

Grand Expressions

A Self-guided Tour



Water-themed creations by youth from
Six Nations of the Grand River



Organized in partnership between Elaine Ho (PhD Candidate, University of Waterloo) and Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts, with support from our generous hosts



Centre for International
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UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT

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A Self-guided Tour

**Water-themed creations by youth from
Six Nations of the Grand River**

*In an age when man has forgotten his origins and
is blind even to his most essential needs for survival,
water has become the victim of his indifference.*

Rachel Carson

Cover artists: Ashley Catrysse, Thomas Anderson, Hannah Wallace-Lund, Steve Johnson, Adriana Johnson.



This book was created by Elaine Ho using contributions of youth from Six Nations of the Grand River, participating in the Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts program. Richelle Miller (Coordinator) and Tayler Hill (Youth Leader) were instrumental in guiding the youth through creation and collecting the writing that went into this self-guided tour.

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Preface

Elaine Ho, Grand-Erie Study

Growing up, water was a marvelous mystery. The streams I played in were full of minnows and little bugs that seemed to belong on another world. It seemed the water had secrets it wanted to keep to itself, reserved for those with gills or other breathing abilities I did not have; and yet, the water also seemed to have a message that could be decoded if I only tried hard enough. Thus, I began a journey that would bring me (in a very roundabout way) to my current pursuit of a PhD focused on water.

I lived in Toronto, a city on one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world, where I could run through our lawn sprinkler even on days the lawn didn't need watering. Potable water always flowed from our taps and it was a given that it would continue to be present without any effort on our part. Then when I began my undergraduate studies at University of Waterloo in 2008, I was exposed to numerous water issues for the first time (e.g., I had never known anyone who relied on groundwater/well water). I realized I my childhood reality was not in any way reflective of the rest of the world—or even Ontario.

As I developed my PhD research one thing became clear: water management is often not at all about water, but is about the people that live in the watershed. E.g., water monitoring is about measuring certain parameters to inform management decision, but who chooses what to measure?

Whose story do we tell?

With this question in mind, working together with many people, the Grand-Erie Study emerged. Since incorporating diverse perspectives was important to my question around water monitoring and management, I set off to engage with community members. A wonderful partnership was formed with Great Art for Great Lakes, which engages thousands of community members to create permanent art installations related to the Great Lakes—or, in 2019 and 2020, Lake Erie in particular. I met Richelle Miller, Coordinator for Music of the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts, at one of these workshops. As we discussed ideas for engaging with youth in her program (at Six Nations of the Grand River) for my research, *Grand Expressions* was conceived.

The *Grand Expressions* tour not only created opportunities for conversations between Canadian and Indigenous community members, but also empowered young Indigenous persons to act for the benefit of their community – e.g., speaking to hundreds of University students, thousands of elementary school students and dozens of water managers and dignitaries, including the Canadian Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth. It is my hope that the relationships formed during this research lay the foundation for meaningful, transformational action regarding Canadian-Indigenous cooperation in the area.

Perspectives shared by Six Nations youth through *Grand Expressions* are being integrated with perspectives shared by subject matter experts, water managers and other members of the public. Together, lessons gleaned from conventional research approaches are intertwined with lessons highlighted in the stories told by the youth. More information, including the final proposed framework, can be found on the research website (next page). Perhaps this book—and the visual and written stories within—will remind us that our future depends on prompt, collective action regarding one shared resource: **water**.

