

WOVEN BEING: A SOUND REFLECTION



This reflection provides context on a 1-hour, Spotify playlist designed to accompany you and give you ambiance while you visit the Woven Being exhibition. The Indigenous musicians on this playlist often reflect and create art about similar subjects (sometimes using shared methods) as the visual artists in this gallery and this reflection is designed to give you a different experience of the Woven Being exhibition. When you're ready to start this reflection, scan the QR code using your phone camera and remember that the sound you allow to bleed in and grow out of you shapes the way you hear everything else.

Wado (thank you), for listening to these Indigenous sounds.

Written by: Teagan Harris (Cherokee Nation), Terra Engagement Fellow

Jason Wesaw (Potawatomi), “Breath of Life . . . The First Song”, Jeff Strand, “Pounding Black Ash” and Nora Moore Lloyd (Ojibwe), “Harvesting Manoomin”

Some sounds are central to our memories and cultural lineages. Be sure to stop and listen to the sounds that some of our collaborating artists have chosen to welcome you to the exhibit.

“Skicinuwiwkuk”, Jeremy Dutcher (Tobique First Nation)

Skicinuwiwkuk, means Indian Land. In this song, Jeremy Dutcher sings over a recording of Solomon Polchies (Sitansisk First Nation) speaking the Maliseet language 61 years ago. As you explore the beginning of the exhibition, consider the English translation of the lyrics:

“Always and forever/ this is indian land/ as long as there is a child among our people/ we will protect the land/ indian land”

“Seeseepano”, Ayansabee (Oji-Cree)

Seeseepano, follows the story of Ayansabee's grandfather, who was taken at a young age to a boarding school before he could learn the meaning of his own name. You can find a similar experience in collaborating artist Nora Moore Lloyd's letters which are written in a language that would have been unreadable to the author who first spoke them. Both artists display how generations, separated by forced assimilation, reach back towards each other, and how the current generation can give voice back to their ancestors. Consider Ayansabee's words:

“They took me from you, sister/Oh, brother/I don't even know my name/Oh, won't you tell me? (Tell me)/Is it God's plan?”

“Mommy’s Little Guy”, Fawn Wood (Cree)

Fawn Wood is a renowned pow wow singer and her 2012 *Askewewak* album is filled with lullabies and modern hand drum songs focused on the theme of womanhood. I chose this song in recognition of the mothers of children taken away by the U.S. government during the era of boarding schools. The sweetgrass braids in Kelly Church’s *Honoring our Children* installation can be smelled throughout the museum. They represent the children whose lives were cut short. Fawn Wood gives voice to this repeated prayer and assertion that no child can be erased, and that grief and love ignores the artificial boundaries of time and distance in the form of a lullaby.

“Teeth Agape”, Tonya Tagaq (Inuk)

Tagaq is an experimental throat singer and a punk Inuk artist, whose avant-garde approach gives life and energy to the stories she tells in her albums. “Teeth Agape” is a compliment and contrast to the previous song even though they both utilize traditional genres of Indigenous music. There is a tight control over enunciation and breath as Tanya undergoes auditory shapeshifting into a mother wolf protecting her children. The rage of the protagonist is underscored by an urgent, driving beat, and I am drawn by her certainty in her own strength and ability to protect others.

[“Utter the name and be crushed by leg grown strong from holding up weight”](#)

“Native Tongue”, Tinge (Anishinaabe)

Tinge captures well the sense of unfairness and rebellion that comes with growing into adulthood while carrying the weight of historical and modern baggage with you. I like to see the last three songs as being in dialogue. A recognition of frustration, angst, and resistance in mothers, children, and young adults who interrogate and challenge the world they have inherited.

“My Way’s Cloudy”, Joe Rainey (Diné), Jake Blount (Black), Mali Obomsawin (Odanak First Nation)

In this remix of the black spiritual, “My Way’s Cloudy” Afrofuturists and Indigenous Futurists join their voices to sing about shared need for ancestral knowledge and guidance. Coming from a range of disciplines pow wow singer Joe Rainey, folk artist Jake Blount, and composer Mali Obomsawin, have combined their unique skills to create a powerful and earnest reinterpretation of this old hymn to comfort and create solidarity among shared and unique burdens. This song amplifies the message that our identity today has been given to us by those who have come before.

