



NICO

WILLIAMS

SPIRIT

TRANSFORMATION



OJIBWE CULTURAL FOUNDATION

SINCE 1974

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"Spirit Transformation" an exhibit of the work of Nico Williams by the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation August 17, 2017 - November 14, 2017

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Nico Williams

The Anishinaabek word for beads translates to spirit berry, or seed. In Nico Williams works delicate glass beads of all colors including 24k gold, and phosphorescent glowing beads are combined with porcupine quills, to create sculptures that go beyond any simple attempt to categorize them. They are traditional, they are contemporary, they are ancient stories and personal narrative. They are paintings made of beads that show the vibrancy of living Anishinaabe culture, honoring the past and building on this footing to create for those lucky enough to see them an image of what stories and legends can be distilled into. A small precious thing that is a world into itself.

Anong Migwans Beam
Curator
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation

Maaba Anishinaabe Nico Williams gah zhitote gnaadjone waakoneh
miinaa dehbajmohensesuk mizinkojganan dbaajmoomgadoon gaabi
zhiwebzid miinwaa ezhi dbendaagzid geye Anishinaabewit.

Anong Migwans Beam
Curator
Ojibwe Cultural Foundation

Artist Statement

Art should be beautiful. Through beauty, my work is able to explore dark issues in a playful way.

The 15 hyperbolic pyramids explore Ojibwe practices. Each work has a solid beaded surface. The spirits breath through each work with the use of japanease Delica's and quill work. When quills or beads are damaged on a surface, I intentionally leave them there. This represents a means to move forward toward healing. Also, in our culture we are not meant to create things that are perfect.

Dad, I caught a Sturgeon

The piece recalls memories of my father and I fishing off the shoreline of Aamjiwnaang in the 1990s. The sturgeon snagged my line and fell back into the water late one night. My father never believed that I had caught it, but I defiantly did. Out of the sturgeon's tail blooms another small, vibrantly coloured fish. There are two, small, black circles on the edges of the surface. These are a pattern of power representing negativity. The blood splatter in the background is a pattern foreshadowing the John Dillon murder case.

Dad, Crystal Meth Auto portrait

This is a follow up to “Dad, I Caught a Sturgeon”. Hidden in the patterns is a traditional Anishnabbe father smoking, a crystal method pipe instead of a peace pipe. “\O\gitchidaw” he screams as his hair blows off towards both edges of the sculpture. While his face looks towards a dysfunctional blue and red symbol of the Ojibwe playful otter pattern. Yellow and black caution tape are also in the work against a pink spiralling background. I show the side effects of crystal method with the subjects teeth, hair, and skin.

Cheeby

A spirit/ghost descending from the heavens. It's beaded with galvanized metallic delicas to represent the copper mines that once flourished in Lake Huron. It's claws reach toward empty space as its mouth opens to feed.

Spirit Digestion

This is a representation of a spirit that is feeding on the edges of the water. It is accustom to feed our dead by placing dishes of food near the streams when a relative passes. Here you have the spirit looking out towards you, red veins, Trace down the face to its copper teeth, fleshy gums, and eventually to its inner anatomy.

Geese Taking Flight

Two geese flying from the omnipresence of a water spirit. The water spirit shoots out copper lightening from it's tail. While heading towards the shore lines of the lake, the geese take flight. One has its tongue sticking out to invite the spirits in. The other goose, is trying to return the sun while smoking a traditional peace pipe.

Shaman's scales

This piece is a tribute to Noval Morriseau. A royal purple bead colour was used. The pattern represents the hair follicles of his hands as they radiate power. In present day, purple is still the most difficult colour to manufacture in Delica beads. It is a meticulous and expensive process to accomplish. The talent and time it takes to manufacture the beads, the use of a royal colour, and the powerful patterns depicted on the work represent the stature of Morriseau within the First Nations, Canadian, and global artistic landscapes.

Sweet wine under microscope

Quite the opposite of making big things small. I explored patterns of sweet wine under a microscope. I chose sweet wine because it is the substance introduced to the Ojibwa by the french voyagers. It was usually cheaply made and went sour after a few uses. This would have been used to do trades.

Playful Otter

A pattern important to Anishnaabe. Work is done in 24kt gold with evil spirits fleeing from the otter

Manitou

This colorful chevron spirit is one of the many spirits that are hidden within the rocks up near the mouth of the Georgian bay into the Muskoka region. Mossy green spots of earth cloak this spirit, which has stayed dormant for many centuries. It's eye is open. A metallic blue wave of water brushes up against its body as the sunset cascades into soft hues of pink and magenta.

