

Pjila'si • Padiuxi • Wachiya • Pee-pihtikweek  
• Ximopanōltih • Shé:kon • Kümey mi akun •  
Tansi • Siingaay' laa • Komo mai



Language is joy. Language is self, and it is community.

In celebration and determination to breathe new life and longevity into Indigenous languages on Turtle Island, Living Our Languages convenes Indigenous artists to celebrate their languages by painting drums with themes of revitalization. Living Our Languages celebrates resiliency, resurgence, and the diversity of Indigenous nations across Turtle Island.

**anna** Gallery Systems  
**Leonowens**

**Treaty**  
**Space**  
GALLERY



Each drum included in this exhibition was created through a series of workshops with Indigenous artists hosted by artist Natalie Laurin and organized by Dr. Joshua Schwab Cartas.

Joshua Schwab Cartas is an emerging Zapotec scholar whose ongoing research projects focus on language revitalization and community-led capacity building in collaboration with Indigenous communities.

Natalie Laurin is a Métis and settler illustrator and interdisciplinary designer, and the Exhibitions Coordinator of the Treaty Space Gallery. Her work centres around a respectful, informed, and collaborative approach – especially when designing for communities other than her own.

This research is supported by funding from NSCAD University and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

# The Artists and their Drums







## Jude Gerrard, *Star Dancers*

Part of a drum series entitled Universal Knowledge. Based off Mi'kmaw petroglyphs located in Kejimikujik and Bedford

Language: Mi'kmaq

## Misiwegiizhig (Gabriel Maclean), *Pulse - Perpetual Understanding, Language, Soul, Expression*

Language: Oji Cree



## P. Doak, *I Will Do My Best / Pjilasi*

Language: Mi'kmaw'simk, Mi'kmaq

"As a person with mixed ancestry growing up in the city, my relationship with language has always been complicated. But through this project as well as some recent conversations with Indigenous artists from across Turtle Island, I have come to realize that I actually know and recognize more than I think I do. I based the design on my drum off of another type of living language: tattoo. The patterns are all inspired by imagery that is on my own skin, including the Mi'kmaw double curve which features heavily on the edge of the drum. The other imagery speaks to two-spirit identity as well as plant life from Mi'kma'ki. Kenny Prosper (Eskasoni First Nation) of the Wabanaki Two-Spirit Alliance gives the word tapuiwjiijaqamijit to mean two-spirit in Mi'kmaw'simk, and that is the word that I chose to speak for this project." - P. Doak



**Delaine Akumalik Fredlund,  
*Skidoonguaq***

Delaine Akumalik is a young Inuk artist from Nunavut. Skidoonguaq is a slang term, friends might ask each other "wanna go skidoonguaq?" when they'd like to go drive around on snowmobiles.

Inuktitut is the language of Inuit.

**Joshua Schwab Cartas, *Guie' saa*  
(flower celebration - as named by  
Najeli Schwab Nicolantonakis)**

The drum was a collaboration between my daughter and myself. The drum celebrates our language by using designs that part of our women's regalia amongst Isthmus Binnizá's (Zapotec).

Language: Diidxazá, Binnizá



**Sydney Wreaks,  
*Onkwehonwe Lakoterihwaien:ni***

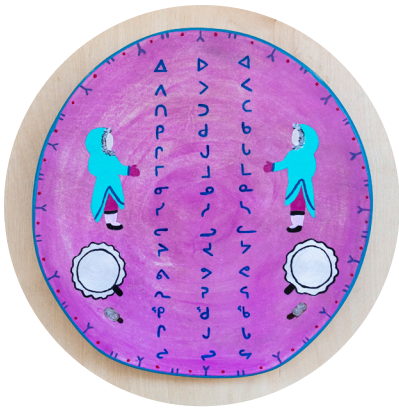
The title means Human beings responsibility, it's to represent our relationship and responsibility as human beings to the land.

