, imbuing the work with deep cultural and spiritual significance. Skill sets of beading as a living connection to heritage (Robertson et al., 2024, 151 - 166). Skill set, specifically beading and moccasin design, serves as a tangible and living connection to the past, reflecting personal growth and cultural continuity.

“Receiving tobacco is the first step. A request from the bundle keeper or the family of the bundle keeper, because sometimes I make for the deceased. That tobacco is my agreement to make and I also request at this time a footprint or shoe size for the bundle keeper. Tobacco and a footprint I begin the process.

Secondly I smudge myself with medicines either Cedar, Sage, or Sweetgrass. When it's for the deceased it's always cedar to call to their spirits and get spiritual insight from the deceased. When it's for the living I use sage to smudge the materials to clear the energies surrounding it.

The tobacco is for my bundle and my offerings. I sometimes put out tobacco on the ground at the base of a tree to ask for guidance. This isn't always how I always work, but sometimes I just allow for what spirit calls for. I let my spirit guide me through the process.

Thirdly I cut out the footprints from the paper it was drawn on. I then measure the footprint on the smoked moosehide. I used to use different materials, because it was easier to use and financially accessible. Then I later on began to use deer hide and any kinds of commercialized hides. It wasn't until in recent years was I able to afford smoked moose hide. It's expensive but when I have it, it's a preference. Lasts longer and sews like butter. Then I cut out the tops of the moccasins.

The fourth step is the selection of the moccasins colours. Sometimes the colours come from the family members guiding me with their deceased relative spiritual name and colours. Sometimes they don't know the colours and when I am smudging the materials I pray the answers will come.

The fifth Step once the colours are selected I then sit with a blank piece of paper and pencil and let the design take over on what I see. This might happen after several sleeps, dreams and visions. But essentially I am able to rough sketch the design and move onto the beading portion.

The sixth step is beading what I sketched. Hill stitch, lane stitch style (Dakota, Lakota, Nakota style). 8 beads on one line. I navigate the beadwork. I pray as I work and I follow the rough sketch outline. Once the design is beginning to take shape I constantly work through the process. What I do on one vamp is what I do on the other.

Messages happen in the beading stage and it's a sacred ceremony that takes place. I allow myself to become the needle and thread. I make the beading portion and listen to what my body, mind, spirit, and emotions share with me the spiritual messages that come through. The beading is the shortest but longest part. Short in time and longest in a holistic journey to process so much in such little time.

The final step is hand stitching the moccasins together. Once completed I smudge my home and transfer the bundle of moccasins to the family and share the spiritual messages that come through. I let go and when I transfer the messages it's the most emotional process. A release happens with the families; they understand it's all spiritual. They aren't just moccasins they are a tie to the past, the present and the future. A real spiritual bundle is born and I let go of the process. I hand them off and move onto the next pair. (Poitras, 2025)"

12. iii) *The Needle and Thread as Spiritual Conduit:* The needle and thread symbolize a constant, spiritual connection and source of protection, guiding the maker through the emotional complexities of creation. Material struggles as metaphors for personal challenges. Breaks and tangles in materials serve as potent metaphors for personal struggles, highlighting the importance of self-care and emotional resilience (Robertson et al., 2024, 151 - 166).

“The needle and thread protect the journey moccasin bundle maker as sometimes the needle bends or breaks, the thread snaps or tangles. These indications are a sign to slow down, smudge, pray, and sometimes let go. As these things happen for a reason, the reason is sometimes rushing the process,

sometimes the reason is you missed a step in the process, or sometimes it's an indication a pause is necessary for the work to be completed. A pause can support the work by letting it stand. Starting again but on another day. Either way the process supports these spiritual assessments and supports the work entirely. (Poitras, 2025)”

12. iv) *Creating Sacred Passage Through Journey Moccasin Bundles:* The spiritual and emotional journey of beading journey moccasin bundles for sacred passage and healing. The work is born from profound emotions, including grief, love, and despair, transforming these feelings into acts of sacred creation. Journey moccasin bundles act as vessels for spiritual transition (Robertson et al., 2024, 109 - 122). The process involves crafting moccasins for both the living and the deceased, reflecting spiritual Indigenous beliefs that emphasize transformation over finality.

12. v) *Tobacco as a Conduit for Connection:* The gifting of tobacco is a crucial element, facilitating connection with the spirits of the deceased and honoring their journey. Dreams and visions as design guides (Kovach, 2021, 100). Dreams and visions serve as powerful guides for the design and color choices of the moccasins, often crafted from moose hide, imbuing them with spiritual significance.

12. vi) *Earth Offerings and Ancestral Guidance:* Offering tobacco to the earth and seeking guidance from ancestors and nature are integral parts of the practice, grounding the work in spiritual connection (Laviolette, 1991, 50 - 51). Ultimately the connection between the earth and all worldly possessions are all offered back to her “Oncí Makâ” is the ultimate keeper of all bundles including all people when they pass. Oncí means grandmother and Makâ means dirt in the Dakota language. The teaching behind this is that all worldly possessions will always go back to the earth. Oncí Makâ is a protector of all living things and every spiritual object. Journey

moccasin bundles are placed on the soles of those who wear them, increasing the vibrational connection to Oncí Makâ. She can then identify you, protect you through those vibrational connections. These are Dakota beliefs and methodologies that have been known through time and immemorial (Kovach, 2021, 233 - 234).

“The humble teachings of our place in the earthly realm. We are nothing, we come from the stars in, birthed through the portal from spiritual realm to earthly realm. Everything that we are returning back. Even through Dakota customs we were buried on scaffolds (Pond, 1986, 162), placed in the sun and our body was returned to animal life and ultimately the Oncí Makâ (Poitras, 2025).”

Chapter XIII: *The Transformative Power of Indigenous Journey Moccasin Bundle Making*

The spiritual and cultural journey of an indigenous journey moccasin bundle making through creative expression. Gratitude for blessings, friendships, and healing. The journey moccasin bundle reflects on the journey with gratitude, acknowledging the blessings, meaningful friendships, and profound healing that beadwork brings (Robertson et al., 2024, 21 - 37).

Community togetherness is part of the blessings that take place, along with supporting the community to feel connected in a generation where the privilege of cultural connection is the goal.

Community appreciation and spiritual connection. The journey moccasin bundle maker's work is deeply appreciated by family and community, serving as a source of prayer, spiritual connection, and cultural affirmation. The spiritual practice of creation. The process of creating journey moccasin bundles is described as a spiritual practice (Robertson et al., 2024, 95 - 108), involving careful and intentional selection of materials and colors that resonate with the journey moccasin bundle maker's vision and spiritual guidance (Walker, 1982, 99).

“Connection is a need that all people seek. Those with connection to community thrive in society.

Connection to cultural teachings and ancestral knowledge become tools for Indigenous people to survive in modern society. Connection to the power of prayer, access to ceremonies, and access to sacred bundles are part of connection ties. The importance of connection is bringing the community together. Bring a single person back into society.

Dakota people have historically had roles and responsibilities in the community. Everyone had their roles in the community that they were responsible for. I can recall from my Dakota grandfather late Calvin Poitras Sr. say “If you know who you are you know where you are going.” The spiritual realm his words of wisdom truly are the support required to walk through this earthly realm called life.

Indigenous ways of life is knowing who you are, understanding your traditional practices/protocols, and participating in this way of life through ceremony/community celebrations. Through dual heritages beading moccasins is a connection to the historical roots, gained teachings, shared knowledge, and supported the community. Prayer and beading has become part of my own survival. Sometimes a pair of moccasins is everything anyone could ever need in their bundle of life. Moccasins are a material tool filled with prayer, love, and spiritual messages. It becomes the missing link in learning and unlearning in modern times.

I am the needle and thread. Dakota Cree Winktê who loves to bead. Practice through Indigenous frameworks and processes. Undertaking ancestral research, Indigenous methodologies and then applied this into life. Beading brought sobriety, beading kept connection, beading gave purpose, and beading supported through grief and loss. Better ways to connect to spirit and use it to help others.

This is a gift and I’m honored to share it with everyone. I make for the deceased and it’s the best beadwork I can involve my spirit with. Best work that nobody will see or witness, but Creator of life was there, helping, guiding, supporting, and connecting me with ancestral understandings. Grateful for this life and for having opportunities to try new things. Praying the beadwork is a gift for future generations. In 750 years someone picks up the needle and thread and all those energies surge through them the way it transformed through my experiences as a journey moccasin bundle maker. They feel part of the experience, it becomes

the blueprint for others to follow. Grateful for connection and how beadwork provides generations after a connection to belonging (Poitras, 2025).”

