

# Artist Perspectives of Indigenous Healthcare Education/Practice: Applying the TRC's Calls to Action

INDIGENOUS HEALTHCARE EDUCATION AND PRACTICE:  
A Community-Led and Community-Informed Collaborative Initiative



**Please note:**

This Companion Guide is a resource created to complement the online modules.

This online module was developed by the Office of Professional Development and Educational Scholarship (Queen's Health Sciences) and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) to address the Calls to Action set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampusOntario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit the [eCampus Ontario website](#) (*click to view*).

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### MODULE INTRODUCTION

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada has been viewed as central to highlighting the systemic gaps in Indigenous peoples' physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness, and dismantling anti-Indigenous racism. Guided by the TRC's Calls to Actions on education, health, and education for reconciliation, this resource is intended to showcase artwork by Indigenous artists which relate to healthcare education and practice.

Artists were invited to submit artwork that aligns with one or more of the seven themes of the digital collection: (1) Historical Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Implications for Health Outcomes, (2) Biases, Racism, and Discrimination in Healthcare. (3) Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Healthcare, (4) Healthcare Rights, (5) Healthcare Services, (6) Culturally Safe Healthcare, and (7) Intersections between Education and Healthcare. This collection of artwork is one way for healthcare learners to meaningfully engage with the TRC's Calls to Action on the path to Reconciliation and health equity.



## LINDSAY BRANT AND COLSON BRUMWELL

### Lindsay Brant and Colson Brumwell, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Band, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Ontario

Lindsay Brant is an Educational Developer (Indigenous Pedagogies and Ways of Knowing) and an Adjunct Lecturer at Queen's University. She is also a storyteller, and writes non-fiction, poetry, children's literature, and self-development books. She uses a culturally based storytelling approach to weave in stories from her knowledge and cultural understanding, and her own professional and personal experiences, to take you on a journey towards discovering your core values and strengths as an individual, while encouraging you to learn, lead and teach from your gifts. You can learn more about her at [www.lindsaybrantauthor.com](http://www.lindsaybrantauthor.com). Lindsay has collaborated with her 12-year-old son, Colson, on this piece of art. Colson designed the art concept, and layout of the painting, and Lindsay wrote the poem to accompany their painting.



"Grounded in Peace" by Lindsay Brant and Colson Brumwell

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We chose to create a mixed media art piece that speaks to the intersections between education and healthcare. We created a painting entitled "Grounded in Peace" to accompany the poem, of the same name, written by Lindsay. Colson and I came up with concepts that were reflective of our Mohawk cultural teachings, and Creation story. We chose to include Haudenosaunee Sky domes which represent the connection between Mother Earth and Sky World, and the interconnectedness of all aspects of Creation. We chose to include the Turtle because in our Creation story the Earth was formed upon the back of a turtle and Turtle Island as we now know it was created when Sky Woman fell and danced on the

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back of the turtle spreading dirt provided by small animals forming the earth. Before this, there was only water here. We included the Great White Pine, which is the Great Tree of Peace, as to us this was an important visual depiction of the intersections of education and healthcare as it illustrates the importance of framing our understanding and the way we relate to ourselves and each other as both humans and non-humans in the foundations of the Great Law of Peace which are strength, peace, and a good mind. These are the core teachings that Haudenosaunee were given to follow and uphold by the Peacemaker, and it is how we maintain balance in our own individual wellness and collective cultural and communal wellness. In our worldview and understanding, education means healing, and healing requires balance of the self and commitment to living in a good way. To properly respond to the TRC Calls to Action, healthcare providers must ensure culturally appropriate care is provided and to do so, they must constantly learn about and engage with Indigenous ways of knowing and being which support wholistic wellbeing and healing.

