



RALLIEMENT NATIONAL DES
MÉTIS
NATIONAL COUNCIL

Climate Strategy Art Contest

SUBMITTED ART PIECES





“Climate change poses one of, if not the, biggest challenges to our citizens and communities. As Métis, we are intrinsically tied to the land, and we must do our part to protect it now and for our future generations. Tackling climate change requires us all to come together and collectively develop and implement solutions. Centred in this fight are our youth and I encourage everyone to send in their artwork. I look forward to seeing their visions, connection to the land and voice of our youth against climate change through the submitted pieces.”

– President Cassidy Caron



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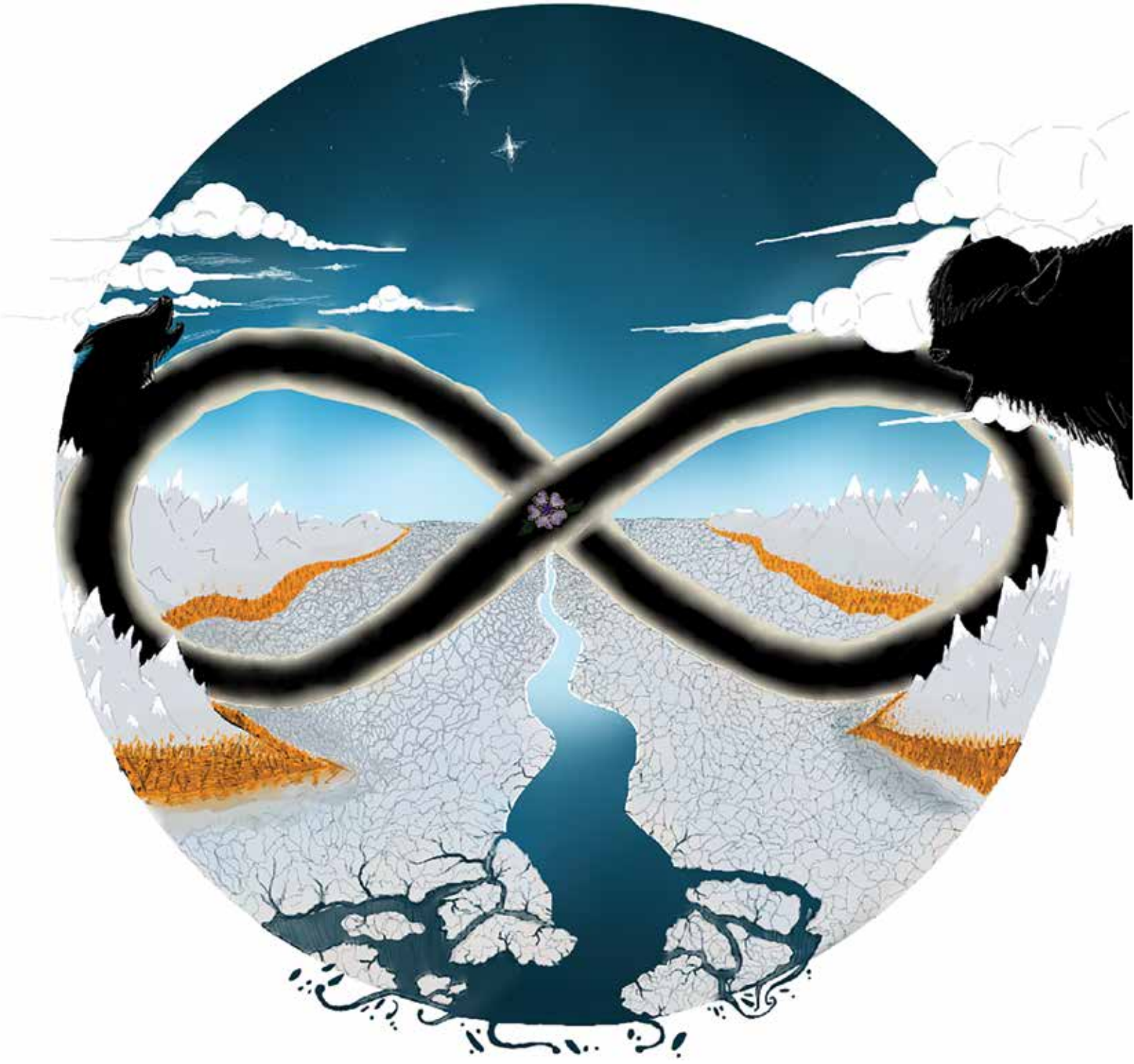
Adera

I choose to do this artwork piece of before and after. The before is a clean healthy, happy earth that is being taken care of by everyone as a team and big family loving earth. The trees are standing tall, the flowers are growing big and strong, the snail is happy, the grass is green and big, the Métis flag is proud and happy we can spend time together celebrating the flowers, animals and our culture.

The after is where we are heading. The trees are chopped down, the sky is dark, the flower is dying, there is garbage everywhere making the earth a unhealthy place to live. The grass is gone and the sun does not come out anymore, the snail is dying. We cannot spend time celebrating our culture and waving our flag high because nothing matters anymore the earth and animals are dyeing.

I am sad to think that right now we are in the middle line, heading towards the earth being a unhappy and unhealthy place to live. I love the earth, the animals, the flower, the sun and my culture. If we don't stop and think of a plan to work together climate change will get worse and we will not have a earth to live and celebrate on. Now is the time to start making changes and working together to solve problems because once we go to far we wont be able to fix the earth and animals. The time to come together and work as a team is now, for each other, the sun, the flowers, our culture, our land, our snails and ourselves. Our earth depends on it. ∞

Adera age 11



Arabella

Introduction

Hello! My name is Arabella Cathers, and I'm 11 years old from Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, BC. I made a special art piece for the Métis Climate Strategy Art Contest. My painting shows how the ice is melting up North in Canada, and there's a big infinity Métis symbol in it. This symbol is really important because it shows how we Métis people are forever connected to the land. This essay is about what the land, water, and our Métis culture mean to me and how climate change is changing everything. I have also shown a wolf and a buffalo, symbolism of Métis culture and the changing landscape for all life in Canada.

What the Land and Waters Mean to Me

When I think about the land, I picture the big forests with lots of trees and all the animals living there. It's like a big, green playground full of life. The oceans, lakes, and rivers remind me of fun times with my family. We go for picnics, swim, and just relax, especially when it's hot outside. My dad has a boat, and we go on adventures on the ocean, exploring new places and catching fish like salmon. It's super exciting!

My Connection to Our Culture and Nature

My family and I are really close to nature. We get a lot of our food from the land and water, like moose, deer, salmon, and cod. We even pick blackberries to make jam and pies. In the fall, we hunt for wild mushrooms like pines and chanterelles. My dad teaches me a lot about the foods we can find where we live.

Memorable Experiences in Nature

One of the best days ever was when I caught my first salmon. It was so big and strong, and I had to work really hard to reel it in! Also, finding mushrooms by myself made my dad so proud. These are moments I'll never forget.

How Nature Influences My Everyday Life

Where I live, I sometimes see people cutting

down trees, and it makes me a bit sad. But I know they replant new trees and mother earth is always supporting us. We're lucky to have four seasons on Vancouver Island, and each one is special in its own way. Each season brings something special.

Climate Change and Its Impact

My dad tells me that because of climate change, it's harder to find time to go fishing and hunting. We also have to be careful when we collect firewood because of the dry times in the forest. Climate change is really changing how we live. We also live in a time of forest fires and how important it is we live with respect with our environment.

What Climate Leadership Means to Me

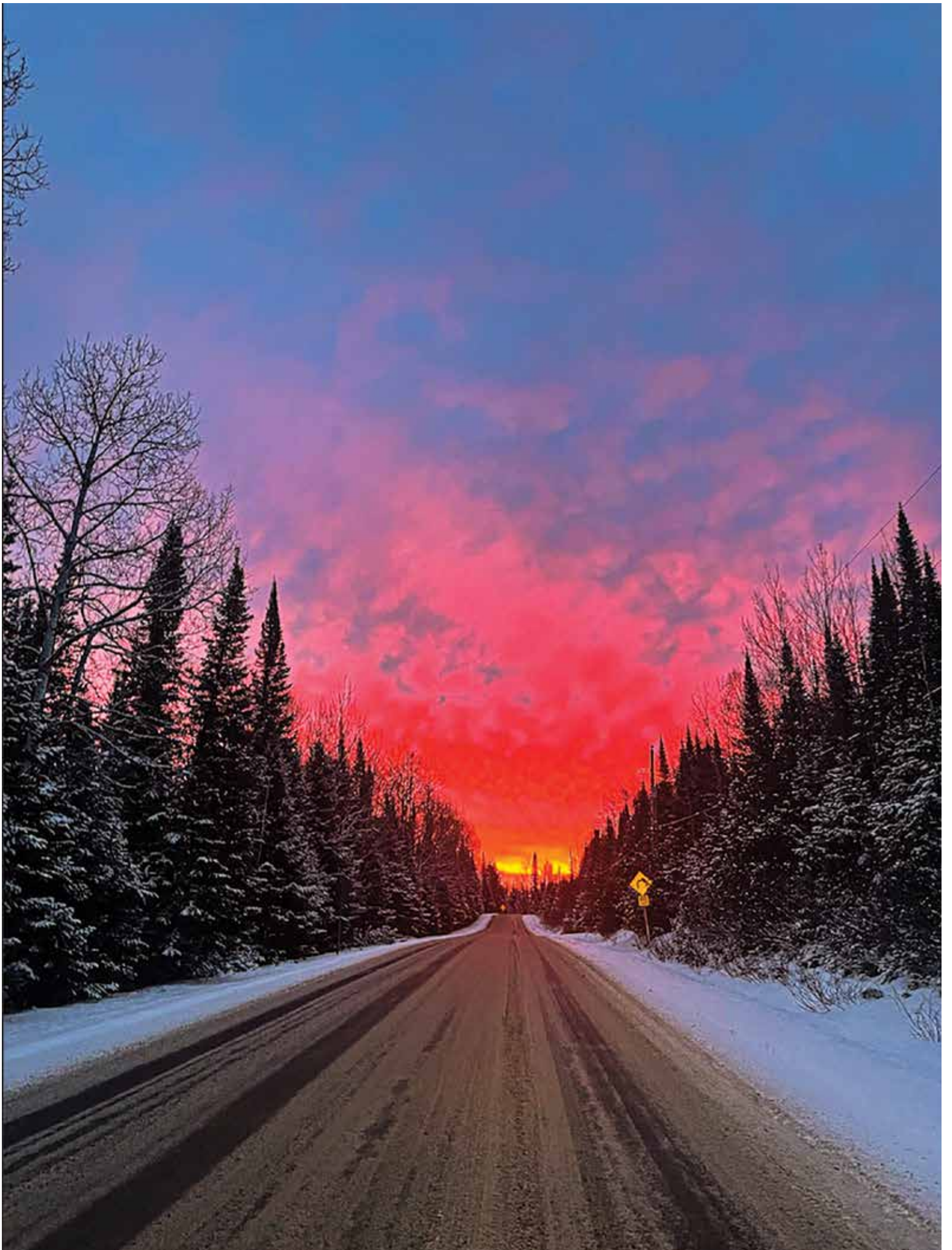
Being a leader in climate change, to me, is all about really getting what's going on and then helping everyone else get it too. It's not just about repeating what we hear; it's about tuning into what the experts say, using our own brains to think it through, and not just going along with the crowd. Being a climate leader means I should encourage everyone to be earth leaders, to take care of our planet. It's a big job, and it's not just up to one person. It's up to all of us, together, to make a difference.

Feeling Empowered Against Climate Change

As a young person, I want to live in a world I'm proud of. A place that's clean and safe for me to grow up in. I dream of teaching my future kids how to live off the land like the Métis, in a way that's good for the planet. I want to live in a beautiful world without being scared of what's happening.

Conclusion

So, that's what my art and this essay are all about. The land, the waters, and our culture are super important. We need to take care of them, especially with climate change happening. I hope my art and words help people understand how special our connection to nature is and why we need to protect it. Let's work together for a better future! ∞



Ashley

This photo was taken on January 1st at 8:12 am in Nipigon Ontario. I was on my way to the local town for a day out by myself when I realized there was barely any snow. For the 17 years I have been alive I have never seen so little snow in the beginning of January. Usually we have so much snow that we wouldn't be able to drive anywhere we would always have to shovel all day. I was born in the winter (December 8th) and for my birthday every year My family, friends, and I would go to Thunder Bay to celebrate. This would make me so happy as I would be with the people I love doing what I love. But most years I would have to either cancel and reschedule or have it really earlier November because of how much snow we would get. But in 2023 There was no snow for almost all of December; in fact it was raining on Christmas day! This has gotten me thinking about how much the climate plays a role in everyone's lives. The most interesting part of this is that the climate has been changing so much recently but because it is changing so slowly it doesn't get a lot of recognition until it is affecting people. I will be honest the reason I am writing this is because it is affecting me but I am also writing this because in the past I have pushed climate change to the side or made a joke about it. Now that I have realized the consequences of climate change I want to focus more of my time and energy on this topic. I will be writing this essay on 3 main points; these points being 1 how I discovered climate change, 2 what I'm doing about climate change now, and lastly number 3 what I can do or say to help climate change in the future. Climate change is a huge topic and not only is it huge it is also scary to think or talk about as it affects billions of people

everyday. I want to make changes so that I can fully become a better and more resourceful person.

I first found out about climate change when doing a research assignment in Grade 8 about fossils. I was looking something up when I noticed a small ad about "Climate change!" And I thought nothing of it but later that day I decided to look it up online and found a lot about the topic. I learned what climate change was and how it affected the earth and people. Learning this got me thinking about how it affects my day to day life. I remember when I was younger the winters would be from November to late February or early march. But now that I am older and climate change has gotten worse I find that winters are from late December or early January to April. This intrigued me to further research the topic of climate change. I remember this night because after I got in so much trouble from my parents as I pulled an all-nighter. I researched a lot about climate change and created multiple slideshows of information about what it is. I was never taught about climate change in school as it was still a "new" topic. Also a lot of people still don't believe it is a real thing. When there is a lot of evidence proving the existence of climate change and how it is already affecting everyone one way or another. I am so grateful that I learned about climate change at a young age so that I can get a better understanding about the topic every chance I can get. This expands my knowledge on how I can help.

When I was in grade 10 we had to do a research project about light bulbs that we find in our house. I was very confused as to why we had to do this but my teacher explained that light bulbs use a lot of energy depending on what kind of light bulb we are using in our houses. I found that in my house we had all LED light bulbs except for in the kitchen so after

doing research I had a discussion with my mother about climate change and how we can do our part to help preserve the earth. We discussed using the oven less, unplugging our freezers when they are empty, changing all the light bulbs to LED, unplugging all the electronics we aren't using, etc. We talked and did research for hours and then the hours became days. After 2 months we got into a good routine on when to unplug certain items and how we can organize our freezers to fit into 1. I find that we helped with our share of using less energy and that made us feel good. We helped put less emissions in the air and we saved money on the electrical bill. Further throughout the grades I found out more and more information on climate change and how I can improve so I made more and more changes to my lifestyle. For example I always carpool, I take the bus instead of driving, I use the oven as little as possible, etc. I have worked super hard to make sure I can take care of my planet for the future generations as I want kids in the future and I hope they can have a healthy planet to guide them through life. Having a healthy planet benefits everyone so I try to help wherever and whenever I can.

I care about the environment and I want to change my life for the better. So I have decided to do research and figure out what I can do to help the planet. I am going off to University soon so I came up with a list including but not limited to taking public transportation, eating out less and buying fresh produce, using my oven as little as possible, making

sure I use efficient light bulbs, etc. I will change my ways to make a better planet for the future. I am always open to ideas for how to change as I want to use less energy, produce less waste, and produce less emissions. This will lead to a better future even if I am only making these small changes. I want to start fresh with helping the planet as I will be starting fresh in a new house, school, and city. With this I am excited to start this journey of helping the planet and moving away. So to begin these next steps I have already started purchasing things to help me in the next coming years including reusable shopping bags, reusable health products, efficient light bulbs, and more! I want to start this journey fresh and I am doing more and more research everyday to find new ways to help!

