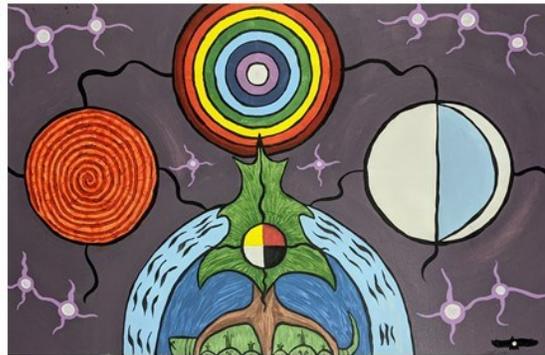


# Grand Expressions

## 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





# Grand Expressions

## 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 by 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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# Forward

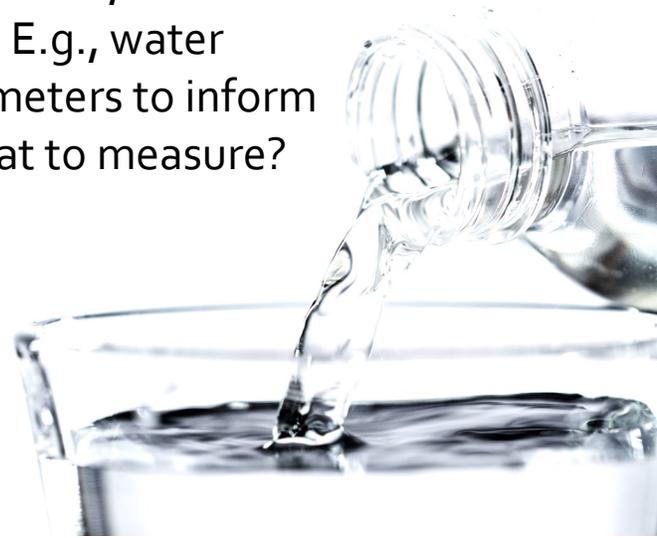
Elaine Ho, Grand-Erie Study

**G**rowing 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 in 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-TBD):** Indigenous youth shared their perspectives regarding priorities and integration of Indigenous knowledge with water management. Artwork, accompanied by stories, will travel across multiple acclaimed locations in four cities (dates TBD, pending COVID-19 resolution).
1. **Water managers workshop (TBD 2020):** consulting with managers (potential implementers) to tweak and create the framework. Youth artists will also speak to the water managers.

Resources and information available at [www.GrandErieStudy.ca](http://www.GrandErieStudy.ca).



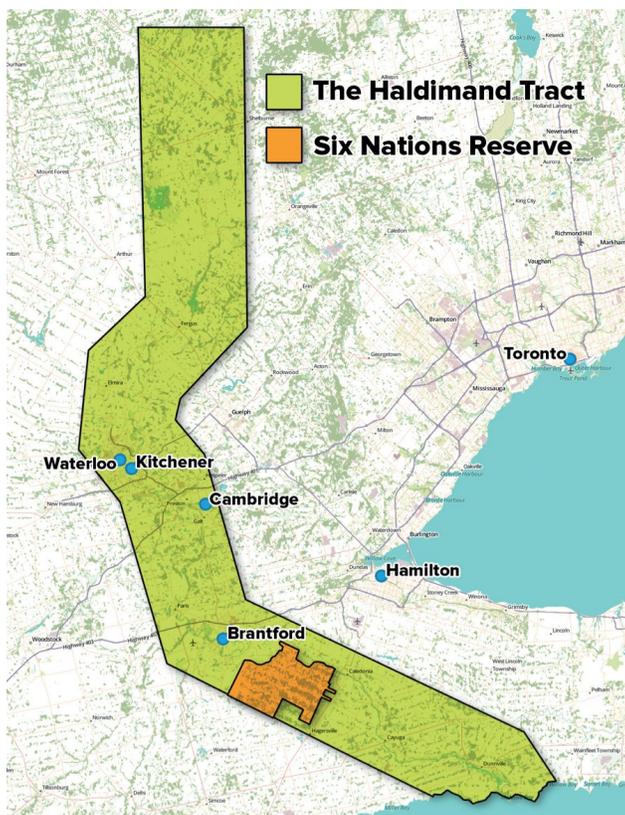
## Shared spaces?

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;

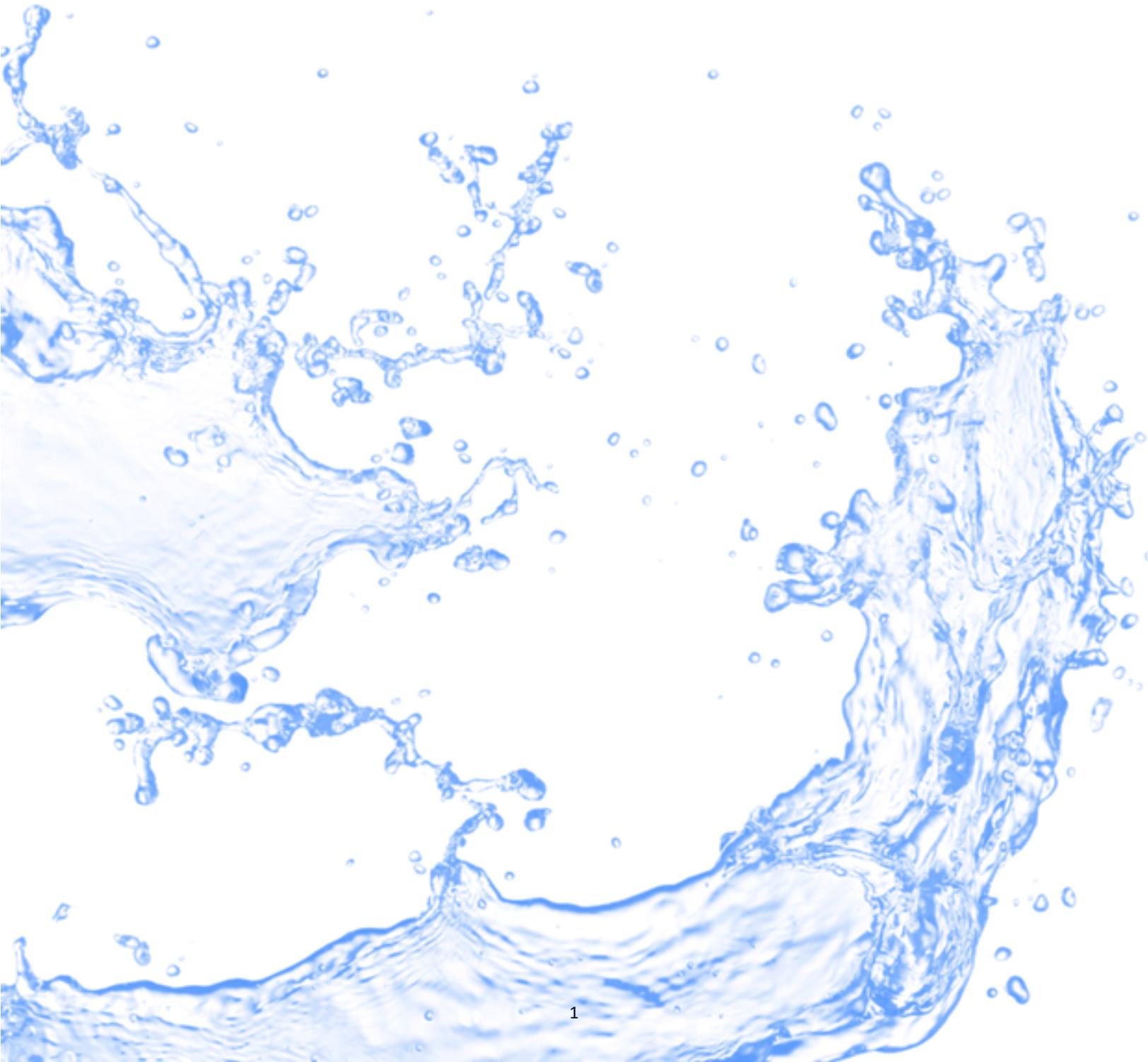
and

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

**To this day, none have been fulfilled.**



# Artwork





# 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 3'  
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.

# Family: A Story of Healing

Thomas H. Anderson

There comes a time in one's life where we face a sickness, be it minor or great. This is one of the times in life where family shines through.

