

# JAMES MISHIBINIJIMA

James was born on Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve 26 on Manitoulin Island, Ontario, Canada in 1954, and he is one of the preeminent international native artists with a stunning catalogue of breathtaking art that hangs in galleries, museums, government and corporate buildings in Canada and beyond. Over his 50 plus years as an artist, James has created his own original unique styles. His most celebrated is the iconic Spirit Mountains, most commonly know as the 'Mishmountain' series. These magnificent acrylic paintings depict various areas on and around Manitoulin Island. The magic in these works are not just the beautifully detailed combination of nature and mankind, but the stories within each painting. He also paints beautiful monochromatic landscapes, as well as a variety of Anishinaabe spirit paintings such as his grandfather, pictograph and symbol works.

As a young boy, James would visit Francis Kagige, a neighbour and well-respected Artist, who taught him the fundamentals of the craft while sharing stories about the spirits, legends and myths that were part of his heritage. He began to draw and paint images that came to him through his visions. His family and community elders taught him the language and traditions of his people which allowed him to transform from a painter into a visual storyteller. James began having visions which he attributes to his native heritage and the strong spirits that inhabit Manitoulin Island. These visions became clearer and more vivid after James survived a serious car crash that left him in a coma for four days. While in the coma, James traveled to a place where he could communicate with other spirits who told him that this was not his time and that he should go back and teach the traditional teachings. He uses those visions and spirits to shape his way of life and allowed them to create his spirit art.

Mishibiniijima's works have won countless awards including 1st Place and Best of Show at art shows and international exhibitions. He has been praised by critics and indigenous leaders alike and has been a passionate and effective community leader who fights for protection of the environment. James has been an advocate for keeping the native languages alive in our First Nations communities and schools. Before becoming a professional artist, James taught school in Wikwemikong where he educated his students about the importance of learning their heritage, language and the teachings of the seven grandfathers. James has released three books, Pictographs – The Graphic Art of James Simon Mishibiniijima (2017), and Indian Residential School Paintings (2019) and his new book, Seven Grandfather Teachings (2023).