

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS  
**HISTORY**  
CENTER

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NEW EXHIBIT SHOWCASING NATIVE AMERICAN ART  
OPENS JULY 2 AT OLD SCHOOL HOUSE IN DOUGAS

JUNE 18, 2021 -- “Art of the People” -- a new, free, summer-long art exhibit highlighting the work of seven local-area Native American artists from the Anishinaabeg Culture -- will open Friday, July 2 at the Old School House, 130 Center St. in Douglas, from noon to 4pm. The exhibit will remain through October 10 for public viewing on weekends (Friday through Sunday, noon to 4pm).

Presented by Saugatuck Douglas Fennville Arts Initiative (SDFAI) in partnership with Saugatuck-Douglas History Center (SDHC), the exhibit is an extension of one originally shown at the Muskegon Museum of Art and Grand Valley State University, featuring sculpture, paintings, beadwork and mixed-media artworks. Visually combining respect of Anishinaabeg cultural traditions and images with contemporary sensitivities and themes, the collection addresses history, identity, social justice and environmental issues.

According to Jason Quigno, Anishinaabeg artist and guest curator of the MMA/GVSU exhibit, “the Anishinaabeg Peoples have inhabited the Great Lakes area of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and sections of Canada for thousands of years. They comprise several tribes that share similar languages and customs, including the Ojibwe, Bodawatami, Odawa, Salteaux, and Chippewa. Before the arrival of Europeans, the Anishinaabeg were a woodland people, drawing all of their food, shelter, and implements from the earth, lakes, and rivers that surrounded them. While most contemporary Anishinaabeg no longer live with the land, they remain a spiritual people tied closely to nature and surrounding cultural beliefs.”

Early artmaking, he explains, arose directly from the need to craft tools from wood and stone, and vessels from black ash, birch, and cedar. As these objects, both practical and ceremonial, were fabricated, they were embellished with woodland designs and motifs – flowers, vines, leaves, and animals – often to signify a name or clan. This knowledge of craft and design was passed down to each new generation, which they adapted to their own circumstances and resources.

Today, many Anishinaabeg artists continue to work in the traditional media while others have moved into painting, photography, filmmaking, and sculpture. Whether through traditional or modern materials, Anishinaabeg art continues telling stories that carry knowledge to future generations. “Art of the People”, Quigno notes, “is a rare opportunity for the viewer to explore these points of view and discover the traditions that inspire them”

SDFAI is a recently formed, community-sponsored collective dedicated to placing highly interactive visual, performing, culinary, healing and horticultural arts in public venues where tourists and area residents visit often. Initiated by local artist Maryjo Lemanski and success coach Ray Hippolyte, its stated goal is to educate diverse audiences and spark their interest in the arts, in support of cultural enrichment, community development and economic growth.

“Art of the People” is one of six SDFAI programs planned for this summer in a collaborative effort involving different exhibits and performances at Saugatuck-Douglas District Library, Fennville District Library, Wade’s Bayou in Douglas and SDHC, to be publicly announced separately. For full information about SDFAI and its schedule of summer activities, visit [www.sdfai.org](http://www.sdfai.org).

Saugatuck-Douglas History Center is supported in part by the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA) and the National Endowment for the Arts. For more information about SDHC, its Museum in Saugatuck and Old School House in Douglas, and its activities planned for the months ahead, visit [www.MySDHistory.org](http://www.MySDHistory.org).

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PHOTO ATTACHED SEPARATELY (see jpeg image: "SacredCircle")

Caption:

Anishinaabeg artist Le'Ana Asher's painting "Entering the Sacred Circle" is among the Native American artworks featured in the Old School House "Art of the People" exhibit opening July 2.

