

Stories from our Youth

*“I always liked art since I was a little child. Creating art was all I ever wanted to do. In my early teens, I fell into a depression. We lost a lot of people over the years, and locking myself in my bedroom with my art supplies was the only way I could release these strong emotions. I didn’t know how else to cope with the grieving. We do things that can help us in positive ways and art was one of them for me. I was using it as a healing tool, which I didn’t know at the time. I was good at it too, so it made me proud to have created such artwork that represented how I felt. I come from an artistic family. I knew it was going to be a big part of my life. **I have always wanted to pursue a career in art. Neechee Studio has been guiding me toward that path. I learned how to run a workshop, have confidence to speak and run a workshop, work as a team and being a part of a community.** Since then, I’ve been trying out different art forms which I enjoyed learning and I’ve enrolled in Fine Arts at Lakehead University. It’s important to be a part of something like it because it changes you.”*

- Lucille Atlookan, Lead Youth Outreach Coordinator and member of Eabametoong (Fort Hope) First Nation

“I’m recently new to Neechee Studio as I’m new to the Thunder Bay community but in my short time here it has giving me a fresh sense of direction toward how I want to take my artistic endeavors forward. It has inspired me to continue as a media artist as well as develop new forms of self expression. I feel that Neechee Studio offers youth an opportunity to find creativity within themselves and to start developing a sense of identity at young age. The cultural component toward the art is great to see because growing up I never had that at a community level. Neechee is a comforting space that can transcend many things through art and I feel creating art is a way to reach a form of awe we are all trying to experience.”

-Damien Bouchard is from Geraldton, Ontario and a member of the Aroland First Nation band. Damien is an audio-visual artist with a Diploma in Broadcasting at Confederation College in Thunder Bay, ON and a Diploma in Film from Capilano University

“I’m Nathaniel, I am from a reservation called Eabametoong First Nation; known as Fort Hope, Ontario. I like to do art because it can speak a thousand words and can do a lot of explaining no one could understand in reality. Neechee is important to me because it helps me to spend time with my cousin Lucille and it gets me closest to the arts core. Neechee is pretty important to me, I get to do something throughout the evening and I also get to meet some great people.”

-Nathaniel Roundhead (18)

“As some may know, the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings for residential school survivors was completed in 2015. Neechee Studio is doing some tremendous Reconciliation work by bridging the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth and creating a connection within the community. I would like to congratulate Neechee Studio for doing a great job: you may not realize it, but you are doing amazing work for Reconciliation and the workshop attendance exemplifies this. For Indigenous youth to learn traditional art skills that may have been forgotten is very important and allows them to create their own form of cultural resurgence.”

-Helen Pelletier, Indigenous Programs and Services Coordinator for the Ministry of Child and Youth Services