

# SHARING EXPERIENCES: ANISHNABEG OUTREACH MARCH 2023

## What is Sharing Experiences?

In February 2020 we launched a new outreach program to connect with our communities. It is important for the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery to welcome and engage with the diverse communities of the Waterloo Region. On invitation, various groups come to the gallery and communicate a lived experience through a free workshop in clay. The lived experience is based on themes discussed with the leaders and the participants of each community group.

The work created is then presented to the community at large with an exhibition and a publication. The eighth community group we invited was Anishnabeg Outreach.

We thank John and Rebecca Short for their support of this program. We do hope that this program will not only allow us to strengthen the existing bonds between our gallery and community partners we already have, but also new ones and allow for new friendships to be forged between the participants.

## Denis Longchamps, PHD

Executive Director and Chief Curator,  
Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery

## Anishnabeg Outreach

Anishnabeg Outreach is an incorporated non-profit organization, which provides Indigenous people with access to culturally appropriate services and strives to support individuals with direction and assistance to overcome barriers. They encourage individual exploration of avenues that will lead to self-sufficiency and success. They offer a variety of community programs, such as workshops, mentorships, and also offer a variety of wellness and healing services.

## Storytelling Through Tiles – Intergenerational Perspectives

What members of Anishnabeg Outreach have created in this wonderful exhibition are a variety of hand-made, hand-decorated ceramic tiles that help to tell a story. Each participant approached this project with different perspectives, different ideas, and a different story that they wished to tell through their pieces.

It is important, now more than ever, to give attention and respect to Indigenous voices as they share their values, their insights, and their experiences. When asked to speak about their pieces, participants examined two important questions: **what story did you choose to share, and why did you want to share this story?**

## SHANNON



The purpose of this work is to signify the role played by traditional medicines (Sweet grass, cedar, sage and tobacco) in achieving healing for Indigenous communities. Each tile represents a piece of shattered pottery (Indigenous artifacts, a result of colonization), with a symbol representing medicines used for ceremony and healing. Though broken and disconnected, these tiles of culture, language, medicine, and spirit can survive and be pieced back together to pave a pathway toward healing the self. Additionally, these have been glazed in an exterior of orange to signify the resilience and strength of First Peoples throughout their journey to heal, reconnect and spirit build.

## KIAN



The purpose of these pieces is to represent a connection to my ancestors through the recreation of an old petroglyph, and the modernized version of the same symbol. The first tile is a recreation of the 8-point star petroglyph that was discovered in Nova Scotia in the 1980's. This petroglyph is of a very significant symbol in Mi'kmaq culture. The 8-point star symbolizes the sun, which is a very meaningful symbol within traditional spirituality. The 8 points also are known to represent the 8 districts of Mi'kma'ki, the traditional and current territory of the Lnu (or Mi'kmaw). This symbol has been heavily adapted into modern Mi'kmaq culture and craftwork, and commonly has been updated to display the four colours that represent the four directions. The second tile depicts the modern version of the 8-point star infilled with the colours of the four directions, this tile has an imprint to appear like modern beadwork, a connection to culture from a modern perspective. Both tiles represent past and present connection to my culture, by depicting the same symbol in two different ways.

## AVERY



My name is Avery (she/her) and I am an Anishinaabe Kwe from Genabajing Anishinaabek (Serpent River First Nation). The piece I have had the privilege of creating throughout these two workshops represents my journey throughout life thus far, through the wholistic lens of the Ojibwe medicine wheel. For those who are unfamiliar with the Ojibwe medicine wheel teachings, each of the four sections represent something different within the circle of life, and the teachings are all based around the importance of balance. I only touched on the life cycle and wholistic properties of the medicine wheel for the purpose of this art piece to help me tell the story of my life.

My life began in the yellow, which represents my birth and infancy. As I crossed over into the red, representing my youth, you can see that some of these plants are beginning to wither, as my self-esteem took the biggest hit during this time of my life. The black is where I am right now, adulthood. Some of my plants have required major attention to be revitalized over the past few years, which is reflected in their wellbeing. These plants symbolize our overall health, because if our mental health starts slipping, for example, our emotional, spiritual, and physical health will ultimately be negatively affected as well. Nonetheless, the same goes for positive; for example, if we begin reconnecting with and feeding our spirit, our emotional, physical, and mental health will be positively impacted. The pattern that is visible throughout the yellow, red, and part of the black sections, represents how much of my time on this earth I have already experienced, and the rest of the black and entirety of the white sections serve as an important reminder to me that I still have a lot of life left to live. I used the space in the white section, representing my elder years that have yet to come, to manifest the flourishing, prospering, and quite literal blossoming of each of the four aspects of my wholistic wellbeing!

## LAILA



## RANDI



"Kwe" meaning "woman" in Anishinaabemowin. The bold and central placement of this word is intentional to show how the universe that surrounds me has had an impact on all of the events of my life and help build me to the stage I am in today. Throughout the years, all of the positive as well negative things have allowed me to discover who I truly am; how Creator sees me and the reason I am here in this lifetime. Butterflies symbolize creativity and transformation. My personal connection to butterflies is meaningful because they are reminders of who I am. The butterfly embodies me as an Anishinaabe Kwe.

The phases of the moon symbolize guidance and the impact it has on my journey. It is vast, bright and beautiful. All-seeing and very wise. As a Cancer on the Astrological calendar, the moon is my ruling planet and I have always naturally felt a strong connection with this particular symbol of femininity. The colours represent Mother Earth's seasonal changes and the auras we experience or have connections with during our time here. We as humans thrive on connections and feed off of energies we encounter everyday. We also are constantly changing and embarking on new journeys as time goes by and the seasons change and become new again. It has been a very important lesson through my life as I evolve within each stage and milestone, to accept change and not to allow fear to impede my personal growth.

## JAYDEN



### Turtle

To me, a turtle is a sign of strength because of its hard and protective shell. The power of strength can mean lots for many different people. In my eyes strength is a powerful meaning of bravery and courage.

### Butterfly

When you see a butterfly, what is the first thought that comes to mind? For me, I see beauty and confidence. As it flutters its beautiful colorful wings.

## SARA

### Dog bone

Even though this might sound silly, my best friend is a dog. This dog has a special place in my heart and his name is Gizmo. It's after one of the greatest movies of all time, The Gremlins! He makes me smile and giggle when I have no reason to!



### Lorsque j'étais enfant

This is a depiction of a specific day when I ran away as a child and spent the whole day roaming through unploughed fields in Vassan, Abitibi, Québec.



### Je te vois qui me regarde

I see you seeing me. Judging me. Asking me why I had hair on my arms. I see you watching my parents when we go to the store. I see you watching our every move. I see you touching my little brother with his beautiful blue eyes and darker skin. I see you snickering at my beloved aunts and uncles. I see you offering me money at a university when I'm old enough to be your mom. You don't see my degrees. I see you Young man with his Young wife drinking alcohol asking the waitress to kick me out because I'm a single woman eating lunch and beading alone at Jack Astors. You don't know me. Je te vois toi qui me regarde sans un mot.



The Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery gratefully acknowledges John and Rebecca Short for their support of the Sharing Experiences Program.

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