



## *Love in Every Stitch: Métis Ribbon Skirts from Kistapinanihk*

curated by Leah Dorion, Bonny Johnson, and Lana Wilson

September 15 - November 5, 2022

### **About *Love in Every Stitch***

Artists:

Kay Chandler

Leah Marie Dorion

Erin Dyck

Keeley Henry

Bonny Johnson

Tanya Lemieux

Melanie Markling

Addison McInnes

Suzanne Moran

Beige L Unger

Erika Warkentine

It takes enormous courage to tell your own personal story from the heart. This group art exhibition features the stories of Métis women artists currently living in (Kistapinanihk) Prince Albert, Saskatchewan region. We all were challenged to use the medium of sewing to express our personal connection to our diverse Métis cultural heritage using our own

contemporary lived experiences to guide our creative process. Through the support of lead artists Leah Marie Dorion and Bonny Johnson all participants were supported to learn the historic High Plains Métis Style Ribbon Skirt pattern and the related ribbon skirt teachings as the common framework for their sewing expressions. Otherwise, everyone was given the liberty and freedom to tell the story of their skirt in their own manner.

Many of us felt the strength, resilience, and determination of our Métis ancestors and the power of women as we worked through the frustration, technical challenges, and obstacles while engaging in sewing. Thankfully, we created a circle of support so all participating artists could move through the emotional process of being creative with ease and grace. This project has revived an almost forgotten Métis ribbon skirt pattern that was once our collective Métis style for over 150 years

**Image:** installation view in the Project Space



*Leah Dorion, Bonny Johnson, Kay Chandler, Erin Dyck, Keeley Henry, Tanya Lemieux, Melanie Markling, Addison McInnes, Suzanne Moran, Beige L Unger, Erika Warkentine, with Elder Liz Settee*

on the high plains. This ribbon skirt project is grounded in love for our Metis heritage, community, family, and love for ourselves as modern Metis artists.

This project occurred for six weeks during the summer of 2022 through studio sessions held at the Mann Art Gallery. Our Metis women artists formed a creative collective whereby we all learned from each other sharing different methods and skills related to the sewing arts. Many traditional forms of Metis expressive arts emerged from the participants such as floral beadwork, embroidery, and different ribbon style application techniques. Most of the Metis artists featured in this exhibition had never made a Metis style ribbon skirt before and several had minimal knowledge of sewing. Nevertheless, through all the joy and pain we all were able to create the show "love in every stitch" and heal ourselves through the expression of our own stories in a meaningful and symbolic manner. One of our studio slogans was, "Comparison is the Thief

of Joy," which helped us remain collaborative versus competitive in our studio space. Our project was supported by Elder Liz Settee who provided spiritual and emotional support for the collective and we are grateful for her love. This exhibition was created through a partnership with Shushkitew Collective, a Metis art collective operating across the Metis homeland, and the Mann Art Gallery, with funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. We are thankful for the Gabriel Dumont Institute's book, *A Guide to Making Contemporary Style Métis Ribbon Skirts*, which was a valuable resource contributing to the success of this project. We extend our gratitude to all of the funders and members of these organizations for their commitment to supporting Métis women's creative artistic expression in Kistapinanihk.- Leah Dorion

Thank you to Alisha Lee Photography for the portrait photographs