

## The Métis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conference

June 18-20, 2003

Saskatoon

Day 1 – Tape 3

**Start Clip: 01:29:12:07**

**Christi Belcourt:** Flowers are also obvious in overtones to femininity and to women. I often think about my grandmother and other women before who had it really hard, who lived in shame, abuse, and poverty. And I think about women living now, who are silenced and oppressed in countries outside of our own. I found that plants and flowers lend well to expressing my views on the question of women, sexism, and equality of the sexes. I use bold and bright colours with strong dark stems that are meant to be in your face. And I'm aware that even the act of painting itself is a privilege. I don't take my fortune lightly and I feel a sense of duty to express myself from this position of health and strength on behalf of other women who cannot.

Further, I use my paintings to assert that life is beautiful. My paintings are manifestations of my prayers for everything to be in balance and harmony, and while the flowers and plants make the overt connection to the earth and to the environment. Once again, the subject matter provides a perfect platform for making statements on issues concerning biodiversity, pollution, globalization, resources, fresh water, pesticides, and traditional medicines. Using wild flowers and plants as content also satisfies my own lifelong study and amazement with the diversity found in plant life. Plants represent a microcosm for a larger view of life not only here on earth, borrowing from what the Jesuit theologian, and philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, "When you come to see the universe as one, as alive, and in part of the immense design, and humans as a part of the whole, then you feel responsible and sensitive to it." Wilfred Pelletier, a First Nations philosopher, mentor, and dear friend of mine, said best in his book, *No Foreign Land*, that when he finally understood there was only one inclusive

totality of life, he realized there was no longer a me and a you, no self and not self, no separate or isolated individual.

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