### **Video of Lindsay Brant describing "Grounded in Peace"**

<https://stream.queensu.ca/Watch/Grounded>

#### **Start of Video Transcript:**

*Hello everyone, my name is Lindsay Brant and I'm from Kenhté:ke, which is the place name for Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. I sit with the Turtle Clan here in Tyendinaga. I wanted to present to you today the art piece that I created with my son, Colson. The concept for this came from a poem of mine that I created called "Grounded in Peace." So you'll see the poem reflected in the turtle shell here in the artwork piece. And my son, Colson, came up with all the concepts for this piece. He drew a sketch of what he would like to see included that would represent healthcare and education, the intersections of those two.*

*We included the turtle to represent Turtle Island because Earth was formed on the back of the turtle when Sky Woman fell. In our creation story she fell and created life by creating the Earth on the back of the turtle, and then that's how the Earth began. Prior to that, it was all water. So we wanted to represent the interconnectedness between Earth and Sky. And also the sky domes, which are the two figures you see on either side of the tree. Sky domes represent the interconnection between Earth and Sky and the meshing and melding of those two worlds when the Earth was created. And to remind us of our connection, always, to all elements of creation. And our place in that is to maintain a sense of peace and gratitude and respect for all elements of creation and to recognize that we're all connected, and we're all related. And so the central image in this too is the great white pine, which is the great tree of peace and it represents a commitment, to strength, peace and a good mind. And those are foundational pieces of Haudenosaunee culture and our teachings where we are taught to uphold that peace and uphold that connection and that gratitude in all that we do so we can live a good life and maintain that life. And so this piece really speaks to that balance and the importance of healing and the importance of education because healthcare professionals really need to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing to be able to be prepared in order to participate in Indigenous community healing efforts and to provide culturally-sensitive care. So we really thought a lot about world view and importance of sharing these teachings so that healthcare professionals can learn from them in order to facilitate further improvements in the healthcare system and in the education system as well. So that was our concept and we're really pleased to share this with you.*

*Nyá:wen'kó:wa. Thank you very much.*

#### **End of Video Transcript.**

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### LINDSAY BRANT AND MANCE GRANBERG

#### **Lindsay Brant, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Band, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Ontario**

Lindsay Brant is an Educational Developer (Indigenous Pedagogies and Ways of Knowing) and an Adjunct Lecturer at Queen's University. She is also a storyteller, and writes non-fiction, poetry, children's literature, and self-development books. She uses a culturally based storytelling approach to weave in stories from her knowledge and cultural understanding, and her own professional and personal experiences, to take you on a journey towards discovering your core values and strengths as an individual, while encouraging you to learn, lead and teach from your gifts. You can learn more about her at [www.lindsaybrantauthor.com](http://www.lindsaybrantauthor.com).

#### **Mance Granberg, Cowasuck Band of The Pennacook Abenaki People**

Mance Granberg is a two spirited Abenaki artisan from Quebec and is an enrolled member of the Cowasuck Band of The Pennacook Abenaki People. He now calls Katarokwi home and has been a member of the urban Katawokwi Indigenous community for over 20 years. Mance is currently registered as a Practical Nurse and is involved in activism within the local Indigenous community.



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We chose to represent the theme of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Healthcare through this collaborative art and poetry mixed media piece. We wanted this piece to represent the fact that we are

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infinitely connected to each other, and Indigenous health and well-being is connected to every system. When one system is out of balance everything is affected. That is why it important to not only address the physical aspects of our wellness, but also the mind, spirit, and heart. Lindsay approached Mance about collaborating on this piece because she realized that they way he paints is very similar to the way she writes. As they two artists chatted they realized not only the synergies and connections between their art forms and ways of self-expression, but also the connections between their cultures. Lindsay is Mohawk and Mance is Abenaki, but their thoughts and feelings around the important of wholistic wellness and balance in supporting and maintaining culturally-responsive, trauma-informed healthcare practices was so deeply intertwined. This piece speaks to the need for healthcare professionals to commit to understanding Indigenous ways of knowing, healing practices, and understanding the complexities of trauma to provide the best service possible to their patients. The TRC Calls to Action call upon changes to healthcare practitioner education, and this includes an emphasis on the imperative to learn about Indigenous ways of knowing, healing, and allow Indigenous communities to be partners in their own health care. When healthcare professionals are equipped with the knowledge to understand and build connections with Indigenous patients and communities then it really allows for the resurgence of healthy, strong, and sovereign Indigenous communities and peoples.

