

Woodlands

Meditative and healing, a quiet walk through Alberta's northern woodlands reveals a beautiful world. This sentient world becomes more pronounced as you become immersed in and attuned to the forest's rhythm. Listen closely and you will hear layers of distinctive sounds --- the wind moving through branches and leaves; trilling birdsong and the scurry of little feet in the tall grasses. Wandering through the landscape, the playful dance of sun and shadows clears and illuminates your vision and with a sense of belonging your heart opens to the wonder.

Seekers with a sense of purpose, the Indigenous artists featured in the **Woodlands** exhibition walk softly and follow the deer trails and through their art express a deep appreciation of the natural world.

With humour and bold brushstrokes Linus Woods shares the spirit of the Northern animals. Set within an abstract landscape, Linus offers a deeply personal and rare artistic insight and shares his moment of communion with the wildlife who pass through his field of vision.

Guided by traditional environmental knowledge and community values, fine craft artists featured in this exhibition also acknowledge the spirit of the forest's inhabitants, both flora and fauna. Through protocols and attention to detail their careful stitches elevate practical goods to treasured and wearable works of textile art. Utilizing both natural materials and seed beads, the fine craft showcased in the **Woodlands** collection includes work by Dolly Metchooyeah, Angelique Levac-Merasty, Sharon Rose Kootenay, Doris Duntra and Rose Nande among others.

Utilizing paint, pigments, natural materials and seed beads, the visual art and artisan works featured in the exhibition **Woodlands** celebrate the wonder of Alberta's boreal forest and the remarkable perspectives, sense of place, and cultural practices of contemporary Indigenous artists.

Sharon Kootenay

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The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program

The Art Gallery of Alberta is pleased to present this travelling exhibition to venues throughout Alberta. Currently the Art Gallery of Alberta serves over 60 venues in approximately 35 communities. Exhibitions on tour from the Art Gallery of Alberta easily adapt to space requirements of smaller venues: schools, libraries, museums, health care centres and other community facilities. The exhibitions are organized in such a manner as to make unpacking, packing, hanging and shipping as easy as possible. Along with the exhibition, each venue receives an Educational Interpretive Guide. These materials enable teachers to use the exhibition within the school curriculum.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts Collection is the primary source of works featured in the travelling exhibitions. Other sources for exhibitions may include community partners, archives, private collections and loans from artists. Each year we welcome new venues to enrich their community art through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program.

