

I am one with everything

by **Mariah Alexander / Baashkooniingad Kwe***

I created this piece, "I am one with everything," after reading a poster about primary producers, primary consumers, and secondary consumers in the water. I have often seen in scientific contexts that the size and diet of animals place them into hierarchies, so I thought there must be a more accurate representation of my connection to different beings. This piece illustrates how I become a part of creation as I consume; how, eventually, we all give back to one another something that promotes the continuation of the circle of life. I eat the fish, who eats the smaller insects, who eats phytoplankton, and eventually we all go back to the earth and are recycled by the plant beings. The water droplets represent that connection water gives us before, during, and after we consume each other. There is no hierarchy in the image because we are equally powerful and important to each other's existence. Our interdependence, taking on the life that we take, is a truly beautiful and humbling thing to me.

** Baashkooniingad Kwe translates to "buds on the tree beginning to open woman" in Anishinaabemowin, the Anishinaabe/Ojibwe language*

An Indigenous artist's perspective on the ecology of the Great Lakes

Before the global pandemic arrived, the Healthy Headwaters Lab, the Incubator Art Lab, and other collaborators at the University of Windsor were excitedly planning the second offering of the land-based Traditional Ecological Knowledge field course to take place at Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island First Nation) at the start of the summer solstice and in alignment with the annual pow wow in June of 2020. As part of that effort, Clint Jacobs, the course instructor from Bkejwanong and newly appointed adjunct Indigenous scholar, received a small teaching award along with me, Candy Donaldson, and Jennifer Willet to develop an art module as part of the 2020 course. When communities around the Great Lakes shuttered to help curb the spread of COVID-19 in March, so did plans for the course.

Instead, we pivoted our support to Clint and his team at NinDaWaabJig (Walpole Island Heritage Centre) to empower and train youth through the Bkejwanong Eco-Keepers program virtually, and also extended opportunities for mentorship to Indigenous artists to explore science, art, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). The aim was to create teaching resources for diverse groups of learners engaged in TEK and Indigenous-led environmental stewardship in the Great Lakes.

Above, in gratitude and excitement, we share one of the works created by our featured Indigenous artist, Mariah Alexander/Baashkooniingad Kwe. Mariah is a recent B.Sc. graduate in environmental and Indigenous studies from Trent University, and as a recent grad, she spent much of the summer working alongside Indigenous youth engaged in the Bkejwanong Eco-Keepers and part of a community-based effort to rematriate native Walpole Island corn back to its ancestral lands for the first time in generations. She will continue to be mentored by artists in the Incubator Lab, engage with the Healthy Headwaters Lab's research underway at Bkejwanong, and work in her communit y. This work was supported by the University of Windsor's Seek to Know Nanadagikenim grant from the Centre of Teaching and Learning at the University of Windsor.

As a group, we are continuing our efforts to deliver land-based courses in the future—in person and virtually.

Baa Maa Pii and *Miigwech*,

Catherine Febria