To conclude this journey I have discussed today, I would like to give a brief overview of how I discovered climate change, what I am doing now, and what I plan for the future. I discovered climate change while in grade eight while doing research on fossils! This then led me to do a lot of research about the topic then leading me to change my everyday routine like changing to environmentally friendly light bulbs, unplugging electronics we aren't using, and more. All of this got me thinking about what else I can change so now that I am moving to a new school, city, and starting a new journey I am planning to change my whole routine. With all of this information I hope to further my knowledge on the subject and to further expand my routine to help the environment. ∞







Hayley

The Métis people are a group whose heritage has been intertwined with nature since our creation. I wanted this piece to be a reflection of our relationship with nature and our responsibilities to protect it rather than a reflection of the damage that has been done to our environment. I believe that being reminded of what nature means to us is a far more powerful motivator for change. The younger generation will be integral to the protection and conservation of the land which is why this message is more important now than ever.

This digital art piece was designed with the cultural ties Métis people have to the land in mind. The beaded flower represents both nature's influence on our art but also our responsibility to nurture and protect the nature that influences and sustains us. The Métis symbol holds up the soil, protecting the flower. The flower is rooted to the Métis symbol, demonstrating how nature and our culture are supported by one another. The blue background is the same shade of blue the Métis flag displays and the border encompassing the piece is a Métis sash. The sash surrounding the symbol and flower is another example of protection and our job as Métis people to care for the land and one another.

I spent several days on this piece. If you look closely you will notice that the flower appears to be beaded. I achieved this by colouring the flower in three layers. First was the darkest colour used as the background for each section of the flower. Next was a slightly lighter colour used as the beads. I individually coloured each circle to ensure the placement was an accurate reflection of real beadwork. My last detail was the individually drawn highlights I placed on each "bead".

I have been lucky enough to have been raised with a relationship to the land. I have grown up hunting and fishing, learning from nature and being able to provide for my family because of it. I recognize many Métis people have not been as privileged as I have in this way. It is my hope that more and more people will remember their ties to the earth and choose to reunite with it. ∞





Heidi

Feet on the ground. The repeated back and forth of my footsteps as I once again ascend and then descend the road near my home. I have walked this path most days for over two years, a dirt and gravel road created for vehicles and the people they carry. For me the road is a passage my dog and I take every day. It is a forced acknowledgment that I am not the only living thing to dwell within this place: the Mountain Chickadee who has flung himself from a cedar branch; a squirrel atop blackberry brambles, hurriedly eating each berry around him; butterflies swirling around the purple plumes of buddleia; flowers and grasses that grow and die back, and then grow again; the stream that dries up in August and teems with water in November. This is what has inspired the art piece I have created — acknowledgment and appreciation for the many wonders in nature which pull us in and teach us the lessons of life, and yet, how easy it is to miss what nature has gifted us.

For the flora and fauna along the road near my home, vehicles and machinery are the immediate threat. When the road is dry, cars and trucks send a spray of dust into the air and coat the leaves of everything within a few feet of the road. Plants laden with dust are deprived of sunlight, and their ability for water uptake, gas exchange and food provisions for animals is reduced. In addition to this instant disruption, the act of driving from one place to another without physical association of the spaces being passed through becomes a threat to the environment as person and place turn into separate entities. To explain this concept in another way, let me tell you what I saw on my walk up the road:

Today I heard the long drawn out croak of a male frog. In recollection of the past two winters, his call is early this year. The result of a warm winter. The frog is hidden under a cascade of blackberry brambles intermixed with grey and beige plants still erect at the end of their growing season. Between myself and the brambles is a creek. Along the road the creek comes and goes from view, it drops off to join other streams of water, flows under the road — onto the road — through culverts, and in areas is caught up by the sludge of dying flora. This week the creek has a steady flow from rainfall. My dog enjoys a drink as she meanders upstream. In the sky are Golden and Bald Eagles. Like the frogs, they are early this year. High above the tallest cedar and Douglas firs, they glide in circles to create a sight that is both dizzying and mesmerizing. Close to the road most plants have recoiled into their winter state. A change in temperature has not brought about this occurrence, but rather a lack of sunlight from the sun's low perch in the sky. One plant still actively flowering, tansy, appears as a flag along the path, signaling bees who have not yet gone underground for winter. At the climax of my observations, I find a turkey tail mushroom. The rest of my walk is devoted to foraging for more turkey tail, but all I notice are the red-wine-stained caps of russula.

Direct contact with the flora and fauna within a few kilometers of my home has illuminated what could otherwise be a blur of undefined landscape. In the repetition of my walk up the road, I can see both short term and long term effects of the damage inflicted upon nature by humans. And in cases where long term effects of climate change are hard to grasp, the short term is both palatable and conducive to participation. I was privileged to grow up in a community which grafted me into a culture of outdoor enthusiasm and respect for the flora and fauna we



share it with. The beaded forget-me-not on nipaapaa's moccasins taught me to admire the smallest of flowers. However, even such things as the importance of grasslands escaped me because of a lack of direct contact. The people in the vehicles and machinery that barrel up the road, or the ones who clear cut land for the purpose of establishing something new, are all missing out on the chance to create familiarity which encourages an investment in protection. The more I see a lack of contact and familiarity between people and the earth around them, the more I see their

acceptance of damage to the land and waters. Therefore, for myself, and for my community, to fight climate change means to create acknowledgment and appreciation for the many wonders in nature. To acknowledge that the Meadowlark needs bunchgrass prairie, salmon need rivers, and humans need to exist in harmony with such creations. To acknowledge how immediate threats to nature and short term effects on the flora and fauna close to your home are outliers of a much bigger issue, but are also where climate action can begin. ∞



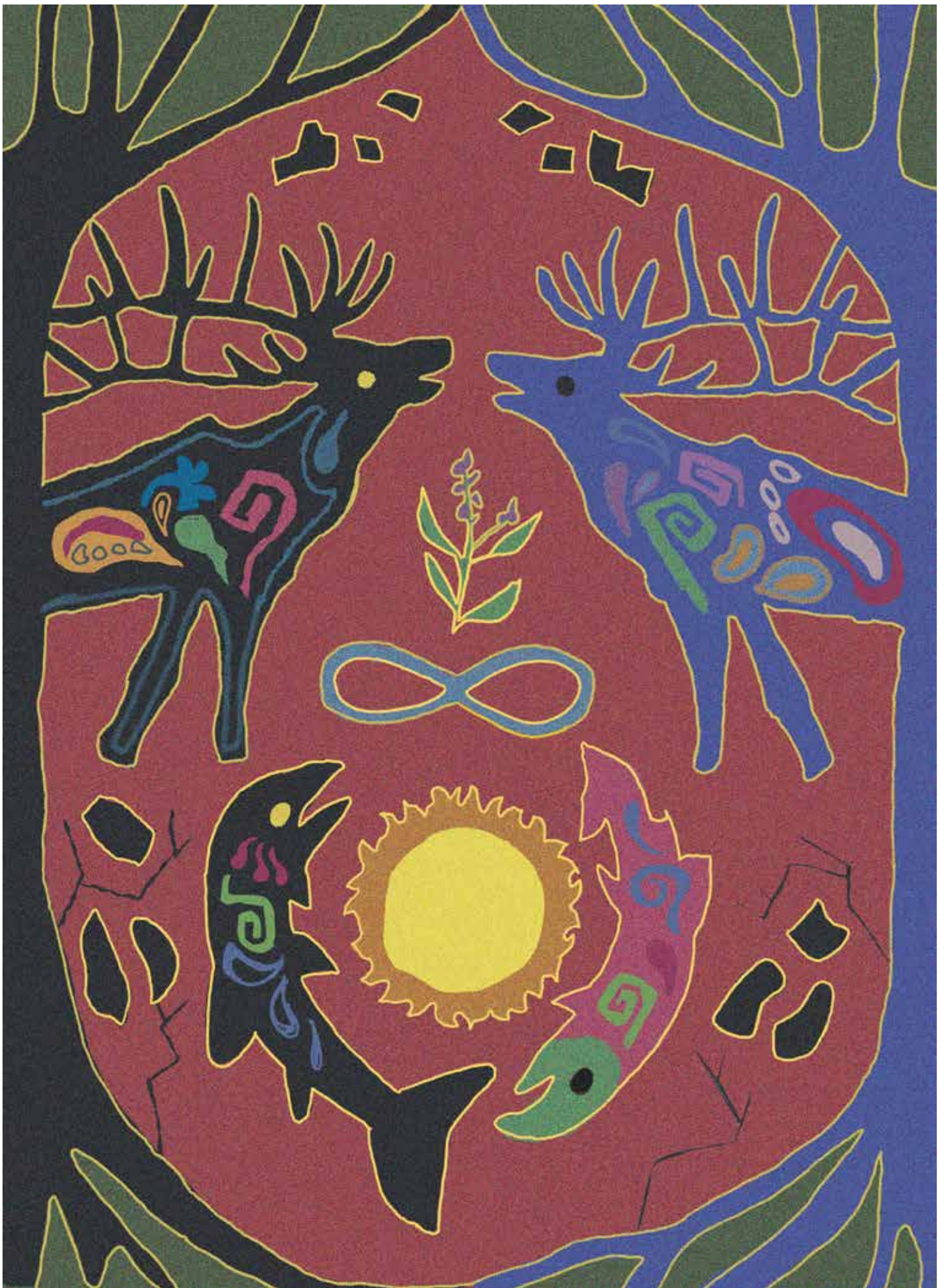


Hudson

My name is Hudson Cathers and I am Métis from Nanaimo, British Canada. I submitted this art piece because the environment is important to me my family. We live in the forest and have seen the climate change. Winters and Summer have both been drier. The inspiration for the piece was my favorite pass time, harvesting, including hunting and fishing with my Dad. My most memorable moment in nature was hunting moose with my Dad. When the weather is too dry, we can't use our quad to hunt and there is greater risk of fire. Fires have been close to our home and we have been at risk to evacuate.

The piece is a mixed-media collage, using paper and fabric. The Métis symbol is at the center of the piece and a very important Métis animal, the Bison. I collected images, which represent the diverse environments Métis people come from, including prairies, forests and coastal waterways, all of which will be impacted by climate change. I have also included call to action words, which everyone should consider. The outline the collage, is scraps of an old fire bag.

Because I feel connected to nature, I feel empowered to fight climate change and preserve our environment for my future. Climate action to me means make choice today, that will have a positive impact on the environment tomorrow. Métis people have always been connected to nature as part of their way of time, and my hope is through climate action this will continue in the future. ∞



Isabelle

The long term effects of climate change have been an ongoing problem for decades around the world. We as humans are experiencing a systemic deterioration of our planet due to our part in abusing fossil fuels, deforestation and more. Collectively, climate change and its effects have been evident in both nature and everyday life. Many Indigenous communities are in a straight jacket in regards to the continuation of their practices due to constant climate change effects.

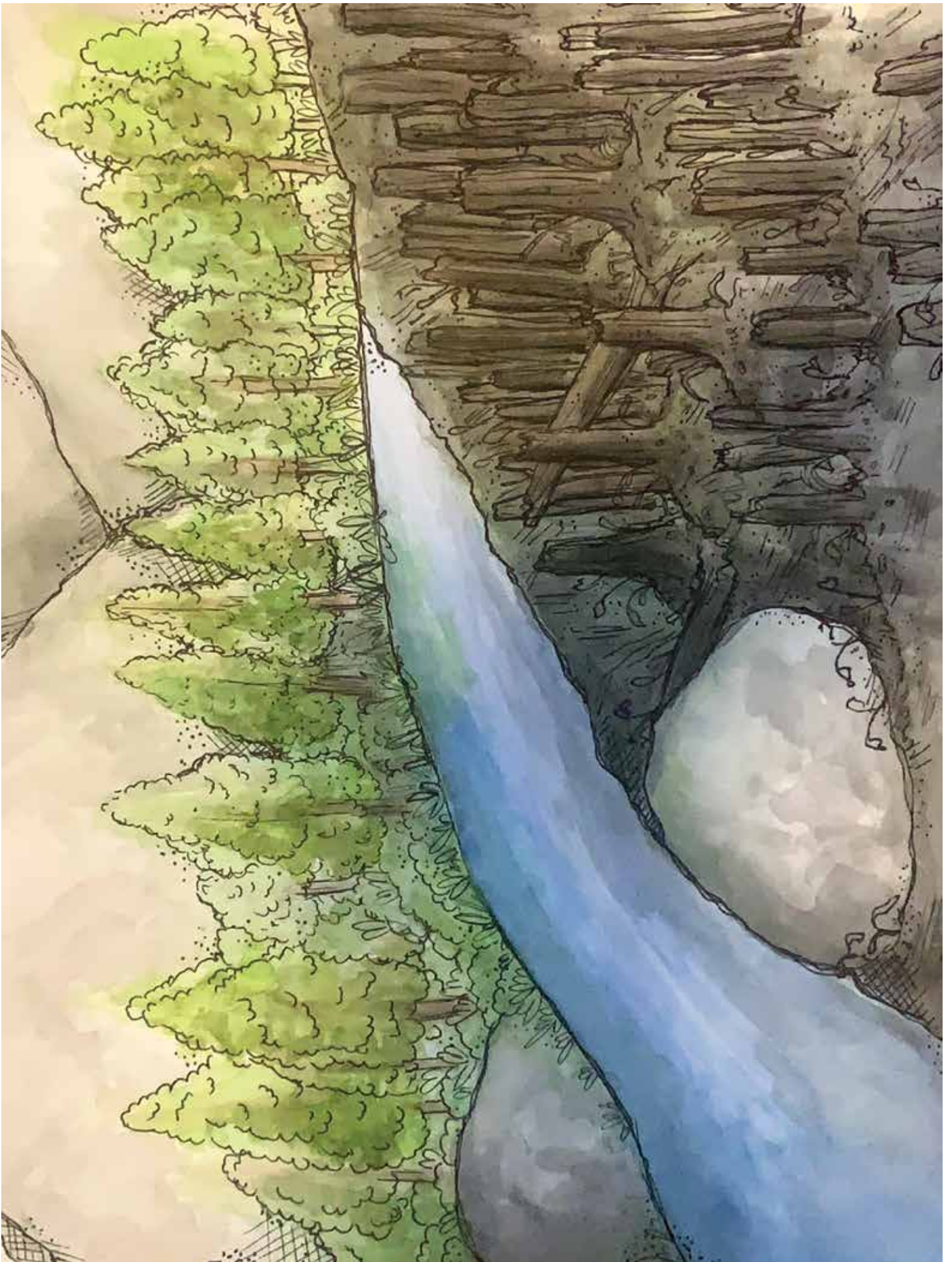
In the context of my Métis community and fellow peoples, climate change poses as a continuous threat to our way of life. From the tangible effects such as our hunting, gathering and fishing being in danger as a result of the rising temperatures, inadequate habitats and more. To the intangible effects, such as the fears instilled into jeopardizing the Métis way of life and our ancestors to come. My indigenous community has a big connection with nature and the peoples which is why climate change risks tearing apart this delicate community. The deep rooted connections we have with the land, the waters and the skies are at risk. The Métis way of life is at risk. This constant decline of the precious, delicate, and intertwined ecosystems nature has built itself upon - and has so selflessly offered to us people - is being used in deviant and unsustainable ways. Everywhere there is mass production and abuse of nature's precious resources, such as the mass deforestation, the animal and meat trade, pipelines being drilled through rural communities and their sacred sites. There is a constant threat to the Métis way of life, and the rest of the people. This poses as an example of how valuable and nature should be treated, rather than an abundance of resources to be abused.