In this piece, it was my mission to portray family in a way that has been understood by many cultures around the world. I brought this concept to the greatest scope that I can, and that is by bringing this thought of family to the universe itself. As we all live within this world as a collective whole, a family in its own right. It is important to remember the ties to the great celestial aspects, just as we remember family members. Each member plays a role in the family and the universe is just the same. My Haudenosaunee heritage brought me a greater understanding of how family works, that not only this structure is in how organisms live together but it goes farther beyond to a cosmic level.

The Sun, the Elder Brother or Great Warrior, to the Haudenosaunee people is the male aspect. It has earned the title of Great Warrior by how it conducts its daily duties without fail and that the men are to follow by its example. The Sun being an intense and powerful being is to embody the virtues of a great protector, as the men are the protectors of the family. The Sun works hand in hand with the land, our mother who rests on turtle island to nurture everything that lives. The men are to provide to their families in the same manner, with the female aspect as an equal.

[Continued...]



**Wholeness**

Canvas, 2' x 3'

Thomas H. Anderson

[...Family continued]

The Moon, our Grandmother, is the female aspect of our greater family. It embodies the soothing and graceful virtues that women carry within families. The Haudenosaunee compare the women to the Moon as they both have their cycles that represent the flow of life. Water is under great influence of the Moon, be it great or small, all water flows by how it moves itself. Women allow life to move in just the same way, as they are the givers of life. The women carry this great power and this power is closely related to the energy of creation.

The Great energy of creation, there is a word in our language that loosely translates into "The primordial energy that makes up everything". That is the best way that I can bring the word into English. There is very little understanding at this time of how we truly understood it but its evidence can be seen all around us. This energy flows like air, water, and fire. The wheel representation is a symbol that I have created in my personal understanding. The symbol embodies the colours of the rainbow, which can be seen as the Chakra belief in the East. As I thought more of colours of the rainbow it has brought me to the thought of light. This is the end of my understanding of this energy at this point and I know that I will learn more as I carry out my life.

This energy binds us as an invisible force, as families are bound by an invisible force but it is well known as Love to us in this world. We are all bound together with this power and I want to bring this to the beginning knowing all that I understand.

[Continued...]

[...Family continued]

Our own self, as an organism is a family in of itself. Our organs are all connected in the same way. They all perform their duties to keep the whole moving but there will be times where sickness will disrupt this flow. This is the time when love and care need to come to this area of sickness, the very things that bind everything together need to come and remind the organ of the flow and harmony. Love is the greatest medicine of all, and it can work in miraculous ways. Knowing all this, we can go even smaller down to the very cells and it will still show the same relationship all the way down.

Remember all that is around you and what binds us all together as one, for we all are in this together. No matter what race, nationality, and even species. We must all keep love in our hearts for ourselves and each other. Love is the greatest force in the universe and so, it is the greatest medicine that it can offer. My best wishes to you and your families, as we are all one family.



**Plastic's Poison** (*Series: Plastics pollution*)  
Drum ring (multiple sides), 12" diameter  
Adriana Johnson



**Eagle and Condor**  
Paddle, 5.5" x 57"  
Thomas H. Anderson



## 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** (*Series: Plastics pollution*)

Painted paddle, 5.5" x 57"

Steve Johnson



**Plastic Beach** (*Series: Plastics pollution*)

Ink, 11" x 17"

Steve Johnson



**Two Points of the Problem (melting ice caps)**

Paddle (double-sided), 5" x 22.75"

Steve Johnson and Tayler Hill

**Two Points of the Problem (drought)**

Paddle (double-sided), 5" x 22.75"

Adriana Johnson





**Untitled**

Canvas, 9" x 11.5"

Clinton Bomberry-Smith



# Series: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

She was someone's mother, daughter, sister and friend: 1 of thousands of women and girls taken since 1980. They are often disregarded as 'bad news' and too soon forgotten. They are Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

On January 28, 2020, we asked a young artist, "What do you see when you look at the river?" She said she sees the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). She thinks about violence against women in general because women in communities across Canada – Indigenous or not – are sometimes thrown into the river, either to drown them or (more commonly) to hide their bodies after unimaginable violence. The student wanted to remind people it continues to happen whether we want to recognize the issue or not – and not just to Indigenous women and girls; it's an issue everyone needs to recognize and act upon.

[Continued...]

[...MMIWG continued]

Canada's promise to combat the persecution of Indigenous Peoples includes addressing hundreds of short and long-term drinking water advisories on reserves across Canada, bringing Indigenous communities out of disproportionate poverty (e.g., the 2016 census shows more than 80% of people on reserve live below the poverty line) and launching an inquiry into the MMIWG.

The final report was presented during a ceremony on June 3, 2019. A CBC article states<sup>1</sup>:

“The inquiry report concludes that a genocide driven by the disproportionate level of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls occurred in Canada through “state actions and inactions rooted in colonialism and colonial ideologies.” Though there is no exact number due to a lack of official tracking, the Native Women's Association of Canada estimates more than 4,000 Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been murdered since 1980...”

<sup>1</sup> Olson, I. (2020). *'It's a crisis': Missing and murdered Indigenous women honoured in Montreal*. CBC News online, February 15, 2020.

# Standing With

Taylor Hill

Standing with and raising awareness to national crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG). The paddle represents youth Illuminating the strengths of communities against violence and historical cultural resilience.



## Standing With

(Series: MMIWG)

Paddle (double-sided), 5" x 22.75"

Cody Doolittle, Trinity Gordon, Paityn Hill, Adriana Johnson, Clinton Bomberry-Smith, Olivia Bomberry-Smith, Tayler Hill



**Water Keeper (Series: MMIWG)**

Canvas, 16" x 20"

