

Women in the Arts

Artists Working for Social Change

Celebrations of Women's History Month are a yearly reminder that we, as women, have much to learn from our past and each other. Manitoba women have a long history of achievements and contributions to the arts. Our province is home to a vibrant community of acclaimed and emerging female artists, as well as mentors, guides, leaders and teachers who encourage and nurture young artists in the community.

Female artists in Manitoba can be found in all areas of our province, in rural, urban and northern communities. The art that is created by Manitoba women is unique and reflects the many diverse cultures in our province. Manitoba's female artists have challenged many of our society's deepest assumptions through their artistic vision, creation and expression. Their work has sparked new ideas, catalyzed critical thinking, elicited new actions and inspired individuals to strive for and maintain social change in their communities. Art for social change raises our consciousness about the world around us, forces us to question mainstream thinking, challenges our own principles and beliefs or persuades us to take a stand and fight for what we believe in.

But a hundred years ago, the idea of women working and making money from their art, was not accepted or encouraged as it is today. Despite the difficulties these women faced – training, travelling, trading their work and gaining recognition – female artists have always been involved in making art. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there were a number of pioneering female artists in Manitoba that strived for social change in their communities and through their work. These women were highly successful during their lifetimes.

This publication recognizes female artists who take risks with their art, share their visions for social change and make a difference. We thank the brave women artists throughout history, who, one by one, broke through the barriers to pursue their artistic passions and paved the way for today's innovative and vibrant female artists.



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

As Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I am pleased to introduce this publication celebrating Women's History Month in Manitoba. For 2011, we've chosen to honour women artists – in particular, those whose work has led to social change in the lives of women, families and communities.

The purpose of Women's History Month is to increase our knowledge of women's past and present contributions to Canadian society. It gives us the opportunity to recognize the achievements of notable and ordinary women from all walks of life as a vital part of our collective heritage.

This year, we are pleased to partner with Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) to celebrate the accomplishments of this year's honourees – eight talented artists who have made a difference in Manitoba's arts community and beyond. We want to thank MAWA for their contributions to this publication and their continued efforts to support Manitoba's female artists.

The featured women – one of them an emerging, young artist – are passionate and gifted individuals who have displayed amazing talent, courage and tenacity in their quest to make a difference in Manitoba's arts community and beyond. Working in a diverse range of mediums – visual arts, dance, writing, theatre, music, media and craft – they inspire meaningful social and political reflection and are outstanding role models for young and aspiring female artists.

This publication reveals only a sample of the highly creative women living and working in Manitoba. Representing a broad range of cultural and regional backgrounds and perspectives, they have worked to develop, support and cultivate women's efforts in the arts. They have influenced some to follow in their footsteps and inspired others to strive for change.

Please join me as we celebrate the passion and energy of Manitoba's female artists.

The Minister responsible for the Status of Women



MEDIA ARTS: **CECILIA ARANEDA**

Cecilia Araneda, executive director of the Winnipeg Film Group, started her filmmaking career in 1996. To date, she's written and directed nine short films which have won awards and been screened in festivals and art house cinemas across Canada and around the world. Whether they're fiction, documentary, or experimental, Cecilia's videos and films focus largely on stories that reflect a larger socio-political reality. She has dedicated much of her life and artistic career to preserving the memories and cultural roots of her Chilean community. Through her films, Cecilia strives to present experiences that not only reflect on the past but also trace connections between struggles, triumphs and changes to the present. In fact, social change plays a large role in both her creative process and the final product.

In 2010, Cecilia's work was featured in a retrospective screening at the Canadian Film Institute in Ottawa called *Memory Work: The Films of Cecilia Araneda*. Cecilia was also instrumental in the development of the Winnipeg Film Group's Mosaic Women's Film Project. This production support and film mentorship program helps women of Aboriginal and other diverse cultural backgrounds produce a first or second independent short film or video.

Cecilia represents a compelling voice in the Chilean community. Her work inspires artistic achievement and social change, as she passes the knowledge of a community's struggles and triumphs from one generation to the next.



CRAFT: **TERESA BURROWS**

Teresa Burrows, one of Thompson's most celebrated artists, is best known for her distinctive talent in beadwork instillations. Her work in this medium has earned her critical attention, not only for her elaborate and intricate designs, but also for the challenging subject matter she addresses in her art.

