

# ‘Gifts of the Heart Berry’

by Alisha Parks



In May 2022, Camosun student, Alisha Parks, gifted her painting, *Gifts of the Heart Berry* to Camosun College. This painting is an outcome from Alisha’s capstone project in the Indigenous Studies program. The goal of her project was to “collaborate on decolonizing accessibility at Camosun College”; the painting is a visual representation of the *Heart Berry Methodology* Alisha developed during her project.

**ARTIST’S BIO:**

Alisha Parks is Kanien’kehá:ka, (Mohawk) through her father and Irish/Danish through her mother. She has lived on WSÁNEĆ, Lekwungen and Songhees territories for most of her life. Alisha has been making art from an early age and has always regarded drawing as her first language. Alisha has traveled extensively but always regards BC west coast forests and shorelines as her home. All of these aspects of Alisha’s identity and experiences have influenced her artistic expressions.

Alisha would like to acknowledge that this project has been a collaboration with Hjalmer Wenstob, Sue Doner, Alison Bowe, and Andrew Louis.

*Gifts of the Heart Berry* is more than a beautiful picture. This painting is a visual representation of a framework based on Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing. In the service of both learning and decolonization, *Gifts of the Heart Berry* needs to be understood within the context of the *Heart Berry Methodology*.

The image should never be reproduced without crediting the artist and connecting the viewer to the *Heart Berry Methodology*.

The *Heart Berry Methodology* and image of the *Gifts of the Heart Berry* painting by Alisha Parks are licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.



To learn more about the artist, the *Heart Berry Methodology*, and permissions for reuse, visit the project website:  
<https://heartberrymethodology.opened.ca/>

## The Heart Berry Methodology

We can understand the heart berry plant as the collective community of Indigenous students with disability, allies, support and accessibility tools.



The roots reach deep into the land. They support and sustain the whole plant. Our roots connect us to our cultures. Accessibility that acknowledges and supports cultural identity and intersectionalities sustains and strengthens us.

The leaves transform the energy of sunlight into valuable nutrients. They are transformative locations that ensure the plant thrives. These transformative locations can look like collaborations, capacity building and reciprocal knowledge sharing. This fosters the creation of transformative spaces for disability and accessibility.



The flowers generate pollen. They are fertile grounds for generative idea creation regarding accessibility. This nurtures an understanding of disability through a social model and productive centers of accessibility. These flowers may be disability centers in academic institutions or accessibility tools. They are the basis for creativity, potentiality and abundance laying the foundation for the fruit to thrive.

The stems are supportive structures. They support and provide a framework for the various intersections, or avenues of accessibility needs. They are also conduits connecting rooted cultural knowledge with accessibility tools, support centers and education paradigms. And they support the potentiality of fruit.



The berries are the gift from the plants. They are the gifts that each Indigenous student with disability has to share. Each fruit is different in shape and texture. Each is unique and in differing stages of its own agentic expansion. Each fruit is filled with teachings, medicine, beauty, flavour, and nutrients. They are all nourishing and they all contain seeds.

The seeds are the unsprouted potentiality of the plant. They are the possibilities and potentialities generated by Indigenous students, academics, faculty and staff. When these seeds find nourishing soils, they become rooted and whole. This deepens our understanding of the actual accessibility needs of Indigenous students with disability and increases efficacy and capacity.



The shoots and runners that move outward and sideways take root in various places to increase the capacity of the plant. These are the various ways in which knowledge is produced, shared and transformed. This might look like research, individuals, space creation, specific funding, facilitation and so very much more. The possibilities are endless.

The hands are ancestors who have held us and brought us into being. The land and ecology are our ancestors and the concept of gifting is embedded within this ecology. The heart berry plant is a gift from the Creator.



The arrows represent the four sacred corners that are central to many Indigenous cosmologies. They represent outward growth, courage and protection.

The circles symbolize the cycles of seasons, time, and growth that are ever present in life.



The cedar frame teaches us about collaboration, collectivity, our cultural roots, the Creator’s medicine, our ancestor’s wisdom and love, and the daily practice of ceremony.