### **Video of Lindsay Brant explaining “Encircle the Tree”**

<https://stream.queensu.ca/Watch/Encircle>

#### **Start of Video Transcript:**

*Hello everyone, my name is Lindsay Brant and I'm from Kenhté:ke, which is the place name for Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory and I'm a member of the Turtle Clan here in Tyendinaga.*

*I wanted to share with you this piece of art that I created with Mance Granberg. I selected to work with Mance because I recognized that his art spoke to me the way that my words speak to me and the poetry that I write is very closely connected to the way that he expresses himself through his paintings. And so I felt like it would be a really good collaboration, not only to work together on this art piece but to discuss the theme of Indigenous Ways of Knowing in healthcare. And so, as we chatted, we realized quickly that there are a lot of synergies and connections between my Mohawk perspective and Ways of Knowing and his Abenaki perspective as well. And so, you'll see many elements reflected in this piece that are reflective of both cultures.*

*We really focused on the wholistic aspect of healthcare and why it's so important to have a sense of health as being more than just physical health, it's about mental, emotional, and spiritual health. And so you'll see different elements represented in this work, such as the sacred medicines, the strawberry, which represents love and heart and you'll see the Four Directions represented there in the Medicine Wheel as well. The turtle is foundational to all because the turtle represents Turtle Island or Mother Earth. And then, the two figures in the painting really represent working together and partnering for healing and the promotion of wholistic wellness and supporting that through allowing healthcare educators and professionals to learn about Indigenous Ways of Knowing and how to incorporate those into their practice. So learning about trauma, learning about residential schools, learning about the necessity for healing to take place in communities, but also recognizing that communities and Indigenous peoples already hold the secret to their own healing. They have the strength, they have the foundational aspects of their culture to rely on. They just need healthcare professionals to know about these ways of knowing and learn how to incorporate them best into their approaches with systemic issues around healthcare, but also in their approach individually and communally when they're working and engaging with communities, Indigenous communities. So, really, the TRC encourages that, encourages healthcare professionals to learn and to*

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*do the work, to understand what Indigenous healing looks like and feels like for Indigenous peoples and that can differ across nations, but for healthcare professionals to learn about those things so that they can improve and better support and work towards the common goal of strengthening Indigenous communities and strengthening healthcare systems so that they're more reflective of the needs of Indigenous communities as well, and more responsive to those needs.*

*So thank you so much for taking so much for taking the time for viewing this painting. You'll see my words reflected in the tree branches and we welcome you to look at it and see what you take from the image as well. We put a lot of thought into what we wanted to include but definitely there are some elements that might speak to you or stand out to you more prominently than others. So take what you will from it and really enjoy and engage with it in any way that you feel that you can or need to.*

*Nyá:wen'kó:wa. Thank you very much on behalf of both myself and Mance.*

**End of Video Transcript.**



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### JAYLENE CARDINAL

Jaylene Cardinal is an accomplished artist and entrepreneur from Saddle Lake Cree Nation, a loving life partner of Dakota Ward, and a proud mother of four beautiful children.

In 2014, Jaylene and her family decided to move to Kingston, ON for a new start; that was where her artistic journey began. Jaylene was first introduced to jewelry making by her mother-in-law, Georgia Ward. This opened her up to exploring her creative nature and further educating herself, and deepening her cultural roots. Once that door was open, there was no end to creating. In 2019, Jaylene and her partner Dakota opened W.C. Creatives, Kingston's only Indigenous-owned boutique located at the Fort Henry trade square where they create and sell skincare, clothing, dream catchers, music, poetry, home décor, and art. They also offer pottery and jewelry from local artists.