Teresa has lived and worked as a professional artist in northern Manitoba for the past 25 years. Her artistic abilities range from printmaking, drawing, watercolour painting, photography, collage and craft. Completing her Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba in 1984, she initially trained as a printmaker. However, Teresa's life in Manitoba's north, her work as probation officer and addictions counsellor at the Ma Mow We Tak Friendship Centre and her role as a mother have greatly influenced the mediums and themes she uses in her art.

Teresa's work is layered with personal and cultural history, mythology, fairytales and collected pieces of northern Manitoba. Her award-winning beadwork creations reflect traditional European methods with a strong influence of northern design and imagery. The artist's *rupertsland regalia: the sul(fur) queen* instillation represented Canada at the 2009 Cheongju Craft Biennale in South Korea and at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. In 2010, she was also a finalist for the RBC Award for Glass, an award which recognizes artistic excellence in Canada's contemporary glass art scene.

Teresa succeeds at merging gripping social issues with her distinctive art form to create a lasting commentary on society.



WRITING / LITERARY ARTS: ROEWAN CROWE

As co-director of the Institute for Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Winnipeg and associate professor in the university's Women's and Gender Studies program, Roewan Crowe's passion for feminism is strongly reflected in her work. The activist, writer and artist is passionate about creating community and initiating projects that engage others in community cultural life.

Exploring the multi-layered relationships among words, images and experiences of trauma is a common theme in Roewan's work. This talented writer uses academic prose and writes in styles to suit her inter-media projects. She identifies as a queer artist who enters into fatal wounded landscapes to explore the possibilities that open up when artists walk through the shadows of the world.

Roewan is actively involved in the arts community. She has worked closely with Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA), collaborating on projects like 2008's Art Building Community project and participating in the group's Artist Lecture series. Roewan has been an invaluable mentor to the FemRev Collective. Founded in Winnipeg in 2009, this group works to better women's lives and improve society through local actions, marches and education campaigns –from a feminist perspective.

Roewan is also a novelist, having recently completed her book *Quivering Landscape*. She's currently at work on an arts-based research project called *Feminist Imagination As a Space of Resistance: Artistic Practices Contesting Violence*. The project explores the different ways art can create space for forbidden narratives.

As a feminist and mentor, Roewan has a lasting effect on people and communities. Her works continue to make powerful statements that inspire social change.



VISUAL ARTS: LEAH DECTER

Active in Winnipeg's art community since 2006, Leah Decter specializes in installations, performance pieces, dialogic practices, video and other digital media. This artist, teacher, mentor and curator addresses social and political issues as they relate to lived experience. Her work has been exhibited throughout Canada and the world.

Leah often collaborates with communities and organizations to highlight specific issues she feels strongly about. An excellent example is her large-scale public art and intervention projects in Vancouver, Toronto and Winnipeg. As well, in 2010, Leah was involved in *Showing Up, Speaking Out* – a collaborative Winnipeg-wide art project that addressed a number of difficult issues. These included violence against Aboriginal women and girls, housing, poverty and accessibility.

Leah has received many awards for her artistic pieces which are held in the Winnipeg Art Gallery collection and in private collections nationally and internationally. Her current work - (*official denial*) *trade value in progress* - is an interactive project created to raise awareness of the contemporary conditions of colonialism in Canada. It also speaks to the processes of decolonization and reconciliation.

Leah's artistic choices reflect her commitment to raise awareness of difficult issues and to promote action for social change.



DANCE: **BUFFY HANDEL**

Buffy Handel is an accomplished dancer and choreographer whose art serves to preserve Aboriginal identity, heritage and community. Originally from the Island Lake region in northern Manitoba, this mentor and teacher works to create positive visibility for Aboriginal women.

Buffy is well known throughout the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. She has travelled the world extensively showcasing her talents in time-honoured practices like storytelling, song and dance. By sharing the ways and traditions of Aboriginal people, Buffy contributes to a growing collective memory of her ancient culture.

Leading by example, this mother, businesswoman, professional performer and dance teacher is a valued role model for Aboriginal youth across Canada. She is the founder and president of the Aboriginal School of Dance in Winnipeg. Under her direction, the school presents progressive choreography that merges traditional and contemporary styles which is intended to evoke intense emotion in people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Buffy's commitment to teach and preserve Aboriginal culture will leave an impact for generations to come.



MUSIC: **INGRID D. JOHNSON**

Ingrid D. Johnson is a versatile artist and a lifetime activist for social change. Based in Winnipeg, Ingrid uses spoken-word poetry, original songs, films, live music and public speaking to change people's attitudes. Her art, expressed through her dynamic personality, encourages others to confront, overcome and eventually thrive following extreme personal hardships.

