



# Two Nature Artists in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia

by **MARY WOODBURY** /// EAC Volunteer

## Tiffany Morris

I met Tiffany when her most recent swampcore novel, *Green Fuse Burning*, was published. After quickly devouring the book and learning that the Ecology Action Centre's spring magazine would focus on art and environment, I chatted with Tiffany to learn more. Besides *Green Fuse Burning*, she is the author of the Elgin Award-winning horror poetry collection *Elegies of Rotting Stars* (Nictitating Books, 2022). Her work has appeared in the Indigenous horror anthology *Never Whistle At Night* (Vintage Books) as well as in *Nightmare Magazine*, *Uncanny Magazine* and *Apex Magazine*, among others. She earned an MA in English with a focus on Indigenous futurisms and apocalyptic literature.

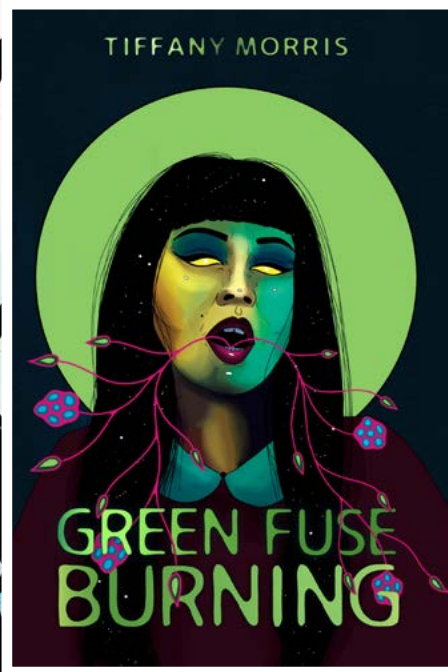
Tiffany is a firm believer in the Land Back movement. She told me, "As an L'nu'skw (Mi'kmaw woman), land is everything. I

feel very privileged to live in the place of my ancestors and to walk on the same land they did, even if it looks quite different than it did throughout their lifetimes." She holds the sacredness of the land close and loves to explore the many forests, waters and wild places of Nova Scotia. Tiffany finds special connections in places that feel ancient and unknowable. While some of the writing is apocalyptic – stemming from frustrations of oppression, alienation and exploitation – her prose also explores preservation of the ecological health of land and waters, and how bonding with nature increases joy.

*Green Fuse Burning*, for instance, was perplexing because, even though I'd never met Tiffany face-to-face, I recognized the natural habitat in the novel and appreciated the ecological weirdness (some might say horror) of it. One of my favorite characters was Lichen Woman. I hesitate to say more due to spoilers (read the book!). Tiffany explained to me how many people fail to live with considerations of land, and I agree. Every day, the world becomes stranger and more horrific due to the climate crisis and the denial and avoidance of how we should mitigate it. The "ecological weird" is a literary mode that can represent the uncanniness of climate change while opening the mind to new ways of thinking about transformation, appreciation and preservation of the natural world.

**Mary** (she/her) is an author and localization specialist residing in the outskirts of Kijipuktuk/Halifax. She likes to hike, jog and garden. She also curates [Dragonfly.eco](#), a site dedicated to rewilding fiction.

Tiffany's writing in *Green Fuse Burning* is highly creative and suspenseful, and connects readers to nature, environment and art. The same can be said about her short story "Night in the Chrysalis" in the recently published Indigenous anthology *Never Whistle at Night*. *Green Fuse Burning* is about an artist named Rita, and many chapters begin with an intriguing description of her artwork. These descriptions are visually rich because in her spare time Tiffany creates graphic and collage work, pastels and mixed-media photomontage paintings. Learn more about Tiffany and where to buy her books at [tiffmorris.com](http://tiffmorris.com).



## Quentin Little Wolf Syliboy

I first learned of Quentin Syliboy's art when my workplace did a spotlight on him. As he painted, he shared what motivated him to create. At age 28, he lost his mother unexpectedly. In her youth, she was forced into a residential school. Deciding that life is too short, Quentin began a personal journey to learn more about his culture. He paired that journey with his love for local nature. He developed his own unique style, tying ancestral art styles with modern techniques and influences.

To witness Quentin paint is moving. Tears formed in my eyes as he painted a hummingbird, bee, raven and more. It's not just the breathtaking beauty and style of each painting. Quentin shared personal, evocative stories as he worked. Many of these creatures are symbolic of certain Indigenous stories. The hummingbird is said to be the physical manifestation of a lost loved one. If you see one, you stop what you're doing, cherish that moment and think of that person. One story says the raven transformed the most beautiful flower into a hummingbird and instructed him to deliver a message to all the other flowers. It's why we observe hummingbirds quickly flying from flower to flower, whispering their thanks for making the world more beautiful. Quentin told me that hummingbirds and lupins rank among his favourites.

"Elegantly Departed" (of a queen bee) is an iconic work. This art represents the strength, resiliency and wisdom of Indigenous women. Quentin explained, "It's also a message of humanity's dependence on Mother Earth. And a beacon of hope. It reflects the hope that we can reconcile with each other as humans, and indeed with all life." On his Facebook page, he points out that the red honeycombs represent the Red Dress movement for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Blue ghost colours stand for those we've already lost. The queen bee's tear-filled eyes depict a mother's sadness for the loss. Bees are also at risk due to climate change. The multilayered symbolism within Quentin's art merges nature and native culture into potent messages – not just of loss and memory but of moving forward with strong, resilient actions.

Quentin's journey into painting was a positive experience. He's been a full-time artist for 13 years. He's also CEO of the non-profit Obsidian Studios: Cultural Learning Program, whose aim is to provide unique learning experiences through art. Participants use art as therapy by creating works that tell meaningful stories from their lives. Since 2015 the organization has raised over \$80,000 to bring the program to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. If that wasn't enough, Quentin also volunteers. He's helped the SPCA for over a decade. For over three years, he's developed art workshops for the East Hants community. Learn more at Quentin's [Facebook page](#) where you can contact him directly if you'd like to buy a painting.

**"Elegantly Departed" represents the strength, resiliency and wisdom of Indigenous women.**  
COURTESY Quentin Syliboy  
**Inset: The book cover of *Green Fuse Burning*.**  
COURTESY Stelliform Press