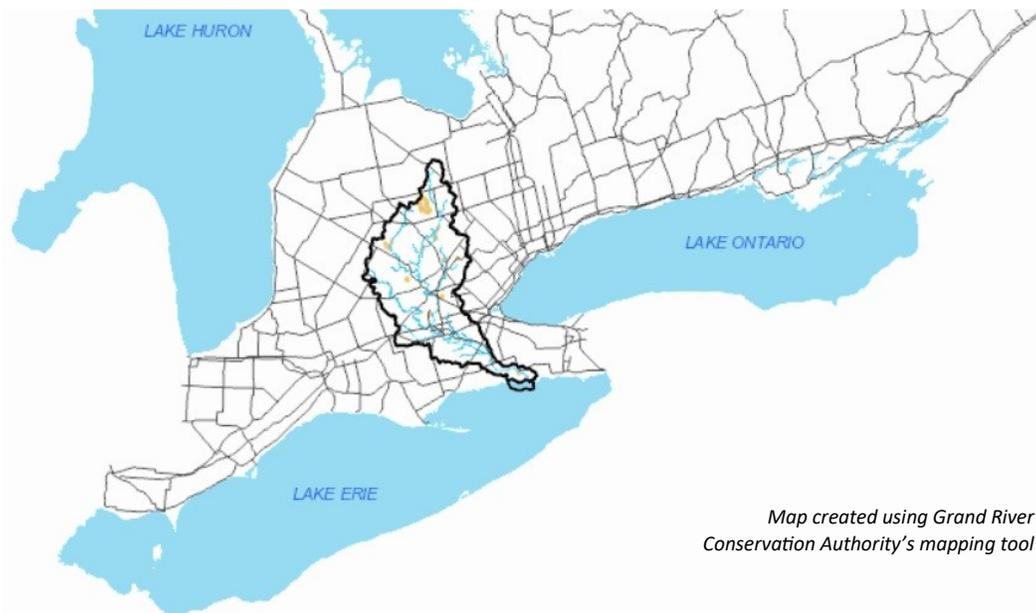
About the Grand-Erie Study

I strive to propose an integrated monitoring and management framework for the lower Grand River and nearshore area of Lake Erie. The research question is, “How can current monitoring processes in the Grand River-Lake Erie interface be strengthened to: (1) incorporate diverse perspectives, (2) consider cumulative effects and (3) connect to management and inform decision-making?” To our knowledge, this is the first interjurisdictional, co-created cumulative effects framework in the Great Lakes area (and, possibly in Canada).

Phases of the research are as follows:

1. **Exploratory study (January-August 2016)**: we redesigned the Watershed Report Cards program (communicating water health) and created a more inclusive way of selecting what to measure.
2. **Key informant interviews (January to June 2019)**: experienced practitioners and scientists were asked to identify opportunities for improving and connecting monitoring and management.
3. **Public consultation (March-September 2019)**: participants in Great Art for Great Lakes shared their thoughts on priorities, problems and solutions regarding the Grand River and Lake Erie.
4. **Grand Expressions exhibit (October 2019-July 2020)**: Indigenous youth shared their perspectives regarding priorities and integration of Indigenous knowledge with water management. Artwork, accompanied by stories, travelled across multiple acclaimed locations in four cities.
5. **Water managers workshop (April 2020)**: consulting with managers (potential implementers) to tweak and create the framework. Youth artists also spoke to the water managers.

Resources and information available at www.GrandErieStudy.ca.



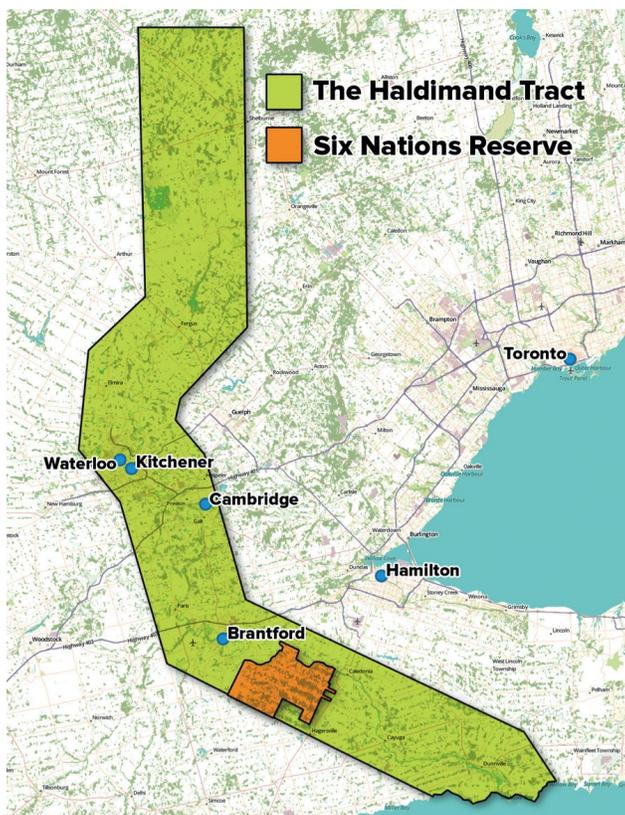
Shared spaces?

