

“Water”

05/2020

114 cm x 107 cm

Ink and Acrylic on Mulberry Paper

Cheryl Buckmaster

Your reading of this artwork will be unique because your personal experience with water is unique. Everyone’s water story is important and connected to others by water itself. Please take a few moments with the painting before reading my thoughts on it.

The collaboration was with Prairie Water, funded by Global Water Futures. My role was to create a piece of art based on my perception of the information presented at an annual conference that provided insights from scientific studies and models. The conference was attended by over 100 people from organizations that care for water and land including First Nations representatives from Mistawasis Nêhiyawak, watershed managers, and Saskatchewan farmers. The information gathered includes impactful water and environmental changes, and land based knowledge. The scientists are trying to get environmental research out to people to make a difference, instead of just being studies on shelves. I am grateful to be a part of this initiative.

Images are placed in relation to each other to convey meaning. In this piece, I painted ink and acrylic images on thin sheets of semi-transparent paper, and layered them. The entire painting is transparent and weaves together a water baby, snow, earth, cycles, a womb, intravenous water, treatment plants, a buffalo hoofprint, farmland, legislative buildings, a balance scale, wildlife, a handshake, and boulders in an assemblage of geography from southern to northern Saskatchewan. Together, the images create many layers of meaning. The depth of meaning grows independently in this piece because water is intrinsic.

Some intentional concepts:

First, thank you to Elder Roland Duquette for granting consent to symbolize the medicine wheel within this artwork, and thus, bringing balance to the work.

The snow on top baby. At the conference Roland Duquette spoke to me of how snow insulates like a blanket to protect the life beneath it, and how the plants under snow turn over periodically to feel the weight of snow, and when to push up. In this piece the snow is the water’s protective blanket, and the baby is able to turn underneath as the snow melts. As the globe warms and snow melts, water will push up.

The Water baby is water as a whole entity, and, the gift of life itself. Water- in need of respect, care, cleanliness, the freedom to exist, to flourish, and naturally evolve. Half the water is underground (prairie ground water). I sketched it at the conference off an internet image of “Fetus in the Womb” by Leonardo da Vinci, 1511. “Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else” - Leonardo da Vinci.

The (red) Buffalo hoof print is in middle of the circle, the horizontal earth line, the vertical precipitation line, and baby's chest. It is no coincidence that the hoof print resembles the shape of a pair of lungs. Millions of hoofs grinding their own waste, carcasses, and plants into the earth, forming the rich soil we still grow food in, eat from, drink from, and breathe today. The buffalo hoof print represents the reverberating effects of mass destruction of natural ecosystems. It is placed in the heart of the baby in reverence, gratitude, and as a core reminder of the need for balance and respect.

The Farmland repeats the blanket concept with the "quilted" farmland atop the snow. The quilted land blanket combines the need for caring and nurturing water baby with the need for food production. For prairie ecosystems survival, food production must co-exist with water, allowing water to move, and live, unpolluted.

The hand shake honors agreements, relationships, and land based knowledge. Networking across all sectors, communities, and cultures, spreading the word on respect for water. Working together to uphold positive relationships with water. Honoring people, countries, organizations guided by protocols and laws which promote responsible relationships with land, water, and animals.

Saskatchewan Legislative Building and balance scale speak about water being weightier than money, the weight of big business controlling water decisions at higher (and lower) levels, and a need for balance that is supported by law. Water needs rights, just as humans do.

The boulders on top of the Saskatchewan Legislative Building are knowledge keepers of the existential laws of nature. Pressure to support our innate responsibilities to water. 'Rights *to* water', 'rights *for* water' and the 'rights *of* water'.

See... the oil rigs, fracking, and drinking water jug?

See ...the map of roads, ponds, and culverts...the pipes, wildlife, and trickster?

See...the circle representing earth, cycles, and womb... the intravenous in water baby's hand?

See...the tree, water running through the roots and veins?

Thank you for looking.

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Please send artwork related comments and inquiries to:

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