“What Made the Red Man Red”, Frank Waln (Sicangu Lakota)

Who is telling the story and who is the audience of the works that draw your attention in this exhibition? In this song, Frank Waln repurposes the intentionally derogatory and damaging lyrics of Disney’s “What Made the Red Man Red” by sampling and reorganizing the flow of the song to give voice back to the Native people that the “Red Men” are meant to represent and disparage

“You've got it right from the headman/The real true story of the red man/No matter what's been written or said/Now you know why the red man's red!”

“Blame”, Mato Wayuhi (Oglala Lakota) and The Tewa (Cherokee)

There is no reconciliation without acknowledgment. Mato Wayuhi’s unique brand of humor and rebuke creates a memorable experience for any first-time listener. In Blame, he redefines the popular phrase “You don't want the smoke”, often meant to be an insult to someone’s willingness to face consequences. Here, it includes the implications of smudging, a practice where one cleanses themselves by smoking or burning sage. It’s a concise way to criticize the attempts institutions and individuals make to circumnavigate reckoning that must come after historical hurt and before healing.

“There There”, Mali Obomsawin (Odanak First Nation)

Sometimes, life can feel confusing, loud, and uncomfortable. Movement forward can be difficult without proper rest. This song creates a sense of stopping the movement forward and finding comfort where one is in its repetitive and slow guitar riff and simple lyrics. “There There” is about grief and comfort, frustration and rest. It also implies a shared burden, comforting one another with the simple, repeated phrase “There, there”.

“B.e.son”, Joe Rainey (Ojibwe)

In this pow wow remix track, Joe Rainey has created a dense layer of singers, whispers, and orchestral swells creating an intimate and engrossing listening experience that takes inspiration from diverse music-making traditions. The non-word lyrics of pow wow music are called vocables and were designed to universalize pow wow songs so that people from diverse tribes and languages could all dance together. This, paired with the chest rattling bass recreates the sense of connectedness one feels while listening to communal styles of music like EDM but curates it to the solo listener.

“Namesake”, Xiuhtezcatl (Xochimilca), Mato Wayuhi (Oglala Lakota)

Breaking with the tone of the deeply personal album, STANKFACE STANDING SOLDIER, Namesake explores accepting oneself through the acceptance of one's name and family. I see this as a continuation of the story started in *Seeseepano* by Ayansabee and we have examples of unbroken connection and the passing on of knowledge with collaborating artist Kelly Church and her daughter Cherish Perish, whose black ash basket is also on view in the galleries.

“Uummati Attanarsimat” (Heart of Glass), Elisapie (Inuk)

We've explored what it means to rest and find comfort in culture and a sense of place, but what about contributing to a wider culture? “Uummati Attanarsimat” by Elisapie, allows the artist to explore her voice and her language within the context of a song many of us already know (“Heart of Glass” by Blondie). Similarly, many artists within the exhibition reference trends with a larger art culture demonstrating the push and pull of influence within and outside subcultures of visual and musical art.

“Waaba Gwasoo”, Saltwater Hank (Ts'msyen Gitga'at First Nation)

Bluegrass is a patchwork genre with influences from West Africa (as seen in the presence of the banjo), Irish folk tunes, and Indigenous pow wow music, specifically from Cherokee folks in Appalachia. Saltwater Hank plays bluegrass beautifully in his album *Gal'üünx Wil Lu Holtga Liimi* but recontextualizes it by making the entire album exclusively in his indigenous, Ts'msyen language from the Northwestern United States. I think this song is a beautiful example of what the artists in *Woven Being* are often doing as well with their art: having fun.

“My Blood Runs Through This Land”, Black Belt Eagle Scout (Swinomish/Iñupiaq)

The album this song comes from is a reflection on the artist's move back to tribal homelands after living in Oregon. This single's wailing guitar solos and floating falsetto runs makes for a mesmerizing listen. If there is one thing to take away from this playlist and the exhibition, it is that all that you see and hear is built off the work of others who survived, learned, and taught others.

“I know you speak through me, I feel it in the sound of water/Touching all the rocks/ I feel no one can take this moment away/ 'cause my blood runs through this land”

“Kija/Care” Kízis (Anishnaabe)

Care for policymaking, the environment, and for each other is the responsibility of each and every person. Kízis's ability to take serious subject matter, complex language shifting between Anishinaabemowin and English, and intense and varied rhythm allows her to make a dance hit out of a call for action.

Do you see, if we don't act now, we will lose everything...”

Wado for Listening!