The Grand River Watershed (outlined above) is Southern Ontario's largest and most populated watershed. However, many of its residents are unaware of historical agreements made between the area's Indigenous peoples and settlers (now Canadian society). The **Two Row Wampum** (beaded belt) is one of the oldest treaty relationships between the Onkwehonweh (original people) of Turtle Island (North America) and European immigrants. The treaty was originally made between Dutch traders and settlers and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois, or Six Nations) peoples in 1613. According to an interpretation by historian Ray Fadden, the rows:

"...symbolize two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs, and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs, and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other's vessel."

The **Dish With One Spoon** is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee—and later, Europeans and all newcomers—that bound all parties to share and protect territory and its resources. Although commonly referring to the treaty signed in Montreal in 1701, the Dish with One Spoon was an Indigenous covenant dating as far back as 1142. The “Dish” (sometimes called the “Bowl”) represents what is now southern Ontario, from Lake Simcoe to the Great Lakes to Quebec's border (including the north shore of St. Lawrence River). The “Spoon” may represent resources within that dish. Since we all eat out of this One Dish with One Spoon (e.g., shared resources), we all have a responsibility to ensure the dish never empties - to take care of the land and preserving the creatures we share it with.

Nearly a century later, Québec governor Sir Frederick Haldimand signed a decree on October 25, 1784 that granted a tract of land to the Haudenosaunee to enjoy forever. This decree—the **Haldimand Proclamation**—designated six miles (~10km) on either side of the Grand River from its source to Lake Erie to the Six Nations forever.



The Six Nations lost their territory in New York due to their alliance with British forces during the American Revolution; the Haldimand Tract was compensation for their loss. However, only about 5% of the Haldimand Tract remains in the hands of the Six Nations peoples. The Six Nations reserve is the only place in North America where all six nations—Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca and Tuscarora—reside.

Map adapted by Alternatives Journal from Six Nations Lands and Resources, map data from openstreetmap.org

The treaties described above represent three historical promises to share the Grand River Watershed and surrounding areas with Indigenous peoples:

(1) To collaboratively maintain the health of lands, waters and animals;

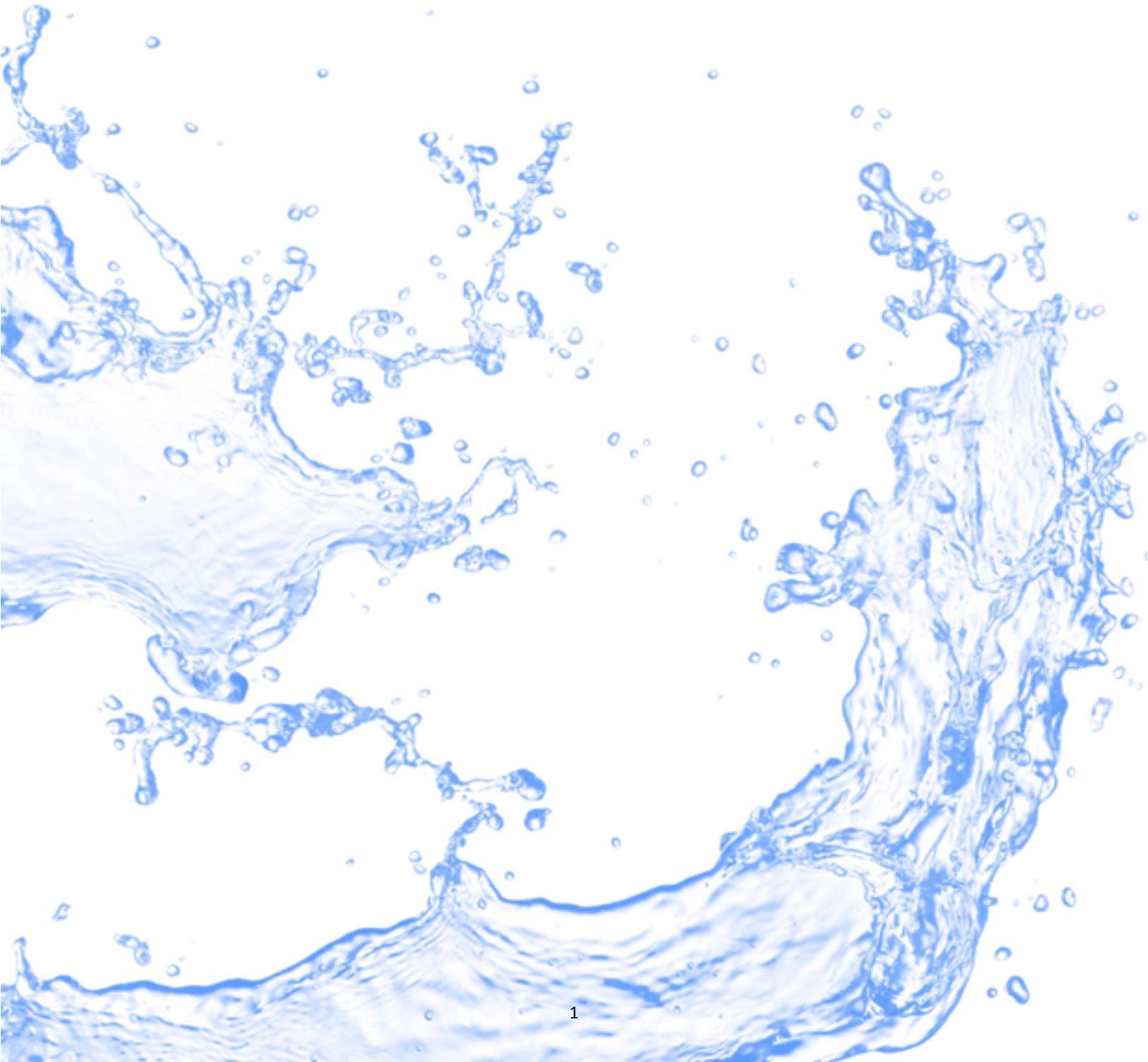
(2) To recognize distinct but equally valued cultures living together but separately, without interference from each other;

