



Canadian
Ocean
Literacy
Coalition

La coalition
canadienne de
la connaissance
de l'océan



UNDERSTANDING OCEAN LITERACY IN CANADA
EXPLORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE OCEAN THROUGH ART
INLAND REGION
JUNE 2020

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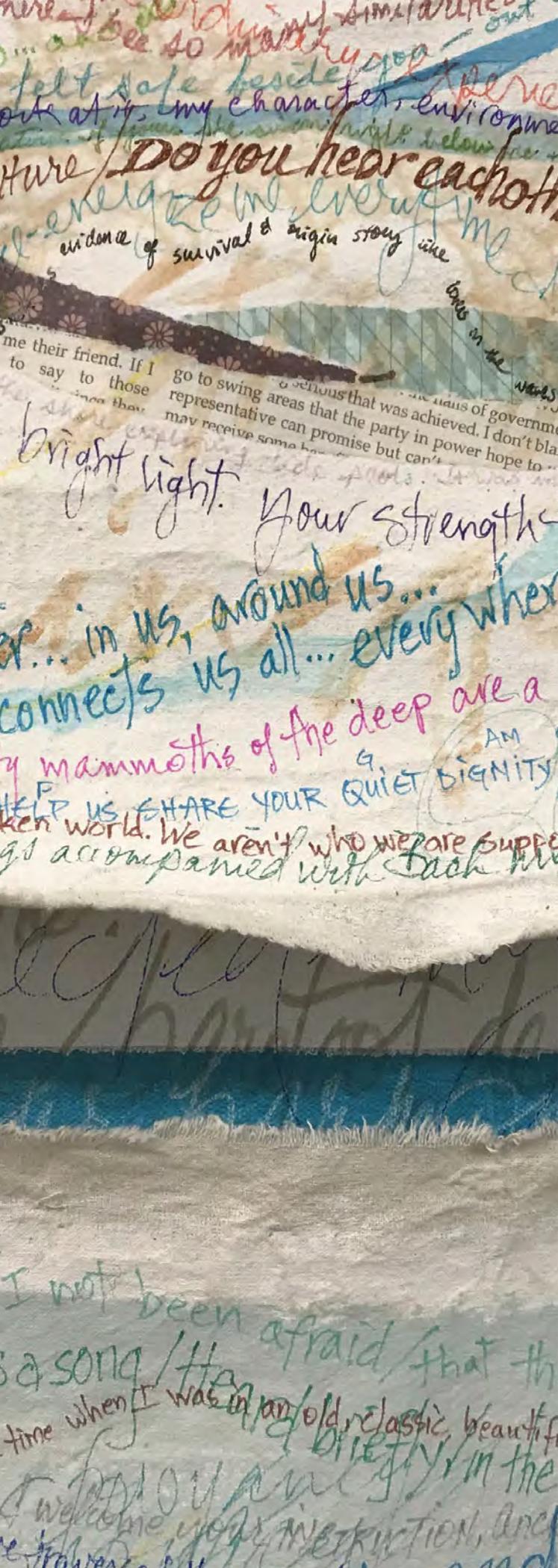
KAREN TAMMINGA-PATON

The subject matter of Karen's paintings reflect what has influenced her life: a big, noisy immigrant family, years of teaching high school fine arts and environmental stewardship; her wanderings along backcountry trails, and the many conversations about faith and the human condition over a good craft beer with friends. Her painting studio is in historical downtown Coleman, Alberta. Karen lives with her husband, Dale, in the Crowsnest Pass, where they raised three daughters and share the land with 2 dogs, 2 ducks and a growing population of gophers.

WWW.TAMMINGAPATON.COM



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ARTIST STATEMENT

"If humanity and the ocean spoke the same language, what would be said?"

I live in the mountainous landscape of southwestern Alberta, about as far from the sea as one can be. What do ranchers, heavy-duty mechanics, teachers and secretaries from this part of Canada, say to the ocean? How do we see Canada's extensive coastal waters in relation to our wheat fields and coalmines? Admittedly, the inquiry became personal; I had not considered Canada as an ocean nation.

In my hopes to engage all kinds of individuals in conversations about their relationship with the ocean, I painted a three-part piece that was intentionally large and visually accessible for us inlanders: a single humpback whale to represent Ocean; a grouping of hands representative of Humanity, and three strips of overlapping canvas for the conversation between the two. The intent was to invite individuals to write their imagined dialogue on to these strips. Arrangements had been made to set up at Calgary's new Central Library, a cafe in Lethbridge, a rural K-12 school and several smaller local gatherings with the hopes of accessing a broad demographic. Prior to that, I rolled the pieces up and brought them to a coffee shop, a seniors' complex, and a fellow artist's studio. They were my test runs. But social restrictions took place the day a group of enthusiastic kindergarteners visited my studio to "talk to the whale", the day before I was to head into Calgary, and as the pandemic spread across the globe, access to Alberta's free-ranging populous was suddenly cut off.