Ashley Cattrysse

# 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.



**Behind the Falls** (*Series: Waterlily*)  
Paddle (double-sided), 5" x 22.75"  
Adriana Johnson

# Series: Waterlily

Adriana Johnson

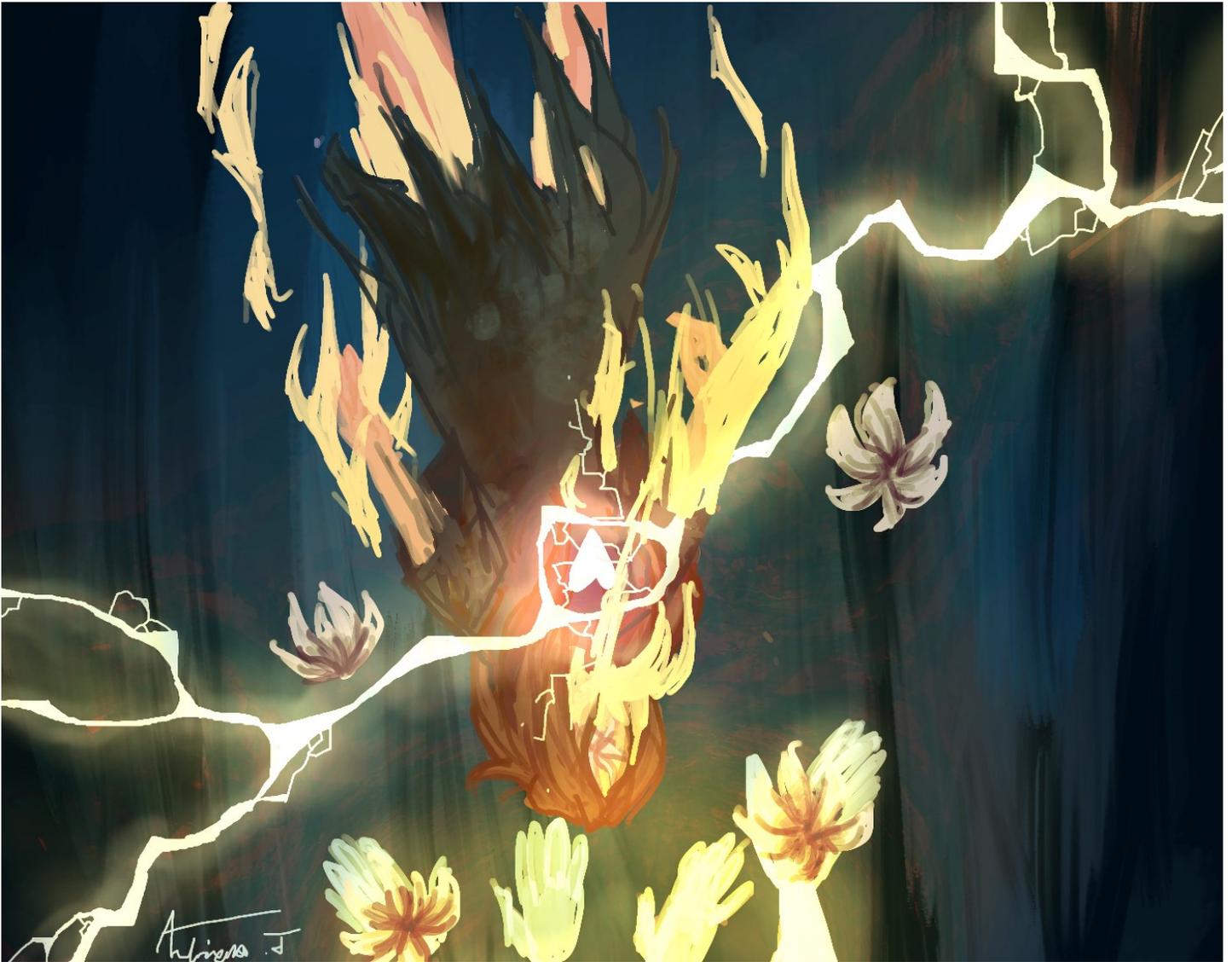
Many moons ago, in a Seneca village, there was a girl named Waterlily who lived by a river and a waterfall. Her mother had died when she was at an early age, so her aunt had taken her in. However, her aunt did not like Waterlily; she mistreated her. She wouldn't fix her hair, she wouldn't give her nice 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's Unraveling** (*Series: Waterlily*)

Digital drawing, 11" x 14"

Adriana Johnson

[...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.



## **Screaming Halt**

Photographic collage, 11" x 17"

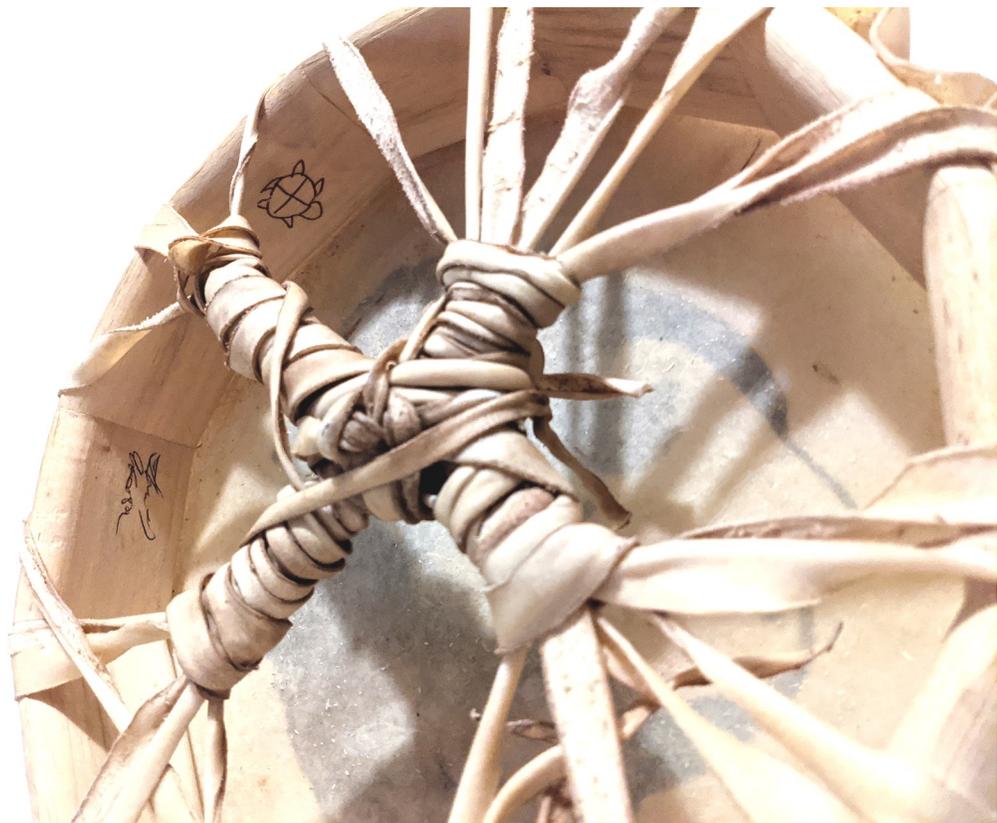
Paityn Hill

Waters need us to protect and prevent the many threats of pollution.



**Two Sisters**

Drum, 12" diameter  
Thomas H. Anderson





**Messenger**  
Pencil, 9" x 11.5"  
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.



**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.

# 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



## Splash screen

Photograph, 8" x 10"