The submitted art piece is titled *Ebb and Flow*: This work portrays a story, illustrating

the effects of climate change on the flora and fauna of the land. My Métis grandpa used to hunt and he can't anymore because it is hard to find elk and salmon. He told me stories of how there used to be an abundance of elk, moose and different kinds of fish. The sun is over heating the lands and drying out the rivers, lowering them every summer. The reason it is called ebb and flow is because of what the land used to be. A place for people to receive from the land as well as pouring back into it, like an infinity sign. The same sign as the Métis flag. The colors are also very important as they represent the good and the bad. The black shapes are to show how there are less animals, fish and medicine in the land. Black is also used in the Métis sash to show the dark period of suppression and dispossession of Métis land. The blue side on the right is to show that it is the same color as the Métis flag. It's also to show when climate change didn't affect the land and life was plentiful and there was an abundance of resources.

Growing up I didn't know much of my Métis heritage. My father alienated me as a child from my family and I never really had the opportunity to learn about my culture until I was put into foster care. I was a part of an organization called xyolhemeylh, they supported indigenous practices like medicine walks, pow wows and smudges. Now that I'm 20 years old and as an adult I have the opportunity to hone who I want to be.

I am now closer to my grandpa and I'm a part of Emily Carr University of Art + Design aboriginal gathering place where I can work on my practice. I am building a connection and better understanding each day of this beautiful place we call earth and I have a strong sense to help fight against climate change. Either expressing through my art or building a sustainable life, I hope to make a difference so some day I can enjoy the lands and waters like how my ancestors did. ∞



Jada

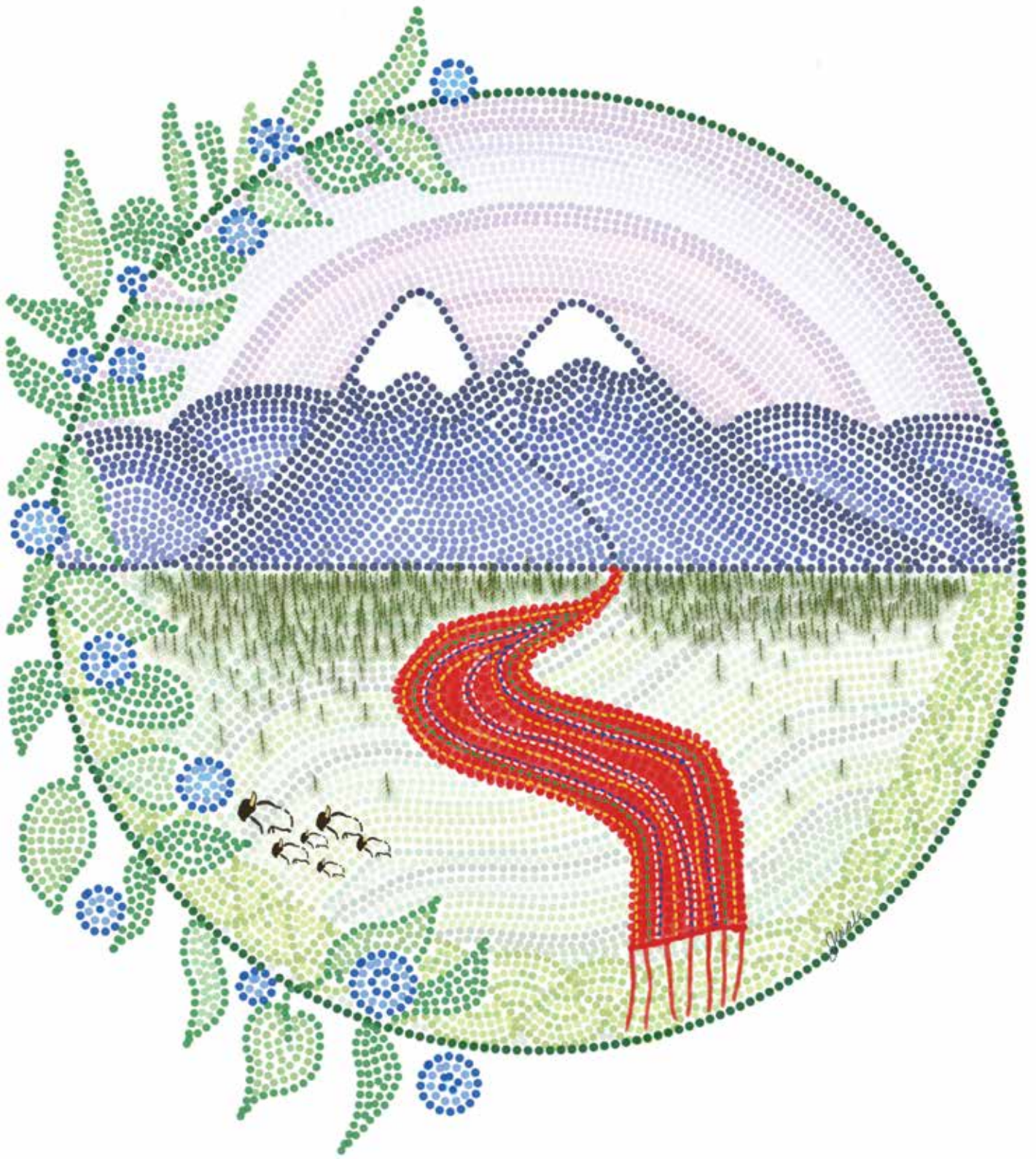
Climate change is one of the most detrimental issues that our lands face, throughout generations these issues have begun to present themselves to us more and more.

Climate change brings issues such as droughts. These affect bodies of water and the life forms that they inhabit. Droughts occur and slowly fish within the water begin to deplete, fish that survive can develop diseases that can be passed onto people. Moisture isn't returned to the soils, drying out the plantations that live around these areas. The herbs that people gather to create traditional medicines or rely on for food become scarce.

Climate change brings dryness and turns forest into potential fire threats. The grass becomes dry; Trees begin to dry out causing their outer bark casings to break off. With all these dry conditions met fires are commonly known to erupt their way into the land and tear it up. Wildlife that hunters rely on for food or resources slowly begin to disperse and relocate. This ends in an inconvenience for hunters as some are unable to move along with the wildlife.

With the destruction of these lands comes the potential destruction of ceremonial practices with the gatherings within. The people who used the land have to face the issues with the ideology of having to relocate to be able to flourish once more. Over time these issues have slowly built up and caused extremely challenging circumstances to those who live on the land and can continue to lead to unexpected, unprepared emergent issues.

In conclusion these are just some of the issues that climate change has brought to the table. This inspired me to create this piece and make people aware; showing the reality of what really happens on the lands and within them, the ecosystems that inhabit them. ∞



Janna

Taansi, Janna Wale dish-ni-ka-shone. Snuneymuxw ni-wiken, mista-hai Spiritwood & Meadowlake, mon famille shin-a-kashew Charette, Arcard, Wale, Marshall, Teare. My name is Janna Wale, and I am Gitxsan from Gitanmaax First Nation on my dad's side, and I am Cree-Métis on my mother's side.

This art contest and the release of the Métis National Climate Strategy is especially close to my heart, as an Indigenous youth who works in climate change. I work as a Policy Advisor with the Canadian Climate Institute, within the Indigenous Research Stream, after having obtained my M.Sc. in Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies (IGS) Sustainability from UBC Okanagan – where my graduate work focused on Climate Resilience in Indigenous communities. I have since used both western and Indigenous knowledge in my work to advocate for better representation and outcomes for our people. I have had the privilege of representing the Métis National Council at the Biodiversity Symposium last year, and have spoken several times about my personal experiences at the intersection of climate, community, and culture. Since I was small, I was acutely aware of the changes happening on the landscape around me and I have been watching our climate change at a rate that is almost too rapid to describe. I have so many memorable experiences on the Land, both positive and negative. I have picked and tasted berries, I have harvested medicines, and I have connected to my culture and my family on the Land. I have also seen heat-sick sockeye come up the rivers, have been blinded by wildfire smoke, and this

year I have experienced my first green Christmas during the hottest year on record. Climate change is impacting the way that I and other indigenous people are able to connect to the land, by fundamentally altering our seasonal cycles and relationship with the land and our non-human kin. It is also changing the way I am able to practice my culture and my own personal wellness as I try and reconcile stories from elders of how the Land was, to what I am witnessing now. On top of this, climate change and my local environment are part of my everyday life, both personally and through my profession, since I have decided that I want to be involved in creating climate solutions.

For me, climate leadership is about balance. It is about knowing our place in the social-ecological system, and looking for ways to adapt to changes, while actively taking steps to change the path we are on. Climate leaders are advocates, both for new and time-tested solutions, and are people who have the humility to listen to the land, to community, and to what they know is right. As an Indigenous youth, I see so many of these qualities in other youth who also share this space with me, and it empowers me, encourages me, and motivates me to continue to work in this space to the best of my ability. I am proud to be a young Indigenous woman working in the environmental and science space – a space that was quite literally not designed for us. While it is not easy, it is worth it to know that I have contributed all that I could, and that I took the good work forward so that the next generation can pick up where my generation and I left off in seeking climate solutions.

About the Art

For me, in both my cultures art was and still is a representation of what we see and experience around us, and what is happening on the



landscape. Traditionally, art was used to convey stories and meaning. Given that we are now weathering massive environmental change, art is an extremely important media for both conveying and documenting the sense of urgency our communities feel relating to climate change. When I saw this logo contest, I wanted to tell the story of Métis resilience, with the hope and understanding that we will continue to bring that resilience into our climate future, in part through the new strategy. Since climate change is inherently complex, I wanted my art to speak to different layers of what we as Indigenous people are experiencing. I chose to use Métis-style dot art to reflect what traditionally would have been beadwork. In this work, each dot represents the idea of coming together as a collective, to contribute to something larger – in the same way that we each have a role to play in addressing the climate crisis.

When thinking about my own personal connection to the Land, I was born and raised in British Columbia, which hosts many mountain ranges that are culturally significant to BC communities. Going into the mountains allows me to disconnect, and reconnect to the land and to myself.

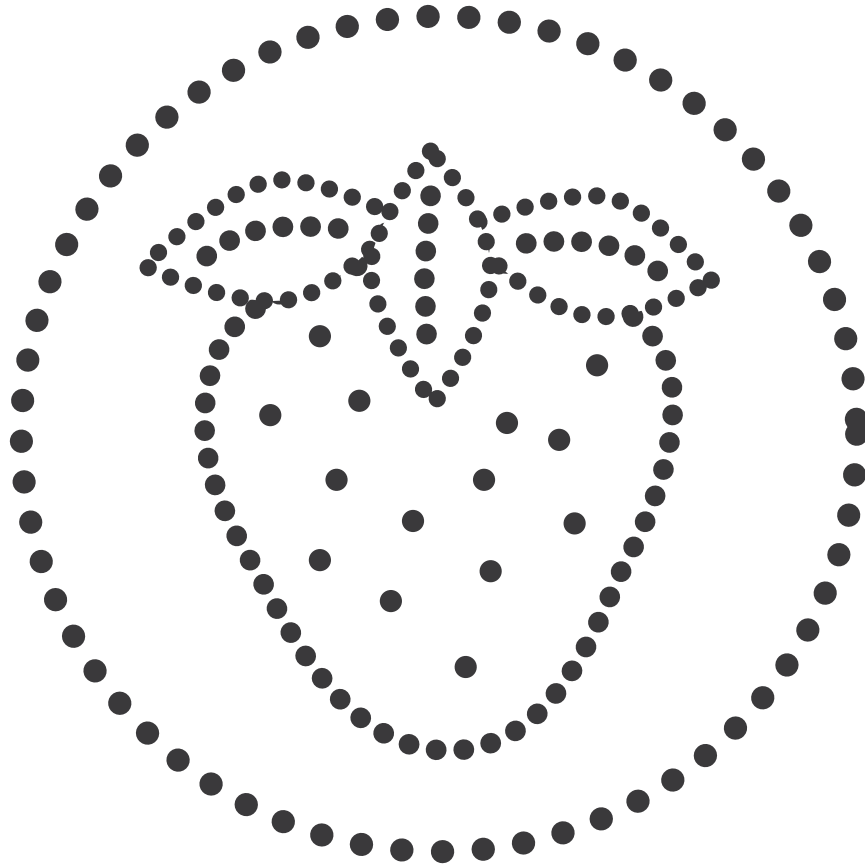
I have created a Red River, to include my connection from the mountains to the Red River Settlement. The river is the Louis Riel sash, which is a symbol of the Métis people. I wanted it to be recognizable, and central – integral - to the landscape. Mountain ecosystems are sustained by their watersheds and rivers: water is life. In the same way, culture transforms climate strategies into climate action – it is how we have lived, and how we will continue to live.

The bottom edge is a sweetgrass braid, which reflects both the braiding of western and Indigenous knowledge, but also reflects the need to work together to become stronger. Too often, climate

strategies continue to rely only on western knowledge and science, after generations of actively refusing other ontologies and epistemologies. In order to begin to address the consequences of this legacy, we need to seek balance in our braid. I also include medicines in the image, since they are so important for wellness and healing, which is what is required to move forward in a good way.

Like many Métis children, I have memories of my family preserving food for the winter months. I have been learning how to make jams and jellies, which is knowledge that has been passed down through my mother and grandmother. I chose to represent this process of generational learning and food preservation by adding blueberries. I chose blueberries because I have memories of picking and eating abundant high-bush blueberries as a child, which has significantly changed over my lifetime. During the BC heatwave of 2021, while berry picking I noticed how badly our berries had been impacted. It took many hours to get enough berries to make jam, and we knew that other animals who rely on berries over the summer and fall would be impacted as well. Over the years, berry abundance has changed significantly. Given that blueberries are not only a source of nutrition, but also a connection to Métis teachings, I included the blueberries stretching around the image, to demonstrate the magnitude of small changes creating ripples of larger change throughout the whole ecosystem.

Lastly, I included a bison family. Both to represent my own family as we are a part of, not outside of, the Land, but to also symbolize Métis resurgence. I have read stories of bison resilience, and of reintroduction, and I know that our culture will be the same – to quote Louis Riel, ‘we must cherish our inheritance.’ I am proud of the piece I have created, and hope you can see the passion, care, and time I put into creating this submission. ∞





Jet

Growing up, every summer, my family and I spent weeks at my grandparent's place on the Okanagan Lake in Vernon British Columbia. My grandma and three of her sisters each lease a parcel of land along the same stretch of lake on the lands of the Okanagan Indian Band. This has always been a place to gather with family. Being part of a large Métis family means huge family gatherings... aunties, uncles and dozens of cousins. The days were spent enjoying nature living off grid with no electricity, no social media or video games. Days spent playing in the water, canoeing, fishing, cooking together, playing board games and making puzzles. Night time brought campfires, music and listening to the family stories of our aunties.

Climate change is connected to increases in extreme weather events such as heatwaves, wildfires and droughts. When I was very young, I remember endless clear skies and fresh air on my summer trips to the Okanagan. In recent years, however, I have seen the direct impact of climate change on the dry landscape. The increase in wildfires has had significant effects on both land and water resources across the province of British Columbia. They have negative impacts on our ecosystems and the air quality for humans, plants and animals.

Wildfires can have significant and wide-ranging impacts on human lives, both directly and indirectly. To ensure the safety of residents, authorities often issue evacuation orders in the face of approaching wildfires. Luckily for my family, Vernon was a summer place for us visit and we had a home in the lower-mainland that we could go back

to. For the local Okanagan residents, this displacement can be traumatic, leading to temporary or even long-term displacement for those who lose their homes in the fires. My grandparents and aunts and uncles who are in their older years are impacted by the air quality issues. Smoke from the fires blows to surrounding communities as well, and can lead to respiratory problems.

The impacts of climate change can also have profound effects on local wildlife and their habitats. The recent increase in heatwaves and wildfires has disrupted wildlife in Vernon in several ways such as through displacement, loss of habitat and direct mortality. The fires have had negative impacts on breeding and reproduction as breeding sites, nests and young offspring are destroyed. The availability of food and fresh water resources become scarce and animals can have respiratory issues from smoke inhalation. Local Okanagan wildlife that we have shared the land with over the years have included bears, deer, eagles, mountain goats, river otters, beavers, racoons and quail. The ashes and the smoke can also impact the lake and the creatures that live there. Runoff can degrade water quality and add pollutants, hot weather temperatures affect the water temperature and growth of harmful algae and reduced oxygen levels can be harmful to fish populations.

