

## ***CO-DEPENDENTS, 1996***

The work *Co-dependents* ( Figure 19) is a result of my observance of co-dependent relationships in Aboriginal communities, though of course, is not exclusive to Aboriginal



Figure 19. *Co-dependents*, 1996.  
Mary Longman. Cottonwood,  
leather, copper. 60 x 55 x 41"

people and it exists elsewhere. Co-dependant relationships occur when friends and family maintain a relationship even though it is unhealthy for them, and even if extreme abuse occurs. Each person disables the other from moving beyond the state of dysfunction. People usually stay in co-dependent relationships due to lack of self-esteem and/or lack of healthy boundaries. They may even over-compensate by caretaking, resulting in further preventing their loved one from dealing with addictions or unhealthy behaviour. Sometimes it doesn't matter how extreme the tension is, the two may still remain precariously balanced between love and resentment. Co-dependence is all around us, such as in the music we hear everyday. In love ballads, we often hear lyrics that reflect unhealthy dependency and the loss of the independent self; "I would be nothing if I didn't have you" or "You are my everything," or in the most pathetic case, "If you leave me, can I come too?"

The wishbone in the piece suggests the contradictory dynamics of a co-dependent relationship: one side wishes that things will get better, the other side reversed, becomes a weapon, a slingshot specifically intended to injure and cause pain. This work is currently the property of the Canadian Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.