Medicine Woman Picking Sweet Grass

My grandmother Sadie would tell me this legend. Aamjiwnaang down to Walpole island used to be one of the largest grass lands in Ontario. Before the agricultural development of the area, large black snakes would live in the blue braids of water. In the legend, a medicine woman wrestles a horned serpent. The neon orange represents the bruising sky. Naked, she goes out to harvest the neon green sweet grass. In one hand she holds the horned serpent. Her power as an Anishinabe shaman is equal to the men.

Shaman Preparing for the Shaking Tent

A naked horned shaman emerges from Ojibwe flowers. I curved the genitals inwards so the gender is not identified. The ass is exposed for some humor.

The shaman is poking a giant frog with a needle. In the other hand, is a piece of birch bark. The shaman rubs this substance on the back of the paper and brings it back to the shaking tent.

Small Pox Hand Bending into a Medicine Wheel

The works' pattern is the small pox virus under a microscope. The brown/red line circling represents flesh being cut. This shows a geometrical representation of something similar to x-ray vision into the arm of an infected ancestor. . Black line patterns of power radiate from the circle as it bends into a medicine wheel. Green was intentionally used as the signature to represent all colours of the 4 painted poles, Red, Yellow, Blue and Green.

Nebaunauabaequaewuk (male)

Omnipotent lake beings pull you in from the shorelines of the water. These beings were respected in the communities of the great lakes. There were also rumours of trade and relationships established with these underwater beings. These lake beings were shy however because they considered themselves ugly.

Nibiinaabekwe (female)

Nibiinaabekwe capture you from the edges of water. It is there she breeds with you. Once consummated, you belong to the bottom of the lake. It was said families would be created in the great lakes, but once apart of the underwater world, they could no longer to return to the surface. She breathes life with the turtle on the edge of this piece.

Bandolier (glitch)

Ojibwe beaded flowers on copper background. I dragged one edge of the flowers. This is to show artistic consciousness and presence. I combined the technique of quillwork onto birch.