Ashley Cattrysse

# Splash screen

Ashley Cattrysse

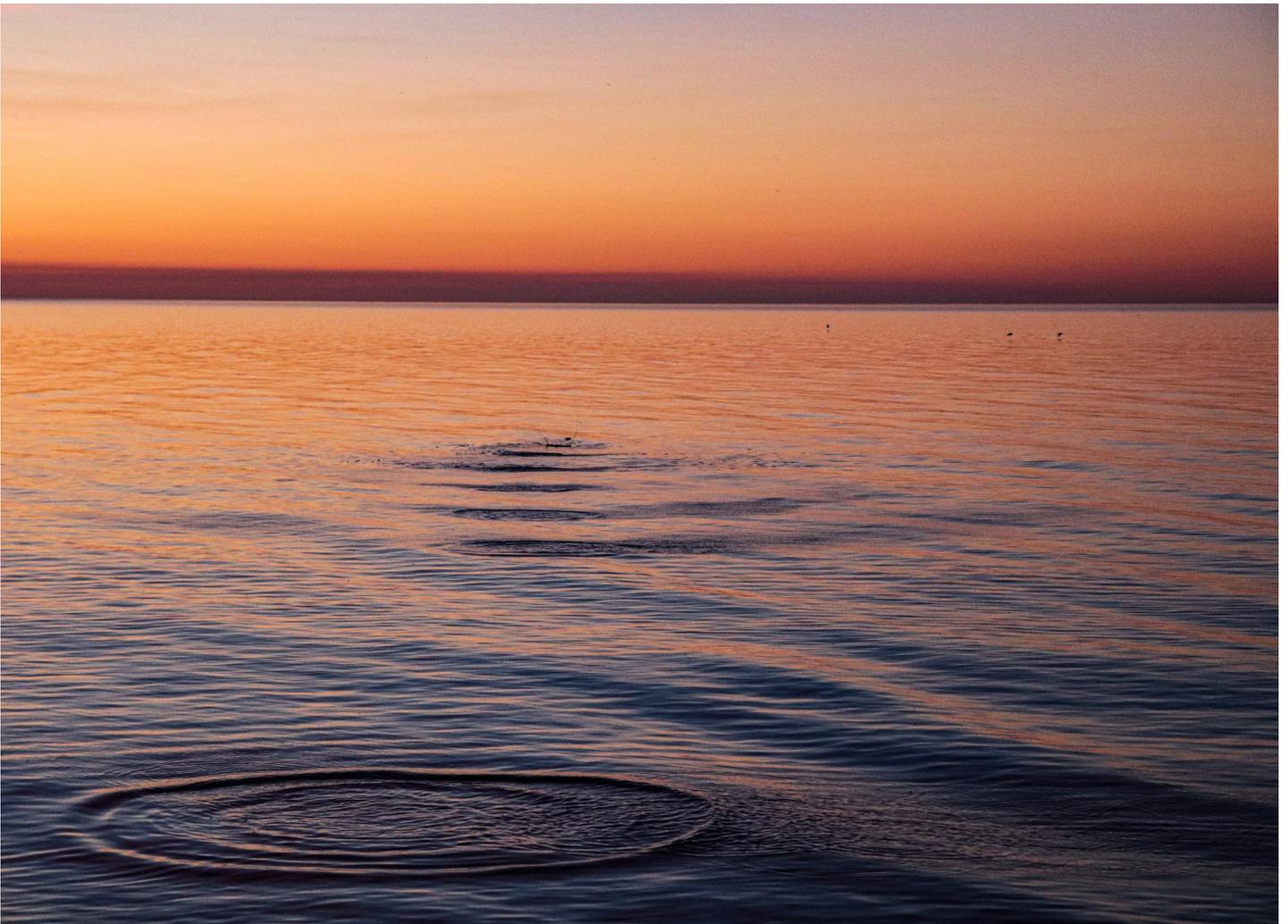
The 'splash screen' is to be a bold first impression and reinforce the importance of water! The water depicted is uneasy, it's angry, disappointed. The water spirit is in pain, and there's no other way to look at it. The rock is our sustainability, our four walls. However, the waves continuously crash 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.

# 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** (*Series: Skipping stone*)

Photograph, 8" x 10"

Ashley Cattrysse



**Skipping stone 2** (*Series: Skipping stone*)

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 effect 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.

# Series: Drinking water

**Scenario:** An international corporation places a bid to extract millions of litres of groundwater per day for bottling and sale. A second bid is placed by the municipal government of the town in which the wells will be located; the town was hoping to secure its water for its people for decades and protect it from private interest (and shipment outside the community). The area in which the town and the wells are located is territory belonging to an Indigenous community. The corporation wins the bid, the town is unable to secure its water supply for future generations and the Indigenous community was never consulted. Nearly the entire Indigenous community living on reserve has no access to clean drinking water, which requires them to boil water carried from a community tap or to purchase bottled water instead – like the groundwater drawn from their own territory, which they have no access to.

**Reality:** The scenario above happened in 2016, when Nestlé Canada outbid the Township of Centre Wellington to draw water from within the Haldimand Tract – treaty land designated to the Six Nations of the Grand River. The community is the largest reserve in Canada, is less than a 30-minute drive from major cities like Hamilton and Caledonia, is only 90 minutes from Canada’s largest city (Toronto) and is Canada’s richest province (Ontario). It has a state-of-the-art water treatment plant, but virtually no operating budget and little infrastructure. An Indigenous-led project designed to expand access to the treatment plant will ensure almost 30% of the residents have access to clean drinking water, leaving nearly 10,000 people without. There are currently 149 drinking water advisories being tracked across Canada, of which 61 are long-term (one year or more). Neskantaga First Nation in Northern Ontario has the longest-standing boil-water advisory at more than 25 years.

[Continued...]

[...Drinking water continued]

### **Did you know?**

A Permit To Take Water, or PTTW, is provided at the sole discretion of Ontario's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change for most uses that involve extracting more than 50,000 litres of water in a day from the environment. There are hundreds of PTTWs from thousands of sources across the Grand River Watershed, many of which exist within the Haldimand Tract (Six Nations treaty territory). The Province currently charges water bottling facilities \$503.71 for every million litres taken (the charge for other permitted uses is only \$3.71/million litres) – none of which is provided to Indigenous communities where wells exist in traditional or treaty territories.



**Untitled** (*Series: Drinking water*)  
Photograph, 11" x 14"  
Hannah Wallace-Lund

This photo (opposite) was taken one day during the Music for the Spirit summer camp last year. I had been helping my cousins Richelle Miller and Caroline Hill with the camp, mostly in the kitchen helping to prepare breakfast and lunch. I had brought a medium format camera and some expired film for fun that day. In the afternoon was taking photos and asked Richelle to sit in front of the water tanks, since I thought they made an interesting backdrop. It was Richelle's idea to ask Chase, one of the participants in the camp, to sit in front holding the water drum. It reminded me as someone who had grown up outside Six Nations that even though we all as onkwehon:we people care deeply for water, some of our relatives live without clean drinking water and must think about that all the time. I grew up next to the Grand River and many of my strongest and happiest memories from then involve the river. To keep the river and Lake Erie clean and healthy should be the priority of all those who have lived beside them and received their many gifts, not just Indigenous people. I hope this exhibit can help those people who live in the region learn about and contribute to the health of the watershed.

Hannah Wallace-Lund



**Energy Footprint** (*Series: Drinking water*)

Photograph, 8" x 12"

