



Niibii

A mural commissioned by Blandin Foundation

What is Niibii?

Niibii, the Ojibwe word for water, is a mural being created for placement on Blandin Foundation's building. It will depict an underwater scene with fish, otters, beavers and other creatures with different themes important to the Itasca area woven into the design, like forests/timber, the four seasons, recreation and other local symbols.

In the Ojibwe culture, rocks are the oldest, wisest beings on Earth. When water passes over rocks, it carries wisdom along to future generations. This is especially significant as our office building sits alongside the Mississippi River.

Who is creating Niibii?

Leah Yellowbird is a Grand Rapids-based painter and beadwork artist. Since 2013, Yellowbird has worked as a full-time artist. Her primary medium is painting, though recent works also include sculpture, mixed media and fiber art. With her Anishinaabe heritage as an inspiration, her work often reflects beadwork, with animals and Ojibwe floral motifs rendered in a pointillist style. She is a current Artist in Residence in Central School.

Where will Niibii go?

Niibii will fully cover the west-facing exterior wall of the Foundation's building. It will be mounted on Polytab mural fabric and mounted to the wall.

What the timeline for Niibii?

The creation process will go through August 2019. Installation will occur in mid-September.

Why is Blandin Foundation commissioning Niibii?

Blandin Foundation works for healthy, inclusive rural communities. In order for a community to be truly healthy, all dimensions – including opportunities to experience art and culture – must be nurtured. This is especially true in the Itasca area where Charles Blandin made his first investments in arts and recreation, including the Grand Rapids Marching Band and parks like Blandin Beach. He knew then what we know now – arts create a sense of place, a certain quality of life, that draws people and investment.

Can I get involved?

Yes! Niibii is being created to honor what local residents love most about living in the Itasca area. The intent is that the process and product will be of and for the community – contributing to the community's shared story. Community members are invited to visit the third floor of Old Central School (10 NW 5th St, Grand Rapids) to view and assist in painting the mural.

