

In May of 2017 SNAP Gallery exhibited a series of new prints by Edmonton Artist Laura Grier who is of the Deline First Nation. Grier has been a dedicated member of the SNAP community and produced work in the SNAP Printshop developing and deepening her knowledge of her ancestral First Nation's history and refining her technical expertise in printmaking. It has been exciting to witness Laura's work become more refined, clear, and powerful as she worked toward this exhibition. The series of prints exhibited in *Sahtuot'ine: Stories for Deline Elders* act as storytellers both of the Deline traditional knowledge and of this remarkable young artist learning her peoples' stories as an act of decolonization and cultural preservation.

The work *Tu Yele* was selected for nomination for its powerful content, linking past and present through the existing landscape and its embedded legends. The work in this exhibition resonated with our audiences and in the community because of the artist's generosity in sharing her own journey of discovery. Laura's experiences of growing up in a non-indigenous family and learning about her First Nation's history as an adult are not uncommon. Her expression through a contemporary medium succinctly combines the history of print media combining word and image as a storytelling device and makes her journey of engaging with her peoples traditional knowledge very accessible.

Artist Laura Grier writes about her work *Tu yele*

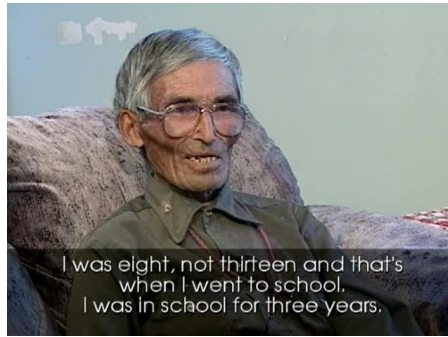
"Long ago there was a place where many canoes were lost in a large whirlpool. One morning a woman heard something in the water in the direction of Saoyu. She went outside to see what it was and saw a big animal going into the water where the whirlpool used to be. As soon as she saw it, the animal turned into a large rock. This animal, which was a giant mother wolf, turned into Gorabe Island. Today you can see the outline of a wolf, as well as the cave where the wolf once lived. Our elders taught us to show respect by making an offering when we are in the area. In the springtime, it is not wise to be near two pointed wolf ears because it will give a person snow blindness. It also is not wise to pass the island and right in front of the nose of the wolf because we believe the nose is guarded by unseen powers".



Image of Gorabe Island on Great Bear Lake NWT

Sahtuot'ine (meaning Great Bear People), is a series of two colour screen prints depicting various Sahtu Deline legends and stories. Being adopted into a non-indigenous family comes with various complexities and finding ways to balance inherited culture with my family can be difficult. Having been raised away from my traditional lands, I use printmaking as a tool to learn about my own Deline culture, and share the lessons that are embedded into their stories.

Tu Yele (Whirlpool) amongst all other prints in this series are titled in North Slavey, which is the language spoken in the Great Bear Lake region of the North West Territories. Though I do not know how to speak in North Slavey, I picked up a few words and sentences through my research. One night I was with my mother talking about some of these stories and we went online to find out more. We came across interviews of Elders, among them she pointed out my biological Grandfather. I found out that my Grandfather was an elder, and I have many biological family members who are cultural leaders. This had a huge impact on me and by finding out I have a history of leaders in my blood, I set out to create this series of Deline stories and legends.



Footage of Izuma TV Interview with Johnny Neyelle

I had come across the story of the mother wolf online that was told by various cultural people and elders. I found this story compelling and strong and while I read it, it conjured up beautiful imagery in my imagination. I have never been to Gorabe Island, but it is said to be sacred. Many Indigenous groups have similar stories of giant mother animals, which are underlining lessons. Storytelling is important in that it tells our history, our experiences, lessons to survive and, how to treat one another. To me this story tells that our land is sacred, that there are many dangers in this world and we must live by these teachings in our everyday life, whether we live in a big city, or a tiny town in the great north.

Mahsi Cho,

Laura Grier