and

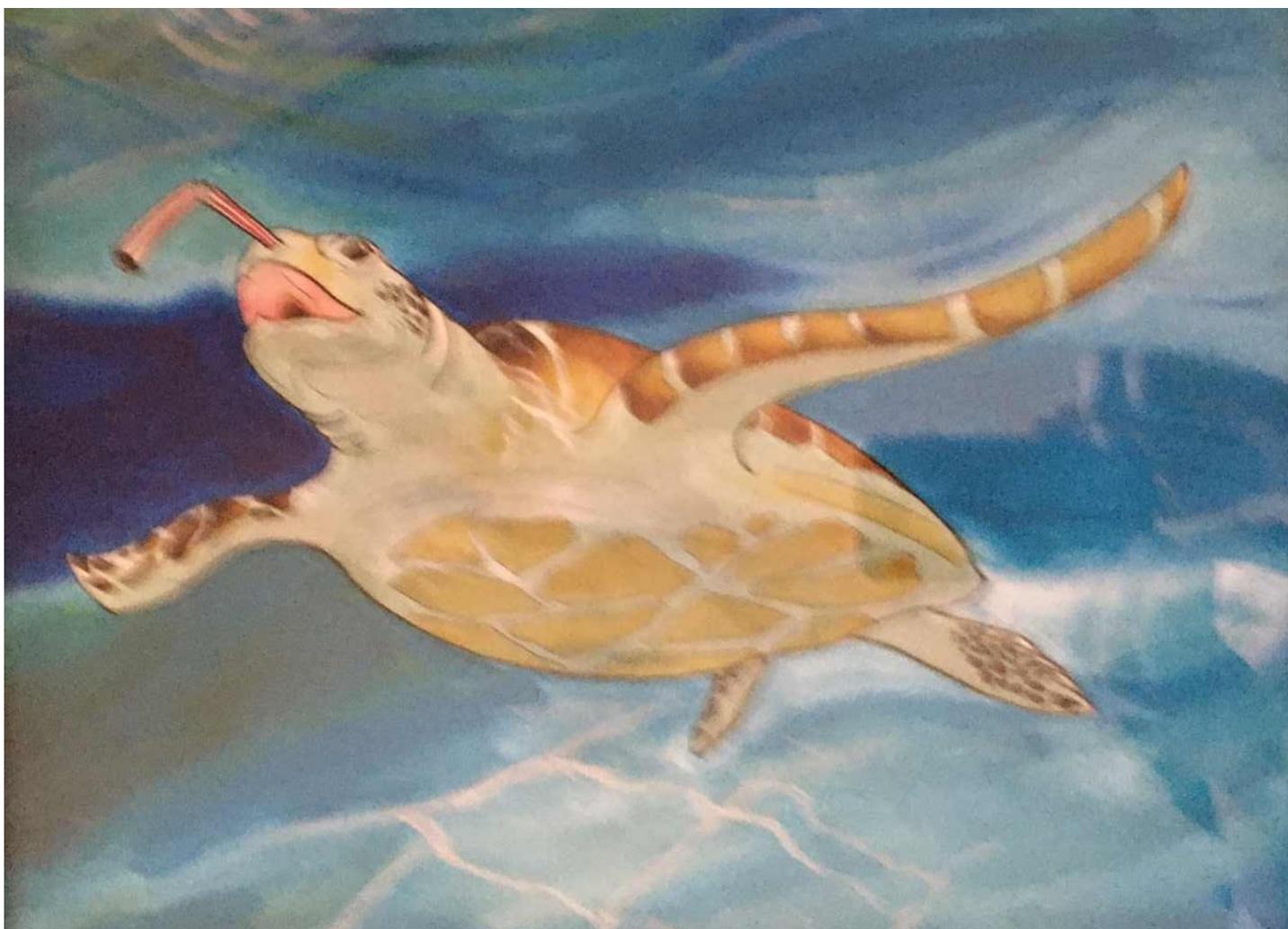
(3) A Declaration placing land under the permanent authority of the Six Nations.

