

## Katie Green

All six of the banner designs are directly based off of the community engagement event, “Walk with Me”, which was held June 2016. This event took forty-three community members on a walk through Fish Creek Park which was led by Blackfoot Elder Casey Eagle Speaker and Stoney/Nakoda Elder Paul Daniels. This event progressed from the initial concept to create six banner designs which focus on the emotional and historical significance of Canadian landscape. Casey and Paul presented an opportunity to explore how individuals see nature integrating into their lives and presented participants with a deeper meaning of the environment as it relates to people.

Following the walk, participants sat together in a sharing circle where they safely expressed thoughts on their own personal relationship to nature and reflections based on the elder’s teachings. The concept for each design is sourced directly from this event. I drew inspiration from both the information shared by Casey and Paul and from the personal insights shared in the circle.



Banners from left to right: Fallen Tree, Dandelion, Honey Suckle, Maternal, Sharing Circle and Stone.

**Fallen Tree** is based off of one of the ‘points of interest’ Casey and Paul stopped at. When asking us to observe what may look like a dead fallen tree, we were instead taught its sustenance and continuation of life. With this insight, we were asked to reflect on the emotional symbolism behind this tree. Not only was there an abundance of new growth on the tree and surrounding it, we were reminded of the regeneration of life. With this we contemplated our own strengths, our internal spirit, and our beauty and imperfections.

**Dandelion** is based on the concept of healing. Casey and Paul described how the milk of a dandelion has a three day window where it can be harvested as a medicine to treat cancer. Casey also described the traditional use of the dandelion as a guide by a Medicine Man to help read symbols in a vision quest. Some other plants mentioned with healing properties were chokecherry and saskatoon berry. Both of these plants are used for the flu, rashes, and cold and cough. In my design you will see an interpretation of a Medicine Man whose face is covered in dandelions. A larger dandelion plant surrounds him and is growing from/through lungs.

**Honey Suckle**, a ‘grandparent plant’ represents the importance of family. When we stopped at a honeysuckle tree, Casey and Paul stated that the flower can be mixed with cedar in ceremony to bring

home together. It calls children back home to their 'nest'. In my design I have included a common bird to Fish Creek Park, the cedar waxwing. This bird perches on top of a nest with honeysuckle flowers growing from its mouth. Below the nest is a cedar waxwing hatchling being fed the sustenance of the flower.

**Maternal** is based off of a specific story shared during one of the sharing circles. A little girl described an intimate experience fostering a magpie hatchling she had found in her backyard. She stated that it had fallen from its nest and had both a missing eye and a broken wing. Over a few days, she eventually had to have the hatchling put down. To me, this story represented a delicate experience of maternal instincts. This may also have been her first experience with death. I found this story extremely touching and inspiring. In my design you will find a tall deer with human attributes. To me, deer have feminine and nurturing characteristics. In its hands, I have mimicked the shape of a womb, a sacred feminine symbol. From the middle of the womb is an eye-like shape which connects to the missing eye expressed by the little girl. This link represents her connection to this hatchling. From inside the deer, a mother magpie is feeding her child. This blends into the lower half where a hatchling and its skeleton sit wrapped in a safe nest.

**Sharing Circle** is based off of a collection of reflections expressed during the sharing circle. There were some similar themes such as nature as a mirror, nature as a place to heal, plants and animals as teachers, and many more. I took these reflections and related them to the symbolism behind birds that live in Fish Creek Park.

**Stone** is based on a moment on the walk where each participant picked up a pebble they were drawn and held it over their heart. We shared the first emotion that came up when holding the pebble and allowed the stone to become a microphone for our internal struggles and joys. On the top of the banner is my personal interpretation of a spirit or magical guide that exists within all of us. Through its third eye, it is connecting to a small sparrow tucked inside its belly. Sparrows are songbirds and I have used this bird to represent the awakening of communication and heart.

## **Artist Bio**

Graduating with distinction from the University of Calgary's BFA program, Katie's work has exhibited in galleries such as Contemporary Calgary (MOCA), The Nickle, TRUCK, and Art Point Gallery. Her burgeoning body of mural work can be seen internationally in Nepal, India, Florida, Sri Lanka, Berlin, and Taiwan and was undertaken both independently and in collaboration with a number of collectives, non-profit organizations and local communities.

Her practice addresses nature as a crossroad for developing concepts of growth, death, adaptation, cooperation, and perhaps most importantly, our emotional and physical selves. More than something to be understood and subjectified, for her nature is a space and opportunity for questioning.

Her interest in public art stems from its ability to change one's environment. She believes that we are constantly responding to our surroundings, allowing what is external to influence our emotions, our decisions, and our sense of self. Taking this into consideration, her approach to public art is to challenge the way people interact with the natural aspects of their environment.

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