



David Garneau, *Aboriginal Curatorial Collective Meeting*. Oil on canvas. 152 x 122cm. 2011

In Dialogue is an exhibition structured as a conversation. It invites viewers into intimate discussions that work through new ways of understanding and being Indigenous in contemporary contexts. Moving from spaces of contemplation and reception to moments of excitement and animation, the artists blur borders drawn with invented notions of authenticity and guide us through negotiations between the specificity of personhood and its abstraction into larger groups of belonging. This gathering of work embraces the wildly individualistic tumble of connections and contradictions that constitute contemporary Indigenous identities, opening a dialogue between artists, audiences, and the interconnected mesh-works woven between all our relations.

#### Acknowledgments

In addition to the included artists, I would also like to acknowledge all those whose words helped shape this exhibition: Barbara Blind, Amber Christensen, Barbara Fischer, Eber Hampton, Richard Hill, Walter Kaherton Scott, Lisa Myers, and cheyanne turions.

Presented in partnership with the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba and Carleton University Art Gallery.



Carola Grahn, *Conversations in Wood*, 2017



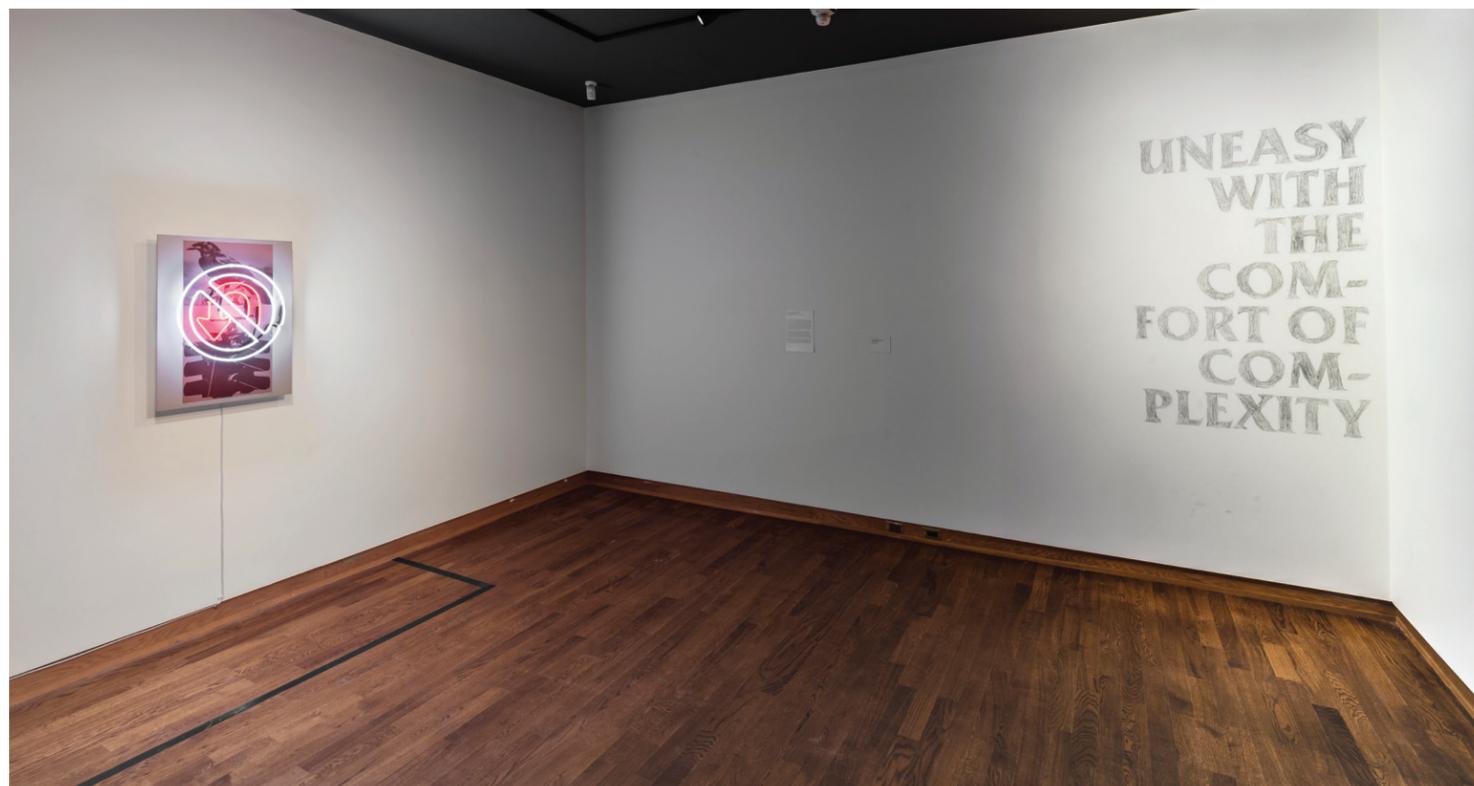
Amy Malbeuf, *Jimmie Durham 1974, 2014*



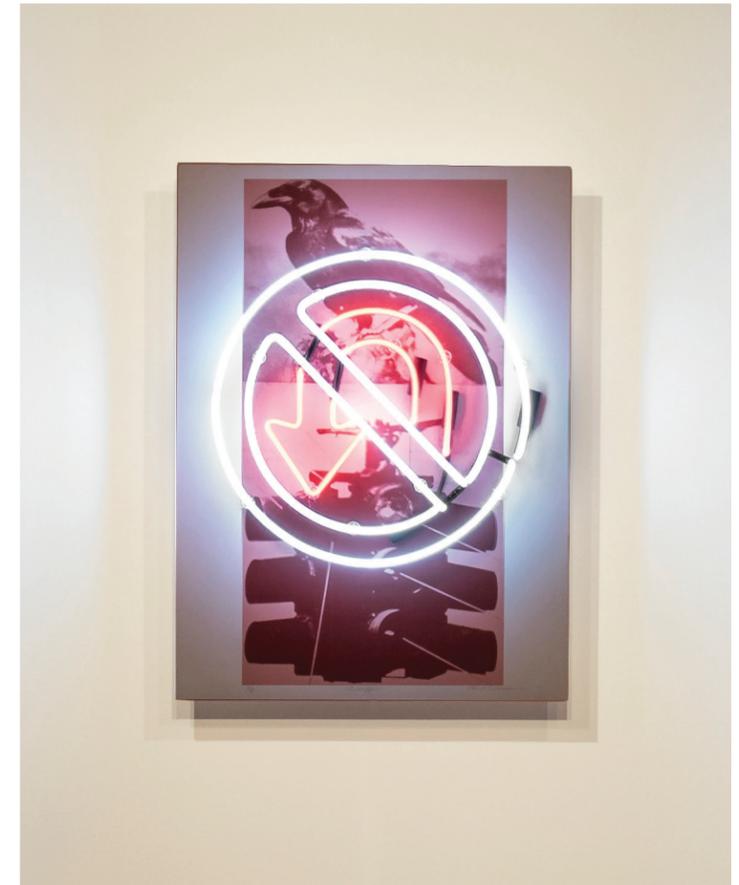
Peter Morin, *land.breath*, 2017



Nicole Kelly Westman, *I felt you listening through the tenderness of your fingertips*, 2017



Native Art Department International, *Untitled (Carl Beam)*, 2017 (left), and Raymond Boisjoly, *Uncomfortable with the comfort of complexity*, 2011-2017 (right)



Native Art Department International, *Untitled (Carl Beam)*, 2017

## RAYMOND BOISJOLY, RAVEN DAVIS, DAVID GARNEAU, CAROLA GRAHN, NATIVE ART DEPARTMENT INTERNATIONAL (MARIA HUPFIELD AND JASON LUJAN), NICOLE KELLY WESTMAN, TANYA LUKIN LINKLATER, AMY MALBEUF, PETER MORIN, NADIA MYRE, KRISTA BELLE STEWART IN DIALOGUE

JANUARY 25 – MARCH 24, 2018  
 Lunch and Look Artist-led tour Jan 26, 12:00PM  
 Public Discussion: The Current State of Contemporary Indigenous Curation  
 Feb 21, 7:00PM  
 Curator-led tour Feb 1, 7:00PM

