

Jaime Koebel

By Brian Cyr and Lawrence Barkwell

Jaime Koebel is a participating artist in the *Walking With Our Sisters* project. *Walking With Our Sisters* is an installation art project of 1,700 pairs of moccasin tops or “vamps” commemorating and representing an estimated 824 Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing in Canada since 1961.



This is the first of several sets of vamps created by Jaime Koebel for *Walking With Our Sisters*.

“[These are] my first set of completed vamps for this project. I couldn't help but think about how ineffective national political organizations have been in trying to get some movement on raising awareness and bringing justice to the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. An example is the support for a national inquiry that the AFN tried to establish during their recent meeting with the provinces. What we are doing with this project is real. It feels to me like a movement from the grassroots to really being awareness to other people like us who may not know about the craziness of this situation. Craziness as in—why it's anything being done in any real manner? I hope that when this gets exhibited general society will be gifted with an important message of urgency and suspicion as to why more sit being done. We are our own leadership.”



Jaime Koebel grew up in Lac La Biche, Alberta. From the age of 15-years-old, she was a vocal youth advocate with the National Association of Friendship Centres for nine years and co-chair for the Urban Multi-purpose Aboriginal Youth Centres Initiative for three years. In 2004, she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Carleton University in Canadian Studies and that same year began a Masters of Arts degree with a focus on the healing and health benefits of Métis cultural dance.

During her years as a youth advocate, Jaime Koebel was appointed as an adviser to the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism and Status of Women through the Department of Canadian Heritage from 1999-2002. In 2004-2005, Jaime was an adviser to the Minister for the Department of Canadian Heritage for the Traditional Knowledge Gatherings and in 2004-2005, Jaime received a Role Model Award from the National Aboriginal Health Organization where she continues to be an active spokesperson. (Photo on left by *Tia Photography 2010*.)

As a successful visual artist, Jaime Koebel's works have been showcased world-wide and are held in many prestigious personal and public galleries. Her art reflects her dreams and perspectives from her Indigenous Heritage and the intangible nature of the world. Jaime was a dancer with the well-known troupe, *Jig on the Fly* for five years until 2010 when she started a new dance group with fiddle player Anthony Brascoupe. She has won many individual dance competitions in Canada and the United States. Most



recently, she claimed the International jigging title when she won the open competition at *Métis Fest* held August 2009 at the International Peace Gardens. In addition to her artistic creative side, Jaime has published literary pieces in a small number of magazines and has academic pieces in journals and books which focus on engaging Aboriginal youth and issues surrounding Indigenous identity. She contributed, “My Story: Reflections on Growing Up in Lac la Biche” to *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories* (Ute Lischke and David McNab, eds. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007: 349- 376).

In December of 2009, Research and Development Officer Jaime Koebel was one of a few delegates selected to accompany Her Excellency, Michaëlle Jean; Governor General of Canada on a state visit to Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. The purpose of the visit was to enhance the relationship between Canada and the three countries through the arts, business, multiculturalism, and women’s issues.

Indigenous issues held prominent in the many forums that the delegation attended. The Governor General herself initiated many conversations around the issue of residential schools and the process of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada. Her commitment to the Métis people and bringing to light the issues they have faced in Canada was knowledgeable and genuine.

Currently, Jaime Koebel is also a Research and Development Officer with the Métis Settlements of Alberta at their Satellite Office in Ottawa. She is also a national board member for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and locally, she is the co-chair for Carleton University’s Aboriginal Task Force and Advisor for the City of Ottawa’s Arts, Heritage and Culture Advisory Council as well as a board member for the Ottawa Aboriginal Justice Committee.



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