Social media became my new platform to gather contributions. Invitations to contribute through personal e-mails, Instagram, and Facebook were open to anyone from the three prairie provinces. I noticed a marked difference in comments. Now, individuals had time to think about what they wanted to say. Some pondered the question for weeks, had conversations together, played with ideas, gathered quotes. Original poetry and songs were created. Entire families got involved. Individuals within their circle were invited to participate. Whatever was sent to me was



transcribed on to the canvas strips with permanent coloured markers. Each contributor received a photo of their comment so they could visualize their words amongst the others. An unexpected byproduct was the cohesive nature of the writing. As the lone scribe, I could lay out text as its own design element. Sentences wove in and out of undulating lines created by papers collaged onto the canvas strips to provide compositional structure. I was also able to ensure that each contribution was legible, even where one overlapped with another – something that would have been difficult to ensure under my original plan.

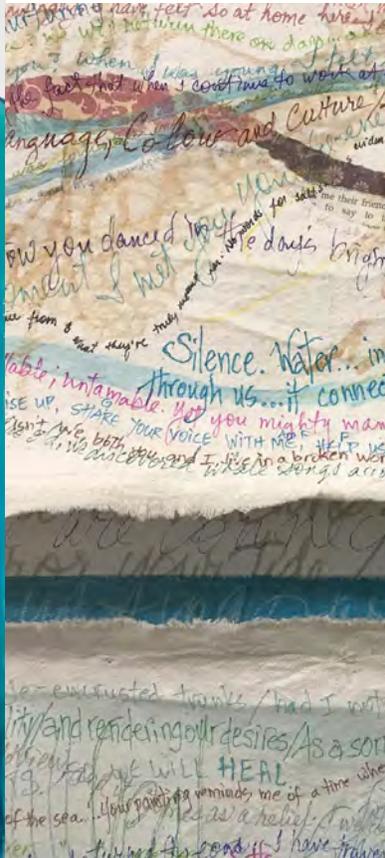
The middle “conversation” piece is comprised of two narrower strips of canvas pinned over a larger base canvas. Colours from the two flanking paintings, Ocean and Humanity, were applied to unify the entire piece. It is on this piece that the kindergartners wrote their words to the whale. Their large, wobbly letters interact with selected fragments of text I found particularly poignant, repeated over and over for emphasis. These words, combined with the handwritten words of the very young, seemed a fitting foundation for the thoughtful, provocative lines contributed by so many individuals.

What was accomplished?

There were conversations. Memories were evoked and stories were shared, some of which I was privileged to hear. But more importantly, I participated in the asking of searching questions. What actually got written on these canvases was a fraction of what was spoken. How does one measure that? One individual shared that she and her friends had an animated discussion ranging from plastics to politics, mixed with memories of clam digs and surfing. It got too much to summarize; she simply wrote, “Thank-you”.

And quiet gazes. Individuals stood in front of the whale long moments and spoke no words at all. “Why does this make me want to cry...?” one person asked. Another stood in front of the hands and wondered at the clamorous nature of them. I hadn’t intended them to be that way, I replied. We’re takers, he said, we must change.

As for the artist? She spent days, weeks, in the solitude of her studio painting a great whale she knew nothing about. As the whale took form, the two of them began a dialogue, spaced out between stretches of silence as they observed one another, curious, thinking about the other’s world. They are not the same after this encounter, of that I am certain.



Hello, you. I've looked forward to this for a long time [to write on this art piece]. Did you know, I used to dream of you? When I was young, I felt safe beside you – out of my element, but yet, my element, too. Tell me, what brings you joy? What brings you fear? I told you something about me, now, tell me something about you.

ARTIST, AGE 54
CROWNSNEST PASS, ALBERTA

Hello Ocean, I missed you. Thank you for hiding everything. I'm afraid of you. Thank you for being hidden. Ocean: thrum-hum-splash-splash-crash! Swish-swish-shhh. Lap-lap-keeeeeeer!

The spirit in you remembers the deep; we're created together.

PROFESSIONAL CAKE DECORATOR, AGE 24
CALGARY, AB

My most exhilarating and frightening friend!

TEACHER, AGE 40+
LUNDBRECK, AB

The sand between my toes, the sound of the waves crashing against the shore, the smell of the salt, the shells on the beach, the power of the waves, how majestic!

