

Christi Marlene Belcourt.¹ (b. 1966)

Christi Belcourt is the initiator and lead coordinator behind *Walking With Our Sisters: A Commemorative Art Installation for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women of Canada*. This is a large collaborative art piece which displays over 1,700 pairs of moccasin tops or “vamps” commemorating and representing an estimated 824 Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing in Canada since 1961. The art is currently installed in Winnipeg, and is being held at the Urban Shaman Gallery from March 21 to April 12, 2014.

This project is about these women, paying respect to their lives and existence on this earth. They are sisters, mothers, aunties, daughters, cousins, grandmothers, wives and partners. They have been cared for, they have been loved, and they are missing. Each pair of vamps represents one missing or murdered indigenous woman. The unfinished moccasins represent the unfinished lives of the women whose lives were cut short by murder. Over 1300 artists, some who are family members of the women who are missing or murdered, have created these vamps. The exhibit, which started in 2013, will tour for seven years. The artwork and funding has all been crowd-sourced as a community effort.



Christi Belcourt, Métis painter, craftsperson, and writer, was born in Scarborough, Ontario in September, 1966, the daughter of Tony Belcourt and Judith Pierce-Martin (née Streach). Her siblings are graphic designer Suzanne Belcourt and filmmaker Shane Belcourt. Her father was the founding president of the Native Council of Canada (1971-1974). Previous to that he was vice-president of the Métis Association of Alberta (1969). He recently retired from his position as president of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Belcourt is recognized within the Métis community as one of the preeminent Métis artists in Canada. In 2001, art curator Catherine Mattes included her in her review of Métis art and artists saying: “Emerging Métis artist Christi Belcourt has been refining themes within her paintings, which reflect, renewed Métis pride and a strong sense of Aboriginal heritage. Her themes are in

¹ This is an excerpt from L.J. Barkwell (Ed.) *Women of the Métis Nation*. Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2110.

three topic areas, Florals—inspired by Métis beadwork patterns; Water—honouring the sacred relationship of all creatures to water; and Métis History – depicting Métis people and events.”²

Christi Belcourt is the author of *Medicines to Help Us: Traditional Métis Plant Use: Study Prints and Resource Guide* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2007). The prints and companion booklet are based on Christi Belcourt’s painting of the same name. There are contributions to the text on traditional plant use by Métis Elders Rose Richardson and Olive Whitford. The book’s Michif language translations are by Rita Flamand with Île-à-la-Croix Michif translations by Laura Burnouf.



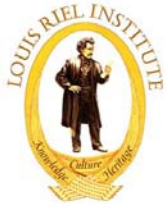
**So Much Depends Upon Who Holds
The Shovel (detail view)**
Acrylic on Canvas, 48" x 96", 2008
Permanent Collection of the Indian and
Inuit Art Centre

Christi Belcourt presented at the 9th Annual New Sun Conference on Aboriginal Arts: *Something Else Again!* which took place at Carleton University February 27, 2010. Her floral mural—*My Heart (Is Beautiful)*—was used for the conference poster. Her work has been commissioned by the Louis Riel Institute, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Centre for Traditional Knowledge & Museum and Nature, and is found in the permanent collections of the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, the Louis Riel Institute, the Gabriel Dumont Institute and Canadian Museum of Civilization, First People’s Hall. Christi Belcourt is a past recipient of awards from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Chalmers Family Fund, and the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Reference:

² Catherine Mattes. “Métis Perspectives in Contemporary Art.” *Métis Legacy* (Eds.) Barkwell, Lawrence J., Leah Dorion and Darren R. Préfontaine. Winnipeg, MB: Pemmican Publications, 2001: 192.

www.christibelcourt.com



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Métis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute