

2019 Report

# The Art For Aid Project

A program of I Love First Peoples 



Supporting Canada's First Artists

I would have to say that this year has been the year that I've claimed myself as an artist and a grass roots professional. I've found confidence. I've discovered that I really can drive this machine.

**The Mission:**

The Art For Aid Project works to support Canadian First Nations, Inuit and Metis art education programs through access to quality art supplies, awareness and fundraising efforts. We work to to connect Indigenous youth to art and knowledge of their culture. We seek to accomplish this by ensuring art supplies are in remote schools and communities.

I believe Art For Aid is becoming more widely recognized, due in large part, to its powerful logo and mission. The bear is a great visual representation of the healing power of art, and the mission puts creative healing tools right into the hands of the youth; all without putting additional strain on a burdened teaching staff. I'm excited and terrified about the growth here (but more excited). I'm watching my *what'ifs* become reality.

**The K11 Program:**

K11 (Knitting 911) is a program that was implemented in 2017 to put knitting materials in to the hands of folks who like to knit. This past year we exceeded our goal of 100 boxes of donated knitting wool and materials sent to Nunavut. I believe we're at 110 boxes now.

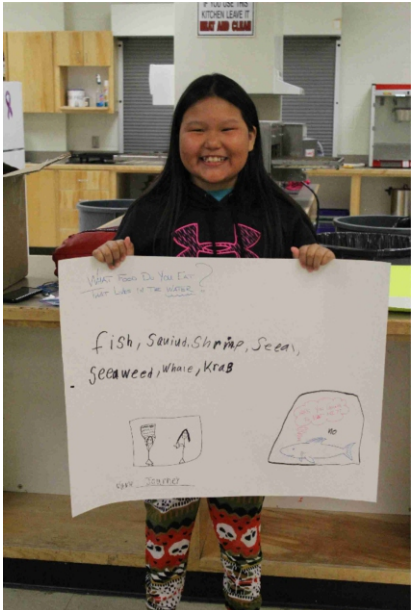
**Lesley House:**

Lesley and her husband are good people who live in Iqaluit. They keep art and craft supplies stocked up at their home. Lesley offers youth a safe place to catch their breath, grab a snack and be creative. Recently they adopted a newborn into their family. Just as we did last year, we shipped a big beautiful Christmas box to Lesley's House. This is the 2nd year we've shipped a large Christmas box filled with quality toys for about 15 kids, along with gift wrap, tape and scissors. Lesley hands them

out to kids who may not be receiving a gift. Cost for this 2019 project was approx \$600.00 with about \$250.00 donated directly towards the shipping costs. I have photos from Lesley that I'll be sharing soon. (all permissions granted)

**Natuashish: Northern Labrador:**

Natuashish is an Innu community in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. After shipping art supplies to remote schools for 7 years, I was able to visit my first remote community in May, thanks to the generosity of I Love First Peoples. We spent time with the teachers and students of the Mushuau Innu Natuashish School. It was an amazing experience to explore the wild backcountry, meet incredible teachers, learn of their experiences, challenges and victories and share some views about what needs to happen to improve remote Indigenous education. I was able to run the Earth To Sky Program at the school. There where posters about the state of the planet were created. Teachers in these communities often go beyond to engage students. Remote community schools are unique and have their own challenges. I spoke with the principal about the possibility of shipping them sewing program supplies so they could offer sewing classes, and utilize this skill for their students. The offer was well received and when I returned, I was asked by Kathryn Willows from Belleville if she could help me to get the program set put together. And boy did she ever step up to the plate. We shipped 3 sewing machines, bobbins, thread, material, machine oil, repair manuals and tools, notions, ribbon, and more. The teachers were very excited to have an entire program's supplies donated to their school.



### The Eagles Rising Campaign:

This summer, I volunteered the use of several pieces of my art for a campaign that highlighted Indigenous issues in Canada through Artists Against Racism. The Eagle's Rising Campaign saw the work of Canadian Indigenous artists featured prominently on billboards across Canada. I was very proud to be a part of this national campaign and the awareness that it brought to important issues. Art is powerful and defies language barriers; it is able to reach people in a powerful way.

### Shipping:

While expensive, Canada Post is still the most efficient method of consistently reaching remote Indigenous schools. (At least until I can develop SkyBearAir) Periodically we're contacted by the Ministry of Youth Justice to request art supplies be sent to a community school or program. Recently the request came for Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation (Loon Lake). A 10 year old child had taken her life and it was the catalyst to a state of emergency. We shipped a few boxes right away, then a few more a month later. I'm grateful to have the trust of organizations that are there to support and get these supplies to the places they're needed. Over the course of the year, we spend between \$2,800-\$3,400.00 on shipping through Canada Post and this is increasing more each passing year. This year we were very grateful to begin working with the National Aboriginal Policing Services. NAPS frequently flies into remote areas and they have agreed to take art supply boxes with them to the places they go. This is tremendous support that will serve to shave hundreds of dollars off the shipping budget over the year, as well as allow us to reach communities we haven't offered support to yet. The seamless operation will be something we'll look forward to utilizing on a larger scale this year.