TEACHER, AGE 40+
LUNDBRECK, AB

You are here on earth, to unearth who you are.

TEACHER, AGE 38
LUNDBRECK, AB

Do you want to go to the bottom of the sea and eat krill?

Do you eat dog food?" [note: this young girl had big bags of dog food in her garage and wanted to share.]

Would you like to come to my sandbox?

[speaking for the whale] "Send food. I would like some fish"

Do you like the sand on the beach?

I love you and do you need food?

VARIOUS STUDENTS, AGE 6
COLEMAN, ALBERTA

To whale: Babe...is that you?! Whale to me: Jonah??

STUDENT, AGE 14,
GLADSTONE VALLEY, AB



I see you, dear one.

ARTIST, AGE 48
LETHBRIDGE, AB

Hello, Whale! I once was fortunate enough to meet a relative of yours. She swam right below me and filled me with awe. She was covered in scars and barnacles and my heart was saddened to see this. I am hoping your back is in better shape

RETIRED NURSE/GRANDMOTHER, AGE 94
PINCHER CREEK, AB

I do love you, Ocean... I emigrated to Canada and travelled across you as a girl, but I got so sick, so very sick, and ever since I've been a little afraid of you...though I do think you are beautiful...you are so large and I am so small.

GRANDMOTHER, AGE 80+
PINCHER CREEK, AB

Dini toh sind einmalig, so beruhigend und Friede pur. Bliib met eus!" [You are so unique, so soothing and peaceful. Stay with us!"]

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT, AGE 33
LUNDBRECK, AB

I am thinking of the time my children and grandchildren spent time along the shore exploring tide pools. It was magic.

SEAMSTRESS/GRANDMOTHER, AGE 83
PINCHER CREEK, AB

I'm sorry. :(

YOUNG MOTHER, AGE 30+
COLEMAN, AB

Beautiful.

GRANDMOTHER, AGE 80+
PINCHER CREEK, AB

I love you, sweet ocean waves. Your appearance at the dawn. You drifting beneath the morning fog. How you dance in the day's bright light. Your strength to carry us with such graceful ease. The beautiful life you carry such life within you. Generously you give your sweetness to our days. Thank you.

MOM AND HOMESCHOOLER, AGE 48
ST. ALBERT, AB

There's so much I don't know about you!

GRANDMOTHER, AGE 80+
PINCHER CREEK, AB

writing a love letter to the ocean
is as singing an aria to a
hurricane: there is nothing in
language for this
no words for the way I mirror your tide
barefoot devotee of your ebb and flow
returning to your shore over and over
like children in the surf do – learning
where their legs came from and what
they are truly meant for
no words for salt skin as evidence of
survival and origin story
of lovers in the waves in mid-winter
sprinting back to a warm car and each
other's arms, a single towel and gently-
seasoned kisses
no words for wet hair like a rallying cry to
climb back into the womb of creation
kiss it reckless inside out on its naval
to remind it that you are grateful
like divers off cliff sides risking safety for
buoyancy
no words for the cresting of an in-breath
giving up the bubble-gift of my lungfull
into undertow like an offering
the most precious thing I could ever give
back to you but somehow never big
enough to permeate the way it wants to
no words enough
so let it be I love you
let it be thank you
let it be I'm sorry
over and over like a prayer
like a pulse
like a tide
never a letter, only a life.

