



Canadian
Ocean
Literacy
Coalition

La coalition
canadienne de
la connaissance
de l'océan



UNDERSTANDING OCEAN LITERACY IN CANADA
EXPLORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OCEAN THROUGH ART
INUIT NUNANGAT
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Editor: Lisa (Diz) Glithero



BECKY OKATSIK

Becky is from a community in Nunavut, where she first found her passion working with youth to educate others about her Inuit culture.

After attending her first year with Nunavut Sivuniksavut, she took an opportunity to be a part of a memorable adventure with Students On Ice in 2011. Since then, Becky has been teaching at schools while educating her students about the importance of the environment, Inuit culture, and language. After years of working in schools, Becky decided to attend her second year with Nunavut Sivuniksavut where she studied Political Science, Community Development, Implementation of the NLCA (Nunavut Land Claims Agreement), the Circumpolar world, to name a few.

Not only is she advocating for Inuit youth, Becky is an artist by heart, creating paintings depicting the beauty of Inuit Culture.



ARTIST STATEMENT

ONE WITH THE OCEAN

12" x 24" on stretched canvas

Nuliajuk, or Sedna, is one of many legends/myths from our Inuit culture. Nuliajuk, our sea goddess, was an Inuk woman who was thrown into the sea after she refused to marry. She is the key to how our sea mammals came to form and live. She is at the forefront to our connection with the salt waters.

I had painted her portrait with the inspiration of the connection and respect we have for our waters, and the mammals that live in it, in mind. Inuit depend on the ocean to hunt and travel whether it be summer or winter.

Over the years of painting in my spare time, I naturally gravitate towards portraits of women with traditional Inuit tattoos as seen in her portrait. I wanted to show her beauty through my eyes and humanize her to give the audience some perspective on what she would have looked like. With my art, I choose to show the beauty of our culture, as I am passionate about educating others about my Inuit traditions and history; art is a good way for storytelling.

I grew up fishing with my dad with his gill nets by our cabin near the shore (Hudson's Bay) every summer. There were some amazing opportunities to see seals and beluga whales from our cabin down at the shore which was pretty cool as I had only seen them on the dinner table or on the cardboard tables at feasts. It gave me a newfound appreciation for our hunters and our connection to the sea and its mammals.

This project allowed me to reflect on our history and traditions around the ocean and sea ice. It also brought back many memories whether it was to be back at home or out on the expeditions with Students On Ice where I have worked for the past 2 years. I hope that future generations of Inuit are able to have similar experiences and appreciate our history, culture, connection to the ocean, and the food it has to offer.

IF YOU AND THE OCEAN SPOKE THE SAME LANGUAGE, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO EACH OTHER?

“Thank you for providing us food
and I’m sorry for the pollution.”

“Stay calm.”

“Is our ocean contaminated
now, who is causing the
contamination?”

“Qujanamiik tariuq, tariumiutaanik
niqiqatikaptigut! Thank you ocean,
for supplying us sea foods!”

“Through calm and storm you are
our provider Thank you for giving
us life giving food.”

“Be nice to me and I will be nice to you.”

“I’d ask the ocean to tell me
the history of the Inuit before
the Canadian government and
churches killed our religion.”

“We both come from strong
forces, and together we can flow
beautifully. ♥”



“Be calm and bountiful so that we can have a great day while you keep the water calm and the ocean bountiful, I can have a great day boating.”

“ You have provided us with food, water to refresh and transport. I do my part to keep you clean by cleaning the beaches, reducing plastics and polymers. What more should we do? “

“I'd thank the ocean.”

“Nice to meet Ocean. I'm Nuliajuk, let's surf the waves together.”

“Keep the Kingdom of the Arctic Sea Clean please.”

“How can we take better care of you? We need you for our healthy food.”

“Kusanaq “
(Greenlandic for ‘thank you’)

“Qaunagiluta sugupta tamaani qaanani uvlum ilaganni. Take care of us however we may be on this earth.”

“Wonderful picture. Quujanamiik for making us thank our most Inuit resource. We are most dependent on our sea.”

“Like the current of the sea, your emotions will run calm like day to the stormy nights. Swim with or against the current.”

“Please save our mammals while we can, sea creatures while we can.”

“I'm so sorry Inuit have been so disrespectful of you with their modern day prowess.”

“Keep providing.”

“Qujannamiiraaluk nirijaksaptini saqqitsuungugavit! (Thank you very much for providing our food).”

“The storm & calm come from the same place, stay balanced.”

“When is the best time to set my fish nets, so that I can catch really good fish when the meat is nice and orange/red?”