Jaylene's creative inspiration comes from her connection to nature and culture. When you look, you see that everything is connected one way or another from insect to plant, from animal to man, and earth to universe, we all share energy. Jaylene's artistic style varies from world culture, abstract, and nature. She loves to explore many different mediums from acrylic, pastel, resin, and natural materials. Jaylene's mission is to inspire, heal, and share her interpretation of the deep connection we all share.



**"The Indigenous Ways of Healing" by Jaylene Cardinal**

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### *Magic of Healing*

The piece I created here is to represent "The Indigenous Ways of Healing" because wellness and healing start with you; your beliefs, your traditions, your ways of knowing. You make the choice and responsibility and put in the energy and commitment to healing and accepting help. The choice you choose is not only physical but mental, emotional, and spiritual. This is why I chose to put the medicine wheel as the root of the tree. The medicine wheel represents the sacred hoops of health and healing and the circle of life. All stages of life, seasons of the year, aspects of life, elements of nature, animals, and ceremonial plants. The roots at the bottom of the medicine wheel represent grounding yourself and the commitment that roots you. The healer's hand combines hand with a spiral to create the powerful symbol of healing and protection. The spiral is known as the symbol of the eternity of your existence on Earth. The healer's hand was said to have the powers of the tribe's spiritual healer. The symbol holds the therapeutic energy, which is why I chose to have them rooted up from the medicine wheel. The tree coming up from the medicine wheel represents you. The blue circles represent the spiritual healer that has come to help and guide you. The pink flower represents loving yourself and the spirals represent protection in your journey. The blue flowers represent healthcare and trust. The yellow circle represents the good medicine working through and helping.

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### JAMAICA CASS

Dr. Jamaica Cass is an Indigenous beadwork artist and member of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. Her art reflects both the traditional practices of Indigenous beadwork using historical materials such as antler, leather, porcupine quills and seed beads blended with contemporary elements such as crystals, semi-precious stones and precious metals and integrates this with her passion for health and well-being through anatomy themes.

Jamaica's formal training started in breast cancer molecular biology- she completed her PhD at Queen's University. She then pivoted to a more clinical trajectory and earned her MD at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Following this, Jamaica trained as a general surgeon for three years. Although she ultimately decided a career in surgery didn't align with her values, it did ignite a love of anatomy and ultimately influence both her artistic themes and beading techniques. Dr. Cass settled into primary care as a vocation and is a wife and mother of two girls and two dogs.



**"A Colourful Mind" by Dr. Jamaica Cass**

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These two pieces of traditional Haudenosaunee beadwork were chosen to represent the Intersection between Education and Healthcare.

The first, 'A Colourful Mind', depicts the sagittal view of a brain, using silver-lined seed beads in the six colours of the pride flag- red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. It is backed with a rich, tanned leather and mounted on a pin back. Rather than 6 discrete segments of equal measure, each colour blends into its neighbor- a visual representation that the more we learn about gender and sexuality, the clearer it becomes that there is a fluidity to these concepts. This piece is much larger than a typical lanyard pin- it is a bold statement for several reasons - the vibrancy of the silver-lined beads, and the number of bright colours and its sheer size. Call to Action #19, addressing the unique health challenges of Indigenous Canadians, including mental health challenges, are represented in this work.

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**"Mind, Body, Spirit" by Dr. Jamaica Cass**

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The second piece, 'Mind, Body, Spirit', is a shield style necklace piece showcasing several varieties of seed beads- charlotte and true cut, silver-lined, opaque, transparent, matte and 24- karat gold-plated. These are interspersed with rare Swarovski crystal elements. The piece is backed with pale gold tanned leather and mounted on gold-plated thread protectors, and a fine chain. This piece symbolizes the harmony traditional Haudenosaunee healers mean when describing health-less emphasis is placed on only a healthy body- the emotional, spiritual, and mental health all must be respected and attended to for a person to be truly well. This speaks to Call to Action #21, wherein the government is charged with recognizing the importance Indigenous Peoples place on physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, and Call to Action #24, teaching medical professionals about the unique health issues of this growing population.