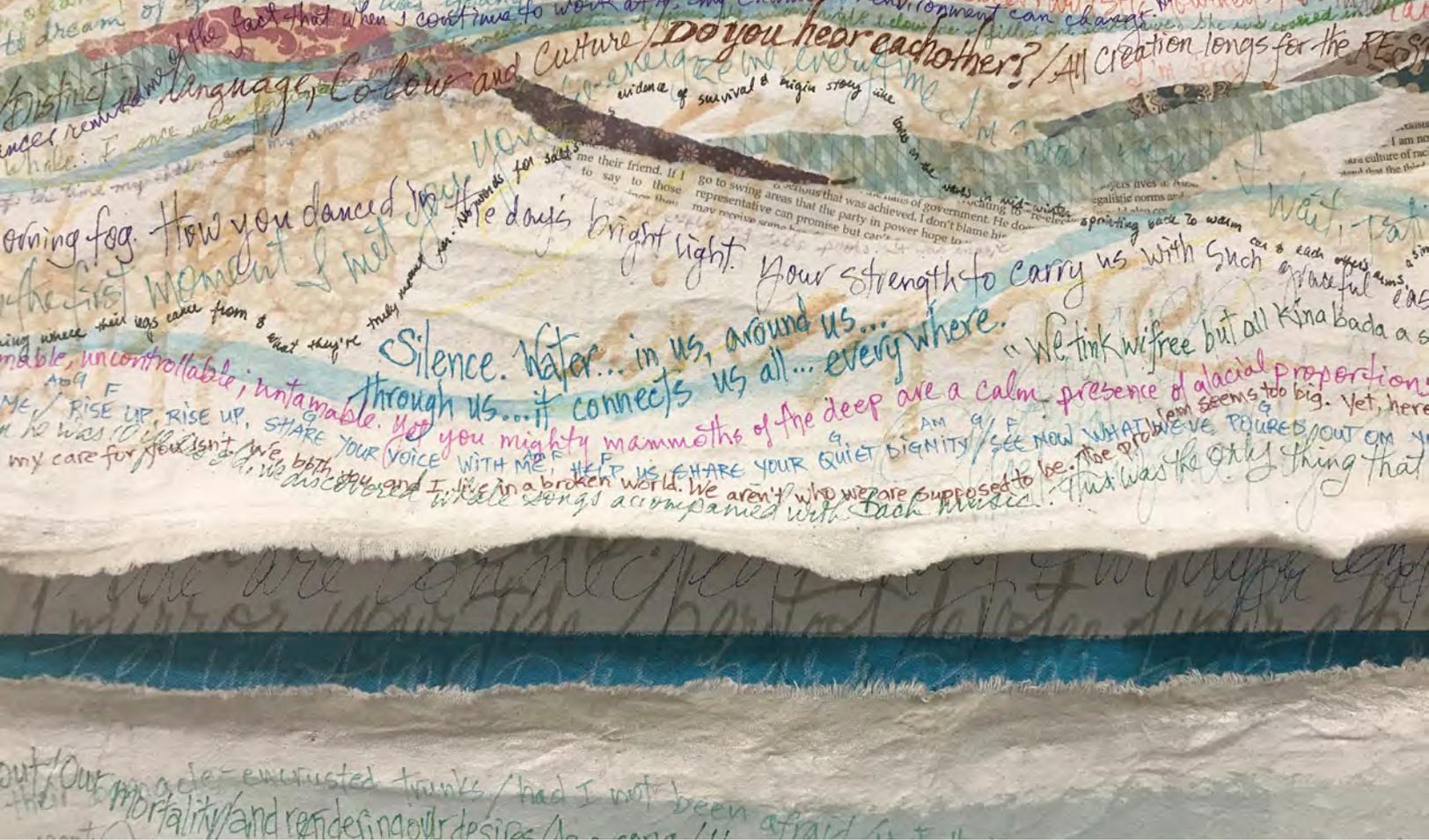
SPOKEN WORD POEM WRITTEN FOR THIS
PIECE BY SARAH J. VALIQUETTE, AGE 27
PINCHER CREEK, AB

WATCH A PERFORMANCE OF THE POEM HERE
[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/USER97106651](https://vimeo.com/user97106651)

If we are to talk, let us not start with words.
Let us take a long, loving look into one
another and feel our way.

FAMILY PHYSICIAN, AGE 33,
LETHBRIDGE, AB





I am curious and in awe of what you have...

TEACHER, AGE 43,
LUNDBRECK, AB

I would tell you how wonderfully beautiful you are! How the thought of everyone not doing everything they can to protect you makes me crazy! And how I've loved you all my life!"

VICE PRINCIPAL, AGE 49,
LUNDBRECK, AB

The ocean is good for the soul.

STAFF, AGE 40+,
LUNDBRECK, AB

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I've not cared for you more. I'm sorry for what we've done to your home. I'm sorry that I've not understood my role, and I'm sorry that you are so beautiful and I've not seen this beauty. But I could change.

LIBRARIAN/GRANDMOTHER, 80+
PINCHER CREEK, AB

What changes have you seen?

STAFF, AGE 30+,
LUNDBRECK, AB

I've watched you frolicking in the Pacific, teaching your calf. It filled me with awe and curiosity. If our oceans support such massive life like your's, can we pass downstream what you need to thrive? It's noisy on the land, compared to underwater. We need to listen to you. Give us advice and help us pass on water quality so that you stay healthy, can continue to raise young and astonish future generations.

OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST, AGE 55,
CROWSNEST PASS, AB

We are all drops of water sharing the same ocean.

JANITOR, AGE 52,
LUNDBRECK, AB

Silence Water...in us, around us, through us...it connects us all...everywhere. We would sing harmonies that rang through the depths.

