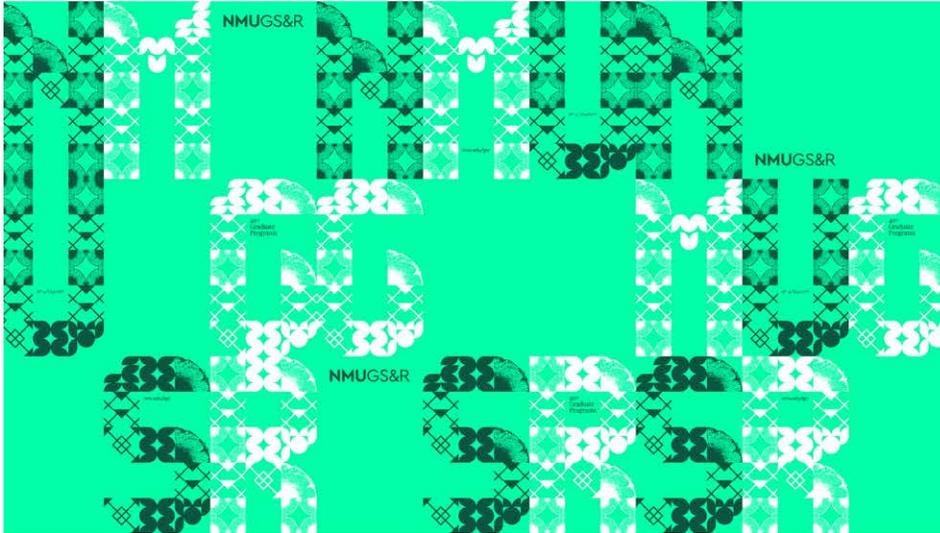


Design for a Nurturing Environment

The Story of the NMUGS&R Visual Identity

May, 2022 — FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



NMUGS&R Visual Identity

Northern Michigan University (NMU) is located on the pristine shores of Lake Superior in the city of Marquette, which places the university in a beautiful natural environment for a holistic education. It boasts a top-notch faculty and an intimate college-town feel. NMU has also been newly designated as a Rural Serving Institution (RSI) and has strong connections with the Indigenous People of the region.

Despite its unmistakable charm, being an RSI in Michigan's Upper Peninsula isn't without its challenges. The campus is a multiple-hour drive to any major city and Marquette is one of the snowiest places in the United States, with nearly 150 inches of annual snowfall. This can be a challenge for recruiting.

When NMU's College of Graduate Studies & Research (NMUGS&R) asked C-90 to create a visual identity to increase their visibility and public awareness, it presented a fascinating design problem.

Chris Ritter, Co-Founder/Creative Director at C-90, said, "Through our research and interviews with students and faculty, we found that some of the most unique things about the university—its remote setting, its harsh climate—were seen as barriers for prospective students. Our initial thoughts were to find ways to take these and make them positive differentiators for the university."

C-90's task was to visualize the program as one that "nurtures the kind of humans the future needs" while giving a nod to the university's natural environment and the distinctive spirit of Yoopers—the people of the Upper Peninsula. The development of the visual identity began with inspiration from four pillars: hygge, sisu, the Ojibwe, and the Upper Peninsula environment.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ABOUT C-90

C-90 is a full-service creative agency and culture lab serving clients that need to be noticed, refuse the status quo, and need co-conspirators.

C-90 specializes in brand strategy, visual identity, campaign development, and creative content and serve clients who move at the speed of culture. Their experience includes some of the world's most valuable brands.

ABOUT NMU

Northern Michigan University, located in Marquette, Michigan, is a dynamic four-year, public, comprehensive university that has grown its reputation based on its award-winning leadership programs, cutting-edge technology initiatives and nationally recognized academic programs.

NMU has a population of about 7,600 undergraduate and graduate students. It offers over 170 degree programs, including 25 graduate programs.

NMUGS&R VISUAL IDENTITY

CREDITS

Client: NMU College of Graduate Studies & Research

Agency: C-90 LTD

Strategy: Theo Erasmus

Design: Chris Ritter

CONTACT

Chris Ritter

chris@c-90.com

—

C-90 LTD

30 West 3rd Street, Suite 4R

Cincinnati, OH 45202

—

(513) 975-0017

Hygge and sisu are Scandinavian cultural concepts related to living in harsh, cold climates. Hygge is typically characterized by a sense of warm coziness combined with feelings of wellness/self-improvement. Sisu is the Finnish concept of stoic determination in the face of adversity. The Ojibwe (also known as Chippewa) are the largest group of Indigenous Peoples in the Upper Peninsula.

C-90's solution was to create a flexible design system that included a new wordmark, graphics system, custom typography, a unique color palette, layout system, and a brand architecture for connecting **NMUGS&R** with the NMU master brand.

Visual assets were developed to communicate each of the four design pillars and a graphics system inspired by the symmetrical forms of Ojibwe birchbark biting were developed to support the brand idea. Land acknowledgement was also added into the visual identity to pay respect to the Ojibwe and call out the university's unique location.

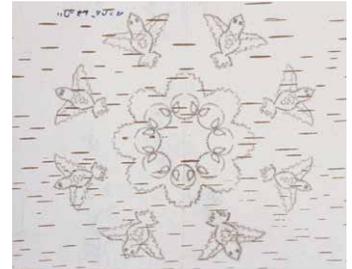
When asked about being inspired by the Ojibwe, Chris Ritter responded, "NMU's ties to the Indigenous Peoples of the Upper Peninsula was a new challenge for our team at C-90. It was important to us to not only pay tribute to the Ojibwe with the visual identity, but to do it in a modern and respectful way."

Amber Morseau, Director of Native American Studies for NMU added, "C-90 assembled respected experts in the field of Native American Studies to inform their design judgments and elevate the university's materials in a culturally-appreciative way. The willingness to learn and the intentionality to protect and preserve the cultural element was exhibited every step along the way."

Lisa Eckert, Dean of **NMUGS&R** stated, "As the College of Graduate Studies continues to refine our portfolio of graduate programs to focus on niche programs that align with the mission and values of NMU, we need to elevate our visibility on campus, in the region, and beyond. Not only did C-90 meet our challenge, but they helped articulate a vision for **NMUGS&R**, creating versatile and gorgeous visual assets for our new brand."

Project Link: c-90.com/work/nmu

Additional media available [upon request](#).



Birchbark Biting example,
image supplied by client.



NMUGS&R Visual Identity



NMUGS&R Visual Identity