

# ***Weaving Hands Planting Seeds***

April 11 - October 27, 2024



**CASTELLANI**  
**ARTMUSEUM**  
OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY

**An Exhibition Curated by Niagara University's  
Exhibiting Cultures (AHM357IS) Course**



“The most rewarding thing for me, is seeing my work dance.

Seeing my work out there...being worn.

That’s the best [thing].”

**Marilyn Isaacs**

# EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

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Learn about artistry, tradition, and the role of self-taught art in preserving community knowledge through the vibrant works of Haudenosaunee fingerweaving artist Marilyn Isaacs (Tuscarora, Bear Clan).

*Weaving Hands | Planting Seeds* celebrates the inspiration, dedication, and passion at the root of Isaacs’ fingerweaving. This textile art continues to play an important role in Haudenosaunee culture, where artists weave by hand belts, bands, and more.

Marilyn Isaacs has been fingerweaving for over 35 years, creating intricate woven works for herself, her family, and other Haudenosaunee community members. She was recognized with a First Place in Traditional Arts award at the 2019 Hodinöhsö:ni’ Art Show at Ganondagan and in an instructional booklet on Haudenosaunee fingerweaving created by Isaacs and Jenine Hillaire (Lhaq’te’mish, Lummi Nation).

Her dedication to this artistic tradition is matched by an equal passion for educating others in her community and the wider general public about fingerweaving through demonstrations, workshops, and classes.

An avid gardener who balances between “weaving season and “growing season” each year, Isaacs works tirelessly to “plant the seeds” of creativity—and nurture the next generation of fingerweaving artists.



(cover, detail) **Marilyn Isaacs**, *Purple and Yellow 'Pansy' Belt*, 2010, cotton

(left) **Marilyn Isaacs**, *Purple and Blue Chevron Belt*, 2024, cotton





## MEET THE ARTIST

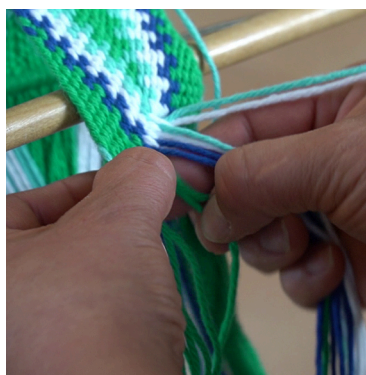
Marilyn Isaacs first began fingerweaving at the age of 15 while she was a dance performer at the Native American Center for the Living Arts—known locally as the Turtle—in the City of Niagara Falls, New York.

Unable to find an in-person teacher, she taught herself fingerweaving from a book she purchased at the art center's store, and through trial and error.

As a community artist, Marilyn Isaacs's fingerweaving has become well known throughout the Haudenosaunee community. Her work is worn as part of regalia throughout the Six Nation territories at dances, gatherings, and more.

Isaacs creates her work without the use of a guide or template, relying on sight, feel, and experience as she weaves.

Through her teaching, Isaacs hopes to foster a passion for fingerweaving in others to ensure that this knowledge continues to be preserved into the future.



## FINGERWEAVING GLOSSARY

### Warp strand

The vertical, stationary yarn which is attached to an anchor or loom to hold tension.

### Weft strand

The horizontal yarn that is passed over and under the warp strand, creating the weave.

### Warp-face weaving

A style of weaving where only the warp strands are visible in the finished work.

### Oblique Weaving

Also known as open-face weaving, a style where both warp and weft strands are visible in the finished work.

### Chevron

A "V" shaped pattern common in fingerweaving.

### Anchor

Any object the warp strands are secured to for tension, such as a hanger, door knob, or wall hook.

(from above) *Spread of Belts by Marilyn Isaacs, 2024; Marilyn Isaacs, 2024; Marilyn Isaacs working on a new belt, 2024; Set of Belts by Marilyn Isaacs demonstrating pattern variation, 2024.* Courtesy Castellani Art Museum

## AHM3571S: Exhibiting Cultures (Independent Study)

This course is a hands-on interdisciplinary introduction to the development of museum exhibitions and programs which feature local cultural traditions, ethnographic fieldwork, and museum-community collaborations.

**Course Instructor:** Professor Edward Y. Millar

**Student Curator:** Rachel Sheehan, B.A., Art History with Museum Studies, '24

### Art History with Museum Studies Program

Art History with Museum Studies is both an academic and professional program that provides students with a scholarly study of art, culture, and museums, while focusing on the area of professional museum work such as curatorship, education, collections management, museum administration, and development.

Our partnership with the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, centrally located on the campus, is an integral part of the museum studies component and provides opportunities for museum internships and exhibition-based courses.

## Exhibited Artworks

All works by and on loan from  
**Marilyn Isaacs (Tuscarora, Bear Clan)**  
unless otherwise indicated.

*Purple and Blue Chevron Belt*  
2024  
cotton

*Neon Yellow Chevron Belt and Leg Ties*  
2023  
cotton

*Coral and Black Chevron Belt*  
2021  
cotton

*Swimming Salmon*  
1999  
acrylic

*Fiery Red Chevron Belt*  
2023  
cotton

*Blue, Gold, and Orange Chevron Belt*  
2023  
cotton

*Purple and Pink Ombre Belt*  
2023  
cotton

*Purple and Yellow Pansy Belt and Purse*  
2010  
cotton

*Green and Brown Diamond Child Leg Ties*  
2015  
cotton

*Skarure Awe (Tuscarora Water)*  
2022  
cotton

*Indigo Blue Leg Ties*  
2015  
cotton

*Yellow and Gold Lightning Bolt Belt, Leg Ties, and Arm Ties*  
2023  
cotton  
*Newtown Green and Gold Belt and Leg Ties*  
2023  
cotton

*Chevron and Diamond Baby Belts*  
2008-2020  
acrylic and cotton

*Red and Grey Chevron Belt and Arrowhead Leg Ties (In Progress)*  
n.d.  
wool

*Maroon Wine Chevron Belt (In Progress)*  
n.d.  
wool

**Heather Hill (Tuscarora, Bear Clan) and Marilyn Isaacs**  
*Ribbon Dress and Ombre Belt for Reinah Hill*  
1997  
acrylic and cotton

**Heather Hill, Marilyn Isaacs, and Joel Printup (Cayuga, Bear Clan)**  
*Ribbon Shirt and Gustoweh*  
2024  
mixed media

**Heather Hill and Marilyn Isaacs**  
(Tuscarora, Bear Clan)  
*Beaded Hat and Woven Band*  
2024  
mixed media

**Angel Doxtater (Mohawk, Turtle Clan)**  
*Fingerweaver Corn Husk Doll*  
2024  
corn husks, cotton and hemp dogbane

**Debbie Shockley George (Shawnee, Bear Clan) and Marilyn Isaacs**  
*Ribbon Skirt and Leggings*  
n.d.  
cotton



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Please visit our website for current hours of operation.  
**The Castellani Art Museum is a free admission art museum.**  
Donations welcome.