ARTIST/TEACHER, AGE 65
ROSEBUD, AB

I've never stepped my foot into you, I feel left out and alone, I want to put both feet in and soak you up. <3

TEACHER, AGE 35,
LUNDBRECK, AB

Spray in the sun...so many miles to go each year. Let faith, not fear, be our guide.

SCHOOL COUNSELOR, AGE 57,
LUNDBRECK, AB

I love you. Sorry

STUDENT, AGE 7
COLEMAN, AB

STUDENT, AGE 11
COLEMAN, AB

This makes me think about how our shared language is one of joint experience. We are never alone in our suffering, or inspiration – whether in ordinary experiences, artistic journeys or interactions with nature and the world around us.

JOURNALIST, AGE 40
COLEMAN, AB

You touched my soul from the first moment I met you. You re-energize me every time I'm near you. I wait, patiently until we meet again.

RETAIL BUSINESS OWNER, AGE 51
CALGARY, AB

Forgive them, for they know not what they do.' And the words of a favourite hymn: 'When love is Lord of heaven and earth, how can I keep from singing?' None of these words are mine, but it's what I would want to communicate with another being...

RETIRED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT, AGE 72
LETHBRIDGE, AB

I would like to apologize for everything we have done and are doing to you!

TEACHER, AGE 40+,
LUNDBRECK, AB

Before moving to Alberta from Australia, I had lived by the ocean my entire life. I thought I was going to struggle, but surprisingly, I have felt so at home. I see so much similarity between the mountains and foothills and looking out over the movement of the prairies. It's like looking out upon the movement of the ocean. For me, the ocean is never far away.

HOMECARE NURSE, AUSTRALIAN-CANADIAN, AGE 52
BLAIRMORE, AB

It kinda reminds me of my vice principal at my school the bright colours for how bright she is and how happy she always is and the whale for how big her personality is.

STUDENT, AGE 16
LUNDBRECK, AB

As individuals I think our conversation with the ocean would be different than with humanity as a whole. But humanity is made up of individuals so I want to believe that our individual narrative can influence humanity as a whole and change this conversation...

Ocean: I'm sorry I upset you.

Humanity: You didn't upset me.

O: Then why do you treat me this way? I've gifted you with food, water, fun, beauty, life...do you not want these things? ... You must make a choice – your current lifestyle or the ocean? Your current lifestyle or food? Your current lifestyle or beauty and fun... your life?

FITNESS COMPANY ADMINISTRATOR, AGE 37
COLEMAN, AB





“There are so many things I wish we could say to each other...to love self, love our neighbours, care for each other as we care for ourselves and loved ones. If we truly cared for ourselves and our neighbours, we wouldn't treat each other the way we do. Dumping garbage and toxins and overfishing is not caring. I want to also say that my eldest son was diagnosed with severe ADHD as a young boy. We struggled through years of poor, restless sleep ...we tried everything. When he was 10 years old, we discovered whale songs accompanied with Bach classical music. This was the only thing that soothed him enough to finally sleep. He is 29 years old now and still listens to these songs to help him sleep. Dear whale, thank you for your soothing music.

ART TEACHER, AGE 48
MAGRATH, AB

Maybe we cry salty tears because the seas know sorrow.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT, FINE ARTS MAJOR, AGE 24
LUNDBRECK, AB

... a dive in Alor, Indonesia's Anemone Valley...a dream dive of mine...15 meters down...a pretty strong current helped us drift over a garden of anemone like the gift of flight in my neutral buoyant state...flying over acres of diverse types of clown fish darting in and out amongst the billions of waving polyps as far as I could see...a silent and peaceful magical dance...there is SO much beauty and so many fish going about their day in this little ecosystem. This must be one of the seven wonders of the underwater world.

FIBRE ARTIST, AGE 54
CALGARY, AB

This [the whale image] is supposed to be magical, but why is it so heartbreaking? As a child my dream was to meet a whale – I was obsessed. As an adult, if I had this opportunity, I'd be overwhelmed with sorrow and guilt. I feel robbed of this desire to have a pure moment because of the impurities of our world.

TEACHER/RANCHER, AGE 31
LUNDBRECK, AB

I'm sorry we don't take better care of you.

CERAMICS POTTER, AGE 50
COLEMAN, AB

I would explore the ocean with the whale asking it all my questions and searching for the most mysterious, unseen animals.

STUDENT, AGE 7
EDMONTON, AB

I imagine this: Whale asks of the Higher Power, 'Where were you when they came with harpoons?'

HP: I was lifting you up.

W: It was so painful and I was terrified, why didn't I see you?

HP: You couldn't see me...you were asleep in the palms of my hands.

W: Where are you now?

