

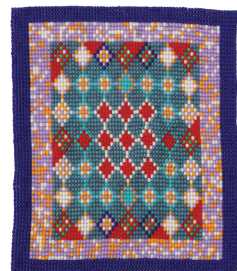
Alice Mary Bennett was born and lived a lot of her life on Woods Island—a small fishing community in the heart of the Bay of Islands that was resettled in the 1960's. Some of my favourite memories are the early mornings on the Island, beachcombing with my nanny looking to see what gifts the tide had left on the shore overnight as we slept. The tides give and take, as the ocean pushes and pulls, but seamlessly creates a constant flowing harmony between the land and the sea.

In Mi'kmaq language there is a guiding principle known as "Etuaptmumk" meaning "Two-Eyed Seeing," originally introduced by Elder Albert Marshall, that involves seeing with one eye the world through Indigenous knowledge, and seeing with the other eye through Western perspectives, and simultaneously seeing both worlds as a way to create balance and harmony—much like the land and sea.

Extending further within my own experiences, I started responding to these traditional quilts through beadwork, as a way of collaborating with my Newfoundland settler and Indigenous heritage simultaneously. This relationship between beading and quilting is a way for me to connect multiple perspectives, and see through both lenses to co-learn and create an understanding of both cultures.

My Grandmother was a brave Mi'kmaw woman, and spent most of her time knitting, sewing, dancing and, of course, quilting. I like to think of these beadworks as a collaboration with her, as a way to begin telling a larger story.

- Kelsey Street



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This brochure accompanies the exhibition
Kelsey Street: Weaving Back and Forth, presented at
The Rooms from October 15, 2022 - January 22, 2023

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Beadworks by Kelsey Street:

1 // **Old Spruce Tree**
2022
Glass beads, string
Collection of the artist

2 // **Rough Waters**
2022
Glass beads, string
Collection of the artist

3 // **Red Morning**
2022
Glass beads, string
Collection of the artist

4 // **Salmon Jumping**
2022
Glass beads, string
Collection of the artist

Quilts by Alice Mary Bennett:

5 // **Untitled**
1989
Cotton, batting, thread
Collection of the artist's family
(Made in Corner Brook,
Bay of Islands, NL)

6 // **Untitled**
2000
Cotton, batting, thread
Collection of the artist's family
(Made in Corner Brook,
Bay of Islands, NL)

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KELSEY STREET

WEAVING BACK
AND FORTH

KELSEY STREET

WEAVING BACK AND FORTH

The Elbow Room Residency Program acts as a laboratory for emerging artists to develop and exhibit new artworks. Over a three-month period, The Rooms provides a professional studio space and curatorial and technical support.



making more

The intimacy of Kelsey's process is on display, approachable and warm, perhaps even relatable—and yet deeply and specifically hers. She examines herself through the lens of her grandmother's craft and life. Looking at bigger pictures within tiny beaded quilts, Kelsey honours what has been made by intentionally making more. Planting glass seeds from the trees that Alice grew. A descendent, a continuance, a collaboration.

Kelsey illustrates a lived truth of mixed ancestry and assimilation in Ktaqmkuk, an affirmation of Mi'kmaq voices within a dominant idea of colonial Newfoundland craftwork. Cultures, hands and threads that have been “woven back and forth” for hundreds of years are warped by the land. Now we look closely at the weft—what brings us together.

Four miniature beaded quilts, markers of family and positions within. To be in conversation with a grandmother through time. To not overthink it, to trust and to move. She is thinking through making. Thinking through family. Thinking through daily rhythms and stumbles. Making decisions. Making quilts, guided by Nan's decisions.

There is an immense comfort and connection in the process of remaking the moves of a grandmother. Even more so for a late grandmother.

Instead of hearing her voice say “too much” or “too fast,” you just know. My grandmother wasn't a quilter, but she was a gardener. It wasn't until after she passed that my garden flourished. That was when I stopped questioning myself. There was no time to question or to hesitate.

A repeated routine is a reinforced thread, a commitment to its structure and its place in your world. It has power, and with that comes a responsibility—to reinforce or to let loose. To follow a familiar path that has been followed for generations, to retrace the steps of an old recipe, to collect fruit from old trees, to reimagine the result in old and new ways. To eat sweet bottled pears, as is, in a cereal bowl. To eat sweet bottled pears on toast with pulled pork and hot sauce. Both good, both familial, both yours to have and to give.