Ingrid's work is influenced by her past and inspired by her present. She is the CEO and founder of In the Closet Productions: A Voice for The Voiceless – a local production company that raises awareness of childhood sexual abuse and other social issues. As a survivor of abuse, Ingrid has faced many of her own challenges. But through her work today, she opens the door to more understanding and knowledge of the issue. Ingrid accomplishes this as a support worker in the same child welfare system she was once a part of.

Ingrid's social activism has led her to perform for and partner with many community organizations, including the Canadian Red Cross (RespectED program), Voices Manitoba Youth in Care Network, Klinik Community Health, UNICEF, Osborne House and the Spence Neighbourhood Association. Her primary goal is to raise awareness about violence against women. She accomplishes this as a spokesperson for the clients of the Laurel Centre, a community resource facility that counsels sexually abused women with addictions. Ingrid serves as a positive influence to the women there, providing guidance for those who might feel alone.

Ingrid continues to use her music to raise awareness of violence against women.



THEATRE/PERFORMING ARTS: HOPE MCINTYRE

Hope McIntyre is an award-winning playwright, actress and freelance director. Since 1998, she has been artistic director of Sarasvati Productions, a local theatre company dedicated to giving emerging artists a forum to create and produce new work. Under Hope's direction, Sarasvati Productions mounts insightful plays which examine how our personal stories connect to larger issues in society and lead to social change.

Hope's company uses theatre in innovative ways to inspire real change on important social issues. In 2010, she partnered with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba and others to develop *Jail Baby*, a play based on drama sessions with incarcerated women in Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie and Edmonton. The production reveals the chilling realities of the criminal justice system and gives women in prison a voice and a forum for their shared experience.

Hope continues to freelance as a director and performer. She also teaches theatre to youth and adults at the University of Winnipeg and the Prairie Theatre Exchange School. A successful playwright, Hope has received national and international awards for several of her scripts. She served as President of the Playwrights Guild of Canada and has represented Canada at two Women Playwrights International conferences. In 2006, she received the YMCA/YWCA Women of Distinction Award for Arts and Culture. The award recognized her work producing FemFest, Winnipeg's annual festival of plays written by women.

Hope sees theatre as a vehicle for change. A true innovator, she uses her art to inform, inspire and transform society for the better.



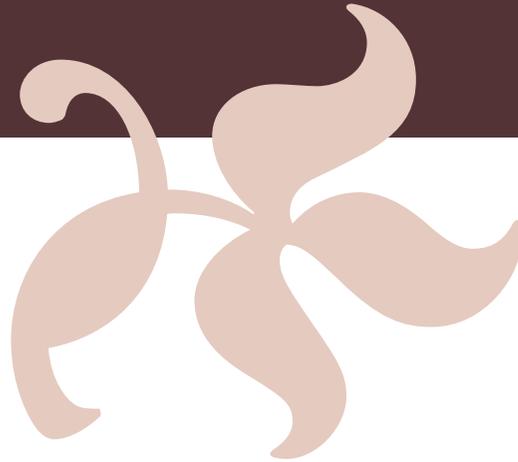
YOUTH: JAIME BLACK

Jaime Black is a young, emerging Metis multidisciplinary artist. A familiar figure in Winnipeg's Aboriginal art community, Jaime has worked at many arts-based youth empowerment programs. Her work reflects current social and political issues, as well as personal life experiences. Jaime primarily uses new media/interactive installations or multimedia performances as a means to reflect on issues of racism, colonialism, discrimination and stereotypes.

Jaime is the artist and creator of the *REDress Project*. It is a public art installation/community project that aims to raise awareness about the murder and disappearance of more than 600 Aboriginal women and girls across Canada. This artistic/social justice initiative has been displayed in many public spaces throughout Winnipeg and across Canada. These include the Manitoba Legislative Building and Women's World 2011: A Global Feminist Conference in Ottawa. In March 2011, the *REDress Project* was exhibited at the University of Winnipeg in partnership with the Institute for Women and Gender Studies during International Women's Week.

Through her art, Jaime has been able to develop a deep connection with her audience and deal with subjects that are both intense and moving. The *REDress Project* has created positive change around the difficult issue of Canada's missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. The images not only give an immediate sense of the reality of the issue but also captures the attention of young and old.

Jaime is a determined young artist who has proven herself in the arts community. Through her work, Jaime exhibits her firm commitment to raising awareness of important issues, challenging social expectations and delivering a strong message that cannot be ignored.



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