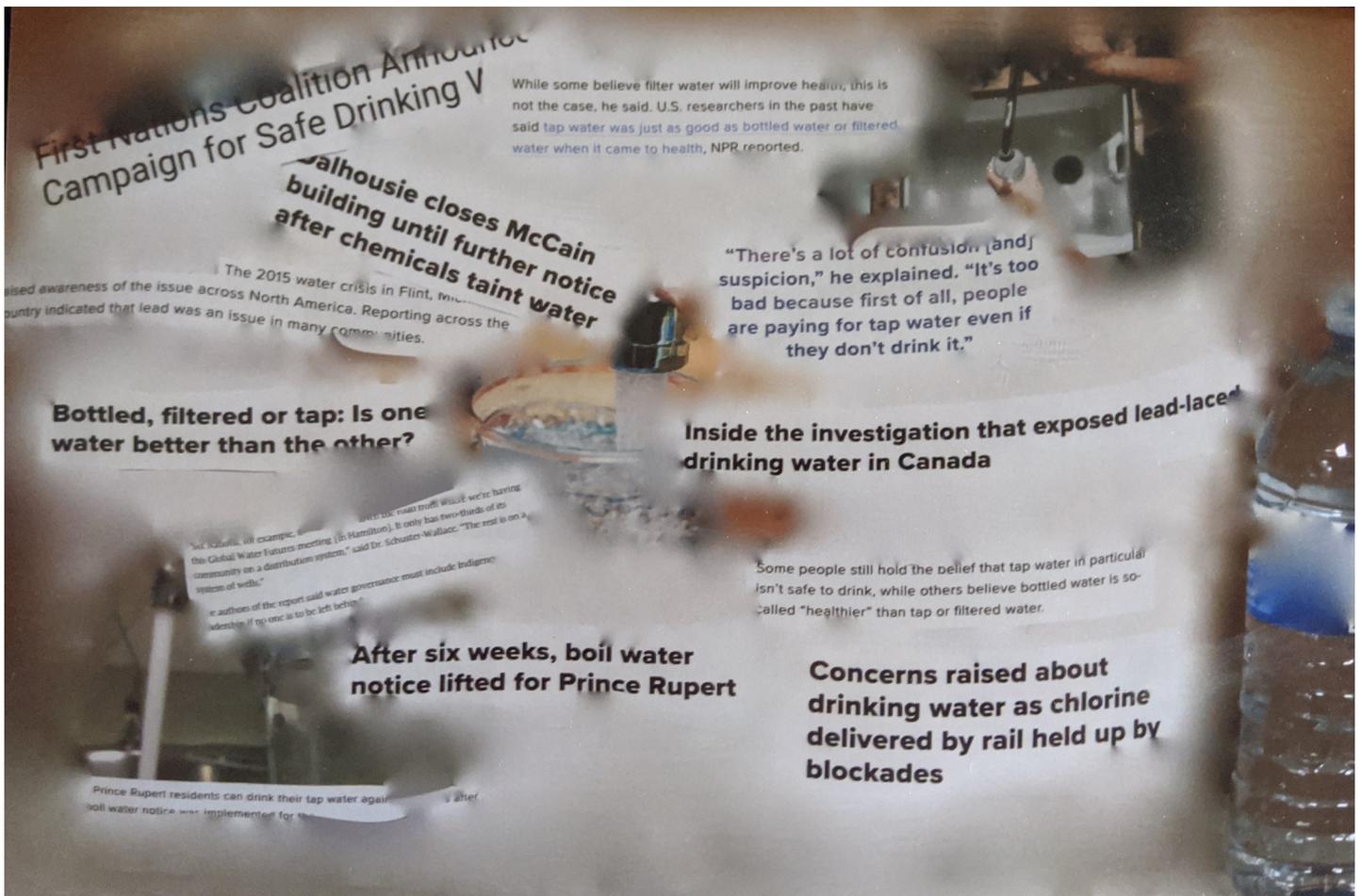
KMC Miller

Plastic and transportation of bottled water , a common site in First Nations communities. The environmental impact is far reaching in the processes of production and delivery. Boil water advisories for decades impacting wellness and increasing health risks. Insufficient infrastructure and failures, abandoned wells and frequency of individuals, families with no drinking water supply.

# Series: Grand River Chemical Spills

Paityn Hill

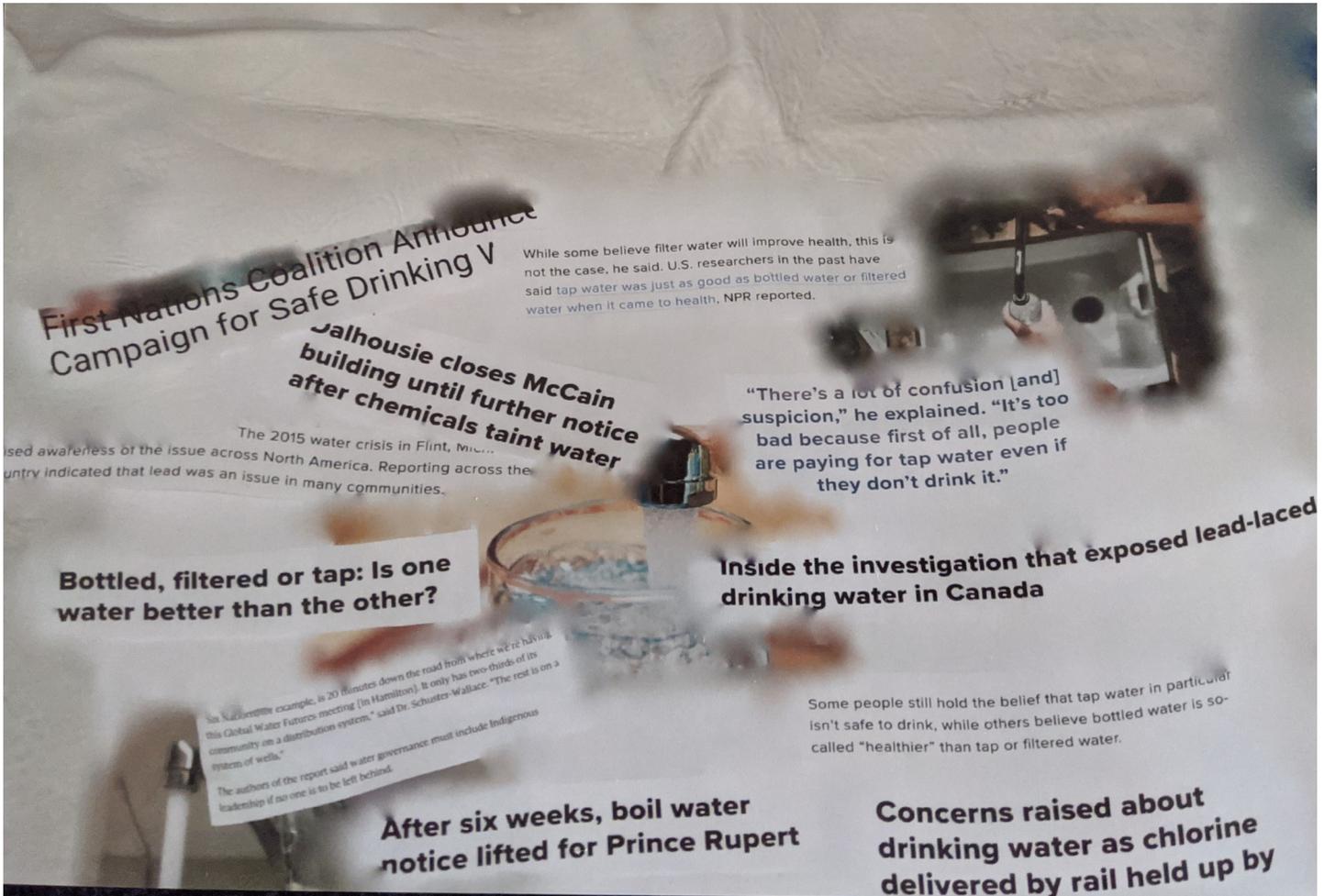
Years pass and we still have chemical spills in our waters, coming downstream. Preventing is easier than clean up and the unknown of the chemicals affects all things.



## Grand Chemical Spills 1 (Self-titled series)

Photographic collage, 8" x 12"