### My Art:

Some of my art is now available on clothing through a fine clothing manufacturer in Montreal. [www.art-a-porter.com/en/colleen.gray](http://www.art-a-porter.com/en/colleen.gray)  
Sales of the clothing directly impact our operations budget.  
All of my original art is now for sale (with exceptions). This has been a long time coming, but I'm there. Original work is available at Galerie d'art Riverside in Wakefield, Quebec on a regular basis, and original art and prints are available for the month of January at Vibration Studios in Osgoode, Ont. The Cheddar Stop in Carleton Place on Highway #7 carries a selection of archival quality prints and cards. Events and paint lesson locations are listed on the website. You can view available original work at my home, by appointment. We also have an e-store now. [artforaid.ca/shop](http://artforaid.ca/shop)  
I am a volunteer in my organization and do not take a salary.



### The Governor General of Canada Sovereign's Medal for Volunteering

for her role in supporting art exploration through access to art supplies and creative art programs in Canadian remote Indigenous schools through The Art For Aid Project.

The face of the medal shows the ideas of caring and generosity, represented by two interlaced hearts.

The sunburst pattern of the rim symbolizes the time that volunteers are giving, and their actions.

The ribbon uses the viceregal colours of blue and gold. The five gold stripes evoke the fingers of a hand, present in the Caring Canadian Award emblem, while the deep red colour is associated with royalty.



### A Powerful Personal Achievement:

There have been some remarkable things for Art For Aid this year, but also for me as an artist. In June I received a call unlike any I've ever received. I was notified that I was being awarded The Governor General's Award For Volunteers. I was certain that the woman on the phone was a friend playing a good joke on me. Once I discovered that this was in fact, the Secretary of the Governor General's Office calling, I had to ask that they repeat the entire conversation – I assumed it was a prank and so I hadn't heard a word she said. After being sufficiently embarrassed, I was sufficiently stunned...for 5 months. There will be a ceremony for this at some point in the near future. I'm the sort of person who prefers to be behind the camera rather than on the stage. This is a tremendous honour and I'm looking forward to the attention it will bring to the work I do. I'm looking forward to using this award to highlight the needs of remote community youth, elevate The Art For Aid Project's work, and if all goes as planned, I'll be expanding the project and hoping to make a larger impact for Canada's First Artists.

*Colleen Gray - June 26, 2019*



### Chi miigwetch – my deepest thanks:

I want to take this opportunity to offer my personal and deepest gratitude to all of you who support this work, who buy my art, attend my workshops, invite me to your classrooms and take the time to learn about The Art For Aid Project. I simply could not accomplish a fraction of this task without your unwavering support. I also want to lift up my amazing husband, Fred. He is literally, the fuel in my tank. He keeps me motivated, efficient and loved every single day. To walk through life feeling fulfilled by one's calling brings me immeasurable joy; having someone who loves me and walks this road with me is beyond words.

I have a strong and consistent social media presence. My work days are filled with satisfaction and plenty of busy. I'm frequently asked, "How do you get all this stuff done?" The short answer is, I have no idea, but it does, just not always as efficiently as I'd like to have it done. As the project grows in scope, I find there are fewer hours on the clock for me and I am beginning to utilize volunteers to help me get things done. There is no greater warmth in my heart that what I hold for volunteers who come and pack boxes, help pick up art supplies, offer encouragement and come over to make me a good cup of tea – anything can be solved over a good cup of tea.

2019 was an epic year, both for me as an artist, and as a grass roots volunteer hoping to make a difference for education in remote Indigenous communities across Canada. I am deeply grateful to all of you who have donated, encouraged, bought,

shared, and even rescued me throughout the year. I have no idea what 2020 will look like, but I'm banking on it being one that sees improvements in access to quality art supplies for Indigenous students. I want to make this year, the year of Young Indigenous Artists.

I believe in the ability of art to invite healing and break isolation. Art is a common thread, prevalent throughout humanity that binds us together. I believe with all my heart, that access to the tools of creation should be accessible to all. I'm glad you believe it too.

Chi miigwetch. Thank you.