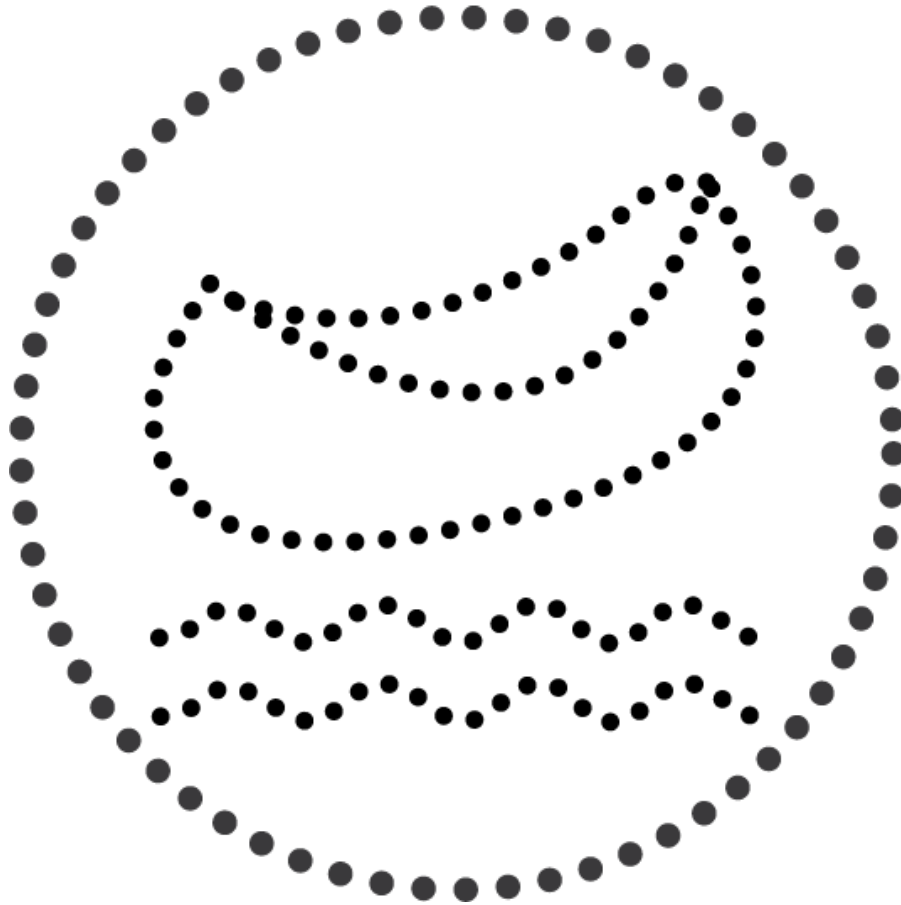
For my art piece, I chose to display the impacts of climate change using recycled and scrap materials to create a textile design. In August of 2021, we were enjoying the hot summer days at the lake when the White Rock Lake fires started to spread across the Okanagan and into the Vernon areas. The fabric art piece is based off of these fires, located on the sides of Westside Road in Vernon, where the fires destroyed forests, animal habitats, numerous homes, and the beloved Little Kingdom grocery and



hardware store. 1400 properties were evacuated on the west side of Okanagan Lake and Okanagan band members lost 10 of their homes, with a total of 75 homes lost in the fires.

As the years go by, climate change continues to increase heat levels and the

amounts of wildfires, not only in British Columbia, but in other areas across the country and the planet. Changes need to be implemented in order to protect our lands and waters and the living creatures that rely on them. ∞

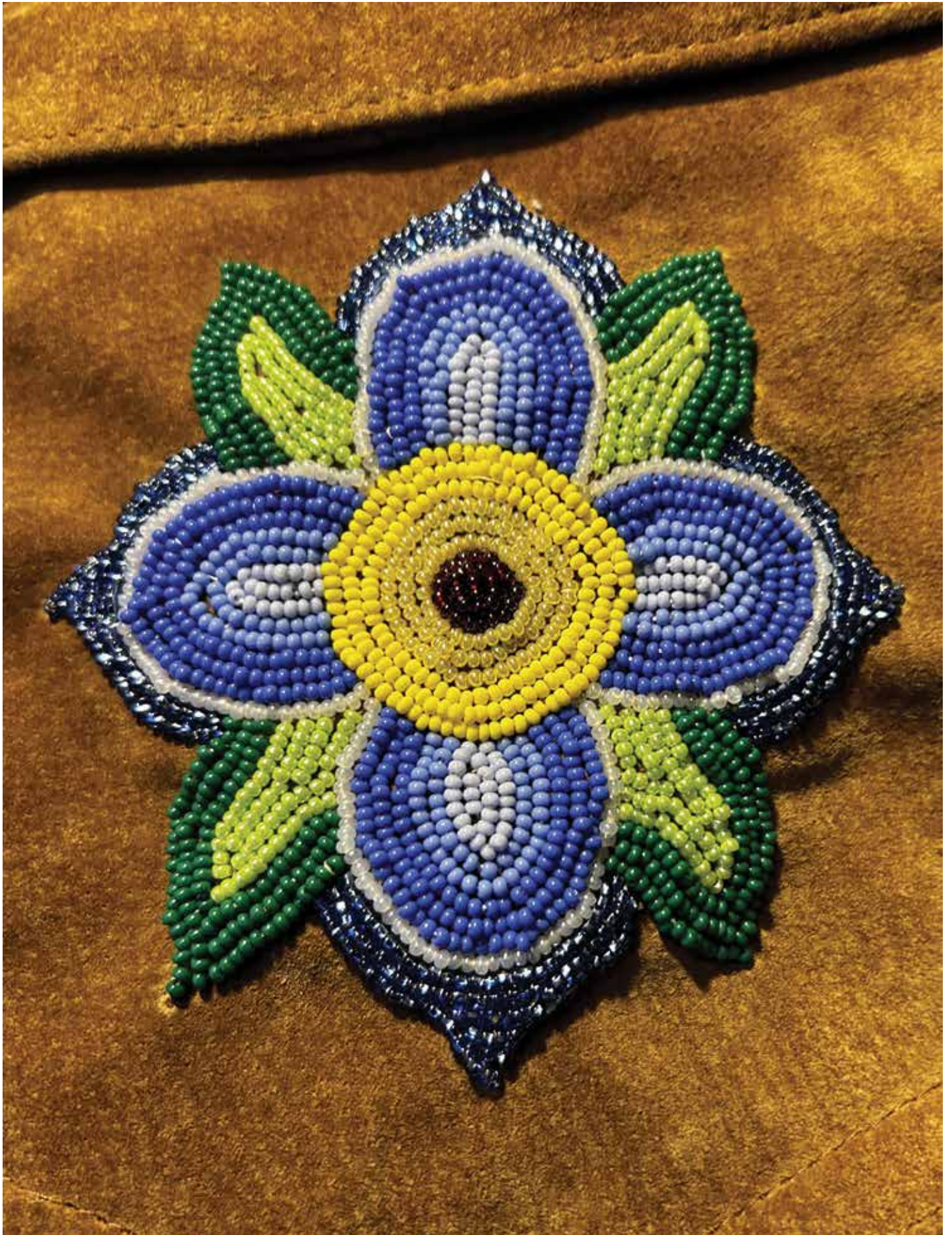




Josephine

Josephine submitted a video with her entry, see the snapshot below.





Justin

Beads of Resilience: Weaving Climate Action with Métis Traditions

The land and waters are the canvas of our history, the foundation of my Métis heritage. This beadwork, rich with colours and patterns drawn from nature, is a tribute to that deep connection. My culture, woven into each bead, reflects a bond with the land and waters intrinsic to our identity and survival. The memories of trapping with my family in the serene yet unforgiving wilderness remain vivid—a testament to our reliance on and respect for the natural world.

Our days were rhythmic with the patterns of nature, and each excursion into the bush was a lesson in humility and harmony. These experiences inform my understanding of environmental stewardship and fuel my drive to protect these sacred spaces.

The local environment is a constant presence, a daily reminder of where I come from and who I am. It shapes my worldview, actions, and hopes for the future—a future where the balance between humanity and nature is restored. This art piece is my voice in the dialogue about climate action, a narrative of resilience, and a pledge to preserve the Métis Nation's way of life.

As I craft this narrative around the beadwork, I delve deeper into what the land and waters genuinely mean to me. They are not just physical spaces but the lifeblood of my Métis culture, the crucible of our traditions, and the keepers of our stories. My connection to these elements is etched into my very being, passed down through generations of respectful

coexistence and a profound understanding of the natural world's rhythms.

My most memorable experiences are those serene moments spent with my father and brothers in the bush, where the whispers of the forest and the gentle lapping of the water against the canoe painted a picture of a world in perfect equilibrium. Each trap set and path walked was done with a deep reverence for the land that provided for us. There, amid the towering trees and under the expansive sky, I learned the importance of balance and reciprocity.

These natural surroundings influence my day-to-day life, guiding my actions and decisions. They remind me of the importance of conservation and my role in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

This art piece, submitted for the contest, is a visual representation of that influence. It carries the spirit of the land and waters—vibrant, flowing, and resilient. It serves as a call to action to protect these precious resources and a reminder of their beauty and wisdom. I hope this piece resonates with the judges and everyone who sees it, inspiring a collective effort to ensure how we interact with the land and waters can continue for generations.

In this continuation of reflection, I consider the profound lessons learned from the land and waters, recognizing that every part of our environment, from the smallest leaf to the broadest river, plays a critical role in our collective well-being. My culture and the land are inseparably linked, a bond that has shaped my character and the values I hold dear.

One particularly memorable experience is a silent, snowy morning on the trapline. As the sun broke the horizon, the world was awash in a golden hue, and the crisp air promised the day's quiet beauty. It was a



stark reminder of the delicate balance we must maintain and the responsibility we carry as stewards of the land.

The local environment serves as my compass, guiding the rhythm of my daily life and reinforcing my commitment to environmental advocacy. The changing seasons are a reminder of the cycles of life, growth, and renewal. This beadwork, submitted for the contest, encapsulates these values and experiences. It is a statement of identity, an expression of respect, and a call to preserve the intricate web of life that the Métis Nation has been part of for centuries. Through this piece, I hope to inspire others to join in confronting climate change, ensuring that the beauty and richness of our land and waters endure for future generations to cherish and respect as we do today.

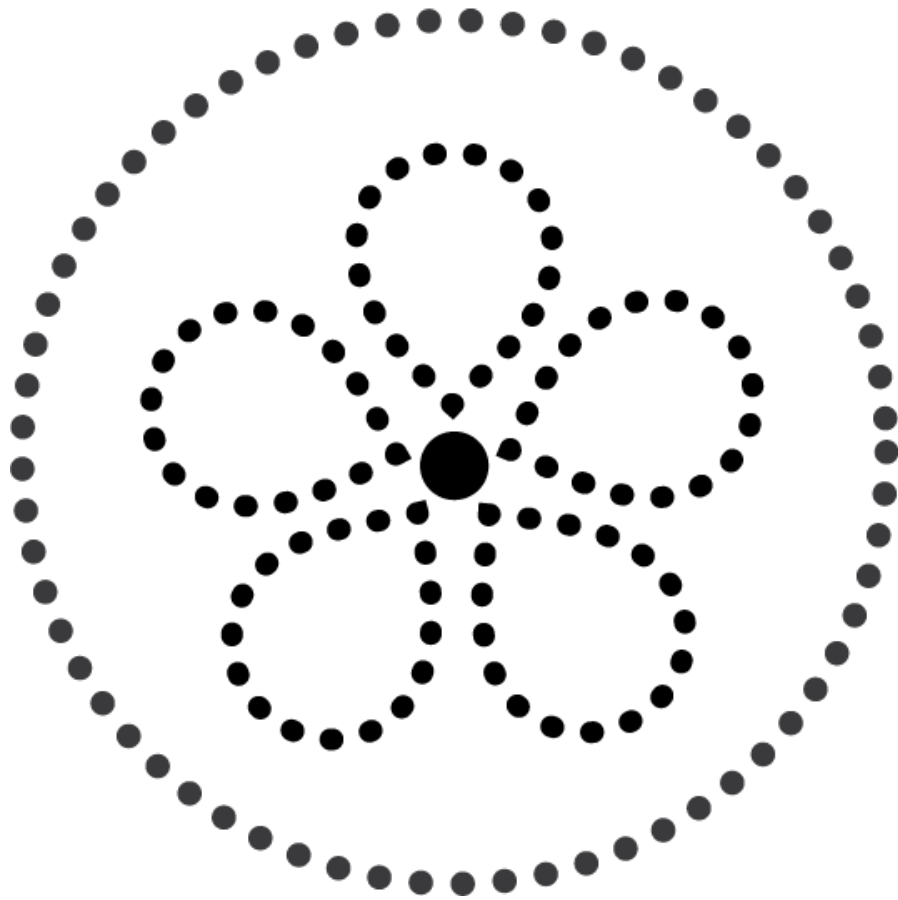
The beadwork is not just art; it is a narrative woven from my life, capturing moments like the one shared with my father and brothers, where the land taught us the essence of Métis resilience. It's this resilience that now fuels my commitment to climate action. Once familiar and predictable, the changing landscapes now serve as a barometer of the urgency we must act. My daily life, deeply connected to the environment, constantly echoes the need for balance. This piece, a fusion of colour and culture, is my voice in the discourse on climate change—a personal pledge to safeguard our traditions through proactive environmental stewardship, ensuring that the land that has nurtured us for

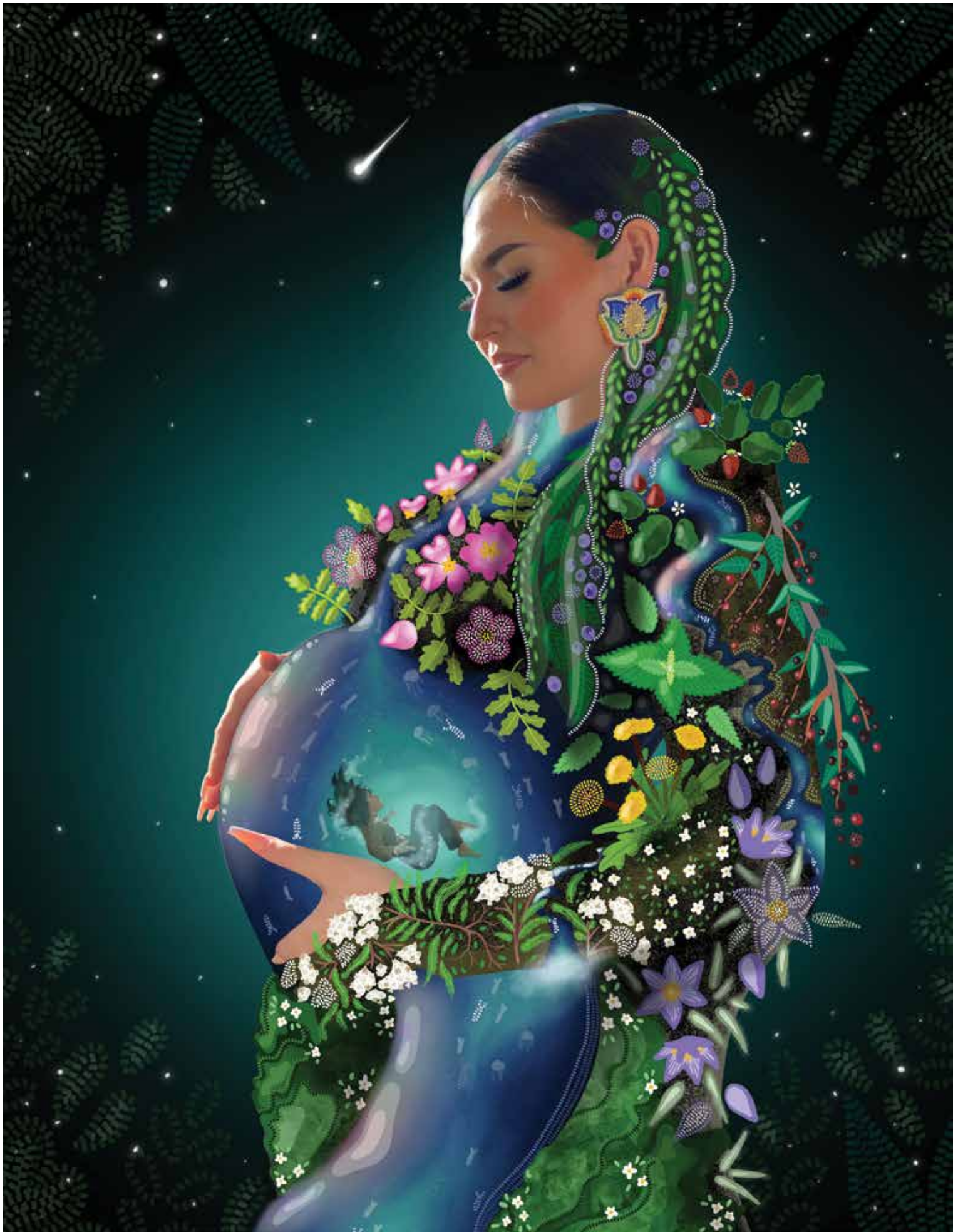
so long receives the care it needs to continue nurturing future generations. It symbolizes hope, a call to action, and a reminder that we are all part of the land and the water's story.