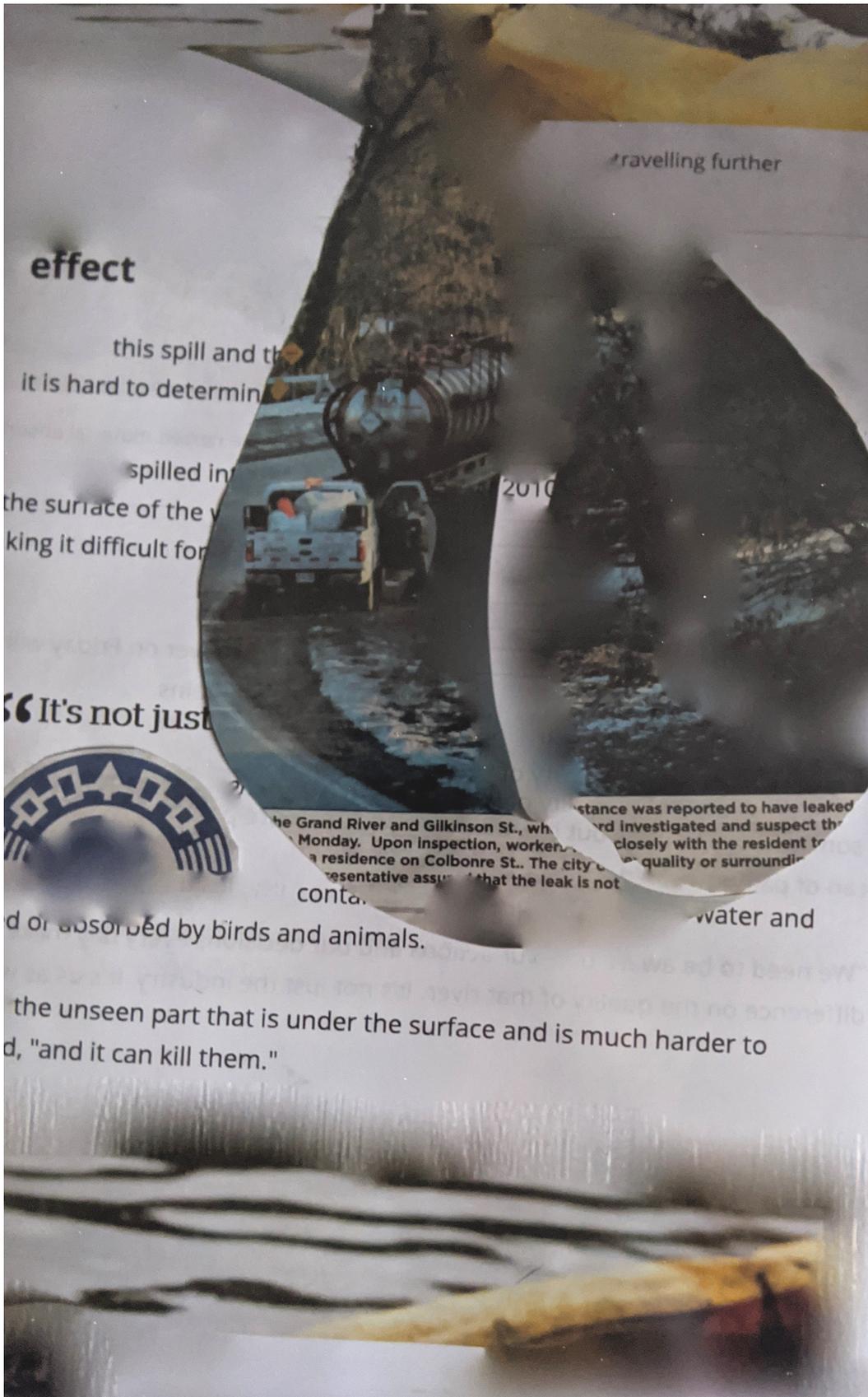
Paityn Hill



## Grand Chemical Spills 2 (Self-titled series)

Photographic collage, 8" x 12"

Paityn Hill



**Grand Chemical Spills 3** (*Self-titled series*)  
Photographic collage, 11" x 17"  
Paityn Hill

To preserve,  
protect and  
restore water for  
future  
Generations.

Our life depends  
on our  
relationship with  
the waters.



**Water is Life**

Photographic collage, 10" x 14"

Paityn Hill



## **Speechless**

Photograph, 8" x 10"

KMC Miller

We know water's power, in the waterfalls, rains, mists and streams, rivers, lakes and oceans of the natural world. The rising up of the water in this photo is encouraging the viewer in advocating the voiceless concerns of all creation.

Key to environmental sustainability is intergenerational protection of water. We give thanks to the waters for quenching our thirst and providing us with strength. Water is Life! One of the Sisters of sustainability, corn is represented, and impeded in the photo collage. We all have responsibility to conserve what sustains us.



**Unceasing**  
Photographic collage, 11" x 14"  
KMC Miller

# Convers ACTION

KMC Miller

Footprint as a symbolism of ACTION to restore, beyond opening dialogue. Accountability for water on reserves. Restoration of clear water.



## Convers ACTION

Beaded canvas, 5" x 7"

KMC Miler



# Acknowledgements

Elaine Ho, Grand-Erie Study

First and foremost, I would like to thank Richelle Miller, Coordinator of the Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts, for her commitment, time and undying support to/for this collaboration from our first meeting. Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts also provided financial and in-kind contributions to the Grand Expressions project.

This exhibit would not have come to fruition without the efforts put in by Richelle and Taylor Hill, Youth Leader, who connected with parents, communicated with youth artists on an ongoing basis, and ensured all administrative requirements (e.g., permission forms, ethics approvals) were addressed. There are no words to express my appreciation for the cross-cultural bridging that was supported by the positive and energetic involvement of both Richelle and Taylor—thank you both!

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person-exhibits were canceled. We thank our wonderful hosts for providing us with a space to exhibit and for their eagerness to reschedule the exhibit upon reopening.

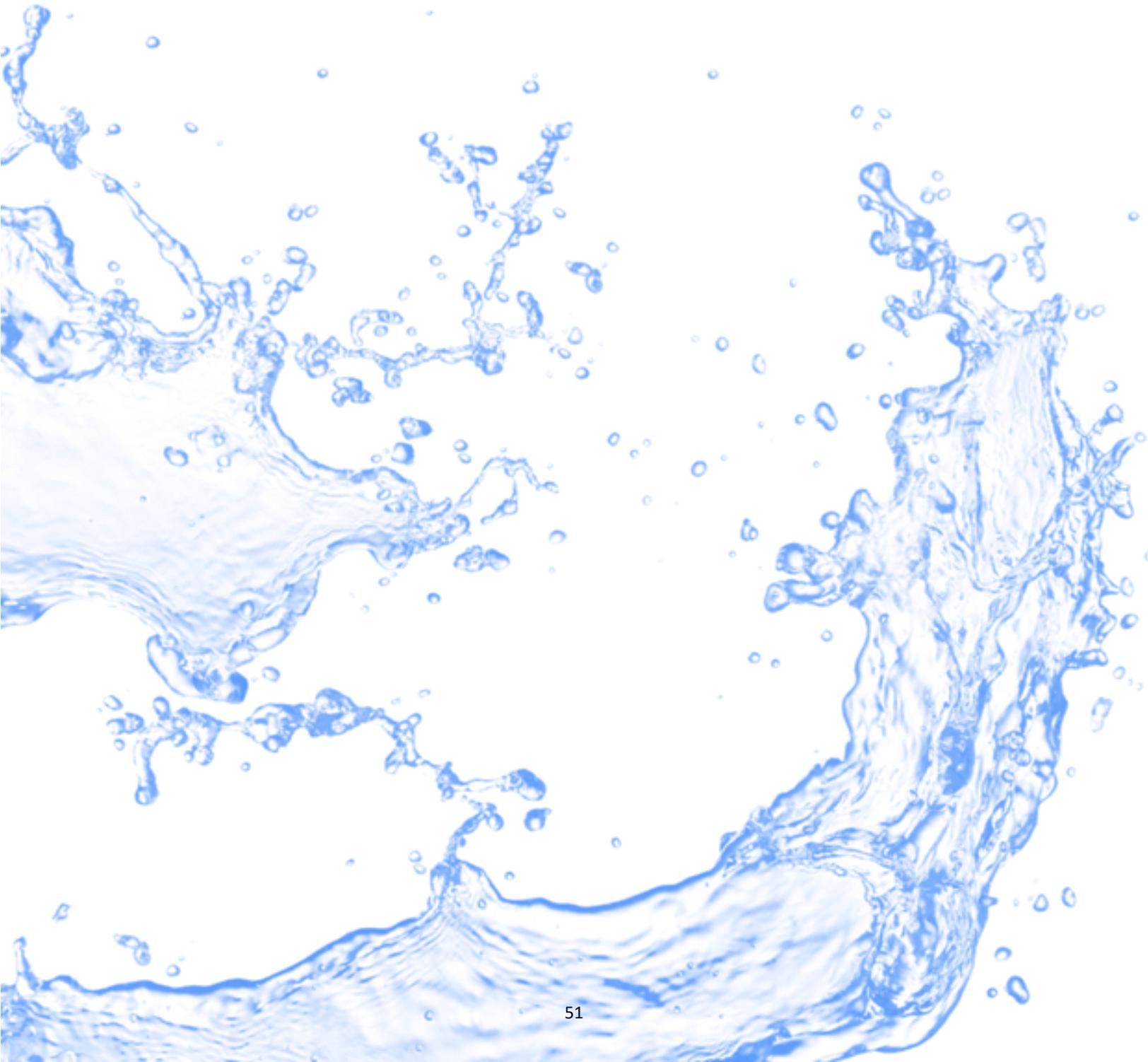
## Funding

The Grand-Erie Study is funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund via Global Water Futures, with additional and in-kind support from University of Waterloo. Exploratory research for this study was funded by the Muskoka Watershed Council via the Canadian Water Network.





