

# COLLEEN GRAY

Artist's Statement



Indigenous Artist.  
Strong Woman.  
Good Human.



**My Home:** I was born and grew up in Petawawa, Ontario, Canada; a place made perfect by the local beach, deep-hole swamps, turtle ponds and the beauty of the Canadian Shield - sacred ground for a curious child. My ancestry comes from the Mik'maq people in New Brunswick and from the Irish folks across the big pond. Finding out about my native heritage didn't change anything about how I draw or paint – ink and paint don't care about these things. But I do like the fact that my ancestry hails from a place where they know how to live and love well. This belief system extends to all who come by my home.

**My work:** I free-paint/free-draw when I work, meaning, I often start with an empty head and paint until something begins to develop, then move forward. I paint from my personal experiences and observations obtained from living Indigenously in the best way I can. I use teachings from numerous First Nations wisdom keepers, ceremonial people, Elders and friends over a span of 30 years. I try to walk the good Red Road well in all things - not an easy task, but very fulfilling.

My great joy and artistic passion lies in ground mineral based water colour on synthetic paper. The sometimes unpredictable effects of this platform excite me and I love teaching others how to enjoy the interactions and then mastering the visually explosive dynamics of minerals and water in paint. It is truly a meditative process that teaches us to slow down, minimize our scope, and focus on the smaller details while enjoying the fascinating interactions.

Many traditional stories and representatives of the spirit world are prominently featured in my work because they live in me and with me every single day. Each drawing takes you on a journey into the visual voice of an ancient time and offers a sense of having learned something new after discovering the interesting stories that accompany the work. At times, I move deeply into the work and teachings, striving to bring forward a whispered bit of wisdom, or a flash of something barely seen in the mind's eye. My work often reflects the state of our only home, the Earth. It echoes the plight of my brothers and sisters who struggle with racism and conflict nearly every single day. We must learn to live together in harmony and without hatred or we will never truly live at all.

**My Mission:** My humanitarian work through The Art For Aid Project has become a priority for me as an artist hoping to make a difference in Canada's remote Indigenous communities. I want to create a way to ensure that quality art supplies reach remote Indigenous schools, nurture budding artists, create a vehicle for expression and healing, as well as present a way to pass the time in a constructive and healing way. Art is a strong portal where healing and beauty can compliment each other. Art supplies are the wonderful tools of creativity and imagination.

I work hard to promote Indigenous art education and public awareness about the issues facing Canada's First Artists.

## Career Highlights

*The Governor General's Sovereign Medal for Volunteers - June 2019*  
*Solo Exhibition - City of Ottawa Oct/Nov 2019*  
*Galerie d'art Riverside - Solo Exhibition - July 2019*  
*Eagles Rising Billboard Campaign - 2019*  
*Missing and Murdered (Eagles Rising) Billboard Campaign - 2019*  
*Museum of Civilization - Indian Horse Launch - March 2017*  
*RAW Ottawa - Feature Artist - 2016*



*Miigwetch. Thank you.*

Artist/Founder  
The Art For Aid Project  
[www.artforaid.ca](http://www.artforaid.ca)