In this beadwork, every bead is a memory, every colour a chapter of my story—a story intertwined with the whispering winds of the prairies, the silent watchfulness of the forests, and the ceaseless flow of the rivers. It is the story of a people profoundly connected to the earth, whose identity is reflected in the health of our natural surroundings.

With the submission of this piece, I share a part of my soul and an invitation. An invitation to all who behold it to remember our collective responsibility to the land that has given us everything. Through this contest, I hope to spark conversations, stir emotions, and inspire actions leading to a sustainable and harmonious coexistence with the natural world. In this world, the Métis spirit and the land's wisdom continue to thrive amidst the challenges of climate change.

This beadwork, symbolic of our past and a beacon for our future, stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Métis people—a people defined by our adaptability, respect for nature, and commitment to protecting the environment. It is a visual promise of my dedication to the cause, a responsibility set in the language of beads, which I hope will resonate far beyond the borders of our Homeland. ∞





Kate

First of all, I want to be honest. I did not do what was asked.

We were supposed to explore how the land and waters are affected by climate change and how this affects us as Métis people, but I did not do this.

Well, when I first started the piece, I tried. I tried to think of all the ways I personally have been affected by climate change: the anxiety it has caused me when snow does not come as early as it once did, the feeling of doom when a summer heat wave goes just a bit over what we were expecting for temperature, and the fevered thoughts of the dystopian future we are creating. Overall, during this contemplation, I was filled with feelings of stress, anxiety, anger, and hopelessness. These unpleasant sensations made me realize I did not want to create an art piece that invoked these feelings. I know it is common to move people to action through fear, but that is not my style. No matter how hard I try, I can't be that way but, perhaps, there is another way. Another way to insight action without causing those we love to fear. But first, a short exploration into my relationship with the natural world.

Floating in the ocean as the tide comes in, dancing in the sunshine of a summer afternoon or sleeping on blowing prairie grasses all give me a profound sense of peace. I, like many others, go to the land when the world around me becomes too big, when I start feeling disconnected, and when I feel lonely and in need of love. When everything is too heavy, I go to our common mother, our ancestor, the one who gave us life and continues

to provide us with everything we need no matter how mean we are to her. In my own personal life, it has been with a mother that I have felt unconditional love so, when everything falls apart, I turn to the ultimate mother, our earth.

As a white passing Métis woman, I have often felt estranged from my culture. Growing up, I hated my white skin and the impurity I felt it represented. Though my heart was that of an Indigenous woman, my physical traits were that of a settler and I could not see past them no matter how hard I tried. So, I lived in a disconnected world, not really white and not really brown. I existed only in the in-between spaces. I existed alone.

In the end, it was my earth mother and mother earth who taught to love myself. My earth mother, my human mother, taught me how to dig in the earth and grow a garden, how to float in the eb and flow of the tide like a mother's womb, and how to get out of bed every morning and find peace in nature. Once my mom showed me how to open my eyes, mother earth showed me the precious white feathers of eagles, the snow-capped mountains, and the foam playing at the edge of the ocean and said "look, this is what you are made of. Your white skin is not ugly, it is part of your beauty the same way all these things are a part of mine". With the guidance of these two mothers, I found my peace.

This sense of peace and harmony, of rematriation and connection, of land and water flowing through me while I flow through them is what I wanted to bring into my piece. Instead of looking at how the earth is broken and how we have broken her, I wanted to look into an ideal future where we learn to live in harmony with our earth. Where we except that we are a part of her, and she is a part of us. I wanted us to, instead of working



towards a goal because we are scared of the present, look into the future with excitement and work towards a better future together because of a shared love for the natural world. Be moved to action out of love rather than fear.

So, there you have it; a piece of art that breaks the rules, an essay with only slight form, and me; someone who wishes to share the peace I have found in the earth with everyone. I hope you like my piece. I hope it inspires you to go out and connect to the earth. To feel her icy breath on a sharp winter day or the warm embrace of her sunbeams as they filter through drifting cloud. I hope it helps you look to the future this strategy will create. I hope, even for a moment, it brings you peace.

A Practical Explanation

This picture portrays mother earth as an Indigenous woman (modeled by my cousin Julianna DeBray which farther creates themes of kinship). Her body and hair are made of plants which are significant to Indigenous peoples such as wild roses, Saskatoon berries, dandelions, yarrow, wild strawberries, chokecherries, and stinging nettle (this also connects to my cousin's traditional name). Along with the native plants snaking around her body is a blue ribbon of water populated by tiny fish. This signifies all the rivers we, as Métis people,

have relied on throughout history. The fish represent traditional sustenance as well as migration patterns and the cyclical nature of the earth. Her belly, full of ethereal blues and greens, represents the ocean and the sea creatures which inhabit it. Floating in her stomach is me, a Métis girl with white skin, my hair wild, surrounded by bubbles. This is both a meditation on the feeling of being totally immersed in the ocean and feeling the rhythm of the tide (the feeling of being in the womb of mother earth) as well as a representation of how the earth is a part of us and we are a part of her. It also brings forward themes of acceptance and love regardless of outward presentation. Beadwork is also intertwined in her body and hair representing the interconnectedness of Indigenous people and the natural world. Surrounding her is a darkened sky full of stars with a green glow coming through the centre. This represents the night sky and the northern lights (all the ancestors who have come before). There is a shooting star in the sky as well which represents all the hopes and dreams that have gone into this strategy as well as all the hard work put into bringing it to fruition. On the edges of the frame are beaded plants to round out the piece as well as very blatantly bring in traditional Métis art forms and ways of being for those who may not be aware of them. ∞





Madeline

She Is Our Mother

Often in our busy and full lives, I believe we forget how much something can truly touch us, especially when the thing that touches us is also made of us.

This thought rings true when I think about my painting. To me, the ground we came from will always be the lingering hope we all hold onto, not only to relish in the beauty that is our environment; I find hope in her brutal resilience. I have been learning a lot about extinction in my science courses, most of which leads me down a road of grief that I'm sure we all fall into; grieving the fact that we are hurting our planet. Although this is something I experienced, I am also learning about the complete and utter resiliency that is the planet we live on. Think of a busy sidewalk in an urban jungle, or a cobblestone path in a suburban neighbourhood - despite this brutal theft of land and space for environments to thrive, there is still small plants pushing through concrete without an ounce of resentment towards us. The greenery and medicine that grows within our atmosphere does not look at us in anger, but rather grows nonetheless. That is what my painting represents: the constant rebirth of our world that occurs without the need to be noticed, as we are all apart of the same world; the only difference is that we are the only ones with the control to change our outcome. Our planet has faced countless extinctions before we have been born within it, and will continue to do so once we return to it; our existence is directly tied with each and everything else birthed from this land.

This piece of art represents pride, in our knowledge and our worldview as Indigenous people, and our responsibility to honour the land we inhabit. It also represents patience, as represented by the painted beadwork, as we cannot fix our planet's mistakes instantly, but rather we commit to doing the good work that needs to be done. This painting also represents me, an Indigenous woman colonized by the systems put in place, but finding community and belonging nonetheless, and slowly beginning to learn the teachings of my ancestors. With the inclusion of the natural medicine plants of the Métis people, as well as the long hair as a representation of strength and growth, this piece holds a well of knowledge and brings me great joy to share it with others. ∞

Thank you for the opportunity to share my work with you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

All my relations, Madeline Lucier





Marissa

Inspired by the Métis National Council logo, the four directions, seasons, medicines, and life stages this work weaves personal and cultural narratives of being Métis in relation to the land and waters across the homelands.

L'ivayr (winter)

In "The Gift Is the Making," Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes of how winter is a time for sharing sacred stories, noting that spirits are asleep, allowing us the freedom to speak their names (2013). Winter is also a time for ceremony, a time to gather around the fire, connect with spirit and our ancestors, and share songs. When I think of winter I reflect upon the



stillness of the land and how the land is at rest. Plants are sleeping, bears go into hibernation, and the land becomes cold, covered by a layer of snow and frost. As nights become longer, our need for rest becomes essential. We sleep, dream and prepare for the spring ahead.

Looking up at the moon I think of my noohkoom (grandma) – a Métis matriarch who passed on to the spirit world too soon. She now lives with my ancestors up amongst the stars, looking down upon me and my family, proud to see how I've reclaimed my identity as a Métis woman, picking up where she left



off. During her lifetime my grandmother, Elaine Jessop (Prescott, Desjarlais, Fidler served as the Treasurer

for the Native Woman of Canada and President for the Native Woman of Saskatchewan. Her involvement in Indigenous and Métis communities has inspired me to be involved within my community where I currently sit as the elected Youth Representative for the Toronto and York Regional Métis Council. I would not be where I am today without the incredible work and inspiration of my grandmother. For that I say maarsii (thank you).

Praentaan (spring)

Snow transitions to rain, giving life to sleeping seeds that blossom into buds and flowers. Pictured left is a photograph of myself smelling the flowers in my



mother's garden in Maple Ridge, British Columbia where I was born and lived until the age of seven.



Within my artwork you will find a small budding purple flower, not yet in full bloom like the photo here, but on its way to growing bigger and stronger every day. As someone who now lives in Tkarón:to, when I think of spring, I picture



the beautiful display of cherry blossoms in High Park that attract people from all over the city and beyond. The blossoms invite us to wake from our slumbers and return to visit with the land. Growing with radiant colours a new life presents itself from the Eastern doorway and once again, we are reminded of the importance of water as life provider for the land, and by extension ourselves.

L'itii (summer)

Berries have always held a special place in my heart, not only for their vibrant flavours, but also for the cherished family moments they encapsulate.

Growing up in Maple Ridge, I have found memories of picking wild berries with my dad along



the roadside of our neighbourhood, eating more berries than I put in my basket each time we went out. Whether indulging in Saskatoon berry pie during visits to my grandparents in Saskatoon or navigating summer spills of blueberries in our kitchen – ensuring none got lost under the fridge – each berry carries a unique story within the fabric of our family history, representing joy and gratitude.



Within my artwork you will find a bush of blueberries and a basket of mixed berries. Delving deeper into the blueberry bush reveals a hidden gem – a spirit bead intentionally placed within the work as a subtle acknowledgment to the importance of embracing and honouring mistakes. The spirit bead serves as a reminder of remaining humble and learning from the process versus fretting over the final product.

During the creation of the spring and summer sections of this artwork, I found inspiration for my spirit bead in a story shared in both Parry Krawec's "Becoming Kin" (2024) and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's "The Gift in the Making" (2013). Both audiobooks share the story of smart berries which emphasizes how true wisdom comes from experience noting that there are no shortcuts to becoming smarter. However, we can learn quickly especially when we mistaken aen lyayv la maard (rabbit poo) as "smart berries."

The summer days of my childhood were filled with not only delicious – and edible – berries, but also the vibrant colours of my family's garden. Each year, my family dedicated time to planting flowers, herbs, fruits, and vegetables, nourishing our mind, body, and spirit from the soil of the land. Surrounded by the whispers of rustling leaves in the wind, and the vibrant hues of my mother's garden, I learned from an early age just how much the land provides for us.

Latonn (autumn)

The changing seasons always usher in my favourite time of the year. As leaves gracefully descend, signaling a new chapter, I find myself immersed in the beauty of autumn. This period not only marks the beginning of my birth month, but also symbolizes the return to school – a time filled with anticipation, learning,



and growth. However, the joy of this season also holds a hidden weight for Indigenous and Métis peoples. Before 1996, the year I came into this world, September was a time when Indigenous children were forcibly taken to residential 'schools,' where they were torn from their culture, families, language(s), traditions, and ways of life. This chapter of Canadian history – also referred to as the dark times in our Métis sash – caused a ripple effect of loss. While trees lose their leaves, we cannot forget the children that were taken and lost to residential 'schools.' Within my artwork I have chosen to include an orange heart inspired by Phyllis Webstad's story and the marking of September 30th as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as well as Orange Shirt Day.



La Michinn (Medicine): The Four Sacred Medicines

The land is filled with medicines including the most recognized four sacred: li sayd (cedar), kinikinik (tobacco), l'aarbr a saent (sage), and fwayn seukrii



(sweetgrass). These are medicines I often turn to help me stay balanced and well. Sweetgrass reminds me to be kind to myself, tobacco connects me to spirit, cedar grounds me and cares for my immune system and sage cleanses. These medicines form my bundle and remind me that all we need comes from the land.

The Four Directions

The Medicine Wheel, also known as the four directions, embodies a multi-layered teaching on seasons, life cycles, medicines, and life stages. As a youth, I sit in the southern direction within the red section of the medicine wheel – a placement that resonates deeply with my personal journey. In my youth, I embarked on walking the red road, reclaiming my identity as a Métis woman. Now, having embarked on this journey, I cannot imagine my life unfolding any differently. Embracing my Métis heritage has become a source of immense pride and purpose in my life. It has led me to become a teacher, sharing my culture



with peoples all across Turtle Island through the workshops I lead and presentations I offer.

All My Relations

It is important to recognize that just as the plants are our relatives, so are the fish in the waters and the birds in the sky. As people, we have so much to learn from the land and the relations around us. As stewards of the land, we must ensure that we not only think of the next seven generations of humans, but also those of the waters, lands and skies too.



Connecting to Climate Change

As our environment undergoes changes resulting from pollution and contamination, it disrupts the delicate balance of the medicine wheel. Each alteration sets off a ripple effect, influencing other seasons, species, and ways of life. While tending to my own well-being within my personal medicine wheel, it becomes imperative to extend that care to all my relations and the surround lands and waters.