Conclusion and Findings:

i) Forgiveness as a Pathway to Healing and Liberation: Forgiveness as a spiritual act and part of ceremony. Forgiveness is presented as a spiritual act, directed towards the spirit, transcending the need for direct reconciliation with the offending person. The act of creating journey moccasin bundle making becomes a powerful metaphor for this research creation journey of forgiveness, and symbolizes the steps taken towards release and healing (Mails, 2012, 34 - 47). Liberation through letting go of fears and past traumas is depicted as a necessary step towards personal growth and liberation, enabling individuals to move forward with renewed strength.

ii) Breakthroughs Are Not Only Inevitable But Necessary: When confronting the inherent stresses and artificial deadlines imposed on creative work. The western institutions and methods of the conflict between deadlines and presence is that they often highlight the fundamental incompatibility between rigid deadlines and the organic, presence-driven nature of true creative engagement with materials. Within Dakota beliefs and methodologies is that they believe communication with spirit happens the most whenever situations are heightened. Causing a connection through spirit and the journey moccasin bundle making process (Laviolette, 1991, 39).

iii) Empathy Through Understanding: Understanding the fears and traumas of others cultivates empathy, fostering deeper connections and facilitating mutual healing. Journey moccasin bundles as a medium for emotional processing and resilience. Journey moccasin bundles serve as a powerful medium for expressing and processing complex emotions, invoking a sense of freedom

and building resilience (Laviolette, 1991, 269 - 298). Journeying through emotion to connection. The journey through grief, love, and despair, when processed through moccasin bundles, leads to genuine connection, belonging, and a profound sense of peace.

iv) The Spiritual Dimensions of Journey Moccasin Bundle Making Bridging Life and Death:

Navigating the spectrum of energies. Journey moccasin bundle makers are immersed in a complex interplay of energies, both positive and negative, light and dark, which influence their creative process. The darkness is part of a journey moccasin bundle maker's experience in creating ceremonial journey moccasin bundles (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, 158). Transforming pain into journey moccasin bundle making suggests that the most profound journey moccasin bundle maker expressions often emerge from the deepest, darkest aspects of the self.

v) Dynamic Equilibrium of Opposing Forces: The journey moccasin bundle maker's work requires a delicate balance between opposing forces, such as light and dark, known and unknown, creating a dynamic equilibrium within the creative process. Journey moccasin bundle making as a bridge through contradiction. Journey moccasin bundle making functions as a powerful force for connection through its ability to embrace and reconcile contradictions. It's important to know not to confuse or misuse the steps in protocol and process as it protects not only you but those who you love in your bloodline. Questions whether the journey moccasin bundle makers may participate in doing any wrong may have severe consequences, all rights are earned. Even journey moccasin bundle making and this is something that you must be mindful of when creating for the deceased (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, 168).

vi) Beadwork and "Cunning Perception:" Cunning has several meanings such as having or showing a skill through deceit or attraction. Perception means to become aware of something

through personal senses such as sight, sounds, touch, taste, and experiences. Through darkness like death it takes a set of skills that can be hard for some to create for others, especially those who are deceased, through spiritual gifts of knowing how and what to do when you use the “cunning perception” is how it will determine how the journey moccasin bundle will be completed. Journey moccasin bundle makers can clear their body of their own spirit to make space for an external spiritual guide to support the work and this is the work of the Creator (Mails, 2012, 20).

vii) Sacred Offering for The Deceased: The most profound work is dedicated to the deceased, serving as a spiritual offering and a means of fostering connection with those who have passed. Beadwork as a ritual of reconnection. The beadwork for the deceased becomes a sacred ritual, allowing the journey moccasin bundle maker to reconnect with the spirits of those who have passed. The intention of making journey moccasin bundles for the deceased is knowing that you are preparing them for the next life. The journey back to the star’s, preparing them for the journey across the milky way (Goodman, 2017, 33).

Spiritual connection is this spiritual process often results in deep, meaningful connections with the families of the deceased, providing comfort and solace. Journey Mocassin Bundles as a catalyst for emotional healing and this healing can support the community with the loss of their recently deceased relative. The challenge is the delivery of what messages are being provided and sharing those teachings in a way that will support the family in their grief and loss (Goodman, 2017, 31). The work evokes powerful emotional responses and facilitates healing, making it the moccasin bundle maker’s most deeply valued and impactful creation.

viii) Spiritual and Cultural Reclamation: Through the practice of beadwork is a journey of self and bringing together community through journey moccasin bundles. The journey moccasin bundle maker is constantly seeking insight about the journey moccasin bundle keeper and their significance to their connection to a deeper level of spirituality. This is about Honoring cultural lineage through practice. As I reflect on the significance of specific cultural practices, particularly the Dakota (Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990), Lakota (Peigan (nee LeCaine), 2008 - 2010), and Cree (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990) ways of beading, and their deeply personal connection to these ancestral traditions (Poitras, 2025).

ix) The Spiritual Path of Learning and Self-discovery: The journey of learning beadwork is a profound personal and spiritual exploration, characterized by trial and error, self-discovery, and the powerful act of reconnecting with one's cultural heritage. The importance of mentorship while beginning to reconnect with spirituality is support that is required to drive inspiration while making beadwork. Mentorship plays a pivotal role, with Grace Peigan, a Lakota woman, serving as a powerful source of inspiration through her beadwork and teachings, guiding the artist on their path (Peigan (nee LeCaine), 2008 - 2010). The experiences that the journey moccasin bundle makers go through is fundamentally about reclaiming their identity and cultural roots, leading to a deeper understanding of self, purpose, and connection to their ancestors.

x) Half of this and Half of that: The journey of reconciling dual cultural identities through spiritual practice and journey moccasin bundle maker creation. Navigating the intricate landscape of being half Dakota (Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990) and half Cree (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990), balancing cultural expectations and personal responsibilities with grace and intention. Spiritual practices as a guiding force and a foundation for the journey moccasin bundle makers practice.

Spiritual practices, including prayer and smudging, serve as a foundational guide for the journey moccasin bundle maker's creative process, grounding them in their ancestral traditions.

xi) Learning Through Observation and Participation: The learning process is rooted in observation and active participation in ceremonies, rather than formal instruction, fostering a deep and intuitive understanding of their heritage. The affirmation of "enoughness" through The grandparents play a pivotal role in affirming the journey moccasin bundle makers identity (Spiritual Spear of Chief Kawacatoose, 2023, 39) and capabilities, consistently reinforcing the message that they are "enough," fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth.

“This is important as I was always enough for my grandparents as they valued that I was the treaty among the Dakota and the Cree. When a baby is gifted to a family with dual lineage it was meant to provide a truce between the two camps. My sister and I were the truce or the “treaty” between the two lineages (Ahenakew, 1995, 32). (Poitras, 2025)”

xii) Reconciling and Honoring Dual Identities Through Creativity: Skillfully reconciles the perceived conflict between their Dakota and Cree identities, using creativity as a powerful means to express and honor both sides of heritage. Beadwork is what bridges together the duality of heritages. The journey moccasin bundle maker embraces both identities and applies knowledge from both Indigenous frameworks (Kovach, 2021, 43). The journey moccasin bundle maker leans on their knowledge of who they are and it becomes the support required to make the journey moccasin bundles. Both knowledge comes into play while the journey moccasin bundle is being created. The journey moccasin bundle maker is nothing without both the knowledge of their mixed Indigenous identities.

xiii) Beadwork as a Spiritual: The process of creating beadwork is a deeply spiritual and interpretative journey, drawing upon ancestral knowledge, personal experience, and intuitive understanding. This part of the process is difficult as it navigates through a part of ceremonial teachings in a single space with the journey moccasin bundle maker and the journey moccasin bundle being created. This transformation challenges the journey moccasin bundle maker and their knowledge of making, skill set, and ceremonial practices. The journey moccasin bundle maker needs to earn these teachings of making through ceremony and if they don't it will be challenging. The journey moccasin bundle maker knows the hardest part of this process is prayer. To stay on task and to support the work through the support of medicines and meaningful timing while in the process of making (Kovach, 2021, 21).

xiv) Sweetgrass: The scent of sweetgrass serves as a potent sensory reminder of the journey moccasin bundle maker's mixed heritage and enduring ancestral connections, grounding them in their cultural roots and embracing natural laws (Ahenakew, 1995, 33). The braid of sweetgrass has the importance of togetherness, community, ceremony, sacrifice and natural order. This medicine was used to bring calmness, clear energies in the space of journey moccasin bundle making and creating a safety of staying focused.

xv) Introspection and Metaphorical Gifts: The act of creation allows for deep introspection and the reception of metaphorical gifts, such as apologies, which facilitate profound emotional and spiritual healing. The process of undoing and redoing beadwork symbolizes the act of making space for healing and forgiveness (Ahenakew, 1995, 33), creating room for new beginnings. This is not coincidence but an act of divine intervention and necessary spiritual work that needs to be conducted as part of support of journey moccasin bundle making.

xvi) Learning and Unlearning: The journey of creating journey moccasin bundles is inextricably linked to personal growth, spiritual experiences, and the transformative power of forgiveness and love. The journey moccasin bundle maker emphasizes the cyclical nature of learning and unlearning, highlighting the continuous process of growth and transformation through moccasin bundle maker expression. Journey moccasin bundle making is a gift and set of skills. The skill is what can be taught and acquired through training. The gift of journey moccasin bundle making is through ceremony and traditional connection to ancestral knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing (Kovach, 2021, 270).

xvii) Healing while Making Journey Moccasin Bundles: There is a weight of doubt and past trauma. Feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure are fueled by lingering doubts and unresolved past traumas, creating formidable psychological barriers. A natural part of the creative process that challenges the journey moccasin bundle maker to look within and create a safe space to pass through the trauma through the creative process. Creative expression offers a vital escape from the constraints of reality, providing a space for personal fulfillment and emotional processing. The profound impact of unexpected apologies. The narrative powerfully illustrates the profound sacrifices inherent in journey moccasin bundle making, revealing a deeply emotional and spiritual journey (Kovach, 2021, 270).

The creative process is a challenging and often painful journey, requiring the journey moccasin bundle maker to navigate artificial deadlines, confront personal traumas, and maintain a state of presence with materials (Laviolette, 1991, 17). "Breaking points" are not failures, but rather integral moments of transformation within this hard work yet ultimately rewarding process. Navigates a complex and emotionally charged journey of discovery and expression. The moccasin bundle serves as a sanctuary and a source of healing, offering solace and purpose

amidst the pressures of daily life and the internal conflict between personal fulfillment and external validation.

Journey moccasin bundle makers navigate unique paths, learning from diverse influences and ultimately deciding which practices to embrace or discard, refining their craft through a series of errors. The speaker is deeply committed to preserving and honoring cultural heritage, navigating obstacles with resilience rooted in ancestral connection. They find strength through ceremony, community, and the enduring teachings of their ancestors (Pond, 1986, 85), ensuring that the legacy of resistance, cultural identity, and spiritual connection continues to thrive.

The journey in beadwork is a deeply transformative exploration of cultural identity, spirituality, and growth, guided by a profound connection to ancestral wisdom and the inspiring mentorship of Grace Peigan (Peigan (nee LeCaine), 2008 - 2010). This journey underscores the importance of seeking knowledge from beyond the self and embracing the power of heritage to shape and define journey moccasin bundle making and spiritual path (Kovach, 2021, 86 - 87). The journey moccasin bundle maker powerfully embraces their dual heritage, transforming it into a source of strength and inspiration in creative endeavors.

