

# STORIES FROM THE LAND

## WHAT THE LAND TEACHES OVER TIME

WITH NICKIA MCIVOR  
FEBRUARY 2026



For Nickia McIvor, a relationship with the land was never something separate from everyday life. It was formed early through time spent alongside others, through watching, listening, and being present long before responsibility was expected. Those early experiences shaped how they learned, how they gained confidence, and how they came to feel at home on the land and water, creating a foundation that continues to influence their work and creative practice today.

“I would be taken out on the land a lot when I was young, even if I wasn’t old enough to help I enjoyed watching and learning. Then as I grew I was given more responsibilities, packing the sled, helping clean the animals, and taking my own snowmobile or four wheeler. Eventually I was the one taking my younger brother out bright and early to get his first moose.”

As Nickia grew older, time on the land became less about tagging along and more about paying attention. Each outing added another layer of understanding, shaped by the people they went with and the knowledge they carried. The land revealed itself differently each time, not through formal lessons, but through shared experience, observation, and story.

“Every trip was learning something new, going out with different people who had different stories about which creek was always slushy, where the best place to ice fish was, or which spot had the best firewood. Then in 2017 I got a summer job on the Churchill River taking people out on tours. I had to learn where the rocks were, what animals we got during the season, and how to tell a boat of people all about it.”

By the time Nickia began working on the Churchill River, that accumulated knowledge shifted into something more deliberate. The river was now something they were responsible for. Guiding others meant reading the water carefully, anticipating change, and prioritizing both safety and story at the same time. Knowing where the rocks sat beneath the surface, when animals were likely to appear, and how the seasons shaped movement became part of daily work.

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Sharing that knowledge with others required translating lived experience into story. It meant noticing what people were curious about, what caught their attention, and how to speak about the land in ways that invited respect and care. Each tour became an opportunity to connect people to place through observation, humour, and life stories, grounding each experience in relationship and connection.

That sense of comfort on the land continues to shape how Nickia moves through the world today. Being out on the land and water carries a quiet confidence rooted in preparation, attentiveness, and care. “I feel comfortable and at home on the land and water, there’s a pride to going out and doing a good job.”

Over time, that relationship with the land began to show up beyond time spent outdoors. The same attentiveness, patience, and care that guided Nickia on the land started to influence how they approached creative work. What had been learned through movement, observation, and responsibility found its way into visual expression, becoming another way of telling stories, sharing knowledge, and caring for the places that shaped them.



“My art is heavily inspired by the good feelings of being out there, whether it’s personal projects or design jobs they usually tie into the land or are inspired by it. Most of my moodboards have pictures of the land in them either for colours or shape language. If I’m stuck on a project, going out for a walk can always help get my brain out of its rut.”

Through this creative work, Nickia sees art not as something separate from the land, but as another way of being in relationship with it. “Anyone’s art could be used as a tool for stewardship and educating people. I’ve created graphics for all sorts of projects relating to our lands and waters: an ethical harvesting poster, a research graphic on light geese in the north, and a historical timeline of the relationship of polar bears and people. I enjoy seeing people’s different skills and efforts they put into taking care of the land.

Nickia’s story reflects how relationships with land are built over time and carried forward in many forms. What began with watching and listening grew into responsibility, confidence, and care, and now continues through creative work that invites others into that relationship. The land remains a teacher, not only shaping how Nickia moves through the world, but reminding us that stewardship is shared work. Through stories, art, and everyday actions, those relationships are strengthened and passed on, ensuring the land and water are cared for by many hands, across generations.

“It takes a village and that applies to our land and waters especially. From our youth to our knowledge keepers, there’s a role for everyone.”

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