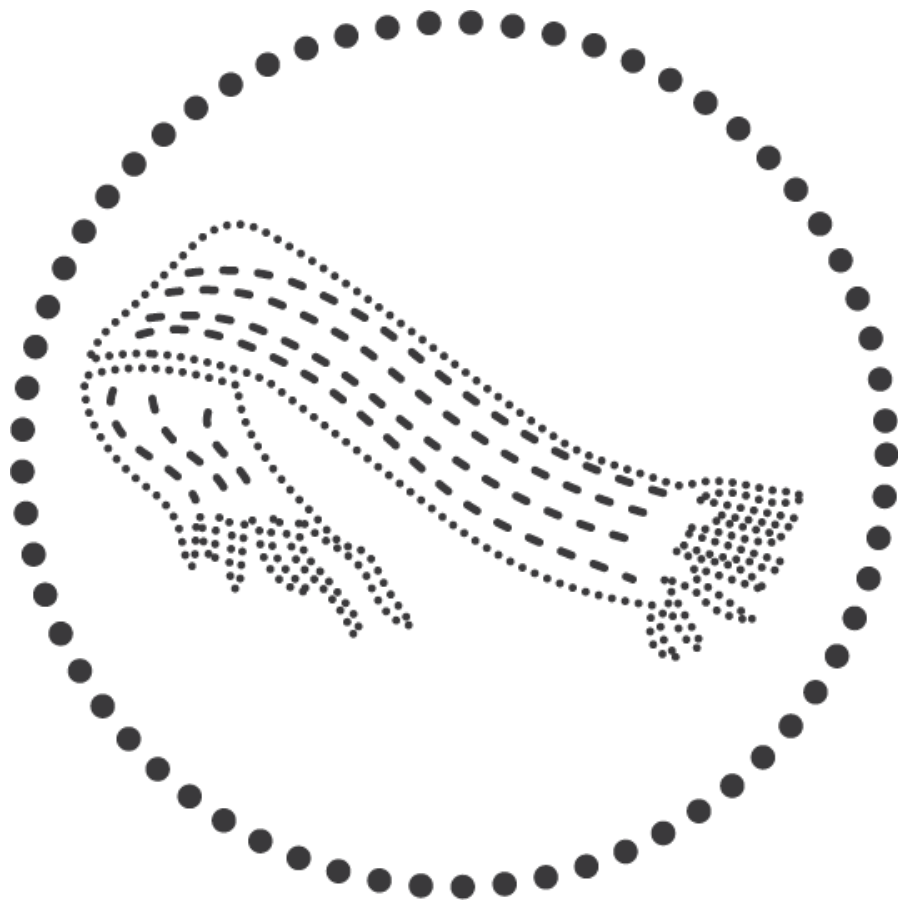
In contemplating how I can contribute to the restoration of balance, I recognize the significance of reducing, reusing, recycling, and replenishing what has been taken from the environment in my neighbourhood. I ask myself, what practical steps can I take to minimize my ecological footprint and foster a healthier,



more sustainable coexistence with the lands, waters and all that inhabit and call this place home. ∞

Acknowledgments

The Michif language spellings employed in this essay have been sourced from the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research through their virtual museum of Métis History and Culture's online dictionary. Please note that spellings may differ based on various dialects. Intriguingly, the relationship between the land and the language plays a crucial role, giving rise to multiple Michif dialects across the homelands.





Natasha L.

I grew up in the small mountain community of Wells, BC, which resides on the traditional territory of the Red Bluff, Soda Creek, Nazko Indian Band, and Tsilhqotin Nation people. The moment you approach the end of Highway 26, you sense that anyone who lives in Wells must have a strong sense of appreciation towards nature- and you would be right. In Wells, I spent most of my free time outdoors; hiking, swimming in the creek, biking, cross-country skiing and outdoor skating in the winter months. Subconsciously I was learning to appreciate and to be humbled by what the outdoor environment provided me. In 2003, the notable Okanogan forest fires were all over media outlets in BC. I can remember myself at 7-years-old, patiently trying to read the newspaper articles that discussed updates on this heartbreaking event that would eventually burn down 250 square kilometers of land and 239 buildings. This was my first brush at realizing the devastating impacts that climate has towards the environments we live in.

There's a new saying among BC citizens now, "There are actually only two seasons: Winter, and forest fire season." Because of continuous years of drought, forest fires typically begin now in May and continue until the end of September. When I discuss summer plans with peers, it's often taken into account that emergency evacuations and highway closures can potentially come into play. It has seemed to have become the new normal.

Another devastating and more recent forest fire in our province occurred in 2021, when 90% of the village of Lynton was burnt, causing two fatalities. The Fraser Canyon and surrounding area

not only faced forest fires that year, but catastrophic floods and landslides a few months afterwards. Due to the lack of forests, the water from the heavy rainfall wasn't able to be absorbed into roots, leaves, and dead logs- resulting in flash floods and landslides that caused millions of dollars in damages to two important transportation routes in BC.

In my piece, "*tihkitew swaytiikh*", the mountains I have envisioned and created not only symbolize rapidly melting ice caps, but the landslides that still take place regularly to this day.

My heart grows heavier as I continue to write this essay. I'm currently looking out of my kitchen window, at my yard that is hardly covered in snow. It's January. It's above freezing today, in fact it's 13 degrees celsius outside. The woman I drew in my piece, although you can't see her face... I believe she is feeling this heaviness, too.

Nature humbles us, guides us, teaches us lessons, connects us- so it is only reasonable that when nature becomes unbalanced, we also start to feel unstable. Somewhere inside of me, there is hope that if we openly connect more with others, we can generate strong and intelligent solutions that can be used to balance our environments once again. But in the meantime, I believe climate change is not something to view with toxic positivity- it's healthy to be overwhelmed, but despite that we will stand. That's why the woman in my piece still stands, observing and acknowledging the scary changes that are taking place around her.

The rushed waters she stands in have sockeye salmon weaved in the waves. Sockeye salmon have been facing irregular population numbers for decades. However, with climate change becoming more relevant, it's predicted by marine biologists that the sockeye

salmon population will steadily decline. The BC coastal waters are warming up at an alarming rate, which affects the typical food supply for these beautiful fish, and lowers their performance rates. Not only does the ocean water warm up, but the rivers and creeks where sockeye salmon go up to spawn face temperature changes as well. Plenty of these rivers and creeks where salmon flow have experienced record-breaking low water levels, with some even on the cusp of drying out completely.

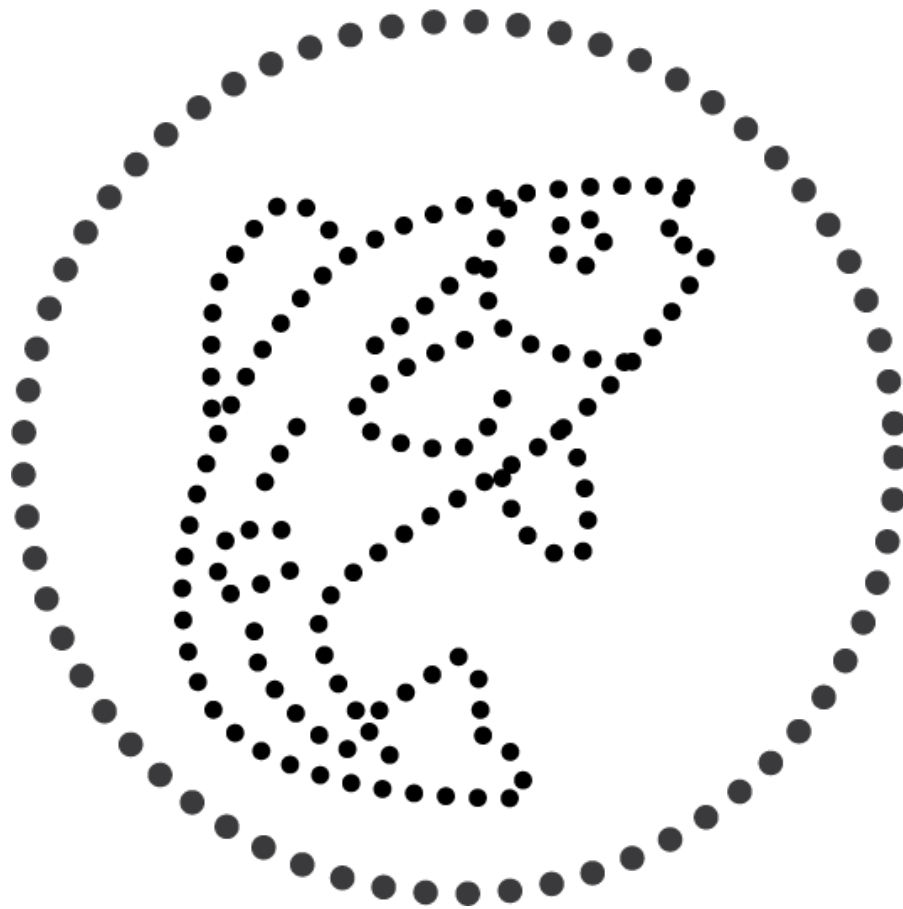
The sockeye salmon I've depicted in this piece are almost like past ancestors. You can feel that they once explored and continued the circle of life in these waters- but they're no longer there anymore physically. This can very well be the case for BC coastal waters, and the waters that channel throughout BC in the near future. However, not all hope is lost. There are studies that show that sockeye salmon are doing well in fisheries in Alaska, because the water further north is more habitable for them. Above the melting mountains are a pair of birds drawn in the same style as the sockeye salmon. They, too, represent how all of this beauty that nature provides us can be gone within the next hundred years or so, unless great solutions are taken into action. Rising temperatures and sudden weather changes affect their ability to reproduce and source nutritional food. In 2023, the Northwest Pacific coast experienced such drastic

heat waves which caused mass deaths in seabirds. According to Parks Canada, by the year 2050, 1 in 4 birds in national parks may need to find a new place in North America to inhabit as a result of greenhouse gas emissions. Even though it may feel as if there is an abundance of birds throughout Canada, many species will soon face either rehoming or death. Can you imagine a life without birds in the sky, or fish in the nearby streams?

As I stated earlier in this essay, there is a heaviness in my heart. This heaviness isn't just about the direction that climate change is trying to pull us towards, but it's also about the future generations that might never get to experience such rich things. The thought of a child who is unable to grow up in a beautiful, diverse ecological world- it's unfair.

Future generations might never get an opportunity to live peacefully, because this heaviness we each experience will most likely grow tenfold. For far too long, people have tried to place hope into the next generation's hands, saying things like, "Your generation will save the environment", or, "Maybe when you're older you'll invent a solution to climate change." It's too late for that now. If we have any heart, then we'd understand that this issue of climate change isn't something you can shrug off or pass along. The time to change is now, for the sake of having a future at all. ∞







Natasha W.

I painted this piece in Gouache, and really wanted to focus on the contrast between the vibrant, lush nature of our land, and the polluted, poisoned state of our waterways. I have always loved the mountains, despite being born in the prairies, and throughout my many trips to the Rockies, have found more and more litter and harmful debris littered everywhere. I used different photos I've taken of both the beauty of the land, and the disastrous state I've found it in throughout my travels as references for the different aspects of this painting. Illustrating in one image both the majesty and the immense danger our land is in was a hard task, as this problem isn't small in scale; it's sweeping across the land, and spreading throughout our waterways, harming not only the various creatures and plant life that depend on it, but also the communities that still lack clean drinking water. The village I depicted isn't any one in particular, more so meant to symbolize the negative effects this issue has on everyone, even those who live far off into the valley, away from where the root of the issue is, and I hope it urges the viewer to deeply consider their personal impact, and where they may lie in this pollutant chain. Being born in Alberta, I've been told many times over of the importance of buffalo to the ecosystems in this region, and their cultural significance to all the groups who have walked these lands. Even through all this speak of buffalo, I've never even seen one in the wild, which is deeply disheartening, as they truly are majestic creatures. The buffalo, in this portrayal, is meant to signify the diversity of life that still has the capacity to return; we are not too far gone to perhaps allow these creatures to return, and allow the next generation to witness them in the wild. The buffalo is placed across the river, away from the pollution, amongst lush and beautiful flowers and wild grasses, to signify the hope for the future, the hope that we as a society can cross this river away from our destructive habits and embrace our spiritual connection to the land and its other inhabitants. ∞





Nolan

Seven Generations

Since time immemorial, there has been balance on Turtle Island or Earth. Balance in the land, climate, and people. But in recent years there has been an increase in concern about the changes across the world and concrete evidence, such as climate change due to human activities. This collage is titled “Seven Generations” and is inspired not only by the changes at hand but also inspired by old treaties signed between Europeans and First Nations peoples, such as the first treaty: Guswenta. Signed between the Haudenosaunee and the Dutch. The ideas of friendship, peace and forever resonate with me. This collage is like a Wampum belt treaty with Turtle Island as it is a living being. A promise not to interfere with one another and avoid disasters that could happen if nothing changes within current world affairs and climate change. It shows what can and will happen. It is a reminder to keep balance. This is what this collage means to me.

Seven Generations refers to the teaching style of First Nations and how one must be held accountable for their own actions and think of how it can potentially affect the collective and future generations. Self-regulation and prioritization of the collective are key to preserving the lands and to prevent further irreversible climate change.

In the top section you can see greenery, fresh water, waterfalls, and animals coexisting. This is what I picture when I think of balance. This environment can be sustained and is a symbol of a healthy relationship with the world. This is a reminder of how beautiful our lands are and how precious connected everything

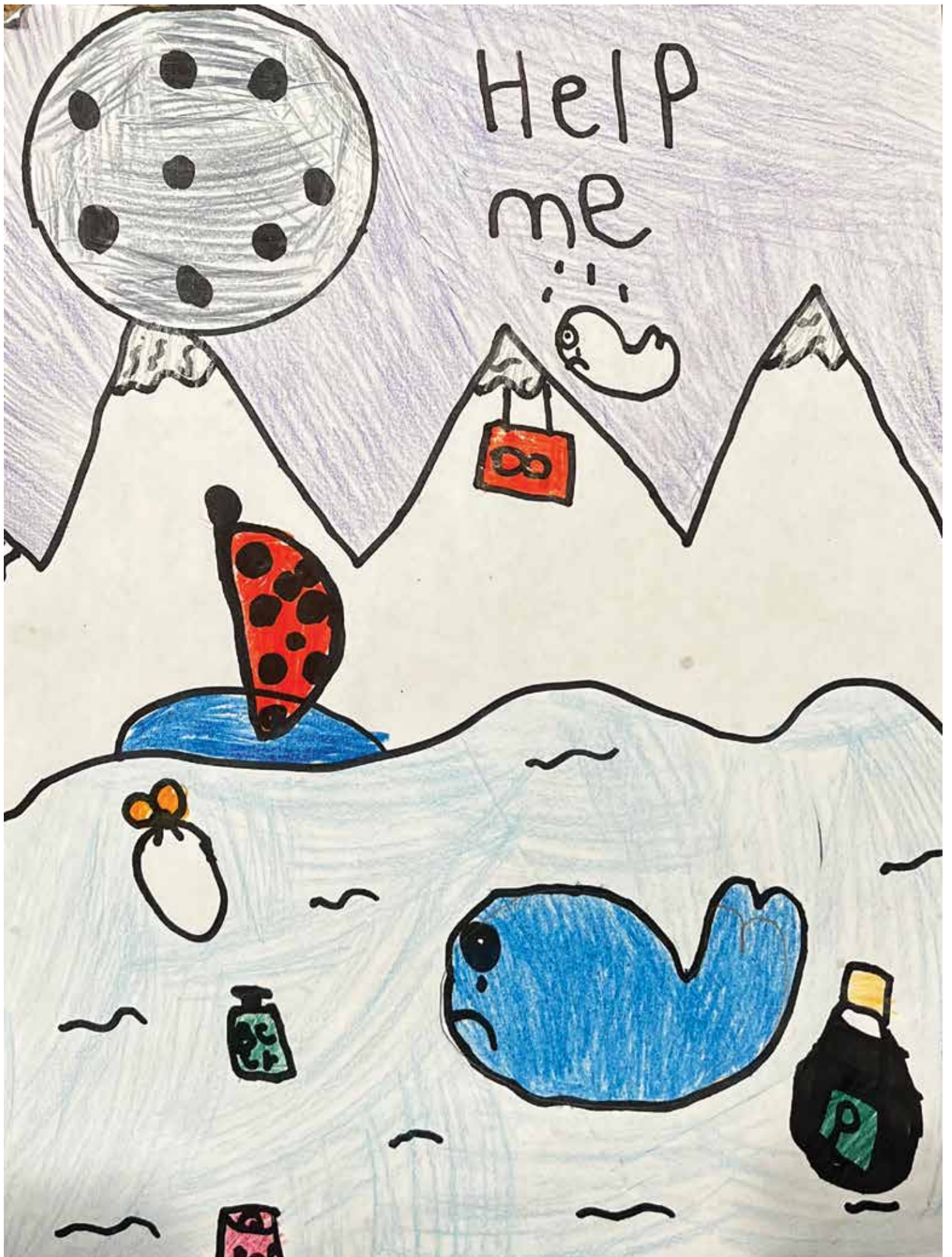
is with one another. I chose to draw a bison as there were an abundance of buffalo roaming the lands. It is a historic animal to Canada. Bison were and still are a vital source of food and material for the Métis and First Nations peoples. There are also birds flying, that represent eagles and ravens which are another important animal to First Nations and Métis people. Birds also display freedom. I have drawn horses throughout the collage because it represents strength and endurance. Horses are important to Métis and First Nations peoples. Seven generations in the past can show mistakes made, poor choices, and what went wrong. We can analyze our past actions and with this knowledge apply these to the present and to the future.