It is a sacred space where divine intervention occurs, allowing for the reception of needed apologies and the cultivation of forgiveness, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of self and spiritual connection. It is a testament to the journey moccasin bundle makers' unwavering commitment to supporting others, honoring ancestral traditions, and creating a lasting legacy of connection and kinship for future generations (Kovach, 2021, 270).

The work is deeply rooted in honoring ancestral traditions and teachings, with a profound focus on spirituality and community. It is both a personal journey of growth and a sacred tribute to

those who came before, emphasizing the vital importance of preserving and sharing cultural crafts to ensure the continuity of ancestral legacy. Creating journey moccasins is a deeply spiritual and emotional practice, rooted in Indigenous beliefs and family traditions. It serves as a sacred act of healing and connection, honoring the deceased while providing comfort and solace to their families, guiding them on their spiritual journey (Pond, 1986, 162).

The journey moccasin bundle maker's work is a profound and powerful expression of cultural identity and spirituality, fostering strong community bonds and facilitating personal healing. Guided by ancestral spirits and a deep sense of purpose, the creative process emphasizes the vital importance of intention, impact, and the enduring legacy of journey moccasin bundles.

“Rejecting the western epistemology ideologies of what art and artists are. The disconnect is real to the experience of making. A spirit having a human experience. The real feelings of prioritizing the Indigenous ways of knowing and ancestral knowledge that leads to Indigenous frameworks (Kovach, 2021, 43). The truth of it all is that making is a gift. Sharing the gift of making is truly what should inspire the work. The journey moccasin bundle making is a connection to the Creator of life an extension of the love and trust of spiritual connection.

As a journey moccasin bundle maker the work can not ignore the real connection of spirituality in the process. The purpose and intent is to keep alive thousands of years of resilience of journey moccasin bundle makers that have come before (Robertson et al., 2024, 2). The only recognition that is necessary in this whole process is that it's part of the ceremony.

The ceremony has five spirits that attend. The ceremony consists of the male spirit, the female spirit, the Winktê (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, 149) (queer), the contrary spirit and the skeptic spirit. Through this process the formal approach in writing this process out is the work of the skeptic. The work of the contrary through this process is by doing the beadwork of journey moccasin bundle making and then participating in the western institutions that do not serve spirit. The work of Winktê (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, 149) is

throughout the process as love and devotion to the beadwork. The male and female spirits are mentorship that was shared through the human experience. None of this makes sense to do but it's important as it can be a tool to support others in reconnecting with their spiritual purpose (Poitras, 2025).”

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Appendices

Table 1 Appendices:

Slideshow of “Best Work is 6 Feet Under, Ceremony in the Dirt” By Paulete Poitras an Art Exhibition presented to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Master’s in Art, Media and Design Kenderdine Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, 2nd Floor, April 14th 2025 - April 21st 2025, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, 2025. Additional Slideshow pages 1 - 59 attached.

Best Work is 6 Feet Under, Ceremony in the Dirt

By Paulete Poitras

Master of Fine Arts Thesis Defence Presentation



Image 1.

Paulete Poitras

They Heal When They Dance, 2022 - 2025
Mixed Media.

Paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Artist Statement by Paulete Poitras

Paulete Poitras is a traditional Dakota/Cree style beader from Muscowpetung First Nation in Treaty Four. They used mixed media and Indigenous epistemologies specific to Dakota and Cree. While working with the in between of Indigenous methodologies in practice and design.

Hàn Mâtàkíyàpì, mijà Dakota sáhàyàh, Ó-ěyâh-wákân-wī īmâkīyâpī, Mùthpīyà-skà īmâkīyâpī, mijà wīnktê wákán, chántē wàstè.

Greetings my relatives, I am Dakota Cree, my spiritual name is sacred voice woman and spiritual name is white cloud, I am a 2 Spirited with a good heart.

My government name is Paulete Poitras from Muscowpetung First Nation located in Treaty Four. I use mixed media and Indigenous epistemologies specific to Dakota and Cree. While working with the in-between of contrary spiritual practices and wīnktê methodologies in practice and design. As a Dakota Cree wīnktê Identified hill stitch traditional beader, it was vitally important to bring forward my journey as a beader. Pay respect to my mentors, the late Grace Peigan from Wood Mountain Lakota Nation, late paternal grandfather Calvin Poitras Sr. from Muscowpetung First Nation, and my late maternal grandfather Warren Kay Sr from Kawacatoose First Nation. Journey moccasin bundle making is important work to be speaking about.

I wanted to showcase growth, persistence, perseverance, Indigenous spirituality, embrace ancestral knowledge and practices with my beadwork. The most important is to showcase the importance of life and death. I used Dakota and Cree epistemologies of how both honour the importance of journey moccasin bundle making. This work is meaningful, purposeful and necessary. I pray that my work is received in a good way and I respect the content that is deep seeded in difficult conversations about death. My intention is to bring forward healing and connection to the creator of life who is the ultimate journey moccasin bundle maker.

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Exhibition Poster

“Owen Petit a graphic designer supported me in creating the exhibition Poster. This poster was able to be completed and distributed out in community and digitally. I am grateful for Owen Petit, Kenderdine Art Gallery in the Ag Bio Building at University of Saskatchewan 2nd Floor. Huge Thank you to Jake Moore, Todd Gronsdahl, and Cole Thomas. Thank you to curatorial team and graphic designer.” -

Paulete Poitras

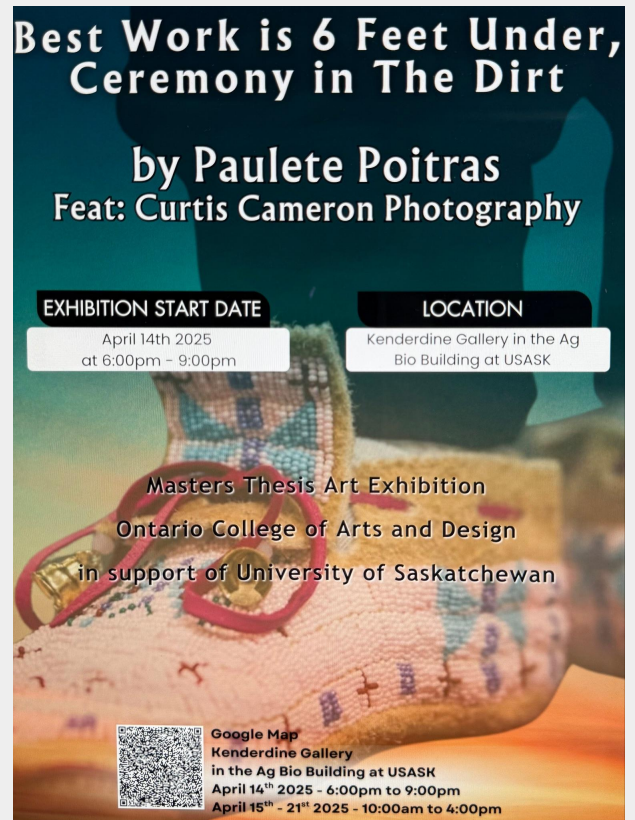


Image 2:

Paulete Poitras and Owen Petit

Paulie's Exhibition Poster, 2025

Digital Media

10' x 8'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

A Walk Through the Exhibition

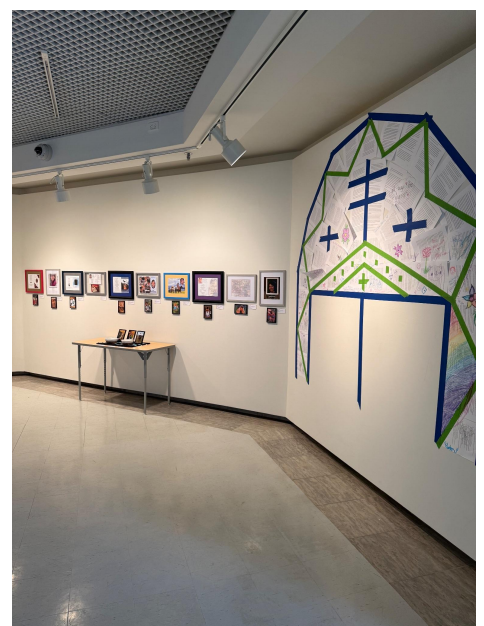
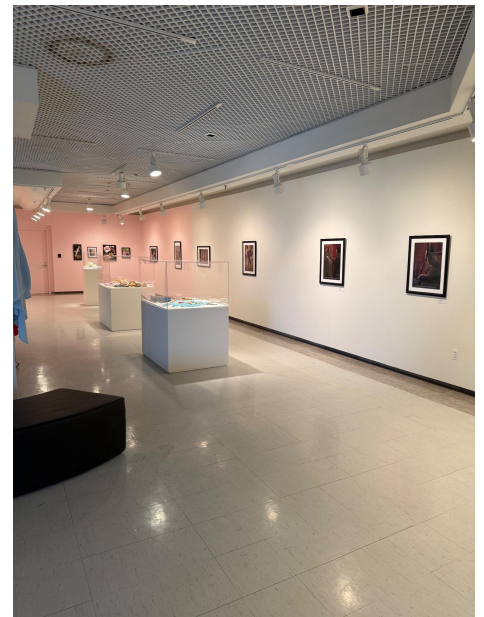
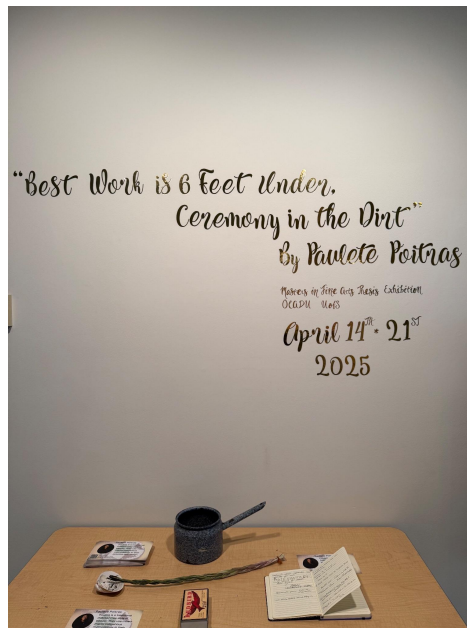
Image 3 - 8:

Paulete Poitras

A View of The Exhibition, 2025.