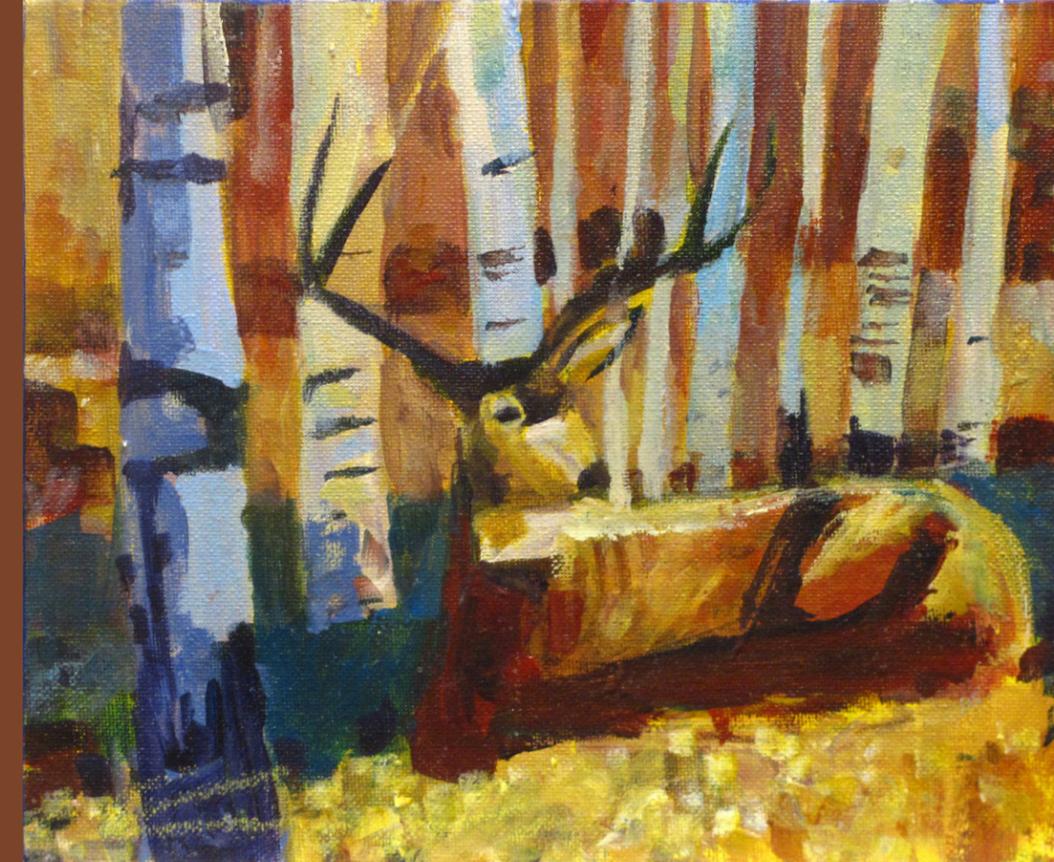
Our Thanks

The Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta
The artists
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts

and to the many individuals, organizations and communities who contribute to the success of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Travelling Exhibition Program each year.

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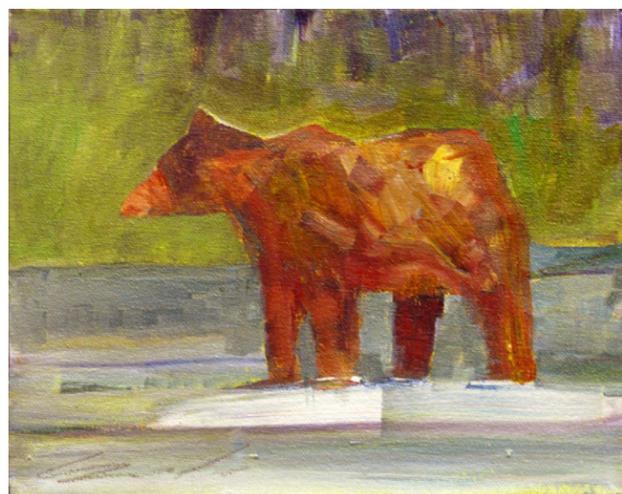
The Alberta Foundation for the Arts
Travelling Exhibition Program

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FRONT COVER IMAGES:

Top: Linus Woods, *Deer* (detail), Acrylic on canvas, 2017, Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta - Permanent Collection
Bottom: Beaded Wallets (details), Traditional Fine Craft - Beadwork, 2011, Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta - Permanent Collection





Linus Woods
Bear, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
Aboriginal Arts Council of
Alberta - Permanent Collection

Linus Woods, born in 1967, is a Dakota/Ojibway artist from the Long Plain First Nation in Southern Manitoba. Largely self-taught, he has taken art and Native studies courses at Brandon University and has also studied with artists such as Edmonton's Jane Ash Poitras and Carl Beam. Linus has also attended Brandon University, having worked toward a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Native Studies.

In the early 1980's, Linus's family moved to Fort McMurray, where he attended junior and senior high school. Although he has since returned to Manitoba, Linus continues to call Edmonton home for part of the year, where he exhibits at the Bearclaw Gallery, maintains a studio and teaches painting to students at Highlands Junior High School in Edmonton.

An expressive artist, Linus communicates his spiritual worldview and deep regard for living beings through his evocative paintings. He works primarily in acrylic, oil and mixed media on canvas, and many of his canvases feature pixelated forms and geometric shapes. Inspired by the natural world, the works featured in the **Woodlands** exhibition capture the spirit and personality of the animals that inhabit Alberta's boreal forest.