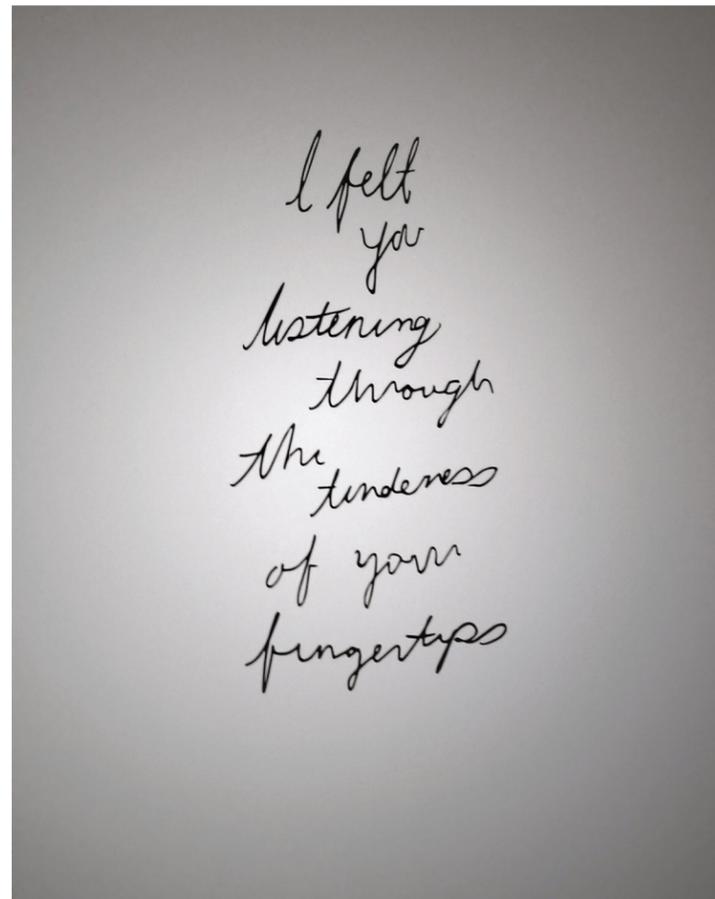
ART GALLERY OF SOUTHWESTERN MANITOBA  
 710 ROSSER AVENUE, UNIT 2  
 BRANDON, MANITOBA. R7A 0K9

## Conversation in Contemporary Indigeneity

Text by John G. Hampton

Over the past two years I have been carrying out conversations with the artists of *In Dialogue*, trying to address the complexities of contemporary Indigenous identity. These discussions were really just a continuation of the ones that we were all already having, which have built up through a lifetime of being. These private exchanges became the fundamental driving force of this exhibition, guiding each element and decision through reciprocal exchange and development.

In our early meetings, the artists and I talked about the difficulty of navigating contemporary Indigeneity against the backdrop of social, legal, and unspoken rules about what constitutes nativeness. We discussed anxieties about self-identification, blood quantum, mixed cultures, migration and diaspora, whiteness, assimilation, internalized and externalized colonialism, legacies of self-erasure, enrollment, disenfranchisement, false spokespeople, blood myths, and the diverse and ambiguous spectrums of Indigenous authenticity. There was an understanding that eventually these conversations would spawn an exhibition, book, or some other material output, but the artworks that ultimately emerged were primarily the artists' organic responses to our discussions. Some works directly incorporate verbal communication, some abstract it to activate its potentiality, and others look at discourse more broadly; such as how history, citation, and authority work together, to construct community.



Nicole Kelly Westman, *I felt you listening through the tenderness of your fingertips* (detail), 2017

Each of the resulting works is rooted in a specific position, which is influenced by multiple intersecting factors of identity (of which the artist's Indigeneity represents only a small component). My involvement inevitably guided some of the conversations according to my personal position—one of relative comfort as a white-presenting NDN male divorced from my traditional territory—as well as my struggle to come to terms with a discomfort felt at my privilege and the amount of opportunities I am given to speak on behalf of others. While organizing an exhibition on identity (or even while one is simply living life), there can be a value to discomfort. I should feel uncomfortable with my disproportionate privilege, when being asked to speak about/for those with different experiences than my own. Rather than being justified away, such discomfort should be nurtured. This discomfort is what reminds us when to listen instead of speaking, to honour the specificity of others, and to learn from them. Tribes, nations, and cultures emerge when individuals gather to speak and something larger begins to form. This process is not always tidy and it is never complete; it involves varying degrees of self-articulation, imposition, allowance, enforcement, disenfranchisement, agreement, and policing.