Mixed Media.

Kenderdine Art Gallery, Ag Bio
Building 2nd Floor



A Walk Through the Exhibition

“I started the Exhibition with singing a ceremonial song, long before the curation portion began. I sang ceremony into the space. I called for my work to come into the space, familiarize themselves with the space. I talk about the work as though it has a spirit because I breathe life into my work. I love everything I make its part of my story of who I am. I hung ceremonial cloth in the space, smudged the space, I had medicine available for others to use, I placed medicine with the work to provide protection, and closed with pipe ceremony. These practices aren’t for performance its my everyday lifestyle into a space that isn’t my home. This is my dual epistemologies of Dakota and Cree protocols and between Indigenous methodologies as part of my practice. I make it safe for my work and for people to view the work in a safe environment. I hung jingle dresses that my granddaughter Amiya Sutherland and myself wear to dance pow wow in. The intention is to bring healing, when we dance we heal.”

- Paulete Poitras

Early Works

“I wanted to show the old work. The reason was it shows the skill set with materials that are cost efficient. I now use smoked moose hide to bead directly on. This changes the work and how I work with the materials. I remember saving money just to afford the beads and materials. Then only charging community members for the material cost and a few hours of my labour. It was a different experience but I’m glad I was able to do these things back then. It helps me to see the progress in my skill set and materials that I now formally use.”

- Paulete Poitras



Image 9:

Paulete Poitras

***Girlfriend Attempting Being Wife*, 2016**

Mixed Media

4' x 6'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Image 10:

Paulete Poitras

***Visit from Grandpa*, 2014**

Mixed Media

4' x 6'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Kêyam - Kìyam

“Moccasin bundle makers incorporate mistakes to reflect diverse perspectives, cultural teachings, and the inherent imperfections of life. This isn’t something that speaks to the work but allows space for natural mistakes to take place. Letting go is an important part of creative energies, letting go of what no longer serves the spirit and inserting teachings of “Keyam (Ahenakew, 1995, 53).” Keyam means to let go in Cree and was a huge teaching in prayer displayed and generously shown through Cree grandfather Warren Kay Sr. (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990).”

“I needed to let go of the frustration, hurt, and harm done to me during my masters. These moccasins were made for someone who I respected and in return hurt me. I choose to turn it around and let go. It doesn’t serve my spirit to carry the pain anymore. It was time to release it. This piece is called Kìyam because let them. I took my power back.”

- Paulete Poitras

Image 11:

Paulete Poitras

Kíyam, 2016
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Forgiveness is a Powerful Gift

Forgiveness as a spiritual act and part of ceremony. Forgiveness is presented as a spiritual act, directed towards the spirit, transcending the need for direct reconciliation with the offending person. The act of creating moccasin bundle making becomes a powerful metaphor for this research creation journey of forgiveness, and symbolizes the steps taken towards release and healing (Mails, 2012, 34 - 47). Liberation through letting go of fears and past traumas is depicted as a necessary step towards personal growth and liberation, enabling individuals to move forward with renewed strength. - Paulete Poitras

Image 12:

Paulete Poitras

***Forgiveness, Santa Fe,
Yellow Horse Medicine,***
2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 13:

Paulete Poitras

***Forgiveness, Santa Fe,
Blooming,*** 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 14:

Paulete Poitras

***Forgiveness, Santa Fe,
Healing,*** 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com
[m](#)



Image 15:

Paulete Poitras

***Forgiveness, Santa Fe,
Horse Medicine,*** 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com
[m](#)



Horse Mask Bundle

“This work was work I did with my Granddaughter Amiya Sutherland. She drew on a piece of Deer Hide when I told her stories of Horses and the Healing they bring. Her small little hands hard at work. I started by gifting her tobacco and telling her she has work to do. She had all the markers I could find and she drew all over the leather. It was a beautiful collaboration and I really enjoyed the process. She is a gift and I hope it inspires her to continue to be creative.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 16:

Paulete Poitras and Amiya Sutherland

Little Wolf Woman's Work Part I, 2022
Mixed Media
4' x 6'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 17:

Paulete Poitras and Amiya Sutherland

Little Wolf Woman's Work Part II
2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

It's Tyme

“Jaylene Tyme is a registered member of the Sakimay First Nation in Treaty 4 and was recently invited to join Canada’s Drag Race. Jaylene is a distant relative from her roots in Kawacatoose First Nation. When she invited me to support her journey I was thrilled. She won Miss Congeniality in the race and did amazing work bringing conversations of her Trans Woman’s journey as a 60’s scoop survivor. Also bringing forward MMIWG2S+ and Every Child Matters, Indigenous issues that are ongoing in the Indigenous communities. This look was beyond beautiful and she did Treaty 4 such good medicine in her work.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 18:

Paulete Poitras, Jordy Ironstar, Jessica Ma'iigan, and Ryan Buffalo

***Jaylene Tyme*, 2025**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com
[@thedragseries](https://www.instagram.com/thedragseries)



Image 19:

Paulete Poitras

***Big Drag Secret*, 2024**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Old Lady Brown Bear

“I would go to sweat and participate in ceremony in a local reservation in Treaty 6. I made these beautiful wrap around moccasins of a Old Lady Brown Bear, I was so impressed with my skillwork it was nice that I surprised myself. This was truly a labour of love.” -

Paulete Poitras



Image 20:

Paulete Poitras

Old Lady Brown Bear Looking, 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 21:

Paulete Poitras

Old Lady Brown Bear, 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Creative Works Behind the Scenes

“Behind a white screen were my beginning parts of working on Moccasin Bundle Making. I cut out the foot print I design on paper a rough draft and I would use medicine throughout the process. The light screen allowed community to play in the light behind the scenes. Becoming part of the Art Exhibition. I was happy to watch community play with this installation.” - Paulete Poitras

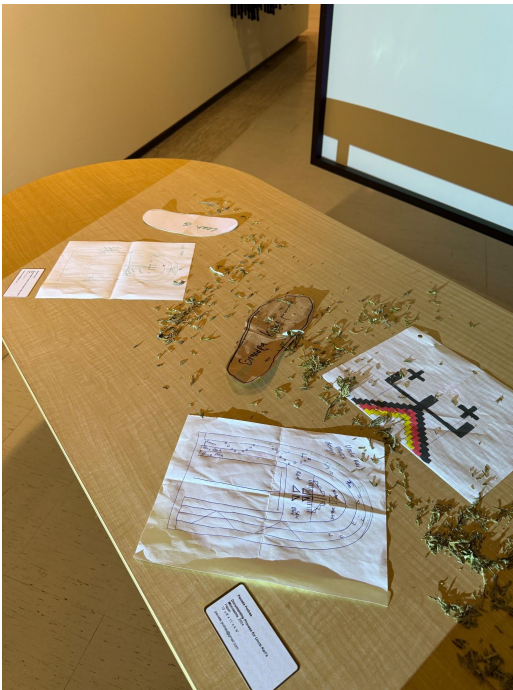


Image 22:

Paulete Poitras

Documenting Process for Leah Gazan's Moccasins, 2025
Paper
10' x 8' x 6' x 3 ½'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Documenting Process for Uncle Karl's Moccasins, 2024
Paper
10' x 8' x 11' x 4 ½'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 23:

Paulete Poitras

Documenting Process for Aunty Debbie's Moccasins, 2025
Paper
10' x 8' x 8' x 3 ½'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Robertson, C., Anderson, J., & Boyer, K.

Bead Talk: Indigenous Knowledge and Aesthetics from the Flatlands, 2024
Print



Image 24:

Paulete Poitras

Chanupa, 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

2 Years He Waited, And Waited, And Waited, 2019
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Works Over Many Years



Paulete Poitras

Blue Eyed Eagle Woman,
2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

The Fox and the Coyote Visit, 2021
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Sacred Water Woman, Healing, 2022
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Blue Shooting Star Man,
2024
Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

My Cousin, My Bloodline,
2021
Digital Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras and Curtis Cameron Photography

Speaking to the Youth,
2025
Mixed Media
4 x 6

paulete.poitras@gmail.com 15

Image 25: Left to Right, Top to Bottom

Works Over Many Years

“All of these works have original stories and meaning behind them. This is important because I only make custom work because I don’t want to lose the spiritual practice that is part of my work. It’s intentional to make each piece unique to each person. Never duplicated and each story is a bundle that is treasured to the family who become moccasin bundle keepers. The care for these moccasin bundles are given when they receive them and this is practiced throughout the keeper of the moccasin bundle’s life. This Collection of Work has taken so many years to complete. I can recall all stories and history of each piece.” - Paulete Poitras

Hunka Relatives and Close to My Heart

“I love making for family it brings me closer to each of them. I get to support them through starting their bundle. They can find the power in using their moccasin bundles to pray and reconnect with spirit. My hunka relatives truly understand the importance of the care of their moccasin bundles and treat them with the respect they deserve. My second oldest is the Brown pair with Blue and Green Circles. I made them for her when she Graduated from Grade 12. I was so proud of her accomplishments.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 26:

Paulete Poitras

Chief's Wife, 2022

Mixed Media

4' x 6'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 27:

Paulete Poitras

Good Medicine Woman, A

Mother's Love, 2024

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 28:

