

## Lynda Stewart Bape Ande Kwe

My map is colored bright with some darkness much like the way my life has been. My outline represents me as a young girl (6) on a swing-seat, anchored to an oak tree. The outline of the support person representing me is a great oak tree and it is meant to be. Minwaashin Lodge, the Aboriginal Woman's Support Lodge, in Ottawa Ontario.

The tree shape is in a Christ like stance to reflect sacrifices made and suffered, and also my roots both true and learned. Minwaashin Lodge mothered and "grand-mothered" me so much that it seemed perfect to show these things together in something that has roots and hints of doe feet in life's waters. The tree has a staircase and a ladder at the base and these are meant to be the steps I was helped take to get up and out of where I was coming from. I painted myself swinging from the tree because I feel the healings and teachings . I received at Minwaashin Lodge allowed me to return to the time in my life where my sexual abuse began and reclaim my childhood. My moods were the only thing swinging in my life before I received their help. Like many other childhood sexual abuse survivors I did not trust authority, and was even less trusting of love.

Minwaashin Lodge became a home that I could model my own after and since walking through its doors five years ago I have grown in such leaps and bounds that I was able to create a map to show others how I arrived here. I was introduced to a Creator that I could find in nature and feel connected to through smudging. I had no home, no love, and a belief only in pain before I was a Minwaashin woman. My map is a picture of a life written by me. My tree and journey both have roots you can see the beginnings of, and branches that reach into the future. It has knots and gnarly parts but it also has a happy girl who found herself with her map. I initially placed my origin images, a cross made of a feather and a knife in the section that was to house my adulthood. It became clear to me that this was in fact where my childhood was because I still had not progressed in some ways into adulthood.

The cross represents my origins: my mother is a catholic woman who met my father while he was "in" a residential school. The feather is my native background and the knife is the part that cut it deeply. I then placed the image of a snake that begin in the origins but also winds throughout. I chose snake for it's obvious phallic representation and also the embodiment of evil from the Garden of Eden.