To this day, none have been fulfilled.

Artwork



Collaborative works



Plastic Beach
Ink, 11" x 14"
Steve Johnson

Series: Plastics pollution

Steve Johnson

These works highlight the problem of garbage infested waters around the world.

I wanted both of them to look beautiful enough to draw the viewer in so the message would be perceived and remain in mind. Rogue Wave is inspired by Japanese art while Plastic Beach is from my own style developed after years of practicing neo-traditional tattoo art and design. This is to display the problem is not only an issue across the world but one close to home as well.



Rogue Wave

Painted paddle, [dimensions]

Steve Johnson



Waterlily's Unraveling
Digital drawing, 11" x 14"
Adriana Johnson

Series: Waterlily

Adriana Johnson

Many moons ago, in a Seneca village, there was a girl named Waterlily who lived by a river and a waterfall. Her mother had died when she was at an early age, so her aunt had taken her in. However, her aunt did not like Waterlily; she mistreated her. She wouldn't fix her hair, she wouldn't give her nice clothes and she made her do all the dirty work when she was supposed to be the one to take care of her. Although she was mistreated in this way, Waterlily would give thanks to the Creator every day because she was thankful to have a roof over her head and to be alive.

Then, in the village where Water Lily lived, people started getting sick and dying. No one could find a way to cure the sickness, so many people died.

One day, a man whose name means 'sweaty hands' (because your hands get sweaty when they hold money) offered Waterlily's aunt a large sum of money in return for permission to marry Waterlily. The aunt agreed, since she didn't like Waterlily that much anyway and she would benefit from the money. So, the aunt gave Waterlily to him and they married. The problem was that he also mistreated Waterlily and although she still gave thanks, the abuse continued until she eventually broke. Waterlily lost hope.

One night, she snuck out, got into a canoe and went down the river. As she did so, she prayed to the Creator for forgiveness because she planned to kill herself. However, as she fell over the waterfall a lightning bolt struck and caught her.

[Continued...]

[...Waterlily continued]

Now, they say the Thunders (powerful storm spirits) live under waterfalls. They took her into their world, where she stayed for the rest of her life. While there, she fell in love with one of the Thunders, with whom she had a child. They took care of the child until he grew up. Once he was old enough to take care of himself, they sent him to Waterlily's village. When he got there, he realized the reason people were getting sick and dying: a snake had been biting people in their sleep, giving them the diseases that killed them. He went out to kill the snake, which lifted the diseases and death from the village.