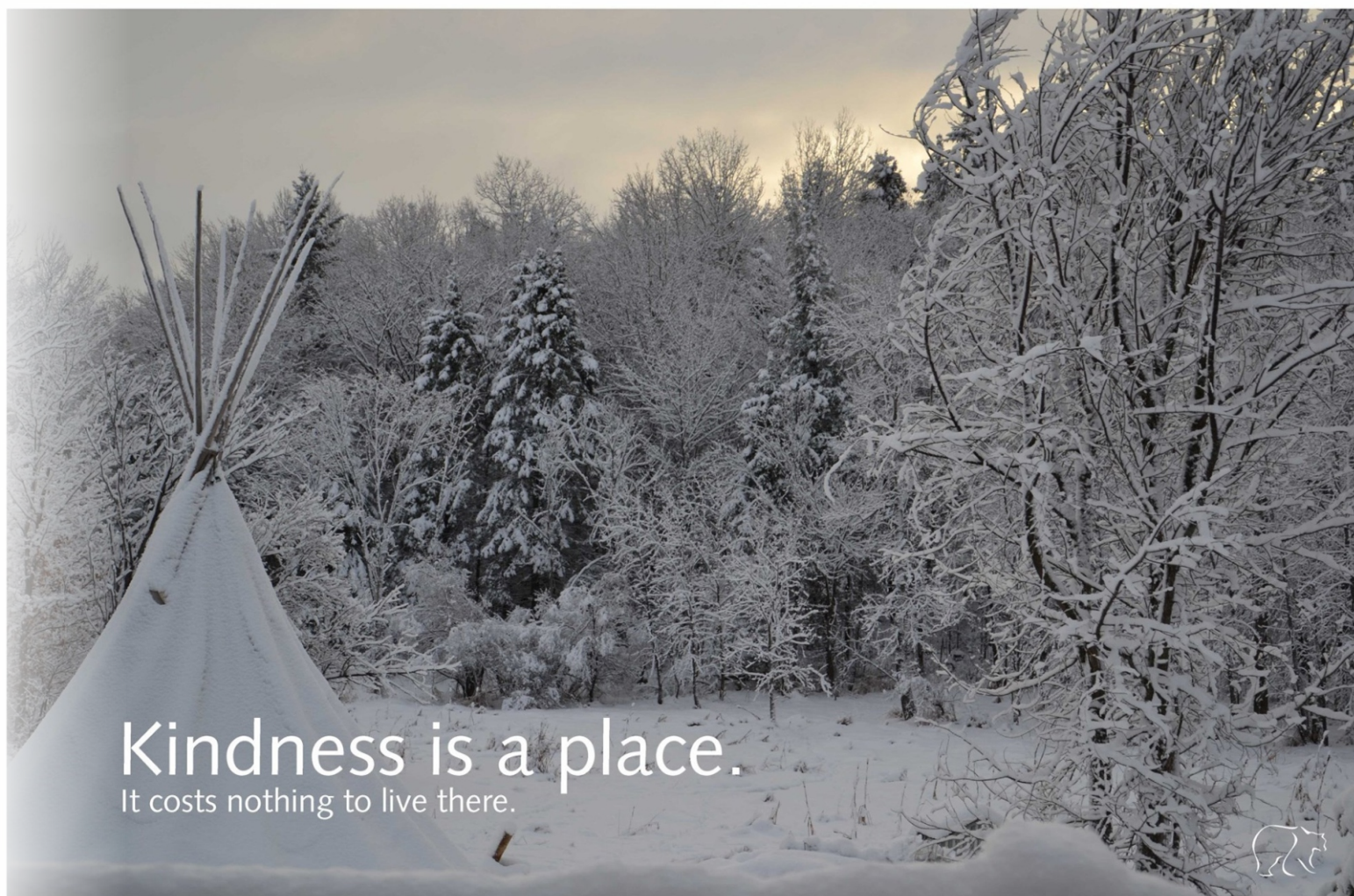
Colleen Gray

Artist/Founder – The Art For Aid Project

[www.artforaid.ca](http://www.artforaid.ca)



*All My Relations Exhibition: City of Ottawa 2019*



Kindness is a place.  
It costs nothing to live there.







...just a few images of art, kids and fun.

We don't get a lot of pictures from the schools we ship supplies to, but we're always grateful when they come in. **Why don't we get many pictures?** Because we recognize the tremendous burden on remote school teachers, the limited and costly internet and the fact that teachers often don't think of it. We don't need proof to know that the art supplies are being used and appreciated by these beautiful children.



Rapid Lake



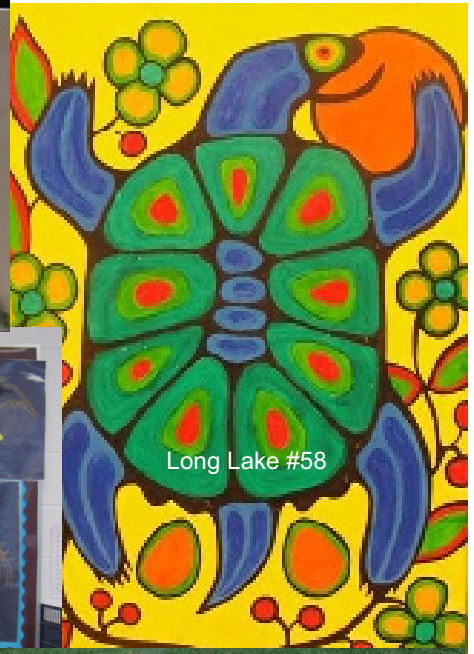
Long Lake #58



Charles Tetcho School, NWT



Kashewchewan



Long Lake #58



Charles Tetcho School, NWT