Linus Woods is a winner of the Peace Hills Trust Company Art Competition and in 2003 was one of seven artists chosen for the Image Makers First Nation Art Exhibit in Los Angeles. Most recently, in 2010, his work was included in *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years* exhibition of contemporary indigenous art organized by the Winnipeg Art Gallery.

In addition to private collections in Canada, the United States and Europe, Woods' work can also be found at Brandon University, The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Arrowhead Corp., The Government of Manitoba, The University of Winnipeg, and the Peace Hills Trust.



Canada's Boreal Forest region - dark blue area

The Boreal Forest region of Canada is characterized by a variety of flora and fauna and is home to a large percentage of Canada's indigenous population.

Canada's boreal forest comprises about two thirds of the circumpolar boreal forest that rings the Northern Hemisphere and in Canada stretches 10,000 continuous kilometers across the country. It represents a tract of land over 1,000 kilometers wide separating the tundra in the north and the temperate rain forest and deciduous woodlands of the west and southern parts of Canada. The region spans the landscape from the most easterly part of Newfoundland and Labrador to the border between the northern Yukon and Alaska. The region is dominated by coniferous forests, particularly spruce, and vast wetlands. The boreal forest region includes eight Eco-zones, each with their own characteristic native flora and fauna.

Canada's boreal landscape contains more lakes and rivers than any comparably sized landmass on earth. It is estimated that 80% of the world's unfrozen fresh water supply is found in Canada's boreal forest. The region contains over 1.5 million lakes and has vast areas of wetland, particularly bogs and fens. These wetlands provide wildlife habitat, particularly for migratory birds, maintain water flow in rivers, and store significant amounts of carbon that otherwise would be released to the atmosphere.

The boreal forest wetlands provide an extremely important wild-life habitat. The region serves as breeding grounds for over 12 million waterbirds and millions of land birds including species as diverse as vultures, hawks, grouse, owls, hummingbirds, kingfishers, woodpeckers and various songbirds. It is estimated that the avian population of the boreal forest represents 60% of the land birds in all of Canada.

Most large boreal lakes have cold water species of fish like trout and whitefish, while in warmer waters species may include northern pike, walleye and smallmouth bass. Mammals that call the forest home include Caribou, Lynx, Wolverine, Black Bear, Moose, Coyote, Timber Wolf and Wood Bison.



Angelique Merasty Levac
Birch Bark Biting, 2009
Traditional Fine Craft - Birch Bark
Aboriginal Arts Council of Alberta -
Permanent Collection

Birch bark biting, also sometimes referred to as 'chews', is the art of dentally perforating designs into folded thin sheets of birch bark to make a mark or pierce the surface. Practiced by the Ojibwa, Cree and other Algonquian groups, birch bark biting was used in fabricating domestic containers, architectural coverings, canoes and pictographic scrolls. Traditionally, bark biting was a means of experimenting with designs that might later be translated into porcupine quill or bead applique work. More recently, bark biting has achieved the status and market of a fine art.

Angelique Merasty Levac is an acclaimed master of the traditional craft of birch bark biting. Born in Midnight Lake, near the family trap line in northern Manitoba, Angelique was raised by her grandparents who taught her the traditional ways of the Cree People. She learned the customary ways of connecting with the land - of trapping, hunting and fishing, making and breaking camp, and living in the wild.

The summer season always brought a variety of activities, and it was during a berry picking adventure that Angelique was first introduced to birch bark biting where the ladies would peel thin sheets of birch bark to make exquisite artistic impressions with their teeth. In 1980, a chance encounter brought Angelique to Beaver Lake, Saskatchewan, where she began a mentorship with the last remaining birch bark biter, a world-renowned craft artist who coincidentally shared the same name.

As practiced by generations of northern Woodlands women, Angelique draws inspiration from the natural world. Complex and intricate, her compositions feature butterflies, hummingbirds, flowers, frogs, turtles, and fish. Dedicated to the revival and preservation of this beautiful and feminine art form, Angelique has made a significant contribution to birch bark biting, and remains one of the most highly skilled practitioners. Her work is exhibited across Canada and the United States.