The middle section expresses seven generations in the future if we continue to live how we live and disrespect our land and waters. This is what can happen. Extreme weather conditions like drought and forest fires leading to starvation, misery, and death. Drought will result in the lack of access to medicine derived from plants, herbs, and flowers. There will be food shortages and water will evaporate and become scarce. This will lead to conflict. Precious animals like horses will not be able to survive. This section also includes the Métis Red River Cart as it is a part of my identity.

It starts with the individual. This is why there are two hands. It represents us, me and the viewer. It shows one considering what wrong we have done in the past and shows an understanding that we must make change. That change can start with just one or two people. Us. The topic of climate change is serious to me, so I wanted to convey a serious and dark tone that can grab the attention of people. I hope this collage can complement the Métis National Climate Strategy. This is why I created and submitted this collage. ∞



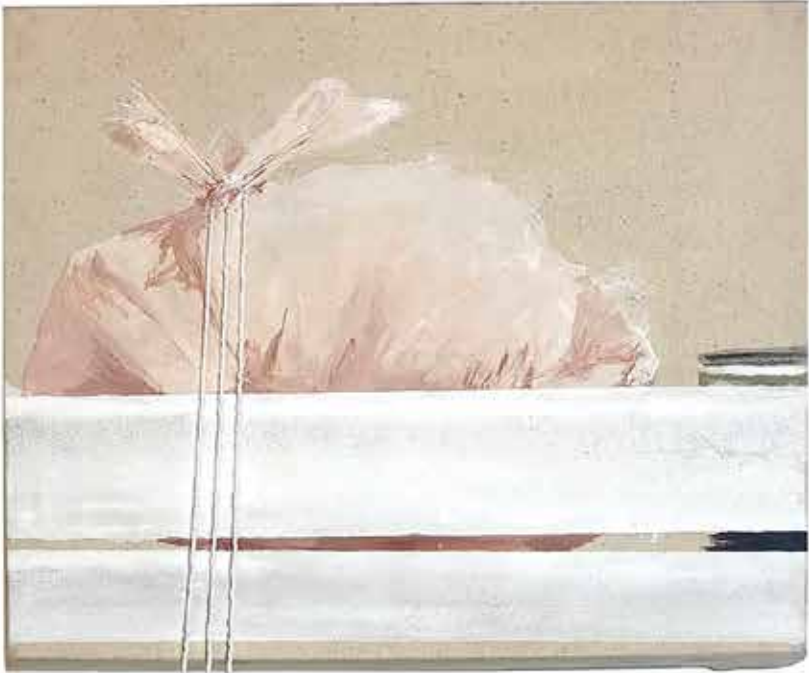
Help
me



Ohsha

For my drawing I choose to do the ocean with garbage and poison, a whale sad and crying mountains melting and a dark sky. I choose to do this because I love nature and animals and pollution is making our world change and our animals sad. The earth is very important to me and I am worried about what is happening. I think we should take better care of our earth to keep us and the animals safe and make sure they don't get sick. We should stop polluting our oceans with garbage, because it not only causes damage to us, and the animals and the environment and everything. The animals and land we live on is important to my Métis culture. We need to work together to take better care of our earth so we can live here forever. ∞

-Ohsha Stevenson
Age 8



Rain

Across Turtle Island, the pervasive impact of man-made climate change, stemming from colonial exploitation of water, air, and land systems, is now seeping into every facet of life. No corner remains untouched, from the depths of the lake where I once hooked my first fish to the pockets of life persisting amidst the fractured pavements of my urban home. Responding to the call for youth-driven climate strategies by the Métis Nation, “Freezer Burn” intertwines personal reflections on early teachings with contemporary practices. The extended beaded fish bones create a narrative thread connecting traditional methodologies to modern existence, emphasizing responsibilities to the land. How we must strive to preserve the land in order to continue our traditions and safe harvesting. Our ability to harvest emerges not only as a survival mechanism but as a cultural continuum, safeguarding rights within land, culture, and identity. Leading back to present day, this memory was carved, top left, by the recent purchase of my first fish knife.

This year marked my acquisition of a modest yet significant tool – my own fish knife – a tangible step towards achieving food sovereignty. This purchase empowers me to reclaim some control over the origin and processing of my food, highlighting the importance of investing in the proper tools for sustainable fishing and hunting practices. The painting captures the moment preceding my first fish cleaning, portraying innards and bones destined for the hole cut into the plywood surface of the fish hut. The knowledge gained that day resonates each time I make a catch, underscoring the responsibility to harvest

only what is necessary and preserve as much as possible.

Post-processing, my catch found a temporary home in a grocery bag perched on the top shelf of my childhood home’s freezer. Too young to cook it myself, my first catch was immortalized in ice crystals, trapped within a pink plastic bag for years to come. The top canvas paints this scene, but connects it still to the fish itself. Reflecting on past fishing experiences and cultural practices, I’ve adopted more sustainable methods for food preservation. The artwork prompts contemplation on the ecological impact of individual choices, emphasizing the ripple effect of actions on a broader scale.

While re-purposing existing resources is essential, responsible food preservation, such as using reusable containers like glass and prioritizing food visibility to minimize waste, plays a crucial role. These seemingly small actions collectively reduce our environmental impact, particularly significant when considering that one-third of global food production for human consumption goes to waste¹. In reducing our reliance on single use plastics, we protect our waterways which connect us all.

By seamlessly weaving personal narratives with broader themes of food sovereignty, waste reduction, and individual and collective responsibility, “Freezer Burn” beckons viewers to take both personal and collective action. In the face of the escalating global climate crisis, the artwork serves as a poignant reminder of our agency and the imperative of embracing sustainable practices, continuing/ developing community knowledge, and contributing collectively to overcome the challenges that lie ahead. ∞

¹ <https://www.wfp.org/stories/5-facts-about-food-waste-and-hunger#:~:text=1.,worth%20approximately%20US%241%20trillion>



Sydney

Taanishi,

My name is Sydney Vandale (Howard), and I am a proud Métis woman, originally from Treaty 7 territory, known today as Southern Alberta. My family was one of many families that fought bravely in the Battle of Batoche, however, I did not have the privilege of growing up knowing that I was Métis, as my father was raised during a time when it was not safe to share his ancestry and openly embrace Métis culture and traditions. At the age of twelve, my dad had the courage to work with Métis Nation Alberta to register my sister and I and this began my long journey home to my culture and community. Like many Métis people, I grew up with little knowledge of who the Métis were and the education system taught very little. I always felt that there was a part of me missing. I felt a longing for community, culture and traditions that heavily lacked in my family. It took me a long time to finally find that community but now that I have, I feel whole, and I am filled with inspiration, warmth, and passion. I attribute this all to my work in climate action.

The energy transition and embracing my Indigeneity have gone hand in hand for me. During the pandemic, I applied for an internship at an Indigenous National Non-Profit called Indigenous Clean Energy. They were looking for Indigenous students and for the first time in my life, I felt ready to self-identify and take a big step into my journey of reconnection. I was successful in my application and soon began working with the organization. I knew nothing about climate action as I grew up with a father who worked in the oil and gas industry, and it was all I knew. It put food on our table, but I was completely

oblivious to the damage it was causing to Mother Earth. It was through my work with Indigenous Clean Energy that I soon became aware of the incredible work that Indigenous Peoples are doing nationally and globally to advance climate action and protect Mother Earth. I had never felt so inspired and amazed in my life. My internship turned into my first full-time job and marked the beginning of my career. I had the opportunity to work with Indigenous trailblazers, doing work in their communities that far surpassed the work being shown in mainstream media. I learned that the story of energy in Canada had turned a new chapter with Indigenous Peoples at the forefront.

What the media doesn't highlight is that Indigenous nations are leading the clean energy transition as the second-largest clean energy asset owners in the country. As my career grew, so too did my kinship with other Indigenous Peoples and my connection to my heritage and culture. I was introduced to beadwork and gifted my first sash and ribbon skirt. I became incredibly passionate about Indigenous leadership and specifically Indigenous youth leadership in the clean energy space. Indigenous youth are the future leaders, and little was being done to engage and support them. Through my work at Indigenous Clean Energy, I was able to support the launch of Generation Power, an Indigenous youth clean energy and career training program. I also had the opportunity to participate in the first cohort of the program and had the privilege of seeing Indigenous youth come into the program with no knowledge of clean energy and leave with a successful project underway or impactful clean energy job. Finally, I had the opportunity to attend the Conference of the Parties (COP27) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt and speak on The Women of the Métis Nation | Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak panel on Indigenous Women and Youth on Climate. This session brought together

Indigenous Women and Youth from across so-called Canada, to speak to the unique perspectives and impacts of climate change. I sat alongside the incredible Sharon Morin and Jordyn Burnouf, who I have always looked up to and shared my story in the Canada Pavilion. It was a moment in my life that I will never forget. Climate work has truly been the most impactful work I have ever done and has allowed me to reconnect with my culture and community in ways that I could have never imagined.

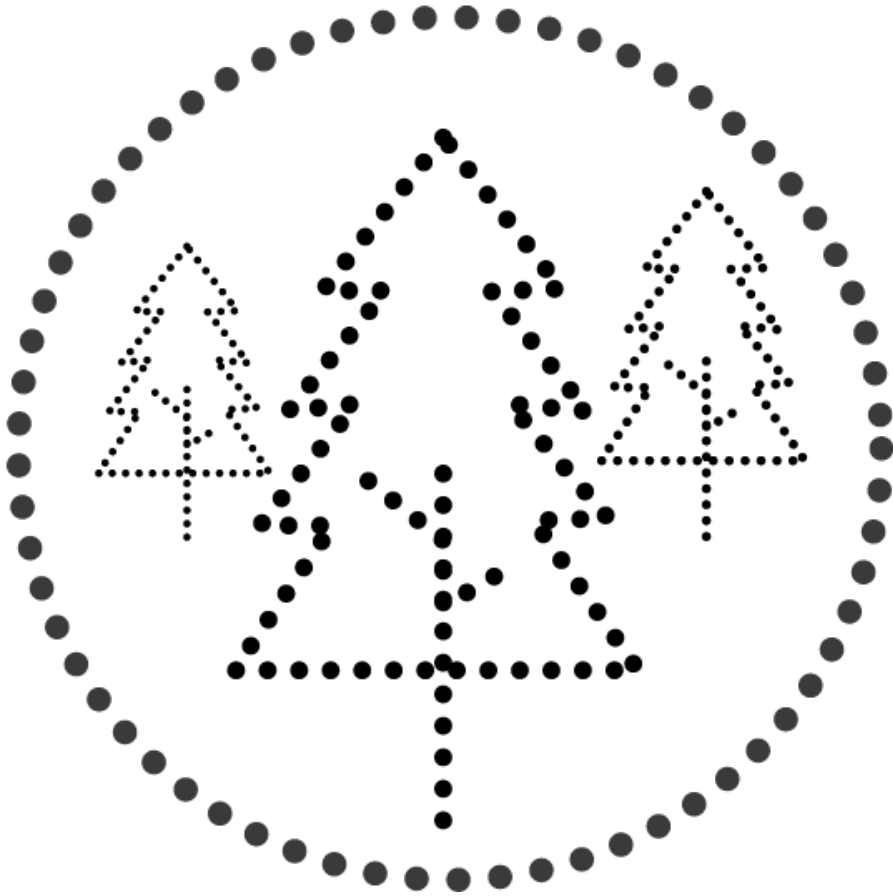
Through my work, it has become evident that continual impacts of colonization have created harsh realities for Indigenous communities worldwide such as energy poverty, human rights exploitation, resource extraction, intergenerational trauma and more. I believe that the clean energy transition is an opportunity for restoration, repatriation, and revitalization through the support of community-led practices and programs. Indigenous ways of knowing and being are integral to the transition and the only way to achieve a just and equitable transition is by respecting, adhering, and acting on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous knowledge and ways of being, need to be recognized as sustainable climate action. We must ground all climate work in human rights, environmental protection, restoration, working to create funding and capacity-building programs by and for the people they are intended to impact.

Ultimately the work we do today as Indigenous Peoples will build a path for our children and the next seven generations.

I believe that it is our children and our children's children that must guide

climate work. In our lifetime we are already seeing the impacts of climate change but just imagine what the next seven generations will experience in their lifetime. My digital art piece is titled "Strawberry Earth". It features the earth at the center, a fruitful earth that I imagine for our children. One rich with growth, prosperity, and interconnection, one filled with life symbolized through the vibrant flowers extending from Mother Earth. Below Mother Earth are the roots of a healthy and plentiful strawberry plant. The strawberry is also known as the "heart berry" to Métis people. Some Elders say that the heart berry helps us understand the connection between the mind, body, spirit, and emotions. We need our heart to guide us in maintaining our harmony and balance. We must act like the strong roots of the plant, laying the foundation for our children, and forging a better future for them. The children are our heart berries, they are present in everything we do, in the hard work that is climate action because the work that we do today will lead to a prosperous future for generations to come. Additionally, the strawberry symbolizes the act of harvesting, picking/gathering, and the idea of caring for the strawberries grounds us in our connection to the land and teaches us how to continue to care for Mother Earth and our community. Since designing this art piece, I have found out that I am expecting a little one in the summer. This news deepens my ties of climate action to culture, reconciliation, and prosperity for the next generations. As articulated in my art, it is vital that we lay the foundation and act as the strong roots for the growth and restoration of Mother Earth, for our children, our "heart berries". Maarsii for your consideration. ∞







Teagan

Reflecting on the issue of climate change, I think of cherished memories from my childhood growing up in Northwestern Ontario. I recall the summers filled with adventures in the woods, gathering mushrooms and berries with my grandparents by my side. The vivid image of wildflowers decorating our yard. Winter brought its own delights, with days spent on the ice, patiently waiting for walleye or trout to bite. Those recollections are peppered with antics of the fox family that stole our shoes from the porch and my unsuccessful attempts to capture hummingbirds with a fishing net. My bond with nature has shaped the person I am today in profound ways.

However, as I struggle with the realities of climate change, I am troubled by its critical implications for our collective future. I worry about the legacy we leave for generations to come. Will they inherit the same experiences that shaped my upbringing? Will they have the opportunity to create their own memories amidst the wonders of nature, surrounded by the richness of flora and fauna that defined my own childhood? As I contemplate the uncertain path ahead, these questions weigh heavily on my mind.

I wanted my climate strategy artwork to showcase the essence of Northwestern Ontario while emphasizing the profound impact of climate change on Earth. Drawing inspiration from Métis beadwork, I shaped my piece with symmetry, symbolizing balance and harmony. Throughout the artwork, symmetry reigns supreme, except for two elements: the Earth and the fire. The fire symbolizes the assault of climate change, engulfing our planet in its destructive embrace. Amidst the flames, Earth cannot have balance and harmony. Climate change disrupts our water, weather patterns, and the entirety of nature's offerings—not just within my own stories but within the collective experiences of us all.

I aspire for my artwork to encapsulate the urgency of strategizing against climate change. We must unite to navigate the flames and emerge on the other side before the fire engulfs us all. I hope future generations will look back on their childhood with the same fondness for nature that I do. There is an abundance we must safeguard and advocate for. ∞

Teagan Neufeld



Zak

My name is Zak Huppe Campbell and I am a 22-year-old Métis man with mixed settler lineage. I was urban raised on the unseeded, unsundered traditional territories of the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Peoples, also known as Kimberley, British Columbia. My Métis family names come from the community of Lac La Biche and the Red River. I was raised in a matriarchal family and uphold that upbringing and the many learnings from my ancestors in all that I do.