Artist' reflection

The reason I chose this story is because, although I am thankful for everything, sometimes you can lose that hope. I was once in that darkness, but I didn't let it get to me; I had to hold on to the little light that I had. I really like this story because they say it took place in Niagara Falls. I feel you can still feel that energy when you go to the Maid of the Mist (the boat that offers tours at the bottom of the falls)—you can feel that power coming from the waterfalls—and it's almost as powerful as the lightning. This story influenced my relationship with water because I realized water is like energy—it cannot be destroyed; it is only changed. I felt like that is how Water Lily felt because she wasn't killed, but she managed to keep on going and eventually have the son that lifted the curse from her village. I have heard more than once that water is life, that it flows wherever it takes you. Very wise people have also told me the Creator gave us the gift of crying because the water cleanses our sadness. Even for people who cry when they are angry, it cleanses that anger. Water physically and mentally 'is' most of us; we keep going with our day like a flowing river, and it goes on.

Behind the Falls

Painted paddle (double-sided), 5" x 23"

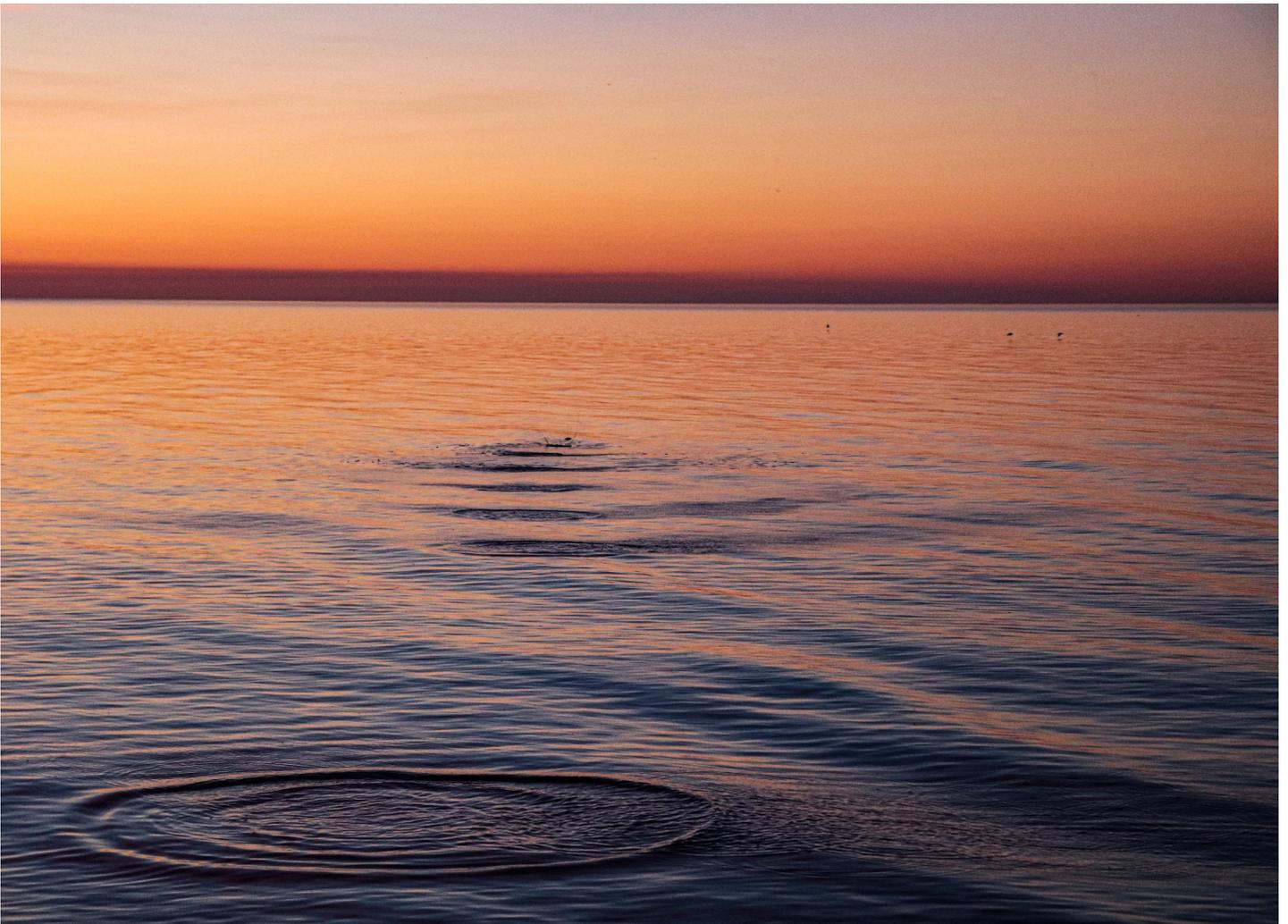
Adriana Johnson

Series: Skipping stone

Ashley Cattrysse

The art of skipping stones, requiring a magic angle and the choice of a flat rock. An intergenerational activity of a good stone throws in adventure and play. A life's lesson so you don't risk sinking. Each ripple as the stone skips across the water represents various perspectives of our future.

[Continued...]



Skipping stone 1

Photograph, 8" x 10"

Ashley Cattrysse



Skipping stone 2

Photograph, 8" x 10"

Ashley Cattrysse

[...Skipping stone continued]

The chalk colored sky (opposite) is just a soft pastel, a look into a bland and polluted world. The stone skipping in this photo is just a ripple affect of the damage we've done already and the damage we can still do if we continue down the same path. The warm colours represent a positive future (above), our goals. When looking at this photo a sense of relief, warmth, and positivity come to mind. The steps to taking care of our environment. Each generation fighting to save the next. That with one person, change is possible.



Caged bird
Photograph, 8" x 10"
Ashley Cattrysse

Caged bird

Ashley Cattrysse

