

## ARTIST STATEMENT

When I was invited to collaborate with FCCAN on this project, I was excited to be involved with an organization who I feel deeply aligned with. What started out as a seemingly straightforward project—visually depicting the org’s guiding values—turned out to be a rich journey in ways I did not anticipate. In writing this statement, I was struck by how many of FCCAN’s guiding values showed up in the process of this project—accountability, community, creativity, and stewardship, to name a few. It feels important to ground this piece in the journey I took while creating it, and the lessons I will continue to learn from.

The final piece depicts thirteen Native plant relatives who inhabit this landscape—yucca, cactus, corn, squash, beans, bearberry, ponderosa pine, white sage, bitterroot, wild onion, dandelion, aloe, and cedar. I arrived at these relatives through an imperfect process, which taught me things along the way. I began with the tool that was easiest for me to access—the internet—and researched plants native to this land, with a special focus on those who are used as soaps, medicine, and food by local Indigenous tribes like the Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Ute. Through a process of feedback with Indigenous community members affiliated with FCCAN, I learned a few things: firstly, I was reminded of the importance in centering Indigenous voices when projects intend to highlight Indigenous knowledge in any way. And, I was also given suggestions for plant relatives who I hadn’t thought to include. As a direct result of this process, I commit to shifting my practice to center a relational element, co-creating with fellow community members into the future.

My artistic style is characterized by a density of details. These are intended to draw the viewer in and hold their attention, inviting a visual exploration of the marks while also creating time and space for internal reflection. As I worked on this piece, I began to reflect: in order for any values to carry weight, they must be seen and held. I realized that nothing holds all of us more lovingly and unconditionally than the Earth. The ground beneath our feet has always been there; it connects us all. I also thought about this specific land—the land of so-called Fort Collins, its history, and my place and responsibility here. While the intended purpose of this piece was to highlight FCCAN’s guiding values, I hope that it also serves as an invitation for Fort Collins community members to investigate their own relationship to the land and to reflect on how we all—especially white people, like myself—can better connect to it and care for it, and to think about how we can learn from and actively support local Indigenous-led efforts.



CAPTION/IMAGE DESCRIPTION

Plants depicted (clockwise from top center): pinto beans; ponderosa pine; bearberry; white sage; bitterroot; yucca; cactus; squash and pumpkins; corn; aloe; cedar; dandelions; wild onion.

ALT TEXT

Illustration of Northern Colorado native plant relatives surrounding FCCAN's organizational values.