Since the exhibit...



# Evolution of Grand Expressions

The idea to engage the Six Nations of the Grand River community via the arts was conceived on July 3, 2018, during a discussion with then-Wildlife Manager Paul General. After a few months of ideation and high-level planning, Paul connected me with Chris McLeod, Creative Director for the Great Art for Great Lakes project, at the end of February 2019. The idea was to incorporate the art initiative as part of the larger, funded project (hosted by Waterlution), which engaged Canadian and Indigenous persons in dozens of 'creation' workshops (i.e., different artistic media) with the goal of implementing permanent, co-created art installations in various communities along the lower Grand River and Lake Erie.

It was at one of these workshops, on August 14, 2019, where I met Richelle Miller, Coordinator for Music of the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts. The program is an after-school cultural program for youth of Six Nations of the Grand River. Over the next month we discussed engaging with youth in the program to share stories and artwork to local Canadian communities and to water managers while contributing to my research. Soon after, from October 2019 until early March 2020, the youth worked hard creating their pieces. On January 20, 2020, photographer Ann Alimi visited Oshweken to provide a photojournalism workshop to interested youth of the program and their family members. I visited a few of the youth during regular program days to get to know them, build relationships with their parents (i.e., answer any questions), and to record the story of one youth whose preference

was to share her story orally as would be tradition. In addition, we held a one-day art camp on February 15, 2020, where the youth came together to create their pieces, share their progress, and contribute to group creations.

The Grand Expressions art exhibit was originally scheduled to rotate between nine events at eight venues across five cities over six months, as follows:

- March 2-14: The Carolinian Café (Cayuga)
- March 20: World Water Day at the Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum (Kitchener)
- March 23-April 3: Cambridge Centre for the Arts (Cambridge) – including a public reception the evening of March 24, 2020
- April 6-17: Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre (Waterloo)
- April 20: private water manager’s meeting at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (Waterloo)
- April 29-May 24: THEMUSEUM (Kitchener)
- May 26-28: annual Waterloo-Wellington Children’s Groundwater Festival at Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum (Kitchener)
- June 2-29: University of Waterloo School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability (Waterloo)
- August (TBD): an on-reserve location, to be confirmed

However, due to closures resulting from COVID-19, the exhibit was launched only at its first location at The Carolinian Café. All venues shut down and the exhibit was promptly converted to a virtual tour made available via the research website. The first version was launched online

on Monday March 2, 2020, followed by a second version on Monday August 3, 2020. This second version is viewable on a tablet on the third floor of THEMUSEUM in Kitchener until the end of January 2021.

## Grand Expressions shared widely

The exhibit was shared, discussed and highlighted as a case study in a number of presentation, online stories and more. Here are some of the ways in which Grand Expressions—and, therefore, the youth artists—created social impact.

### **Recommendations to water managers**

This exhibit was summarized into a 10-page summary report that is being integrated with expert interviews, results from public engagement (through Great Art for Great Lakes), and takeaways from workshops, water manager meetings, a review of exemplary or innovative programs, and a review of literature. The following points summarize recommendations being put forward as a result of the stories written by artists for this exhibit:

- Recognize the fundamental nature of water; we begin our lives in water, it nourishes us throughout our lives, and it provides sustenance for every other organism on the planet
- Recognize that impacts are shared by all, though not equally
- There is a unique connection between women and water; celebrate this and empower female champions of the community
- The interconnectedness of our world means what we put into the watershed returns to us in one form or another; we need to acknowledge this and act as if it matters

- We should not shy away from encouraging love and gratitude for each another and for the water, which we all depend on; we need to openly acknowledge that we are all sentient, equal and co-dependent in many ways
- We should celebrate the gifts we enjoy from the water, making gratitude a regular part of the way we think about the water
- There needs to be much more accountability for the lack of drinking water on reserves
- Challenges identified by the youth include chemical spills and other pollution, lack of drinking water on reserve, undrinkable surface water (Grand River), unknown cumulative effects, and two mentalities that need changing (dilution fallacy and removing ourselves from the 'big picture' interconnectedness of nature)
- While open dialogue is a great start, action must surpass this towards restoration and prevention; a proactive approach is preferred
- Managers should strive to measure and enhance community experiences as part of its assessment of watershed health
- Nation-to-nation histories must be openly acknowledged, and efforts made to reconcile (i.e., too many Grand River residents do not know what the Haldimand Tract is)
- Intercultural and intergenerational knowledge should be captured and shared
- Diverse perspectives are necessary to succeed with making our watershed healthy and equitable for all
- Managers and community members need to understand and accept the diverse relationships that exist between different peoples and the water (i.e., including spiritual, emotional, and physical)

- Precautionary management should be implemented, and positive framing may make the community more receptive to messages about riverine health
- More of us need to be engaged to collectively work together towards shared goals

## Departmental and lab stories at University of Waterloo

January 8, 2020:

A story published by the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability (SERS) focused on the importance of engaging with people in different and meaningful ways.

Grand Expressions was highlighted as one important example.

JAN. 8, 2020

**SERS Stories: Every drop of this river is another good, good day.**



Nothing about a river is straight, nor is its management straightforward. I quickly learned from my exploratory research, evaluating monitoring indicators in the Muskoka River Watershed, that the supposedly simple task of generating a list of environmental indicators for monitoring watershed health was more about social equity, communication, organizational capacity and partnerships, than it was about managing the watershed – at least at that stage in the monitoring program’s development. The question ‘what do we measure to understand watershed health’ quickly evolved into questions around whose definition of health was used, who decided what the priorities should be, why certain groups were not engaged, what the implications of exclusion might be, and how to rectify this exclusion. Essentially, the monitoring indicators workshop I spent weeks designing turned into a philosophical discussion largely about the community, not the watershed. The 14-year old watershed monitoring and reporting program was overhauled and redesigned to incorporate the interests and needs of the community. The new program (as of 2018) is one of the strongest examples of watershed reporting I have reviewed.

April 15, 2020:

The Water Institute promotes the launch of the virtual tour.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the University of Waterloo website with links for Admissions, About Waterloo, Faculties & Academics, Offices & Services, and Support Waterloo. The main header reads "WATER INSTITUTE". On the left is a sidebar menu with options like "Water Institute home", "About", "Our people", "Research", "Graduate programs", "Opportunities", "News", "Events", "Publications", and "Water and COVID-19 online resources". The main content area features a breadcrumb trail "Water Institute » News » 2020 » April »" and a title "Grand Expressions self-guided tour" with a date "WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2020". The text describes an artwork collection by young Indigenous artists and mentions that the in-person event was canceled due to COVID-19. It also introduces the exhibit organizer, Elaine Ho, Ph.D., and her research at the School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability.

August 19, 2020:

The Courtenay Lab published an updated version of the SERS story.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the University of Waterloo website. The main header reads "COURTENAY LAB". On the left is a sidebar menu with options like "Courtenay Lab home", "People profiles", "News", and "Publications". The main content area features a breadcrumb trail "Courtenay Lab » News » 2020 » August »" and a title "'Every drop of this river is another good, good day'" with a date "WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2020". The author is listed as "By Elaine Ho". Below the text is an image of a large fish sculpture made of plastic waste, set against a wooden wall. The text on the right discusses the author's research on monitoring indicators in the Muskoka River Watershed, emphasizing social equity, communication, and organizational capacity.