A grand gathering of swans to inspire majestic peace. As we observe a graceful glide over the water, we observe a demonstration of harmony. A big-footed bird without footprint into its surrounding. A skyward fly, in V - formation at great heights to reflect victories of peace. But behind a cage, does this change how we perceive these birds of peace? To any, the cage is invisible, unnecessary. We just see the birds. We just see how calm, and carefree they seem. But behind any cage, we seem to continuously ignore that we are purposely distant from our creators' creations. We distance ourselves to see the smaller picture, which is just the bird. When in reality we distance ourselves to somehow make it easier to be able to simply throw a piece of trash out our car window. If we engaged ourselves into our environment and see birds covered in oil, or animals being killed for their fur or fins, we could see how caged we are now. Hiding from the reality that we can't face.



Splash screen

Photograph, 8" x 10"

Ashley Cattrysse

Splash screen

Ashley Cattrysse

The 'splash screen' is to be a bold first impression and reinforce the importance of water! The water depicted is uneasy, it's angry, disappointed. The water spirit is in pain, and there's no other way to look at it. The rock is our sustainability, our four walls. However, the waves continuously crash against the rocks, and with every crash of the wave against our walls, eventually it will give in. Slowly but surely, the water will erode the rock.

[other similar splashy image]

Photograph, 8" x 10"

[artist?]

Killing the environment

Ashley Cattrysse

The Great Lakes are the largest source of surface freshwater in the world and as depicted in the photograph we are killing our most essential resource.



Killing the environment

Photograph, 8" x 10"

Ashley Cattrysse

Messenger

Pencil on canvas, 11" x 14"

Ashley Cattrysse

Messenger

Ashley Cattrysse

The eagle spirit signifies courage, strength, and wisdom. It provides us with spiritual protection and a connection to the creator. As the messenger, the eagle was believed to carry prayers to and from the spirit world. In the drawing the smoke along the edges of the canvas represents the burning of the four sacred medicines: sweet grass, cedar, tobacco, and sage. When the herbs are burned, the smoke travels the prayers to the creator as the eagle protects them. When sprinkled around, it's a sign of gratitude to the Creator to acknowledge the trees, animals, water, etc. The sweet grass is used to help cleanse the body, mind and spirit. Cedar serves as a protector. Sage wards off negativity and tobacco is a sign of respect to the Creator. Everything has a spirit, including water. As a protector, a keeper, and messenger, the eagle is telling the creator that the water spirit is in pain. The message we are receiving back is straightforward. We are killing ourselves and our environment. We shouldn't kill the messenger.

Water Keeper

Ashley Cattrysse

"The earth is said to be a woman... She is Mother earth because from her comes all living things. Water is her life blood. It flows through her, nourishes her, and purifies her."

Kate Cave and Shianne McKay.

