



Nicole Watts

Class of 2016 at Emily Carr University of Art + Design

→ Bachelor of Visual Arts

Currently completing Master of Arts-Counselling, Psychology at Yorkville University

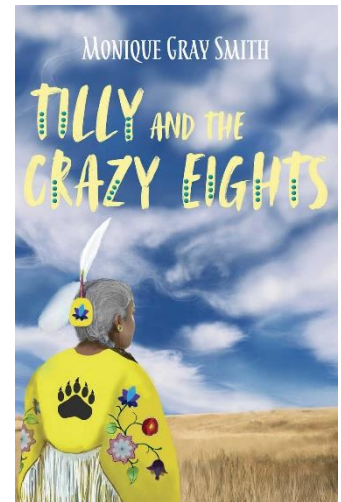
Member of Saddle Lake First Nation

Nicole (Niki) Watts is from the small community of Bella Coola, located in western British Columbia. Looking back and reflecting on her upbringing in Bella Coola, Niki felt less confident, academically, coming from such a remote area. Now, she has a Bachelor of Visual Arts from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology. Academics aside, she is an award-winning artist, has designed the cover illustration for a published novel, and has had her work displayed at the prestigious National Art Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Ontario.

After graduating from Emily Carr University of Arts and Design in 2016 with a Bachelor in Visual Arts, Niki took two years off from school to gain work experience and take some time for herself after a very busy undergraduate experience. During that time, while working with her parents at a school in her hometown, Niki began debating going back to school herself. Eventually, she

decided to apply for her Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology, which appealed to her because of its flexible career path, finding that it would be applicable to many different areas of employment. The area of counselling that interests Niki the most, however, is Art Therapy. Niki hopes that by working in the health sciences field in the future, her education will be put to good use, helping Indigenous youth in her home community. She feels that her past experiences in running programming for teens, promoting positive images for teens, and helping to inform youth of the dangers of drugs and alcohol has equipped her well to continue on working in this field. She hopes to one day open her own counselling practice centered on and incorporating Art Therapy into sessions with her clients. Alternatively, Niki has also considered returning to a school setting working as a school counsellor, recognizing the importance of having different career opportunities to consider, whichever way life takes her.

For Niki, being able to continue pursuing art while completing her Master's degree was a major factor when deciding which program best suited her. As is clear, Niki's passion for art is a major component of her life, and her success in that has been tremendous. In 2017, Niki was honoured to win The Hnatyshyn Foundation's REVEAL Indigenous Art Award, an award given to Canadian Indigenous artists working in all artistic disciplines. In 2018, Niki won Second Story Press' Indigenous Writing and Illustration contest, opening the door for her to be featured as the cover illustration artist for Monique Gray Smith's novel *Tilly and the Crazy Eights*, published in October 2018.



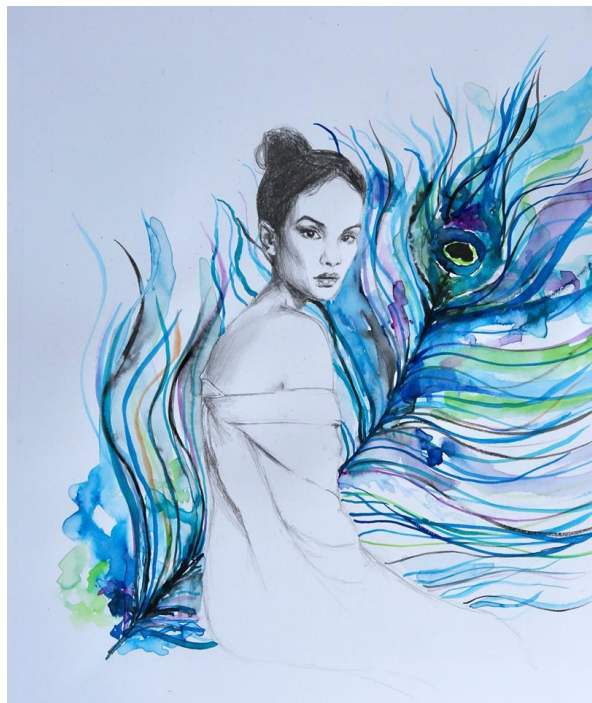
Niki wants potential and current students to know that they are more than capable of achieving their dreams, and that they have more in them to do this than what they may think. She encourages potential students to do their research: reach out to alumni for advice, ask a lot of questions, keep a budget in mind, and do not be afraid to look into scholarships and bursaries. She stresses that preparation is very important and wants to reassure current students to 'just keep going.' She maintains that it is important to make time for yourself, physically and mentally - to 'reset and take care of your soul.'

Niki's overall experience with Freehorse was, and still is, positive as she continues her educational journey. She appreciates Jessica, her funding officer, who is always very quick to respond to emails, making communication between student and the organization easy. Nicole states that she is very grateful for her experience and opportunity to be sponsored by Freehorse Family Wellness Society.

Below is some of Niki's art work. You can find her on Facebook under 'Art by Niki Watts' or at <https://www.nikiwattsartist.com/>.



"Calling the Salmon Home"



"Pretty As a Peacock"



“The Power of Thunder”



“Icarus”