HP: I am here with you, open your eyes, shake the horrible memories from your mind. You are free in the universe with love wider than all the oceans to swim in for all eternity.

LANDLORD, AGE 46
BELLEVUE, AB

I need you more than ever.” “...me too.”

COFFEE SHOP OWNER, AGE 32
LETHBRIDGE, AB

Ocean: 'I am wild. I am essential. I am good. Linger with me. Care for me. Embrace me as I embrace you. Live as I live.' Humanity: 'As I slow down and linger, I see more. I cannot live without you. Your tides, your depths, your colours, the life that is in you, all wonders. I will embrace you as you will embrace me. Teach me to live as you live.' ...I love the ocean. Three years ago I lived my dream of learning to surf while in Costa Rica. Whenever I'm by the ocean, I am amazed at its power and vastness, and I feel great fear, respect, and serenity all at once. The constant sound of waves breaking is one of my favourite sounds to fall asleep and wake up to.

CHEF/MUSICIAN, AGE 40
LETHBRIDGE, AB

There are deep things in you; there are deep things in me. What does it feel like for these things to surface?

CORPORATE HEALTH SPECIALIST, AGE 40
LETHBRIDGE, AB

I'm sorry we didn't start fighting for you sooner.

UNIVERSITY STUDENT, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AGE 23
COLEMAN, AB

[haiku] Powerful ocean / Relentless rock eroder / I miss you greatly. Sea water runs through my veins, sea spray lights my soul, the crashing of waves on a deserted beach beats my heart and the smell of the ocean reminds me of how alive we can be when connected to the ocean.

KIWI-CANADIAN, GEOPHYSICIST, AGE 49
BELLEVUE, AB

HEALING. This is the word I am thinking of. This is my mother tongue, Arabic ___ [Arabic letters for 'healing']... all of us are healing now; nature is healing because us (the polluters) are staying home and us are healing because we are trying to change hundreds of years of bad habits.

SUPPLY SERVICE MANAGER, IRAQ-CANADIAN, AGE 45
CALGARY, AB

We would discuss secrets of the deep.

STUDENT, AGE 11
EDMONTON, AB

Why so dark? I am fearful of all that is unknown. Be it the depths, or the vast population you house. Though I am thankful for our relationship, I cherish our differences and seek to remain.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATOR, AGE 27
EDMONTON, AB

...on that misty mid-winter morning / Pacific greys – your cousin – swam so close to our panga / I could have reached over to caress / their barnacle-encrusted trunks / had I not been afraid / that they'd raise their flukes / slam them with a force to generate a wave / so high that we'd capsize / and then, tal vez, / perhaps we would have heard them.

AUTHOR, AGE 60
COLEMAN, AB

Love one another. I'm sorry.

RETIRED ENGLISH TEACHER, 70
BLAIRMORE, AB

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATOR, 26
CALGARY, AB



Coming from the UK, where no one is more than a four hour drive from the sea, I have often pondered how I could be so happy in landlocked Alberta! There is something deep in my soul which answers only to the voice of the sea. When I saw your painting, I was reminded of a time when I was in an old, classic, beautiful lady of a sailboat. We were anchored deep in Alert bay after a rough crossing. A solitary grey whale slowly circled around us, diving deep, and resurfacing many, many times. I thought of a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, "it is not the length of life, but the depth." Later, in the company of an incredible sunset, I opened my journal to a Vincent Van Gogh quote, "The heart of man is very much like the sea; it has its storms, it has its tides and its depths; it has its pearls, too." It was a gift of a day.

HEALTH CARE WORKER, AGE 65
PINCHER CREEK, AB

Whale: 'Wanna play? You guys should play more.' Humanity: 'Just a sec. I'll get my wet suit.'

MUSICIAN, AGE 43
BLAIRMORE, AB

When the music starts, let yourself go, and just dance, no matter who's there.

STUDENT, AGE 13
COLEMAN, AB

'When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.' - Rumi

RANCHER, AGE 68
RURAL PINCHER CREEK, AB

Carragio. May your heart make you grateful for simple things.

RETIRED TEACHER, AGE 75
CROWNSNEST PASS, AB

Dear 'Whales singing in the ocean deeps' (Psalm 8:8). At first glance, it seems you get a bad rap in the Judeo-Christian text, Jonah; after all, you swallow the prophet! But the reality is that you shelter and protect Jonah in your deep, beautiful and mysterious – yet uninhabitable by humans – ocean home. Thank you! And then after three days, you safely deposit Jonah on a beach – I love beaches! And in so doing, become a metaphor and vehicle for resurrection, new life, and life after death. How awesome is that. What a gift you are to all of us from the Creator. My hope and prayer is that we humans would return the favour and protect and care for you and your home in the same way.