Due to lasting systemic impacts of colonization my grandparents spoke very little to my sister and I about our Métis heritage. We have come to learn however, that they instilled strong values that align with our Métis ways of knowing and being that have helped us to grow and thrive. Growing up there were not many opportunities to be involved in the Métis Nation; however, being raised in a tight-knit town, I have and will continue to volunteer and be involved in my community. I hope to learn more about traditional Métis art forms that I can incorporate into my personal and professional work. It is my hope to give back in every way I can to the community that has supported me. I will work to increase awareness and advocacy around Indigenous, environmental and disability rights through education, relationship building and art.

I am sharing part of my story with you because it is interwoven into this art piece. The deep connection I feel to my home, community and kin is embedded into the meaning of my work.

My hometown is surrounded by mountains. These mountains provide a safe haven for my community, a shelter for wild creatures, fresh water for all living things, and so much more. These mountains are the place I envision raising children and being with grandchildren like my parents and grandparents before me. Within my short lifetime I have witnessed these mountains degrade, the glaciers melt and the ecosystem drastically shift. The reality of climate change negatively impacting current and future generations is stark.

My art piece is about disconnection and possibilities. Individualism has become more important than community. Commodification takes priority over sustainability. A large portion of humanity remains blissfully ignorant from the fact that we have a dependent relationship with Mother Earth. In many Indigenous teachings, protecting and sustaining the land, water and air for generations to come was held in the highest regard, but these teaching are not present within the colonial systems that run the modern world. The diamond frame around the nature scene within the art piece is the barrier that encloses the systems enabling disconnection. I see Indigenous ways of knowing and being trying to function within these systems but like the river needing to flow and expand in order to thrive. Therefore, the spaces outside of the barriers offer opportunities for Indigenous futurisms of sustainability and resurgence.

The scene that is trapped within the barrier is my home and the place I imagine when I think of the homelands where my ancestors voyaged. The mountains are depicted in black and



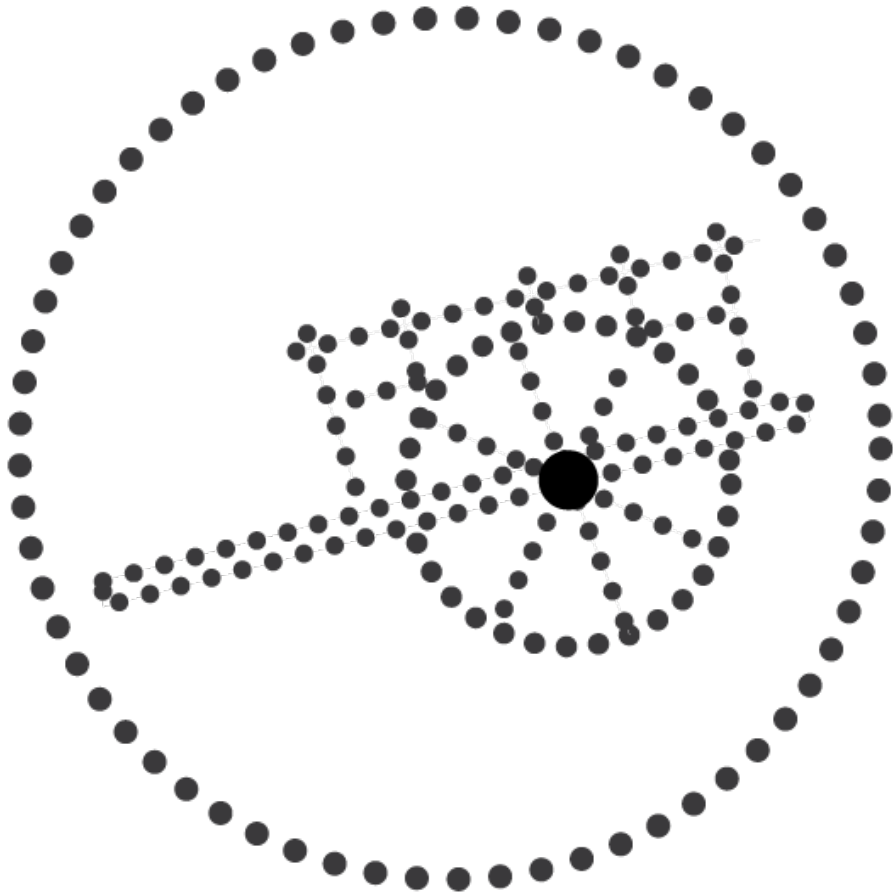
white which represents the existence drained out of them from the climate crisis. The river is life and is coloured red to symbolize the blood of our ancestors and the resilience of our nations. The mighty Grandmother Moon shines above as a matriarchal power grounding Spirits and guiding their direction. Both the river and the moon depict the hope and strength that live within the barriers. My desire is for this art piece to spark difficult and needed conversations

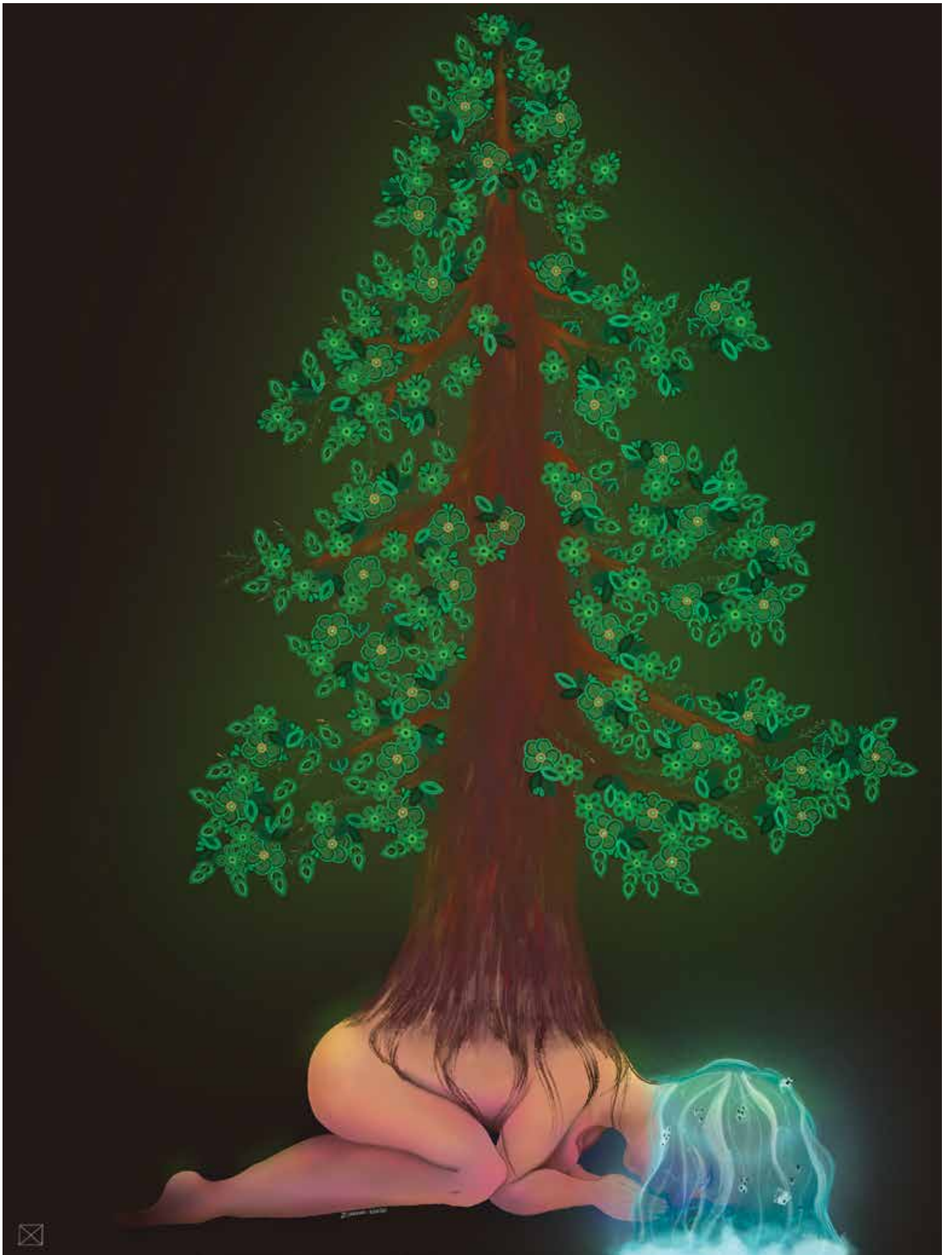
around climate realities and climate action; to magnify the individual and collective responsibilities and impacts on Mother Earth; and to inspire hope for Indigenous future visioning and sustainable pathways for generations to come. ∞

Maarsii poor toon taan (thank you for your time),

Zak Huppie Campbell







Zinaeah

MOTHER

I have named my artwork “Mother”. It is meant to portray the delicate balance of “Mother Earth” and how the land, water, and air connects us to everything. The human form symbolizes how we as a species are both connected to our planet, and at the same time are responsible for the health and stewardship of it. Just as the tree needs healthy roots, we as humans need the oxygen that the tree provides and so on. My hope is that we all remember that if one thing is negatively impacted, then so are others, like a deck of cards that took millennium to build and create. When it comes to the climate, a small change can have big consequences, and whether these consequences positively or negatively impact the climate is up to us.

I feel at home when in nature. Going out into a forest or into the water gives me a sense of calm: feeling the sun and the light breeze that rustles the leaves and the feathers of the birds overhead; hearing the soft sound of water flowing as fish ride it to the open water. In nature is where I feel grounded and at peace; watching and listening to the living art that is our world. I feel that my Métis roots must at least be partly responsible for these connections.

Making this piece has given me an even deeper appreciation of creation itself. It took many hours and great discipline to complete this project and to get it to where I felt like I had created something beautiful. Nature, on the other hand, seems to effortlessly create such beauty. Looking out a window and seeing trees amidst a city remind me that beauty still exists.

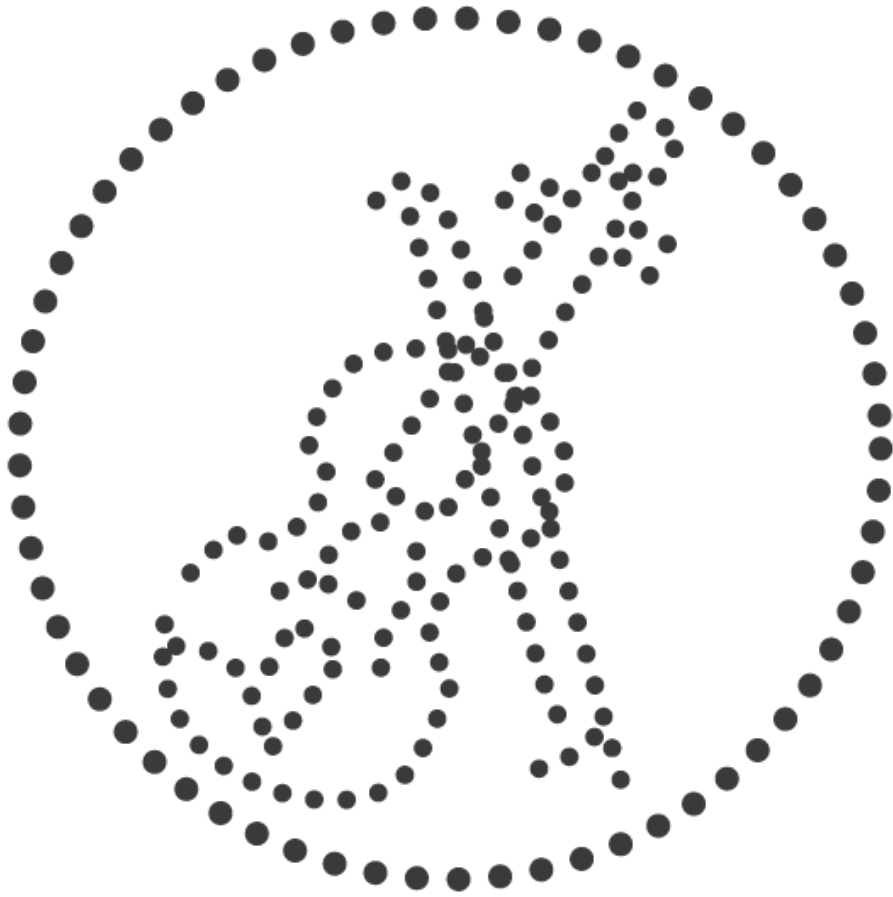
Considering things such as the patterns of leaves, the sparkle of rocks and water, the colours of flowers, and the buzz of animals out and about brings me to the realization that the natural world is the purest form of art. Thinking that those things are slowly dying fills me with anguish and sorrow.

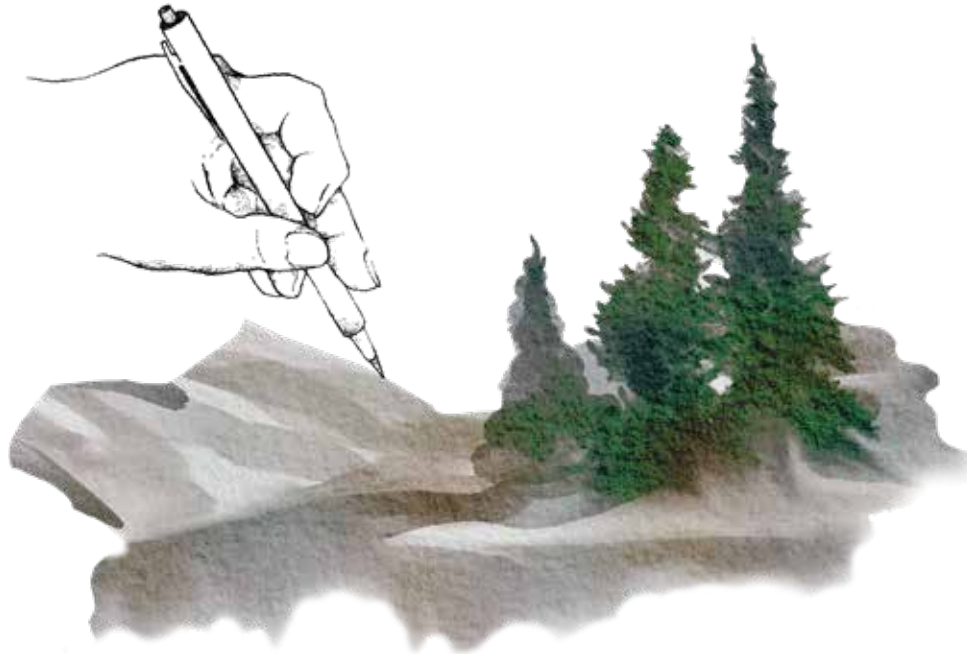
The Earth is our responsibility to restore because she helped create us and the planet is our home. It is the only known planet that has the compounds and fundamentals to host life. Recognizing climate change as a very real threat is critical. I believe society as a whole is finally taking it seriously, which gives me hope. Even so, I don't believe it has been our top priority, and it simply needs to be.

The main theme of this piece is connection. As a society, I feel that our connection to the land and water is too often overlooked when considering the effects of climate change. When the natural world falters, so does the connection. In nature many animals have symbiotic relationships, where one provides protection and security while the other provides stability and nourishment. We had this connection with the Earth in the past, but it seems like lots of us have forgotten. We all need to remember.

I didn't grow up with many of the traditions and teachings of the Métis culture, but I am working towards connecting more with it. By creating this artwork and incorporating a traditional Métis art form (dot painting), I was able to gain a sense of belonging. My goal is to help bring awareness to the earth and everything we've put it through. By itself, “Mother” may not be the greatest or most important contribution to help fight climate change, but thinking that something I've created with my own hands might help spread awareness makes me proud, and it becomes something bigger than just art. ∞







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