

# Art as Medicine:

Utilizing Creative Arts and the Medicine Wheel as a Tool to Wellness

Can utilizing creative arts and the Medicine Wheel act as a source of medicine for healing?



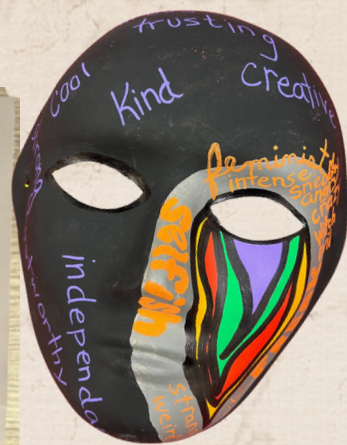
## Art Pieces

When looking at a piece of art, you can interpret the piece and create feelings, thoughts, and imaginations about the art; however, art is a whole process, that involves self, one's own rhythmic flow, and a story created of its own. Art defies boundaries, stereotypes, and logic.



## Art Directives

- Body Mapping
- "The Masks that We Wear"
- Customized ZINE



THE

# Research Project

## Art as Medicine Workshop

Art as Medicine: Utilizing Creative Arts and the Medicine Wheel as a tool to Wellness comprised of a six-week workshop with focus on self-love, self-worth, and self-esteem from an Indigenous perspective; self-worth being derived from a place of wholeness and one's inherent value rather than a measure of perfection and success. The workshop was designed to introduce the Medicine Wheel symbol, each quadrant of health, and to interweave art, psychology and Indigenous philosophy while incorporating an anti-oppressive, two-eyed seeing, arts-based experience for those living with and managing mental illness.

## Artbeat Studio Inc.

This research project took place at the Artbeat Residency Program through Artbeat Studio Inc. Artbeat studio accommodates and welcomes eight artists to the residency for an allotted six-month time period twice a year. During the artists stay they have access to a studio to develop their art portfolio.

The artists also get a chance to participate in various art activities where they can explore different art modalities. In addition, each artist has the opportunity to share their art amongst the fellow artists at Artbeat, where they can discuss their art in a positive way amongst each other. At the end of each residency Artbeat Residency Program hosts an art exhibit open to community to showcase each artists talent.

## The Workshop Experience

During a six-week period the artists explored their definition of self-worth and self-love, while reflecting on their value systems, relationships, and connection to spirit and how this connects to the teachings of the Medicine Wheel and their own personal self-care.

The first workshop comprised of an introduction, open dialogue on the topic of self-worth and self-love, personal value systems, and history of the Medicine Wheel, with primary focus on the Anishinaabe and Cree Medicine Wheel. Sessions two-to-five focused on a quadrant of the Medicine Wheel and the sixth session ended with a feast and a Medicine Wheel teaching by Elder Wally Chartrand. Elder Wally is from Ojibway Key First Nation Saskatchewan, and he grew up in Mallard Manitoba.

This workshop can be well suited for those who experience mental health concerns with particular challenges with self-esteem, healthy relationship with self and with others.

## The Findings

Throughout the participants artistic process, themes that emerged were associated with shame, guilt, capacity, bullying, mothering, resources, food security, transportation, EIA, perfectionism, anxiety, anger, power, and relational conflict. The topic of self-love was either embraced or foreign, and insights of re-narration of their story came to mind. Some of the artists had prior knowledge about the Medicine Wheel, which often inspired conversation of family belief systems, spirituality or the topic of the Medicine Wheel's core tenets: balance and harmony.

# The Workshop and Art

## Directives

The art directives that the participants used during the workshop *Art as Medicine: Utilizing Creative Arts and the Medicine Wheel as a Tool to Wellness* were the *Body Map* activity and the *Masks that we Wear* activity. At the end of the workshop, I had customized a personal ZINE as a memento to return to the artists with pictures of their work for their contribution and time spent partaking in the workshop.

