

Thunder Bay Airport Unveils New Indigenous Artwork Across Terminal Check-In Counters

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The Thunder Bay International Airports Authority is proud to unveil a striking new collection of Indigenous artwork installed across the airport's check-in counters, creating a welcoming first impression for travellers while celebrating the rich culture, landscapes, and stories of Northwestern Ontario.

Developed in collaboration with Thunder Bay-based Indigenous artist Jessica Mamakeesick (Robinson), owner of Mamakeesick Roots, and Minwabi Interiors, the installation transforms the airport's newly designed common-use check-in counters into vibrant works of art. Three original paintings were adapted into multiple custom pieces to fit the various counter sizes throughout the terminal.

Jessica, an Oji-Cree artist with roots in Sandy Lake and Kee-Way-Win, Ontario, began her professional artistic journey in 2021 following a deeply personal experience that inspired her to reconnect with her creativity, culture, and identity. Today, through Mamakeesick Roots, she shares artwork that reflects healing, Indigenous teachings, and the beauty of the land.

The collection features three original works:

Guided by Seven reflects the Seven Grandfather Teachings: Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth which guide living in balance with one another and the world around us. Vibrant colours celebrate the beauty and diversity of life, while the Sleeping Giant and a feather symbolize protection, strength, and the enduring connection between the people, the teachings, and the land.

Spirit of the Mountain is inspired by Mount McKay (Anemki Wajiw), highlighting the relationship between land, water, and sky. The sun represents renewal and guidance, the mountain symbolizes strength and resilience, and the feathers throughout the painting represent the Thunderbirds; powerful symbols of protection.

Sacred Abundance celebrates the gifts of the land. The sun, water, berries, and plants represent life, nourishment, and renewal, while the bear symbolizes strength, protection, and healing. Together, the elements tell a story of resilience, gratitude, and connection to creation.



"Having my artwork featured at the Thunder Bay Airport is a true honour," said Jessica Mamakeesick (Robinson). "I hope it offers a warm welcome and gives visitors a sense of the beauty, culture, and spirit that make Northwestern Ontario so special, while highlighting our local landmarks such as Mount McKay and the Sleeping Giant."

The artwork is part of the Airport Authority's continued commitment to enhancing the passenger experience while creating meaningful connections to the region's identity and Indigenous heritage.

"Our airport is often the first and last impression visitors have of our region," said Jackie MacDonald, Director of Business Development & Revenue Management, Thunder Bay International Airports Authority. "We wanted our terminal to reflect the place we proudly call home. Jessica's artwork beautifully captures the landscapes, stories, and Indigenous culture that make Northwestern Ontario unique, creating a welcoming experience that is both authentic and memorable for every traveller who passes through our doors."

The project was brought to life through the creative collaboration of Open-Mind Interiors sister company, Minwabi Interiors, who designed the airport's new common-use check-in counters and worked closely with Jessica and the Airport Authority to thoughtfully integrate her artwork into the finished installation.

"We started Minwabi Interiors as a separate brand under the Open Mind Interiors umbrella to be able to provide uniquely designed products for commercial spaces featuring local indigenous art. This project is a fantastic example of what we can do through design to add some wow factor to any space," said Stacey Strey, Partner & Sales Manager, Open Mind Interiors. "The new check in counters throughout the Thunder Bay Airport were custom designed by Open Mind Interiors which are now wrapped in Jessica's beautiful artwork by Minwabi. Our team has been honoured to work closely with the TBIAA team on these recent upgrades, which we hope inspire local travellers and encourage visitors to learn more about the natural beauty of our great city."

The installation reflects the Thunder Bay International Airports Authority's ongoing efforts to create a terminal that showcases the people, culture, and natural beauty of Northwestern Ontario while providing an enhanced and memorable passenger experience.

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