

STEAM Education in Curve Lake First Nation

STEAM Gikinoow'amaagowin O'shkiigmong Maa

Traditionally recognized as Wabaskamag or O'shkiigmong, [Curve Lake First Nation](#) is a Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg community in southeastern Ontario. The community prides itself on preserving its unique dialect of Anishnaabemowin (i.e., the Ojibwe language), along with its diverse traditions and ceremonial practices. Over the past 100 years, Curve Lake has faced many challenges, including, but not limited to, transmitting its language and ceremonies to the younger generations, maintaining its cultural identity—and, of utmost importance, protecting its territorial lands and waters in perpetuity for future generations to enjoy as those before them have. Unfortunately, through various legislation and

government-sanctioned projects, our lands and waters have drastically deteriorated.

During a two-week camp hosted by the Pinnguaq Association and Curve Lake First Nation with the help of the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), the state of the bodies of water that surround us was portrayed by young people using a variety of art media. Over the course of the camp, youth from our community were involved in several computer-related programs that relate to STEAM education. The predominant theme expressed in the artwork the youth produced was directly linked to the degradation of the water systems throughout Curve Lake territory.

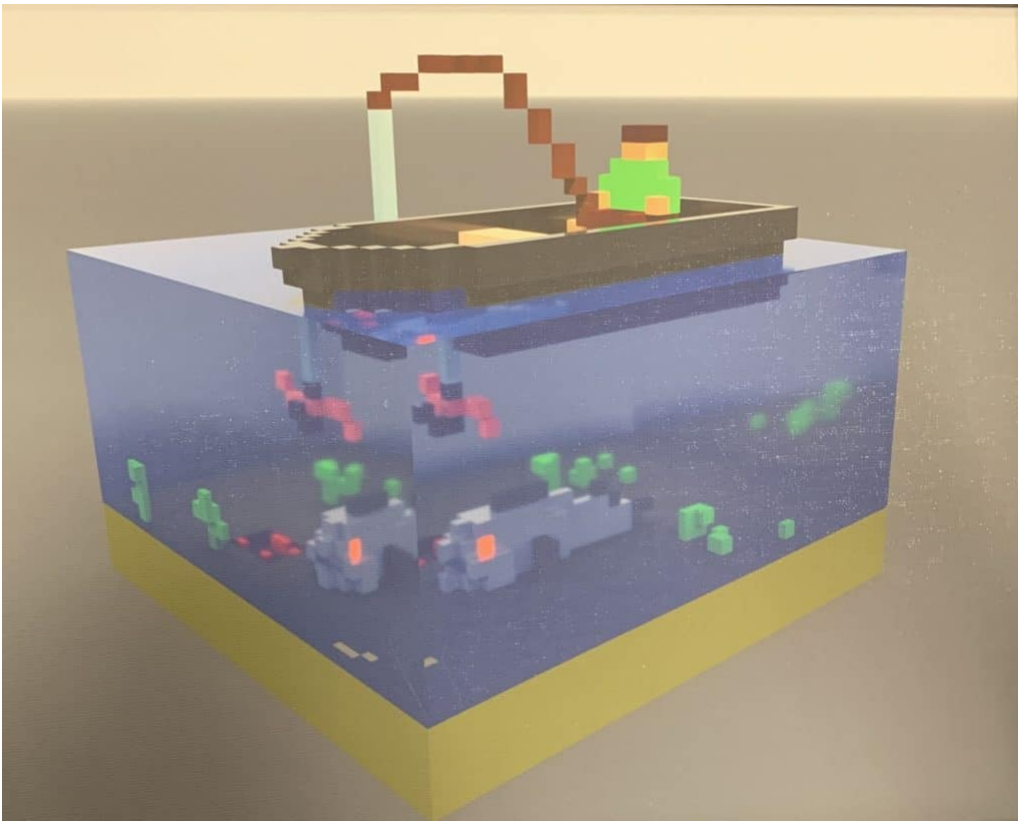


Figure 1 - Voxel art created by Tomson Knott during camp.

One hundred years ago, our lakes were so pristine that our Elders remember drinking from their waters. With the increase of tourism in the region, the water quality started to deteriorate. During hot summers, we cannot even swim in the lakes, due to various pathogens and algae blooms. Curve Lake First Nation has been under a boil-water advisory alert for the past 50 years: we have to outsource clean drinking water, even though the municipalities that surround us have access to it.

Throughout the images that were created by Curve Lake youth, the socio-political aspects of the state of the water within our territorial lands will become apparent. As Michi Saagiig Anishnaabeg, we have been tasked with acting as the natural stewards of this land. But ask yourself this question: How can we all come together and work collaboratively and in unison to ensure future generations can enjoy this water as we have done in the past? After all, without water, all life as we know it would perish. It is extremely unfortunate that today's youth must face this issue, but this is the harsh reality we are leaving our future generations to deal with if we do not do something about it now.

Curve Lake First Nation and Pinnguaq are currently in the process of developing a makerspace that will utilize the components of STEAM education to educate our youth in the knowledge of these subjects. We are certain we will be giving young people the tools and resources that will allow them to combat the cultural and environmental issues in the near future, as they are the leaders of tomorrow.

~ Ni Kina Ganaa – To All My Relations ~

About the author

Jack Hoggarth

Jack Hoggarth is the Cultural Archivist at the Curve Lake Cultural Centre in Curve Lake First Nation. The Centre works to increase access to education in the visual and performing arts, culture and humanities for Curve Lake residents of all ages, with specific concentration on youth development and professional growth.