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### MICHAEL 'CY' CYWINK

Michael "CY" Cywink, Elder/artist/author/curator/muralist is a band member of the Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory on Manitoulin Island. He is also an alumnus of the Museum Studies Program at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Michael is an independent curator. Previously he was the arts coordinator for the Wiikwemikoong Art Gallery, and curator for the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation in M'Chigeeng, Manitoulin Island, as well as a First Nation's cultural consultant with Walt Disney Imagineering / Disney's America theme park project in Glendale, California. He has interned at the Canadian Museum of Civilization of Man, Hull, Quebec, the National Museum of American Indian, Smithsonian, Washington, DC, the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, Santa Fe, NM, and Walt Disney Imagineering, Glendale, CA. Throughout the 80's he was a counselor / contract street worker (at risk youth) in Toronto. He has been exhibiting his work since 1979, utilizing art as therapy from his Indigenous perspective.



**"It is What it is / Healing Through Addictions" by Michael 'Cy' Cywink**

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I painted this work which addresses addictions (cocaine, meth, fentanyl) related to needle use and how this relates to mental health and health care rights. I lost my youngest son to addictions this past August. Overdose at 27... My son's organs were donated to which I received a medal from Ontario Health Trillium Gift of Life Network (Canada): his donation help save 5 lives. The painting I titled: It is What it is / healing through addictions.

My first nation's perspective of the spiritual healing process as it relates through the images on the painting. The image inside the syringe is praying for help to and from the Spirits of his/her Ancestors. The individual reaching out wanting to return to be 1 with our Mother Earth through the 7 Sacred Teachings; which relate to Respect, Love, Truth, Courage, Wisdom, Honesty, and Humility. That perhaps their 'Earth Walk' can continue in a clear way. However sometimes it is the call of the addiction that carries their interest in to 1 last hit. Which takes them from this earth plane (from their Earth Walk) back into their Spirit Journey... while they still ask for help in and from their Spirit Being.

This message reaches all. My son was an aspiring artist in his rap, painting and written word. He had his battles and he moved on. I felt I should share this not just with you/your agency, but to whoever can relate to this reality.

*"Addiction is a disease. Much like diabetes. It has to be monitored everyday. For the rest of their lives. And it's HARD. It takes support and unrelenting diligence. Like cancer in that it can always reoccur."*

~ Unknown

### **Video of Michael "CY" Cywink explaining his painting "It Is What It Is/Healing Through Addiction"**

<https://stream.queensu.ca/Watch/Healing>

#### **Start of Video Transcript:**

*This is another heavy one.*

*Yeah, this is a heavy one. It's the last one I did out of the five pieces. The title of it is "Healing Through Addiction." "Healing Through Addiction." And what I mean by that is that, here in the centre, you have the syringe. Inside of the syringe you have the symbolic image of a being a human being that is reaching out, not asking for more fentanyl or whatever, but reaching out asking for help. And the only way we're connected to the earth is through our connection through our feet. So down here the roots are connected, and they connect in to the four colours.*

*The Four Directions.*

*The Four Directions. There is also the meaning of my emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, ok? Not just the four colours. And then in the berries - there's seven berries. Two of them representing the Seven Teachings. Seven of these all the way around. So the whole thing is that, I've known people that came out of addiction. They healed themselves through addiction, and that was by putting this syringe, that was the downfall of their life. By they got out of it.*

*Yeah, yeah. So they always came back?*

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*Yeah, they always came back. And that's basically what this means. It's healing.*

*The natural healing will survive.*

*Yeah. As opposed to, you know, trying to encourage the kids to take the plunge so to speak.*

**End of Video Transcript.**

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### CHRISTARR SMILLIE

{Aanii - Wabska Ahjijaak Ndishnikaaz - Waawaashkeshi Dodem - Tkaronto Nindonjibaa}

As an Afro-Indigenous (Anishinaabe + Metis) artist (she/her) growing up within Toronto's urban landscape - connection to land, culture and tradition were both healing and empowering for me.

