



Christi Belcourt (b. 1966), Michif (Métis), Espanola, Ontario, Canada
***It's a Delicate Balance*, 2021**
Acrylic on canvas. 2021.30

Excerpt from Label Copy

For most Indigenous communities, all life—plants, animals, insects, microbes—are kin, and to be treated with respect and care. Most of the living beings that *Belcourt* depicts here are currently threatened, endangered, or at the edge of extinction in Mia's backyard, the Upper Midwest. Each of these species is critical for the balance of our ecosystem, interconnected to all of life, including humanity.

Belcourt paints these creatures as if she were beading them on hide, starting at the bottom and drawing upon designs and motifs found in Michif beadwork. Each dot is painted individually, representing a single bead. The composition of the painting is a seamless whole. Blossoming flowers and wisps of greenery are intricately outlined in the color palette and style of Michif floral imagery, a part of an aesthetic system and way of life made possible through careful observation of the natural world.

1. Look closely at the painting, *It's a Delicate Balance*. What is your eye drawn to first? Keep looking. How do your eyes move around the painting? What else do you notice?

2. Think about Belcourt's technique of using thousands of dots to emulate Michif beadwork. How would you explore this technique with viewers in relation to her theme of the interconnectedness of the natural world?

3. Belcourt states that humans are part of the interconnectedness of all living things. Why do you think she does not include any humans in her painting?

4. Belcourt says, "I think art is a vehicle and it is powerful in its ability to communicate what, sometimes, plain words cannot. Art can be used to seek justice and raise awareness so that change can happen. So the role of the artist is not only as an artist, but as a leader." Belcourt uses beautiful imagery as a starting point for examining issues related to the environment, climate change, and potential species extinction. How would you use her work to discuss how humans impact these issues?

Note: a document is being prepared that identifies many of the plants and animals in the painting and what their endangered status is.