August 25, 2020:

The Water Institute promotes the launch of the virtual tour, which was later featured as the first story on the University of Waterloo homepage banner (and, according to the University's Daily Bulletin, was the most successful story that week).

Initially planned as an in-person experience, Grand Expressions is now being offered virtually through a tablet at THEMUSEUM's ALARM exhibit. The project has resulted in new community relationships, empowered Indigenous youth, and sparked discussion among staff from local municipalities and the Conservation Authority. Specifically, the project inspired a commitment to a meeting between the youth and the Canadian Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

"The art exhibit was originally scheduled to rotate between nine events at eight venues across five cities over six months," said Ho. "However, due to COVID, all venues shut down after our first location launched successfully. We converted the exhibit to a virtual tour.... We were thrilled that THEMUSEUM held true to their commitment to the youth, offering us a space alongside their highly-publicized ALARM exhibit so that the youth's work may have exposure to roughly 50,000 patrons over the next six months."



## In-person exhibit of the virtual tour

August 25, 2020:

THEMUSEUM is "a premier cultural destination dedicated to presenting fresh, inspired content from around the globe in unique and immersive ways designed to showcase art & technology at play."

We are so excited that the exhibit will be available to roughly 50,000 visitors until the end of January 2021, and even more so that we are being hosted under the banner of ALARM —a series of four highly-publicized exhibits focused on achieving action on climate change and biodiversity.

## Grand Expressions

[— LEARN MORE](#)

*On exhibition August 2020 – January 2021*

From October 2019 until March 2020, Indigenous youth at Six Nations of the Grand River worked hard creating personally meaningful pieces to share their stories, experiences, concerns, solutions and teachings with water managers and the Canadian public. The stories range from personal experiences – e.g., lack of access to safe drinking water on reserve – to sharing teachings that have been passed down through generations.

The project is a co-created collaboration between Elaine Ho, PhD Candidate at University of Waterloo, and Richelle Miller, Coordinator of Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts (with early inspiration from artist and former Six Nations Wildlife Manager Paul General). Elaine's PhD focuses on the lower section of the Grand River, Southern Ontario's largest watershed. The river, and many of the major cities around it, are situated in the Haldimand Tract – land given to the Six Nations community to enjoy and control in perpetuity in return for their alliance during the American Revolution. However, only about 5% of the original Tract remains in the hands of the Six Nations. Representatives of the Six Nations are rarely included in any decision-making capacity when it comes to the management of the Grand River or other local natural resources. Further, when engagement opportunities are made, most individuals of the community do not have the procedural knowledge, technologies, or funding capacity to fully participate.

**Grand Expressions** was designed to inform water managers in a culturally relevant way. The objectives were twofold: first, to feature young people's voice and creative works in a publicly accessible way; and second, to capture their relationships with water (especially the Grand River or Lake Erie) to inform management. Capacity-building took place in different ways, including workshops to teach participating youth about photography and an art camp to provide them with space to create their works.

This collaboration was a unique opportunity to engage youth in traditional activities while offering water managers a rare glimpse into the values and concerns of some members of the Six Nations community. This project resulted in new community relationships, empowered Indigenous youth, and discussion among staff from the local municipality and Conservation Authority. Grand Expressions was viewed and reflected upon by 200 undergraduate ecology students over the summer of 2020. Further, the project inspired a meeting between the youth and the Canadian Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth (to be scheduled once in-person meetings are possible).



### *Grand Expressions Virtual Exhibit featured at THEMUSEUM*

Elaine Ho, PhD Student with the Lake Futures project, is having her Grand Expressions virtual art exhibit featured at THEMUSEUM as part of the ALARM Exhibition. Grand Expressions is a collaboration with Six Nations youth to inform water managers in a culturally relevant way.

[read more >>](#)  
[self-guided tour >>](#)  
[Elaine's research story >>](#)



## Global Water Futures e-news promotion

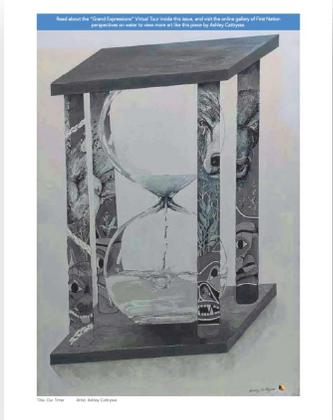
September 3, 2020:

The Global Water Futures initiative involves over 400 researchers across Canada in the largest university-led water research initiative ever.

# Industry magazine feature article

October 16, 2020:

The Canadian Water Resources Association's *Water News* is published three times per year, in winter, summer and fall. A feature article was published in the Fall 2020 edition that highlights the importance of the youths' contributions and of nation-to-nation collaboration, which was also featured on the back cover of the magazine. Readers of *Water News* include approximately 4,000 water academics and practitioners from across Canada— including engineers, hydrologists, geographers, biologists, climate scientists, planners, modelers, industry representatives, and policy makers.



## GRAND EXPRESSIONS: PERSPECTIVES FROM FIRST NATION YOUTH

Elaine Ho, PhD Candidate, Social and Ecological Sustainability (Integrated Water Management), School of Environment, Resources and Sustainability, University of Waterloo

From October 2019 to March 2020, youth at Six Nations of the Grand River worked hard to create artistic expressions and written stories demonstrating their relationships with water, highlighting their priorities for management and sharing traditional teachings. The youth, aged 10-26, are part of an after-school program called Music for the Spirit & Indigenous Visual Arts, coordinated by Richelle Miller. I met Richelle at an artist's workshop through one of my other research partners, Great Art for Great Lakes. Together we conceived *Grand Expressions* – a collaboration incorporating Indigenous youth perspectives into my research, which seeks to improve monitoring and management of the lower Grand River and nearshore Lake Erie (Southern Ontario), while also providing the youth with a voice that would be presented to local water managers. While Richelle worked with the youth and their families, I planned a traveling art exhibit that would be featured at 10 locations across four cities over six months. Then COVID-19 happened, closing our wonderful venues. We are grateful that each of these prominent locations are eager to reschedule the in-person exhibit once they reopen. Fortunately, we were able to launch the online virtual tour in April.

*Grand Expressions* not only creates opportunities for conversations between Canadian and Indigenous community members, but also empowers young Indigenous persons to act for the benefit of their community through various opportunities created through this partnership: speaking to hundreds of University students, thousands of elementary school students and dozens of water managers. The project has also gained attention from the Canadian Minister



Title: untitled  
Artist: Hannah Wallace-Lund  
Exhibit series: drinking water

Title: Rogue Wave  
Artist: Steve Johnson  
Exhibit series: plastics pollution



of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth, with whom we are planning a meeting (once in-person meetings are able to be scheduled) to discuss local priorities and how Canadians and Indigenous communities can work together to accomplish mutual goals. It is my hope that the relationships formed during this project and the broader research lay the foundation for meaningful, transformational action regarding local Canadian-Indigenous cooperation.

This work was awarded the CWRA's *Our Water – Our Life – Most Valuable Resource* award during the May 2019 National Conference. The draft paper, co-authored by Dr. Andrew Trant and Dr. Simon Courtenay at University of Waterloo, raises key points for the more equitable and accessible design of water management systems in Ontario and across Canada. A presentation (see link below) highlighted early outcomes of this research

and discussed approaches taken in our methodology as they relate to equity and creating shared spaces.

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. 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. Perhaps the visual and written stories within the *Grand Expressions* exhibit will remind us that our future depends on prompt, collective action regarding one shared resource: water.

For more information, or to view research presentations or the *Grand Expressions* virtual tour, visit [www.GrandErieStudy.ca/tour](http://www.GrandErieStudy.ca/tour).





***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](http://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.