Paulete Poitras

Good Heart, Frog, & Light

Snow Falling, 2021

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Good Day of Life's Bundle

“Witnessing a person coming into their own medicine and power is a beautiful thing. I watched them turn to their spirituality as a need to pursue a better way of living. They naturally took on these responsibilities with love and grace. I am deeply grateful and deeply proud of them. They are truly a gift. I had the opportunity to make them Moccasins so they can use them in ceremony. Then again when they wanted a bag for their chanupa. I made them match and it was meaningful work to complete. First set of Moccasins and Chanupa to match. I love this set and maybe in the future I can make more sets for more prayerful people.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 29:

Paulete Poitras

***Good Day of Life*, 2024**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image: 30:

Paulete Poitras

***Good Day of Life*, 2025**

Chanupa

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Babies Are Blessings

“This is important as I was always enough for my grandparents as they valued that I was the treaty among the Dakota and the Cree. When a baby is gifted to a family with dual lineage it was meant to provide a truce between the two camps. My sister and I were the truce or the “treaty” between the two lineages (Ahenakew, 1995, 32). (Poitras, 2025)”



Image 31:

Paulete Poitras

New Baby, New Beginnings, 2022

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Violet, Kokum's new Dancer, 2025

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Baby Clarence, A Surprise Healing Gift, 2025

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Red Thunder, 2022

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Babies Are Blessings

“I am often asked to make baby Moccasins. I am a bit reluctant because the babies grow so fast that when I’m done they don’t fit them for long. That’s unless I live close to them. But, I often feel that it’s important to make for them when they are young even if they fit them for a short period of time. Moccasins connect them to Creator of Life and all the natural world. It’s important to make for them so they have that opportunity to embrace their heritage at such a young age. I know I’ve make plenty more and just haven’t gotten images to share during the exhibition. But each person that I made for their babies seem to always honour those small bundles. It becomes something they truly treasure. I feel overwhelmed with happiness when I see the babies in them.” - Paulete Poitras

Honoring My Beading Mentor Late Grace Peigan

“Influence of Grace Peigan (nee Lecaine Wood Mountain) on Beading. Grace Peigan (nee Lecaine) was a Lakota beadmaker from Wood Mountain, living in Pasqua First Nation. Her home had a distinct smell of sweet grass, smoked moosehide, and cigarettes, and was always welcoming. Beading connected Grace to her Lakota heritage and ties to famous Lakota leader Sitting Bull. She inspired others not through direct teaching but by sharing stories and her own experiences. The practice of beading is tied to Indigenous spirituality and ancestral knowledge. Grace emphasized the importance of being proud of one's identity and the spiritual connection in creating for others. Grace Peigan (nee LeCaine)'s influence extended beyond beading techniques, instilling a deep sense of cultural pride and spiritual connection in her students. Her teachings emphasized the ancient Indigenous methodologies and the importance of understanding one's heritage. (Peigan (nee LeCaine), 2008 - 2010)” - Paulete Poitras



Image 32:

Paulete Poitras

**Wood Mountain
Ancestor, Hunk Papa
Lakota, Sitting Bull's
Camp, 2025
Mixed Media
15' x 12' & 25' x 17'**

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Honoring My Beading Mentor Late Grace Peigan



Image 33:

This photo is of Paulete Poitras, Mac Peigan(Grace Peigan's Great Grandchild), and Maxine Peigan (Grace Peigan's Granddaughter). Taken at the Art Exhibition Opening April 14th 2025.

Love Has No Bounds

“I believe it’s truly important to make both of them each a pair of moccasin bundles. This is because they are so deeply important to my Prosper family as I married into this family. They are important pillars to me and often come to support the work I do in community of Treaty 6. They welcomed me into the family, the community and hold deep importance to me. I love them and I love witnessing the love they have for one another.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 34:

**Paulete Poitras and Curtis Cameron
Photography**

Uncle Karl, Tipi Keeper Elder, 2025

Mixed Media

21' x 31 ¼'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 35:

Paulete Poitras

Aunty Debbie, Sash Maker Elder

Admiring Her Moccasins, 2025

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Love Has No Bounds

“Uncle Karl and Aunty Debby
Brought Their Moccasin Bundles to
Wear to the Art Exhibition Opening
April 14th 2025. They then loaned
them for display.”

Image 36:

Paulete Poitras

***Love Has No Bounds*, 2025**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Spill the Tea

“I love this work. I was really into drinking hot tea and hearing the hot tea too. As a 2SLGBTQQA+ person I wanted to play with the work that I have done and the words spill the tea...as in spill the hot gossip. Beading tea bags was fun and different as it was much more delicate than smoked moose hide. It was a beautiful addition to the work I want to continue to do.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 37:

**Paulete Poitras
Poitras**

***Spill the Tea - Part I*, 2023**
Mixed Media
7' x 7'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

***Spill the Tea - Part II*, 2023**
Mixed Media
7' x 7'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete

***Spill the Tea - Part III*, 2023**
Mixed Media
7' x 7'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Beginning Years of Amiya Sutherland

“I was so blessed to have met my wife in the beginning years of Amiya Sutherland aka Little Wolf Woman. She has been my blessing in my life. I got to witness her grow throughout the years and document her growth through beadwork and textile work. This is labour of love as she is the one I get to support in this journey called life.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 38:

Paulete Poitras

Little Wolf Woman's Beginning,
2018
Mixed Media
13' x 13'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 39:

Paulete Poitras

***Little Wolf Woman's Bonnet,
Skirt, and Wrap Around
Moccasins,*** 2019
Mixed Media
15' x 12'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Amiya's Dancing Journey

“My Little Wolf Woman truly embraced her culture and Indigenous heritage from a small age. She naturally gravitated towards dancing pow wow. She loved it right from the start. So I got to work early and never quit. It's part of my life that I actively get to participate in. I love making for her and she proudly displays her previous work. The Greatest Role I ever get to play in life is being a Grandma to my grandchildren.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 40:

Paulete Poitras

*Little Wolf Woman's Pendleton
Mocs*, 2020
Mixed Media
15' x 12'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 41:

Paulete Poitras

*Little Wolf Woman's Mocs, Belt,
and Ribbon Skirt*, 2023
Mixed Media
20 ½' x 17 ½'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 42:

Paulete Poitras and Jolene
McLean

Little Wolf Woman's Regalia, 2022
- 2023
Mixed Media
21' x 17 ¼'

['paulete.poitras@gmail.com](mailto:paulete.poitras@gmail.com)

Little Journey of Little Wolf Woman

“From so small tiny tots to growing into Junior categories. I get to document her journey throughout life by making. This is going to be a lifetime of work that I get to do. I embrace these changes and growth. She is a gift and I always cherish these opportunities to support her in this way.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 43:

Paulete Poitras

Little Wolf Woman's Dancing, 2022

Mixed Media

15 ½' x 12 ½'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 44:

Paulete Poitras

Little Wolf Woman's New Junior Beadwork,
2024

Mixed Media

21 ½' x 17 ½'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Little Journey of Little Wolf Woman

Image 45:

Paulete Poitras

***Little Wolf Woman's Fresh Set*, 2024**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

***Little Wolf Woman's Wrap Around Moccasins Part I*, 2024**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

***Little Wolf Woman's Wrap Around Moccasins Part II*, 2024**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Máto Najìn

“From his first pair of moccasin bundle no beadwork. I was first dating my now wife and I had some material with me. I quickly made a pair of moccasins for a small 2 year old Kaden Sutherland my now grandson. When his grandma he came home he walked up to her pointing at his feet. “Look Grandma shoes.” She began to cry and I continue to make for him throughout his life. I follow what his likes are during that time. It helps him enjoy dancing pow-wow.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 46:

Paulete Poitras

Rainbow Shirt, Sutherland, First Moccasins, 2018

Mixed Media

20 ¾' x 12'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 47:

Paulete Poitras and Cheryl Prosper

Standing Bear Starts Dancing, Mario, 2022

Mixed Media

15' x 12'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Wedding Bliss

“Kaden’s two pairs of moccasin bundles I’ve made for him following his likes. In hopes he would like to dance pow wow. I will continue to make for him moccasin bundles because I know he appreciates them. His wedding attire to my wife’s beaded bowtie for our wedding. Life has been a gift that I get to participate in and document through beadwork.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 48:

Paulete Poitras

I Do, 2019
Mixed Media
21' x 17 ¼'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com
[m](#)



Image 49:

Paulete Poitras and Mike McCoy

I Do, Wrapped in Blanket, 2018
Mixed Media
14 ¾' x 11 ¾'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Winona

“Our oldest Daughter the winona in Dakota. She is also Half Dakota and Half Cree just like me. These moccasin bundle were truly a gift for her healing. She lost her very best friend, his name was Nick Bell. I made these moccasins bundle and her late grandfather came to visit me. So did Nick Bell. I incorporated what they wanted to share with me into the design along with incorporating her spiritual name. The golden bells on the moccasin bundle is to honour her late best friend. She cried when she received them.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 50:

Paulete Poitras and Curtis Cameron Photography Photography

***Butterfly Woman*, 2024 - Printed 2025**

Mixed Media

31 ¼' x 21

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 51:

Paulete Poitras and Curtis Cameron

***Butterfly Woman Standing*, 2024 - Printed 2025**

Mixed Media

21' x 31 ¼'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

My Mama My Life Giver



Image 52:

Paulete Poitras and Curtis Cameron Photography

***Blue Lightning, Thunder Horse, Holy Elk Woman*, 2024 - Printed 2025**

Mixed Media

21' x 31 ¼

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 53:

Paulete Poitras and Curtis Cameron Photography

***Blue Lightning, Thunder Horse, Holy Elk Woman, Wearing Purse*, 2017 -**

2024 - Printed 2025

Mixed Media

27 ¾' x 22'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

My Mama My Life Giver

“I can recall going to my grandparents' home in Kawacatoose First Nation (Spiritual Spear of Chief Kawacatoose, 2023, 6). It was north of Muscowpetung First Nation where I was raised. I can recall as far as I could remember my late Mushum Warren Kay Sr. greeted me and talked to me in Dakota and in Cree. He knew multiple languages as he was a translator like his late Daddy Bob Kay Sr. So, he would have his rough hands down my face starting from my forehead to my chin. He would say “Half Cree and..” slide his rough hand across the left side of my face gently and then say “Half Dakota.” His rough hands would slide across the right side of my face roughly in a playful way. It was his way of connecting with me and showing me his Cree humor (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990). I was enough for him and for me that was important. Some of my best work is in floral work from my Cree side (Kovach, 2021, 49 - 51), it just takes longer, but I feel my connection to my material side. When I bead in Cree stitch it teaches me to slow down and appreciate the gift I was given by the Creator of life and that life itself is the real journey in life. My Cree side reminds me to find the joy and laughter in everything I do. Although I do prefer the hill stitch, also known as Sioux Stitch, Lane Stitch (Robertson et al., 2024, 147) or as western Europeans racistly named it “lazy stitch.” I myself love that stitch in beading and it comes so naturally and quickly for me. I love making Dakota style moccasins (White, 2013, 47 & 52) and this has been the majority of styles of moccasins that I create (Poitras, 2025).” - Paulete Poitras

Together We Succeed

To my wife Cheryl Prosper, my best friend, my lover, my support and the reason I wake up every morning grateful to be alive. Thank you as you continue to bring joy and happiness as I continue to chase my dreams.