Language: Kanien'kéha kateweiénhstha

**Cameron Walker, *Uggamlamun*  
(Pronunciation)**

Language: L'nui'sin (Mi'kmawi'simk),  
Qalipu First Nations





## Inuujaq Leslie Fredlund, *Inuktitut Syllabics Chart*

Inuit have always had an oral culture, until the writing system was introduced by the Anglican missionaries as a way of spreading biblical teachings. When Christianity was introduced many Inuit practices such as throat singing and drum dancing were forbidden.

Inuktitut is the language of Inuit.

## Trina Annand, *kiweki*

kiweki means returning home; it's connected to the land and community. As someone not living on their traditional land it is a word that resonates with me. I decided to fill my drum with images from the land that make me feel at home and at peace.

Language: Algonquin



## Natalie Laurin, *G Bay*

The ceinture fléchée surrounds the lively waters of Georgian Bay, where I feel most at home and connected to my roots.

Language: Michif, Métis



## Aly Conrad, *Ka'qawej with Buttercups*

Ka'qawej (crow) and gold iridescent buttercups - Childhood nostalgia.

Language: Mi'kmaq, Wasoqopa'q





## Aiden Gillis, *Wliwa'so'qa'tuin [To Give You Good Light]*

"For me, learning our languages is more like building a relationship, than it is memorizing sounds, words, and their definitions. With each word, we learn more about ourselves, our history, and the ways our cultures perceive the world and our interconnectedness with it.

Ravens, like us, have oral histories that they pass down throughout the generations in their own families and communities. I wonder about the history they share with one another about this land.

There is a raven somewhere in this painting -- can you find it? Why do you think I included it in this way? *Wliwa'so'qa'tuin* is my best attempt at pronouncing the title of this piece at this time. It is painted above my hands in Mi'kmaw hieroglyphs, which is one of the oldest known written Indigenous languages on the continent. When I think about my relationship to my language, I think about how illuminating it feels to learn a new word, how much warmth I feel when furthering my understanding of our etymology, or otherwise described as the root origins of where any word comes from. Although I have a long way to go, I really feel I do, I'm grateful for every speaker in my life, those who encourage me to continue, and I am optimistic really about my language journey."

Deer rawhide, bear grease, wood, graphite, acrylic paint  
14 × 14 inches [35.6 × 35.6 cm]  
2024

Mi'kmaw and French, west coast Newfoundland and Labrador [Flat Bay and Port au Port region]



# Jordan Bennett

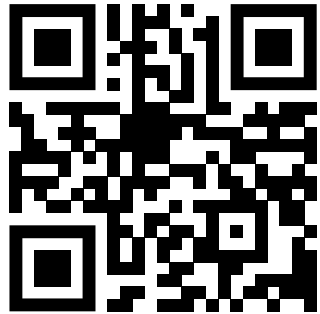
Jordan Bennett is a Mi'kmaw visual artist from Stephenville Crossing, Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland). He lives and works on his ancestral territory of Mi'kma'ki in Corner Brook, Newfoundland. Jordan's ongoing practice utilizes painting, sculpture, textiles, video, installation, public art and sound to explore land, language, the act of visiting, familial histories and challenging colonial perceptions of Indigenous histories and presence with a focus on exploring Mi'kmaq and Beothuk visual culture. (2024, [jordanbennett.ca](http://jordanbennett.ca))



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Native Land Digital, an Indigenous-led, not-for-profit organization, maintains a database of Indigenous languages spoken around the world.

Included in this exhibition is an interactive map, which we invite you to use to take note of the languages spoken in your region or places you have visited. We encourage you to spend time on their website by scanning the QR code or visiting [native-land.ca](http://native-land.ca).



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## Additional Contributors

Emily Gillies, *Research Assistant & Lead Designer*  
Sydney Wrecks, *Research Assistant, Workshop & Exhibition Lead, Artist Liason*

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