### Body Mapping

Body Mapping is a therapeutic art activity which allows for an individual to explore and describe themselves non-verbally and visually through storytelling using a Body Map. Each participant had the opportunity to outline their body on a large or small piece of paper in whichever shape and dimension they wanted to choose, and to express their story or standpoint through mapping out various aspects of themselves be it their strengths and challenges, a mantra they walk with, their hopes and their fears, their pains and pleasures or health concerns that they live with and manage. Some of the artists described this activity as fun and impactful, and some found it difficult to create in a short amount of time. One artist shared that she will likely keep her outline for years and expressed that she lives with and manages physical ailments making it hard capture her body map in a brief moment of time. The Body Map activity was used to focus on the physical quadrant of the Medicine Wheel.

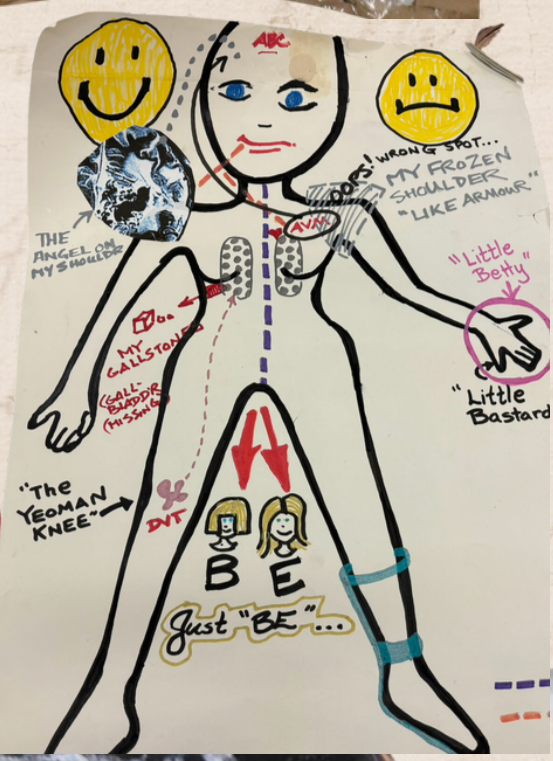
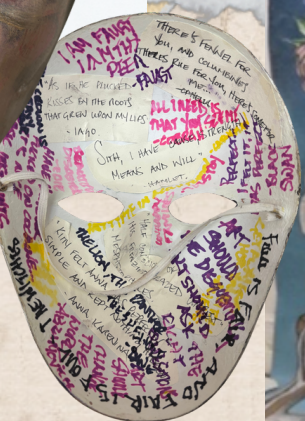
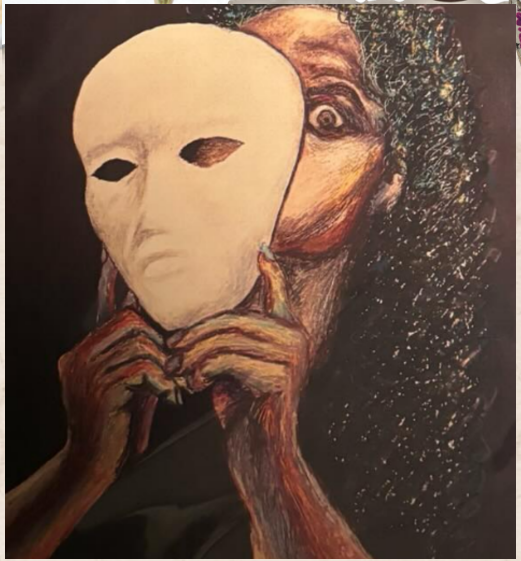
### The Masks that we Wear

The *Masks that we Wear* is an art directive where the participants at Artbeat Studio Residency used a paper mache mask to convey through art how they perceive themselves both inwardly and outwardly. On the outside of the mask the artists represented what they believe they show to the world and others around them, and on the back of the mask the artists detailed what they carry inside. This art directive was used to reflect upon the emotional quadrant of the Medicine Wheel, to delve deeper into the psyche and the soul, and to further explore their interpretation of themselves in an intuitive and creative way.

### ♥ ZINE

Each artist left with a customized ZINE as a keepsake for their time and contribution. A ZINE is a self-made paperback self-published magazine that is easy to make, using a photocopier, printed pictures, scissors, and paper. ZINE designs and examples can be found online and are a cost effective, not-for-profit hand-crafted item and/or memento.





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