Image 54:

**Paulete Poitras, Cheryl Prosper, and Curtis
Cameron Photography**

Collective Pride, 2024

Mixed Media

27 ¾" x 22"

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 55:

**Paulete Poitras, Cheryl Prosper, and Curtis
Cameron Photography**

Collective Pride, Just Admiring, 2024

Mixed Media

27 ¾" x 22"

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Works on Display

“Thank you to our children Amy, Cetera, Milburn and grandchildren Kaden, Amiya as they bring pure joy and love into our lives. To my sister Amber Memnook, thank you for being my first best friend and for always supporting me through all my endeavors. Also, thank you for your patience as I finished your ten year long project of finishing your beading leggings and moccasins. This work is a collection of work from Amiya Sutherland, Cetera Sutherland, Amy Prosper, Amber Memnook and My own Moccasins.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 56 & 57:

Paulete Poitras

Paulete Poitras

Paulete Poitras

Paulete Poitras

Includes Works of

***Good Medicine Woman*, 2024**

***Butterfly Woman and A Bell*, 2024**

***Early Morning Sky Woman's Ready*,**

***Little Wolf Woman*, 2024**

Paulete Poitras

Mixed Media
Size 8

Mixed Media
Size 8

2015 - 2025
Mixed Media
Size 8.5

Mixed Media
Size 1

***38 years, Made My Own Moccasins*, 2023**
Mixed Media
Size 10

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Works on Display

Image 58:

Paulete Poitras

*Rainbow Sky Woman, One Who
Walks With Wolves*, 2022

Mixed Media

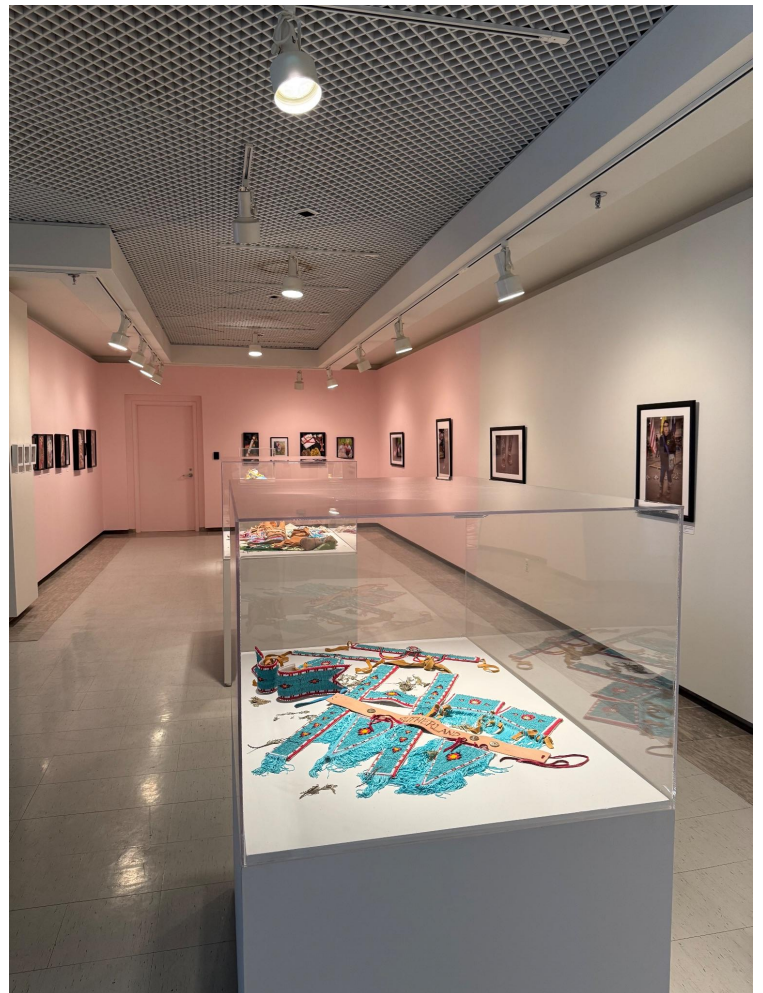
Size 8

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Mâto

“This beadwork was made years ago for my nephew Ashtyn Memnook who is now a father. This beadwork now belongs to my grandson Kaden Sutherland. Both have Bear Spiritual Names. This is truly a beautiful gift I get to keep in our bloodline for a long time.” - Paulete Poitras



Images 59 & 60:

Paulete Poitras

Mâto, 2016
Mixed Media

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Aunty Beverly Poitras



Image 61:
Paulete Poitras

Beverly Poitras, *The Trade*, 2023
Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
13 3/8' x 15 3/4' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Aunty Beverly Poitras

“I knew she was getting more and more sick as time passed. It was challenging. Years prior she asked me to make her some moccasins, I hesitated in making them for her. I knew that if I did them and completed them, they would end up being journey moccasins. This haunted me. One day after going to university classes I went to her house to visit. I sat with her and she said “Polly I want some moccasins made by you. I am not getting any older and well I know when I pass away I want you to make them for me. I know you pray and I know you only start things with tobacco.” She reached on the table in front of her and grabbed one smoke from her pack. She said “Here! Take this and you can not refuse. The truth is I am not well and I need you to make my moccasins. I'll give you one month to get them done.” Reluctantly I took the smoke she offered me and put my head down. I knew what this meant, she was getting ready to leave this place, the earthly realm. I said “Well aunty what are you gonna trade me for?” She smiled and said “Look behind my couch there is a large mirror behind there not put up.” Sure enough when I looked behind her couch there was a large mirror sitting there. She said “Take it home and hang it up.” We visited and talked and I told her how much I love her and appreciate all she has done for me through my education years and my entire life up to that point. She said “Oh Miss Polly Ann I love you too, and I really think the world of you. Since I first met you I fell in love with your big eyes and big curiosity. I love watching you grow into the woman you are today. You are chasing your dreams and finishing school. You will accomplish great things. One day your beading will be so important in the world. You bring healing and happiness. You are fearless and determined. You are a proud Dakota Cree 2 Spirited woman. Keep going and don't quit until you get everything you deserve.” With tears in my eyes I gave her a kiss on the cheek and thanked her. Four months later I finished her moccasins and sure enough I completed them in time for her to make her journey to the spiritual realm as her time here in the earthly realm was done. It was difficult but meaningful and I was so deeply honoured to give her exactly what she deserves. The mirror hangs in the entry of my home and I think of her often. I miss her always and love her deeply. I talk to her from time to time when I pray, when I do beadwork for others. I thank her for encouraging me when I needed it. I am so grateful for these life lessons (Poitras, 2025).” - Paulete Poitras

Uncle Rick Favel



Image 62:

Paulete Poitras

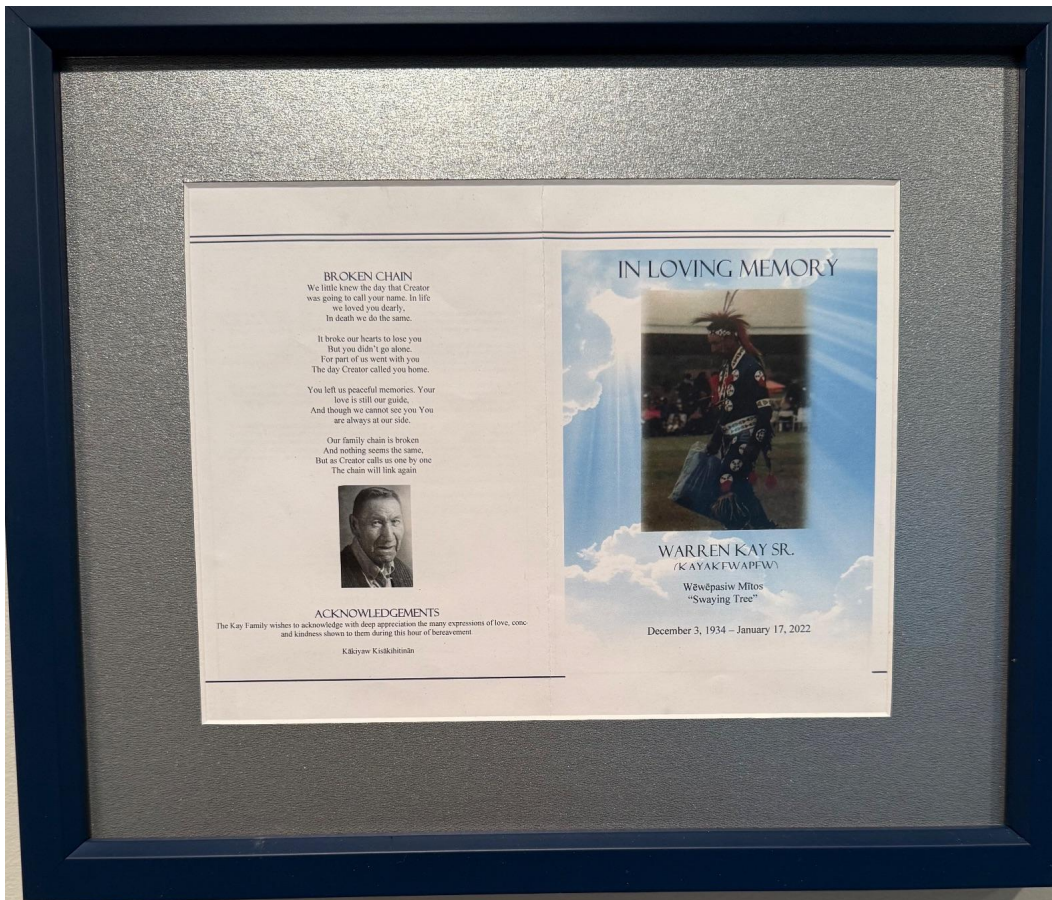
***Rick Favel, Daddy's
Girls Final Request,
2022***