Kelsey has held this project in her mind for years, and she will continue to grow it, move through it, and to offer it, as Alice once did. Through this work, Kelsey uncovers and asserts what was taken through what was given, what is to come and what will be given again.

Jane Walker is an artist, writer and community worker based in Bonavista, NL. She is a descendant of European settlers in the Bonavista Bay and Trinity Bay areas.

more making

When I engage with Kelsey's work in *Weaving Back and Forth*, I immediately think of Mothers and Grandmothers. When I think of the women in my life, I am moved to live a lifeway comparable to theirs, I admire their skills and ways of being, making and caring.

Mi'kmaq women pass skills blood-to-blood and hand-to-hand, their hands led by their hearts. I know and trust that when knowledge and skills are transferred this way, they come with a promise of more to come—more life, more makings, more love. Kelsey delivers on such an (unspoken) promise with this work and shows us future possibilities, encoded in this intergenerational collaboration with her Maternal Grandmother, Alice Mary Bennett.

I think Kelsey's envisioning of new and old shared worlds is something that *Weaving Back and Forth* is showing us in a relatable and comfortable way. I'm drawn to her use of colour, pattern and makings-through-time kind of repetition. By developing this work while dialoguing with her Grandmother and her interwoven L'nu and settler ancestry, she is showing us how truly interconnected and interdependent we all are. She gently and carefully reminds us in her bead loom quilts, that maybe, in some places and in some ways, we have quietly been so all along, despite a past and present world that pushes and leans toward homogeneity and assimilation.

We all stand on the shoulders of the people who have come before us. We stand with our Ancestors, always. Here, Kelsey is showing us resourcefulness and continuance in a specific and familial response to making. She makes while engaging with the world through Two Eyes and with two views, as we must—we go where we point our gaze. When we must see the world through multiple lenses (and we must, now) we have to constantly do the labour to translate back and forth, between worldviews and life-ways. Kelsey is doing the hard, particular work of translation for all of us in these small quilts.

I have deep respect for Kelsey's multifaceted communication through her making. She is speaking, in real time, with her Nan, with her family and with the people, us. Kelsey is responding to ancestral guidance, her hands making works that encourage us to see past stereotypes and to instead visualize and affirm the long thread that winds back-and-forth, between then, now and future. Her work gently urges us to recognize simultaneously, what has been lost to colonial violence, and what we've been communicating through family and kin-networks, forever.

Megan Samms is an artist, farmer and community worker in her home territory and community—Katalisk, Ktaqmkuk. Megan is an Internationally Indigenous person of Mi'kmaq, Nlaka'pamux and mixed settler descent.

Kelsey Street is an L'nu artist from Elmastukwek, Ktaqmkuk Territory (Bay of Islands, NL). She has an interdisciplinary arts practice working in a variety of forms such as beadwork, textile/craft, printmaking processes and site-specific performance/installation. Within her practice, Street navigates ways of connecting to her Newfoundland settler and Indigenous heritage, often exploring themes of community, home and resettlement. Street graduated with a BFA in Visual Arts from Memorial University of Newfoundland (2019) and has participated in exhibitions provincially and internationally (Canada and UK) at venues such as Tina Dolter Gallery, Craft Council, PULP Gallery, Grenfell Art Gallery and Gatehouse Arts. Street has been the Director of Programming for CBNuit art Festival for the past two years, and was recently the visiting artist-in-residence at Union House Arts in Port Union, NL.



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Artist Thanks

This body of work is dedicated to my late grandmother Alice Mary Bennett.

I would especially like to thank Jane Walker for helping me grow this project since the very beginning, and for working collaboratively with Megan Samms to write such a magical and thoughtful essay to accompany my work. Thank you Jane and Megan.

I would also like to thank my family members for letting me borrow their everyday used and cherished quilts to share in this exhibition, including my mother Michelle Bennett Street and my Aunt Wanda Pynn.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to Mireille Eagan and the entire team at The Rooms for their support and in realizing this exhibition.