Anishinaabe ceremony and teachings have allowed me to express myself in a way that melds my ancestral, modern and future connections through a unique lens. When approached openly, honestly and with respect - our traditional perspectives and protocols on how to live in connection to all creation - provides holistic healing for both self and community.

My work addresses the impacts of colonialism, intergenerational and personal trauma as well as finding the balance between traditional teachings and modern identities - through a colorful, symbolic lens that focuses on the unique impact our next 7 generations will have on Mother Earth.

Please visit me at [www.skywrlld.ca](http://www.skywrlld.ca)

Miigwetch (thank you)



**"Intergenerational Healing" by Christarr Smillie**

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The historical perspectives of Indigenous peoples in Canada have greatly impacted our implications for health outcomes. Colonial violence, institutional oppression and the attempted erasure of Indigenous identities have created an impact felt over generations.

Our models of health structures - from our clan governance systems and connection to all creation have been targeted. Through this trauma, generations have become displaced from knowledge intended to encompass them in carefully curated health knowledge.

This knowledge (meant to be passed from generation to generation) secured the health of future generations on all levels of being. It is through the impacts of colonialism, discrimination, violence and erasure - that trauma instead became the new gift to be passed on. Our health models were replaced violently. The health of our communities, compromised.



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It is now that we find ourselves reconnecting to that which was so carefully protected for generations. Carried underground, practiced in silence. We now openly reconnect while still healing the trauma of the past - in order to give a new gift to the future. The gift of health.

Within Christarr Smillie's piece entitled 'Intergenerational Healing' we can see the connection between the ancestral realm, modern Indigenous identities and the future generations yet to come. Healing is not a singular responsibility of one generation - but a connection to what has come before - and what has not yet come to pass.

The circle of the Medicine Wheel reminds us of our traditional principles of holistic health on all planes of being. And it is through this reconnection that we understand truly who we were, who we are - and who will become.

### **Video of Christarr Smillie describing her art piece "Intergenerational Healing."**

<https://stream.queensu.ca/Watch/Intergenerational>

#### **Start of Video Transcript:**

*Aanii, boozhoo. Wabska Ahjjaak n'dizhinikaaz. Waawaashkeshi dodem Tkaronto nindonjibaa.*

*Hello, my name is Christarr Smillie. I am a Afro Indigenous artist from the Toronto area. I am Anishinaabe and Metis, and I would like to walk you through my piece called 'Intergenerational Healing.'*

*The historical perspectives of Indigenous Peoples in Canada have greatly impacted our implications for health outcomes. Colonial violence, institutional oppression and the attempted erasure of Indigenous identities have created an impact felt over generations.*

*Our models of health structures, from our clan governance systems and connection to all creation have been targeted. Within this piece we can see the connection between the ancestral realm, modern Indigenous identities, and the future generations yet to come. Healing is not a singular responsibility of one generation - but a connection to what has come before, and what has not yet come to pass.*

*The circle of the Medicine Wheel reminds us for our traditional principles of holistic health on all planes of being. And it is through this reconnection that we understand truly who we were, who we are - and who we will become.*

*I would just like to say chi miigwetch, thank you so much to Queen's University and the Faculty of health for providing this opportunity to Indigenous artists so that they may share their vision of holistic health and the implications on our communities as a whole.*

*Miigwetch*

#### **End of Video Transcript.**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This online module was developed by the Office of Professional Development and Educational Scholarship (Queen's Health Sciences) and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) to address the Calls to Action set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This project is made possible with funding by the Government of Ontario and through eCampusOntario's support of the Virtual Learning Strategy. To learn more about the Virtual Learning Strategy visit the [eCampus Ontario website](#).

#### Artists and Contributors

- Lindsay Brant
- Colson Brumwell
- Jaylene Cardinal
- Jamaica Cass
- Michael Cywink
- Nancy Dalgarno
- Jenny DeBruyn
- Mance Granberg
- Georgina Riel
- Aaron St. Pierre
- Christarr Smillie
- Giselle Valarezo

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