Mixed Media - Beaded
Journey Moccasins
15' x 12' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

“Uncle Rick was a prayerful man and a ceremonial man. He was a community Healer. He always talked about the importance of traditional protocols and to never worry about things that don't work out. “Someway Creator finds a way to protect us all in the things we do for others.” - Paulete Poitras

Mushum Warren Kay Sr



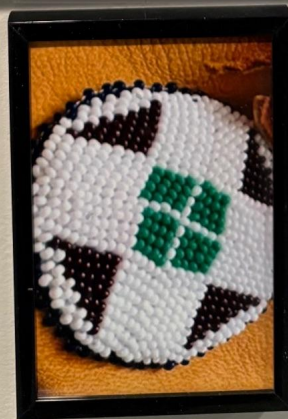
“A lot of people didn’t know that the family nicknamed him John Wayne. He loved Westerns and had blue eyes. It was something I started to say when I saw him “Mushum you look like John Wayne.” With his smile he would say “Thank you Very Much.” - Paulete Poitras

Image 63:

Paulete Poitras

John Wayne Rides Away, Warren Kay Sr, 2024
Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
13' x 15 ½' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Paulete Poitras
John Wayne Rides Away, Warren Kay, 2024
Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
13' x 15 ½' & 6' x 4'
paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Mushum Warren Kay Sr

“The memory takes place in Kawacatoose, First Nation, during a family gathering, likely around Easter. The grandfather would wake up at 4:30 AM to tend to his chickens, collect eggs, and bring them to the grandmother who was already making breakfast. The morning was filled with the smells of sweetgrass, bannock, and coffee, and the grandfather would start his day with prayer and sweetgrass. He was a humble, kind, and hardworking man who taught the importance of prayer and connection to the Creator by example. The grandfather shared a deep understanding of the world, teaching about the relationship with nature and ancestors, referring to trees and weather as older siblings. The family valued experiences, language, and understanding of the world over material wealth. The grandfather's teachings emphasized gratitude and the interconnectedness of life and nature. His teachings were the power of prayer, that real power was in that prayer, connection to Creator, that we were part of creation. Many of my methodologies of Indigenous understandings were through him and his teachings (Kay Sr., 1980 - 1990).” - Paulete Poitras

Aunty Shirley Ironstar

“When I was making her Moccasin Bundle I could feel her near. She guided me on what to do and how she wanted things to be done. She choose her colours and designs. She shared with me her spiritual name. She was the guiding hand in the making. Sometimes I have to just listen and follow the guidance that is being spiritually shared with me.”

- Paulete Poitras

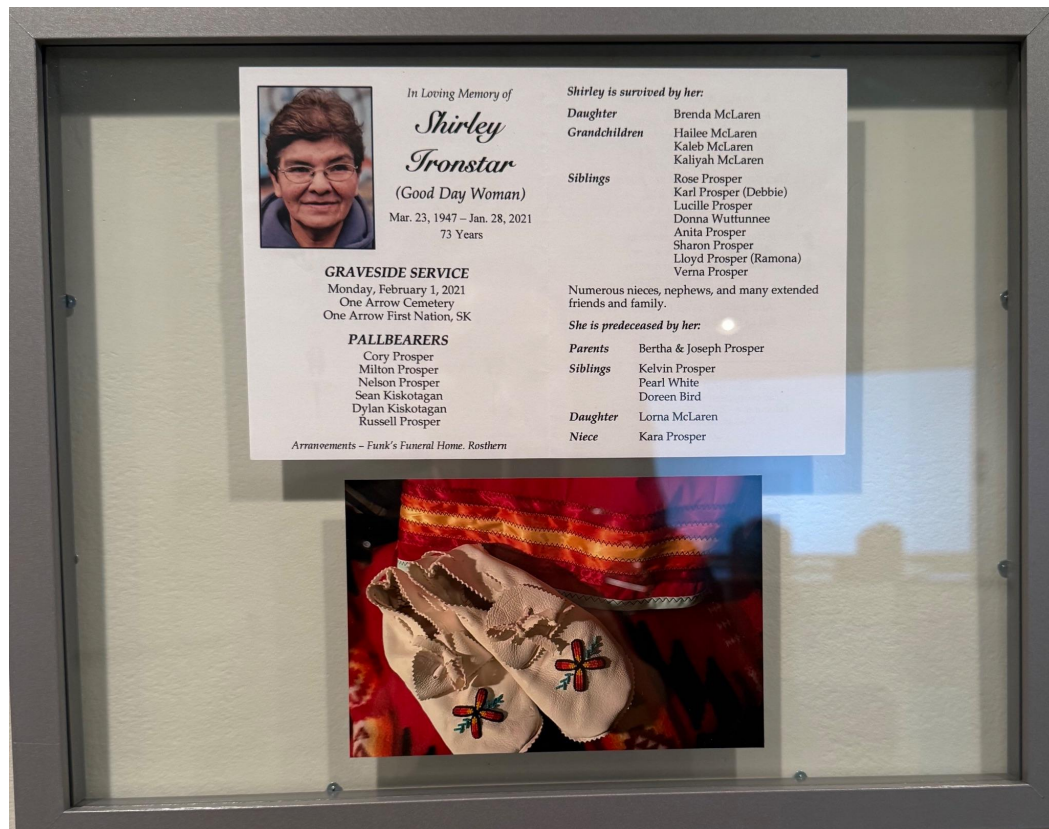


Image 64:

Paulete Poitras

Shirley Ironstar, for The Love of Her Daughter, 2021

Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
12' x 15' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Brother in Law Angus Prosper



Image 65:

Paulete Poitras

Angus Prosper, Poplar Tree:
Hang The Offerings, 2022
Mixed Media - Quilled Journey Moccasins
14 ½' x 17' & 6' x 4'

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Paulete Poitras
Angus Prosper, Poplar Tree: Hang The Offerings,
2022
Mixed Media - Quilled Journey Moccasins
14 ½' x 17' & 6' x 4'
paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Choose the Hard

"Choose what will be hard, and then make the choice to pursue it." I've never been granted the privilege of grieving as a human should. Life relentlessly pushes forward, responsibilities pile up, and all I crave is the solace of bed and tears. Instead, I must choose. I must choose what my heart will endure today, what challenge I will confront, what energy I will focus.

I never choose myself. My choices are always for others, ensuring their well-being before my own. Perhaps that's why my creative process unfolds at night, in the quiet solitude where no one demands anything. It's the only time I'm left with myself, the spirit, and the gift of beading.

The familiar rhythm of the needle piercing leather, the sifting of beads, finding those precise eight beads, the colors that speak to me – it's a symphony of voices, a cacophony of responsibilities, yet I still never choose the path of my own passion.

I'm aware of this internal struggle, this journey of self-discovery, unearthing gifts, purpose, and intention. The rhythmic dance of needle and thread guides my hands, toughening my fingers, as I reflect on what I've lost. I think of the people I've lost, the "best work" buried six feet under, unseen, unappreciated.

The late-night sessions, the bowl of beads, the silence that roars – it's a communion with spirits. It's a different kind of moccasin bundle making, devoid of Western theory, built on prayer. How do I explain to an institution that my home, my sanctuary, is where I find healing, not just for myself, but for others?

Perhaps this is my way of choosing myself.

Yet, a disconnect persists. The closer I get to the moccasin bundle making title, the further it feels. The pressure, the energy, the constant need to choose my heart, to define what is important – it's overwhelming.

The one constant is the present moment, the act of making. It grounds me, reminds me of who I am. In this space, there is calm, there is good, there is safety, there is intention, and for that, I am grateful (Poitras, 2025)."

Brother Harley Randall Memnook



Image 66:

Paulete Poitras

***Harley Memnook, Cody's
Little Brother***, 2024

Mixed Media - Beaded
Journey Moccasins
12' x 15' & 6' x 4'

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Paulete Poitras
Harley Memnook, Cody's Little Brother, 2024
Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
12' x 15' & 6' x 4'
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Chantē Wastē

“I am guided by the teachings of their grandfather, particularly the principle of "chantē wastē" (good heart), which inspires them to act with purpose, intention, and compassion. To walk in ceremony in the practice of traditional beadwork and prioritizing ancestral knowledge as they move forward in art practices. Listening and following the voices of ancestors that lead every detail in their life purpose with love, compassion, truth, help, and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing. Perseverance and cultural identity in adversity. The speaker emphasizes the importance of perseverance and maintaining a strong connection to their cultural identity despite adversity, ensuring the continuity of their heritage (Poitras, 2025).” - Paulete Poitras

Max Itittakoose Sr.