COMMUNITY BUILDER, AGE 61
EDMONTON, AB

If we were given a second chance, can we promise to breathe life into you?

METAL SMITH, AGE 28
BELLEVUE, AB

It is important to understand our connection, reliance and interdependence on fresh water to our life. Water is the manifestation of a beautiful life cycle and our oceans are an integral part. We may live on the prairie, but our creeks and rivers are part of our oceans, and so are we.

LANDSCAPE ARTIST WITH MAP FOCUS, AGE 65
RED DEER, AB

I think of the ocean as a powerful force; capable of immense destruction and terrible beauty. Yet, she is also a mothering force; one of nurturing, life-giving and sustenance. Man is a destructive force; determined to control, manipulate and dominate the world around him in order to bend it to his insufferable will. As J.K. Rowling puts it, 'Neither can live while the other survives. Ours is the choice. We choose who dies.'

ARCHEOLOGY STUDENT, AGE 26
PINCHER CREEK, AB

I would just listen. I talk too much anyway. If I could just understand, I'd be more interested in what they'd say to me! FYI, my favourite Canadian band, Said the Whale.

PETROLEUM ENGINEER, OIL & GAS, AGE 34,
CALGARY, AB

We're all in this together. With oceans having garbage and raw sewage into it, with vast and productive landscapes being bought up just so more and more houses can be built on it...when is enough going to be enough? Where is the room for wildlife? What future do they have? What about their well being if they have to swim through miles of built up cities to survive? One of the pasture we rent has no houses for miles away in each direction. The peacefulness that you experience when you are out there horseback riding is indescribable. I'm certain there are still places like that in our oceans as well. But I believe as humans, we must step back and look at the big picture.

RANCHER, AGE 31,
RURAL PINCHER CREEK, AB

An original song created for this piece, watch [here](#). Chorus: I see you look at me cross the miles / of the deep blue sea, see through me / I offer you my hand from the mess we've made / of the promised land, see through me / vs 1: Rise up, rise up, share your voice with me / Help us share your quiet dignity / chorus / vs 2: See now what we've poured out on your home / Lend us your forgiveness for what's done / chorus

BECKY PICHURSKY, MUSICIAN, TEACHER, AGE 38,
BLAIRMORE, AB

Ancient cultures often considered seas a force of chaos; unfathomable, uncontrollable, untamable. Yet you mighty mammoths of the deep are a calm presence of glacial proportions and temperament. Would that I could know your long considered thoughts and understand your mournful, baritone timbered songs.

CHEF/MISSIONARY, AGE 38,
LAFLECHE, SK

How can you hold your breath under water?

STUDENT, AGE 5,
CALGARY, AB

To the Ocean: I am ignorant to your needs because you don't stare me in the face. You are distant and far from my mind. BUT ignorance is NOT bliss and I feel like I need to play a part. What can I do? How can I make a difference? What has God laid out for me to do? I am listening. Teach me...

Ocean to me: Caring for God's creation isn't limited to your location. When you care for the creation where you're at, you care for it all. Be mindful of your impact around you. The choices you make at home and work impact far beyond your immediate time and space. That's where you start...

SCIENCE TEACHER, AGE 41,
LETHBRIDGE, AB

I hope you know you are majestic!

SUPPLY CHAIN LEAD, OIL & GAS INDUSTRY, AGE 41,
CALGARY, AB

Wi tink wi free but all kina bada a stop wi, wi cya roan as wi want with out a VISA, yo truly free so swim the ocean whole heep deah deh fi si." [translation from Jamaican: We think we are free. But there are borders that stop us, we can't roam as we want to without a VISA. You are truly free so swim the ocean. There is a lot out there to see.]

JAMAICAN-CANADIAN, MECHANIC, AGE 33,
BROCKET, AB

You give me a sense of tranquility, open fins, like an invitation to be held. A wisdom, too, that the ocean knows things that we are just learning.

SCHOOL SECRETARY, AGE 52,
LUNDBRECK, AB

Martin Prechtel says that the ocean is salty because it is made of all the tears of all the world's losses since forever. It is the giant, salty womb of the earth. She is the capable healer, pulling down grief and converting pain into life. She is part of our community, who has received my grief and participated in my healing. How does one say thank you for that.

YOUTH LEADER, AGE 38,
BLAIRMORE, AB

Hola, and what is going on in your world?

STUDENT, AGE 9,
CALGARY, AB

The ocean, like music, is a vast expanse of emotional connection to strangers, lovers, children, every person on the face of the planet. With music we can transcend time, race, our differences, to commune with other human beings. Music connects us to each other with our hearts, our love. Music is the spider's string that bears the weight of all of our human experience; delicate and precious yet strong beyond measure.