Indigenous women share a sacred connection to the spirit of water. They are known as 'water keepers' or 'care takers, the life-givers. As water keepers their responsibilities are to protect and nurture. Among their roles, women across Canada are raising awareness to draw attention to the water crisis faced in Indigenous communities and Canada. As depicted in this piece the message is stop, listen, act, prepare, join. However, this is not the only crisis in Canada. If you are not aware of the "highway of tears", it is based on the missing and murdered Indigenous women in B.C. Originally this piece was created as an awareness to this issue. The color red also represents the missing and murdered Indigenous women. In most cases we see a red dress, in connection to the increasing water contested issue, the red paint presents their fight to protect our water and our water keepers. We can't hide from the reality that our fresh water is being polluted, as a developed country, there are roughly 3000 homes in various reserves that don't have safe drinking water. The point being that water is life, it sustains us.



Water Keeper

Pencil on canvas, 16"x 20"

Ashley Cattrysse

Our Timer

Ashley Cattrysse

The nature of the symbolism of time is up for personal interpretation. There are various ways to perceive time, such as a reminder that soon enough bad things will pass, or to not take for granted the things we have now because time will eventually run out. As for this piece, it does represent the time we are losing to save the most essential resource we have, water. The glaciers are melting at an alarming rate, our oceans are polluted by chemicals and plastic waste, and many communities do not have safe drinking water. Indigenous people are the caretakers of mother earth and all its inhabitants.

Our medicine wheel incorporates the responsibility of all nations to protect mother earth and what she provides for us. The uses of the medicine wheel are varied among nations, each with a different representation of what each section stands for. For some it's the four sacred plants (tobacco, cedar, sage, sweetgrass). For others, it's the four directions, four seasons, four elements, stages of life (birth, adolescence, adulthood, elders), aspects of life (spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical) four races, four spiritual animals, etc. Each totem represents each of these symbols, because it's not just one nation that's being affected by this water crisis.

The first direction of the medicine wheel is east (yellow or spring). This totem represents our emotional well-being, and is the beginning of life, birth or childhood. The eagle is the keeper of tobacco. This sacred plant was given to us to communicate to the creator. It has a special relation with plants and is an activator to spirits.

[Continued...]



Our Timer

Canvas, 2' x 4'

Ashley Cattrysse

[...Our Timer continued]

The second direction of the medicine wheel is south (red or summer). This totem represents our intellectual state. The buffalo symbolizes a strong spirit with great emotional courage. This stage also represents the beginning of knowledge and adolescence. A time of mental development. The sacred plant is cedar, it is a restorative medicine and serves a protector.

The third direction is the west (black or autumn). This totem represents our spiritual being and is the time for adulthood. Our responsibilities grow, to nurture. To find our meaning and place. The bear represents this totem because it is a sign of the spiritual and physical power and courage. The bear often represents protection and a connection to the animal. Sage, just like the bear is used to protect us from negative energies. To cleanse our mind.

Lastly, the north direction (white or winter) is the final stage of life and the aspect of life. The wolf represents freedom as an essential way of life. It's intelligent yet fears of distrust. It is the keeper of sweet grass. It attracts positive energy and is used to help cleanse the body, mind and spirit. This stage represents our elders, a place of wisdom and of imparting from a lifetime of knowledge and living in the physical world to younger generations.

The aboriginal people use certain parts of the medicine wheel to strengthen a deep firm connection to the earth and water for protection, and guidance. People who are fighting for water can use the medicine wheel to help guide and strengthen them, to ward off negative energy, and give them courage to keep going and allow them to accept messages from the creator.



Grand Expressions is a collection of artwork by young Indigenous artists contributing to water research in the Grand River Watershed. In this exhibit, the youth highlight water-related issues and share teachings using visual and written storytelling.

The art tour created opportunities for conversation between Canadian and Indigenous community members, e.g., speaking to hundreds of University students, thousands of elementary school students, dozens of water managers and national dignitaries. Relationships formed during this research lay the foundation for meaningful and transformational action regarding Canadian-Indigenous cooperation, especially in the context of our most important shared resource: water.

www.GrandErieStudy.ca/arts

This book was created by Elaine Ho using contributions of youth from Six Nations of the Grand River, participating in the Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts program. Richelle Miller (Coordinator) and Tayler Hill (Youth Leader) were instrumental in guiding the youth through creation and collecting the writing that went into this self-guided tour.