Image 67:

Paulete Poitras

***Max Itittakoose Sr, For
The Love of Her Daddy,***
2024

Mixed Media - Beaded
Journey Moccasins
12 1/2' x 15 1/8' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Niece Jasmine Prosper



Image 68:

Paulete Poitras

Jasmin Prosper, Purple Northern Lights Woman, 2024
Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
14 ½' x 17' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

The Door is Opening

“When I’m in the midst of drawing the moccasin bundle onto paper it’s here when the spiritual door to my ancestors opens. I can feel spirits near me. I smudge, I begin to pray and they are there beside me showing me pictures inside my mind’s eye. I allow for the design to slip onto the paper. I let go and allow for the work to begin. Sometimes it’s an urge or surge of energies inside me pushing my thoughts to do something. Or an image in my brain I can’t unsee. I trust there is purpose and reason behind everything. I let go and listened to the ancestors. From the paper to the act of beadwork being performed the dance is similar. Then when I’m done, I share this knowledge in the transfer. It never makes sense to me but for the moccasin bundle keeper I transfer to or their relatives who receive them on behalf of them. It will always make sense to them. This is where I take the tobacco either before or after the process is completed and I put out my offerings of tobacco to support my ancestors for trusting me and showing me ancestral knowledge. (Poitras, 2025)”

Kokum Catherine Sutherland

“The humble teachings of our place in the earthly realm. We are nothing, we come from the stars in, birthed through the portal from spiritual realm to earthly realm. Everything that we are returns back. Even through Dakota customs we were buried on scaffolds (Pond, 1986, 162), placed in the sun and our body was returned to animal life and ultimately the Oncí Makâ (Poitras, 2025).”

Image 69:

Paulete Poitras

***Kokum Sutherland, Grandchildren's Pillar*, 2025**

Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
12' x 15' & 4' x 6'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Aunty Anita Prosper



Image 70:

Paulete Poitras

Anita Prosper, *Poncho and Lefty*, 2025
Mixed Media - Beaded Journey Moccasins
15' x 12' & 6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Steps Taken

“Receiving tobacco is the first step. A request from the bundle keeper or the family of the bundle keeper, because sometimes I make for the deceased. That tobacco is my agreement to make and I also request at this time a footprint or shoe size for the bundle keeper. Tobacco and a footprint I begin the process.

Secondly I smudge myself with medicines either Cedar, Sage, or Sweetgrass. When it's for the deceased it's always cedar to call to their spirits and get spiritual insight from the deceased. When it's for the living I use sage to smudge the materials to clear the energies surrounding it.

The tobacco is for my bundle and my offerings. I sometimes put out tobacco on the ground at the base of a tree to ask for guidance. This isn't always how I always work, but sometimes I just allow for what spirit calls for. I let my spirit guide me through the process.

Thirdly I cut out the footprints from the paper it was drawn on. I then measure the footprint on the smoked moosehide. I used to use different materials, because it was easier to use and financially accessible. Then I later on began to use deer hide and any kinds of commercialized hides. It wasn't until in recent years was I able to afford smoked moose hide. It's expensive but when I have it, it's a preference. Lasts longer and sews like butter. Then I cut out the tops of the moccasins.

Steps Taken Continued

The fourth step is the selection of the moccasins colours. Sometimes the colours come from the family members guiding me with their deceased relative spiritual name and colours. Sometimes they don't know the colours and when I am smudging the materials I pray the answers will come.

The fifth Step once the colours are selected I then sit with a blank piece of paper and pencil and let the design take over on what I see. This might happen after several sleeps, dreams and visions. But essentially I am able to rough sketch the design and move onto the beading portion.

The sixth step is beading what I sketched. Hill stitch, lane stitch style (Dakota, Lakota, Nakota style). 8 beads on one line. I navigate the beadwork. I pray as I work and I follow the rough sketch outline. Once the design is beginning to take shape I constantly work through the process. What I do on one vamp is what I do on the other.

Messages happen in the beading stage and it's a sacred ceremony that takes place. I allow myself to become the needle and thread. I make the beading portion and listen to what my body, mind, spirit, and emotions share with me the spiritual messages that come through. The beading is the shortest but longest part. Short in time and longest in a holistic journey to process so much in such little time.

The final step is hand stitching the moccasins together. Once completed I smudge my home and transfer the bundle of moccasins to the family and share the spiritual messages that come through. I let go and when I transfer the messages it's the most emotional process. A release happens with the families; they understand it's all spiritual. They aren't just moccasins they are a tie to the past, the present and the future. A real spiritual bundle is born and I let go of the process. I hand them off and move onto the next pair. (Poitras, 2025)"

Giants and Healing Horse

“When I made the Giant Moccasin Bundle for my friend Jesse Short’s relative. I dreamed of things that helped their research and when I made them it brought healing to the family.

Clifford helped me in my healing and in return I gifted him a Horse Mask Bundle. He wore this to protect him during spiritual journey rides for community. When he passed I understand that the Horse Mask Making Bundles are also to prepare for the afterlife of the Horses.” - Paulete Poitras

Image 71:

Paulete Poitras

Giant Visitor, Length, 2023

Mixed Media - Beaded
Journey Moccasins
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras

Giant Visitor, 2023

Mixed Media - Beaded
Journey Moccasins
6' x 4'

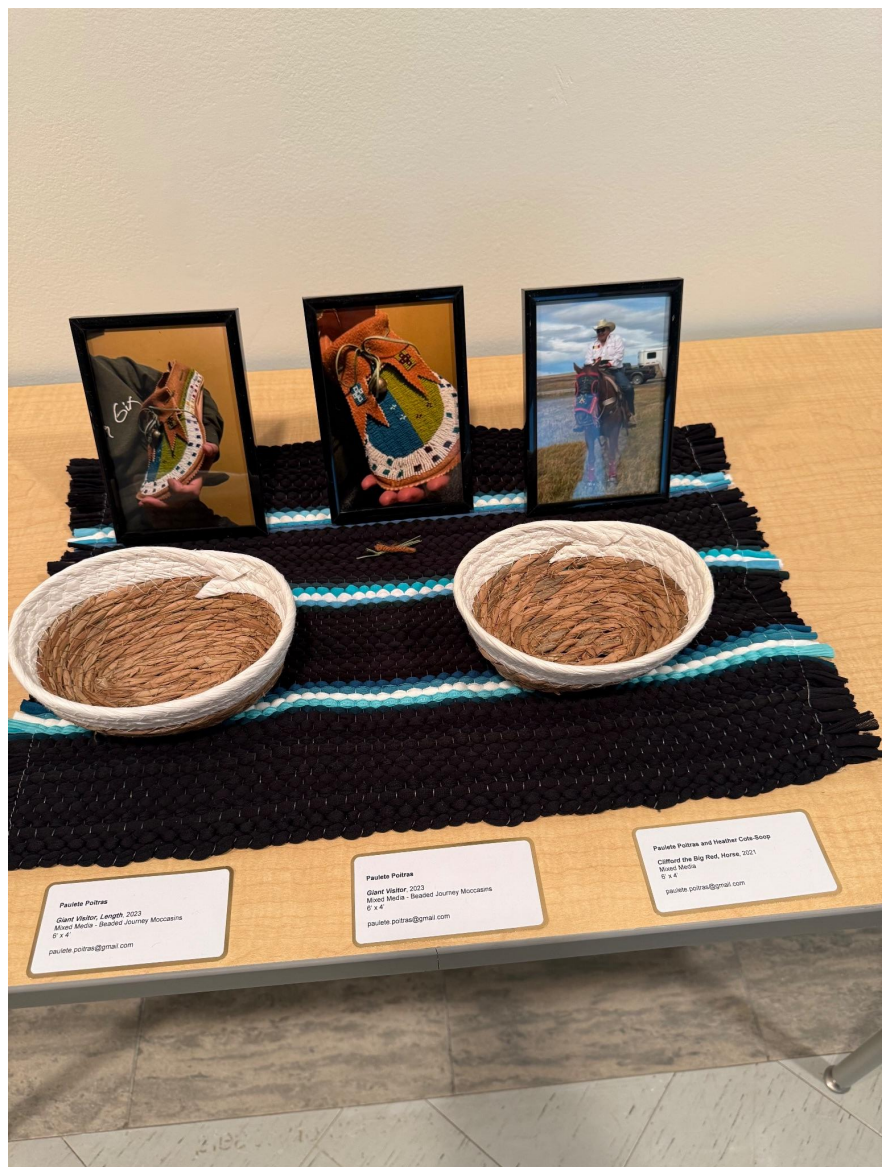
paulete.poitras@gmail.com

Paulete Poitras and Heather Cote-Soop

Clifford the Big Red, Horse, 2021

Mixed Media
6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Honourable Mention

“A lovely surprise sometimes people show up when you least expect it. This was definitely one of those moments. It was through this moment at the Art Exhibition Opening April 14th 2025. A hunka (adopted) relative came to the art opening. Unexpected but most appreciated. I made journey moccasin bundle for her late mother. I helped her when she needed support. It was beautiful in the exchange I had to retrieve her mother’s spiritual name. In return she now carries her mothers spiritual name. She then became my hunka relative. Life is beautiful gift.” - Paulete Poitras



Image 72:

Friend, Myself, and Niece Mel



Image 73:

Photo during art exhibition presentation. My 3 best friends sitting there watching, and wearing gifted ribbon skirts I made them. Support is always appreciated. Photo Taken by Curtis Cameron.

Art Installation

“Influence of Grandfather's Rituals. The narrator's grandfather, Calvin Poitras, was a Dakota elder who lived nearby. He practiced a daily ritual of waking up early, maintaining a wood stove fire, and making offerings. He spoke the Dakota language and focused deeply on prayer, a tradition passed down from his childhood. His practices emphasized the power of prayer and the importance of starting everything with prayer. The grandfather shared Dakota ancestral knowledge and spiritual teachings, influencing the narrator's modern life. The grandfather's dedication to prayer and Dakota traditions profoundly impacted the narrator, instilling a strong foundation of faith and cultural identity. (Poitras Sr., 1980 - 1990)”



Image

Paulete Poitras

Paper Moccasins, 2025

Paper

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Humble Beginnings to 30 Hours of Love...The Journey Continues



Image 74:

Paulete Poitras

***Humble Beginnings*, 2008**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com



Image 75:

Paulete Poitras

***30 Hours of Love*, 2025**

Mixed Media

6' x 4'

paulete.poitras@gmail.com