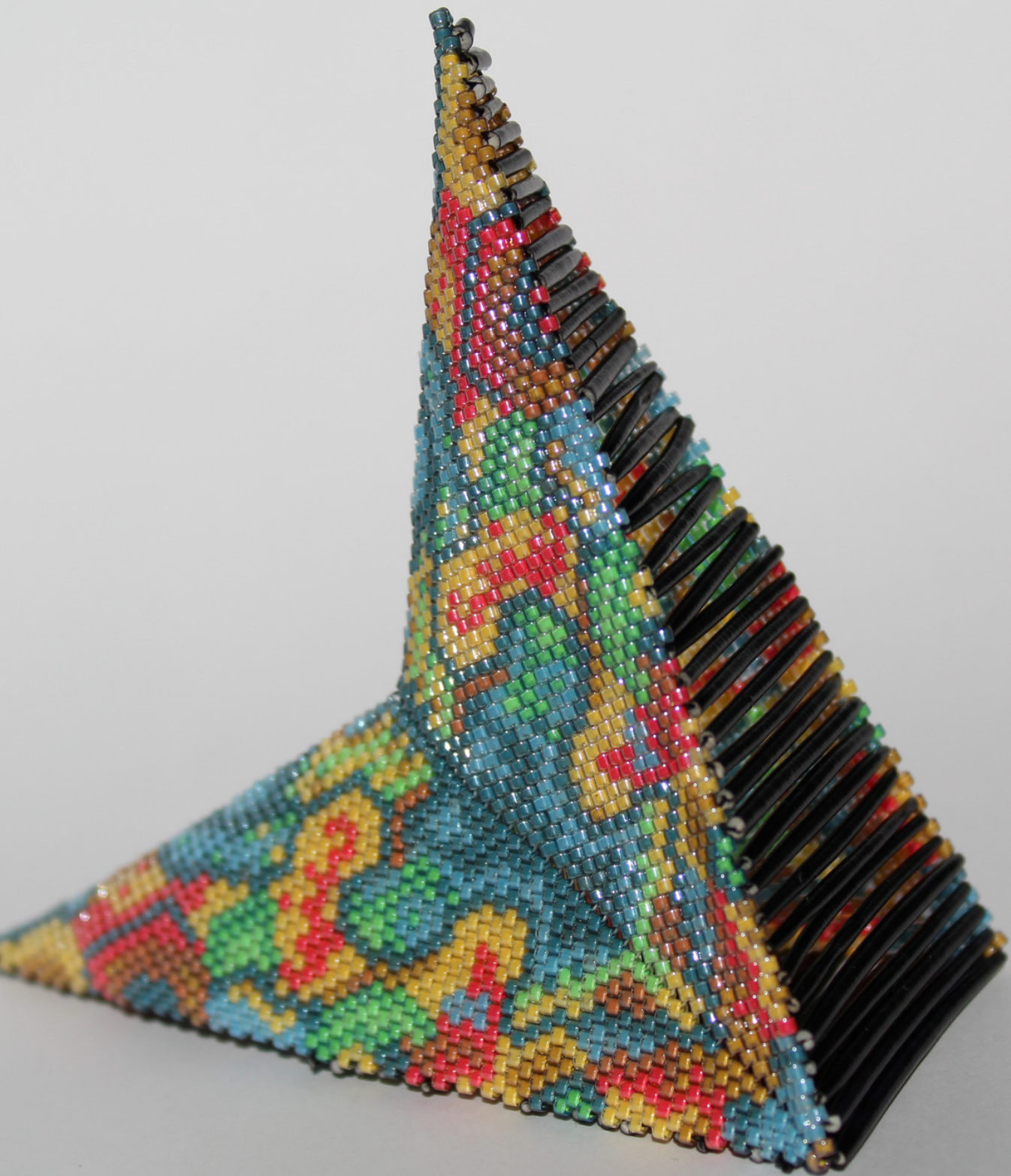
















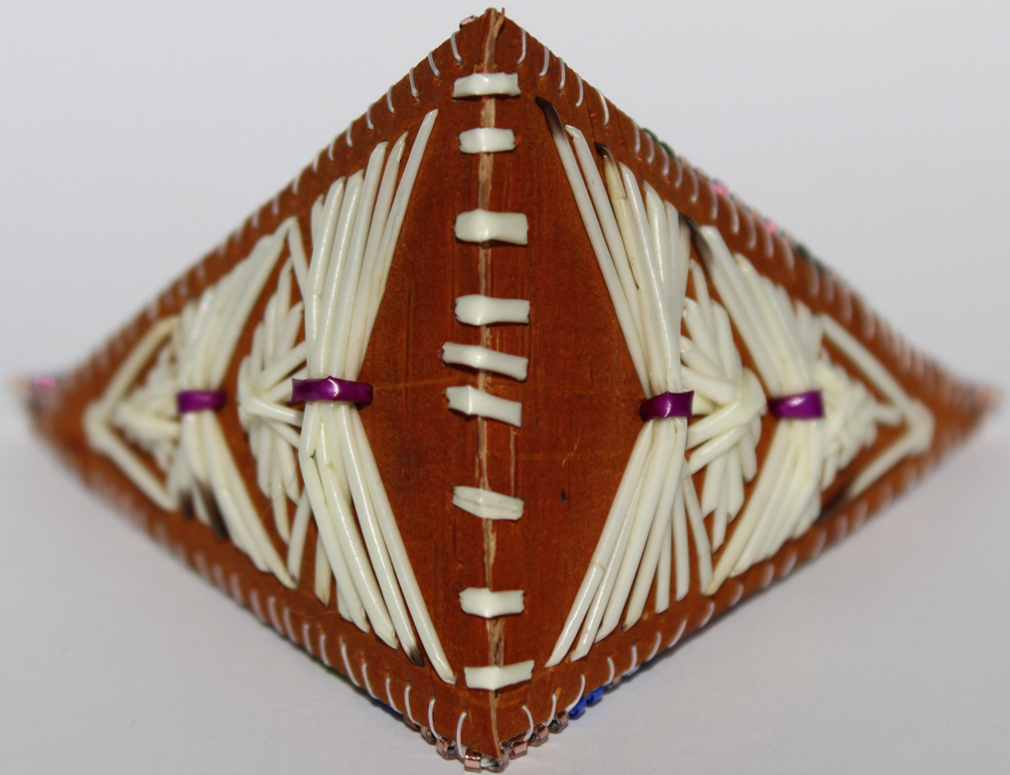








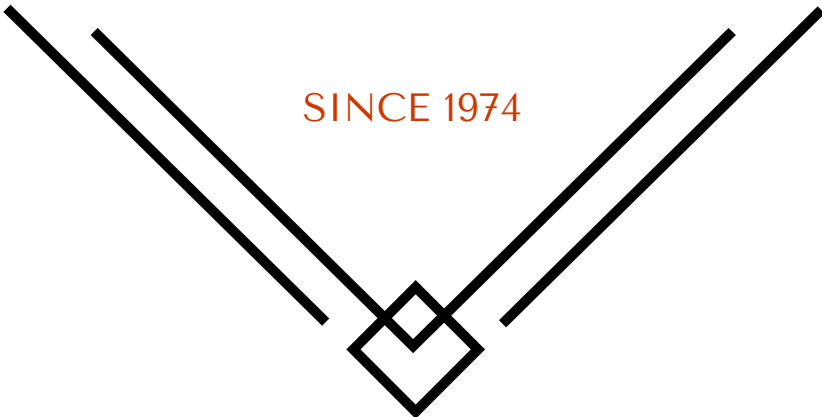






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15, Hwy 551, M'Chigeeng, (705)377-4902
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