Through discussions about this interplay between the individual and its abstraction into larger cultural masses, an exhibition began to emerge as its own abstract mass. Made up of a myriad of contradictions and kinship amongst its individual participants, communication between these works unfolds in rhythmic movement between concealment and revelation, abstraction and specificity. In navigating this tumble of contradictions, new understandings of contemporary Indigeneities can emerge, specific to the space created between the somewhat interconnected histories of viewers, artists, organizers, and environment.

Honest and open dialogue about contemporary Indigenous identity and experience can hopefully function as an antidote to a new age of romanticization while also avoiding playing the role of the native informant in a colonial script. Throughout the space of this exhibition, one will hear—sometimes loudly and sometimes in a whisper—about skin and blood, intergenerational citation, institutional violence and kinship, encircling histories, the simultaneous decentering and recentering of body, corrupted traditionalism, politics of refusal, and strategies for communication.

Identity is not decolonized by re-inscribing the settler/Indigenous dichotomy, but by restructuring the concept of identity formation to centre one's Self and Relations rather than one's difference from an Other. This exhibition grew out of intimate discussions between Indigenous artists, but in its presentation, it becomes an invitation for the viewer to enter the conversation as well. The viewer, whoever they may be, is encouraged to embrace their own specific position—their class, gender, sexuality, nation, culture, skin, and everything else we cobble together to make our selves—as they partake in this discussion of who we are individually and who we are when we come together as a people.

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David Garneau, *Aboriginal Advisory Committee Meeting*, 2011 (left), *Aboriginal Curatorial Collective Meeting*, 2011 (right) and Krista Belle Stewart, *Indian Artists at Work*, 2017 (centre)



Nadia Myre, *A Casual Reconstruction*, 2017



Tanya Lukin Linklater, *...you are judged to be going against the flow because you are insistent.* 2017



Raven Davis, *Wiigendaagok Biintood Aki, (A Severe Loss of Land)*, 2014 (left) and *Wiigendaagok Biintood Nbiish, (A Severe Loss of Water)*, 2014 (right)

## LIST OF WORKS

-  
Raymond Boisjoly  
*Uncomfortable with the comfort of complexity*, 2011-2017  
Beer can on wall

Raven Davis  
*Wiigendaagok Biintood Aki, (A Severe Loss of Land)*, 2014  
Acrylic on Canvas Print, 90 cm x 130 cm  
Raven Davis

*Wiigendaagok Biintood Nbiish, (A Severe Loss of Water)*, 2014  
Acrylic on Canvas Print, 90 cm x 137 cm

David Garneau  
*Aboriginal Curatorial Collective Meeting*, 2011  
Oil on Canvas, 122 cm x 152 cm

David Garneau  
*Aboriginal Advisory Council Meeting*, 2011  
Oil on Canvas, 122 cm x 152 cm

Carola Grahn  
*Horizons of Me(aning)*, 2017  
Three cords of birch firewood depleting over the course of the exhibition as it is used for sweat lodges conducted for the Brandon Friendship Centre and local community members. 10,000 lbs of wood (contracting).

Native Art Department International  
*Untitled (Carl Beam)*, 2017  
Neon, Signed artist proof of Carl Beam's lithograph *Traffic* (1997), 50 cm x 76 cm

Nicole Kelly Westman  
*I felt you listening through the tenderness of your fingertips*, 2017  
Benches, comb designed from tracings of the artist's mother's fingers, folded wool blankets, listening, and instructions.

Tanya Lukin Linklater  
*...you are judged to be going against the flow because you are insistent.*, 2017  
Video, 11:29

Amy Malbeuf  
*Jimmie Durham 1974*, 2014  
Tarp, Glass Crow Beads, Salvaged wood, Rope, 229 cm x 168 cm

Peter Morin  
*land.breath*, 2017  
Two found land drawings, unidentified animal bone, sinew, copper pipe cut to the same length as the height of this room and bent to the height of the artist's mouth, performance, song

Nadia Myre  
*A Casual Reconstruction*, 2017  
Installation with chairs and a recording of a dinner conversation the artist had with friends about the effects of Canada's assimilationist policy and their feelings of belonging as mixed race Aboriginal people. The 2 hour conversation was edited to 30 minutes.

Krista Belle Stewart  
*Indian Artists at Work*, 2017  
Grey Paint, Printed Vinyl, 863 cm x 270 cm