

A JOURNEY OF LIFE, LEARNING, AND ART.

By Debbie McClure

Artist
Spotlight

When he was about 10 years old, Jeffrey "Red Dog" George saw a sketch of a native medicine man, and was intrigued. That first experiment has led to an artistic journey that continues to grow and develop.

For young Jeff, doodling and drawing were a way to express his imagination, thoughts, and emotions. In his mid-20s he started painting in earnest, having realized he had a gift that he wanted to share. He wanted to inspire others with his native art, which is suffused in rich, vibrant colours that tell the indigenous stories he'd grown up with and continues to learn about. In fact, he's the first indigenous person to be accepted into the Ontario Art Society of Canada, and credit's local artist Josie Britton for sponsoring him.

When asked what inspires him in his paintings, Red quickly responds, *"Nature, animals, my culture, the spirit of the land, and all the emotions connected with those experiences."* He recounts how one of his first professional paintings, entitled *"Youth and Elder"* was inspired at a time when he was going through a difficult time and met local resident, Bob Kennedy, a man who would become his "adopted father" and mentor. Red says he was seeking guidance and advice on how to create a better direction in life. He now wishes to inspire others to make positive choices, and says that *"some people work to make a living, some inspire others to make a life."*

One of the ways Red communicates the meaning behind his paintings is to write short stories about the images and indigenous meanings behind them. His goal is to educate and inspire others to respect the earth more, the value of walking a good path, getting in tune with nature and themselves, and of course, to make them feel good on the inside.

"My paintings speak for me. They're related to truth and reconciliation, and bringing people together in healthy, positive ways."

Red's current artwork is a commissioned piece for St. Paul's Cathedral in London, Ontario of Jesus carrying a cross. In this piece he has also incorporated the Medicine Wheel, which is inclusive of all races, religions, and nationalities—encompassing the whole of man.

Currently he's working on two murals at the Kettle and Stoney Point Hillside Public School. One depicts a turtle, which is about truth and reconciliation, and the other is of a family of wolves, which talks to the importance of healthy families.

Red's work can be found at www.reddogartstudio.com, and is available in Marten Arts in Bayfield on Main Street and Gallery Indigena, in Stratford, Ontario. If you attend any of the upcoming Kettle and Stoney Point Pow Wows, you just mind find him there.