MUSICIAN, AGE 40,
COLEMAN, AB

"Geheimnisvoll am lichten Tag / Läßt sich Natur des Schleiers nicht berauben, / Und was sie deinem Geist nicht offenbaren mag, / Das zwingst du ihr nicht ab mit Hebeln und mit Schrauben." – Goethe [translation from German: 'Mysterious in the light of day, nature retains her veil, despite our clamours: that which she does not willingly display cannot be wrenched from her with levers, screws and hammers.']

QUOTE OFFERED BY ENTREPRENEUR, AGE 50,
EDMONTON, AB

"What makes you happy?"

MECHANICAL ENGINEER, OIL & GAS, AGE 42,
CALGARY, AB

If we spoke the same language --? 'Peace to Power' and everything in between.

EMPTY NEST MOM/AVID RECYCLER/CANCER SURVIVOR; AGE 59
BLAIRMORE, AB

I think we (ocean/humanity) do speak the same language as we adapt and renew under challenging circumstances. I have personally found that often difficult circumstances remind me of the fact that when I continue to work at it, my character, environment, or both, can change. Much like the ocean.

ARTIST, AGE 53,
AIRDRIE, AB

Mer, je suis desolée de la façon dont nous te traitons. Tu es une si grande source de vie. Une étendue infinie, si puissante et mystérieuse. Nous sommes inséparables. S'il te plait, continue de nous aider à vivre; et d'être patiente avec nous. Et guide nous si possible – nous avons besoin de toi!" ... interesting fact: ocean (mer) is feminine in French and pronounced the same as the word mère (mother)." [translation: Ocean, I'm sorry for the way we have treated you. You are such a grand source of life; infinite, powerful, and mysterious. We are inseparable. Please help us continue to live, and be patient with us. And guide us, if possible - we need you!]

FRENCH-CANADIAN STAY-AT-HOME MOM, AGE 34,
FRANK, AB

I wish I would see what you see.

NURSE, AGE 29,
CALGARY, AB

In Cree we have Nipiy Atayokan, which means water spirit. My mother always said water is healing and this is true in other First Nations beliefs. That is why we cry, to wash away the pain. Water is also related to women, because they are 'water carriers'; when they are pregnant they carry their baby in water.

CREE TRADITIONAL HOOP DANCER, AGE 43,
FORT MACLEOD, AB

I hear the click of your camera / The sound of your boat and laughter / Can you hear me? / Even in the tribes of your own humanity / Distinct in language, colour and culture / Do you hear each other? / All creation longs for the restored rhythm / Cooperating, respecting and embracing / Do we hear each Other? / Sana all. [a Pilipino expression meaning 'I wish it was all of us']

YOUTH WORKER, MISSIONARY, AGE 65,
COLEMAN, AB

I don't know you, and you don't know me. We have never met before. We are separated by space, as many of us are. Often, that makes us think it's okay. It's not. My love for you is profound; however, my care for you isn't. We, both you and I, live in a broken world. We aren't who we are supposed to be. The problem seems too big. Yet, here you are, and I'm here too. Willing to have a conversation. I'll start ... I'm sorry. Can you help me to understand?

MOM/HOMESCHOOLER, AGE 33
COLEMAN, AB

Me to whale: "Věřím, že rozumíš ..." Whale to me: dar milosti, ale občas bolí ...[translation from Czech: Me to whale: 'I believe you understand...' Whale to me: 'I know the gift of mercy but it hurts at times...']

OWNER OF GUEST RANCH, AGE 43,
GLADSTONE VALLEY, AB

As the tamed horse / still hears the call of her wild brothers / and as the farmed goose flaps hopeful wings / as his sisters fly overhead / so too, perhaps, / the wild ones amongst us / are our only hope in calling us back / to our true nature' – Joel McKerrow. Wild. Senses awake ... Reconciled to our mortality. Skies, water, earth in me.

TEACHER, AGE 55,
BLAIRMORE, AB

"Si las ballenas y los humanos habláramos el mismo idioma, las ballenas podrían recordarnos como dejar ir las cosas con la gracia con la que el mar le da las olas a la playa." [translation from Spanish: If we spoke the same language, whales could remind humans the way to let go of things with the grace that the ocean gives the waves to the beach.]

ASSET COMMERCIAL LEAD FOR OIL AND GAS COMPANY,
CALGARY, AB

Please stop

STUDENT, AGE 17
LUNDBRECK, AB)

The ocean would sound like the voice of God. Peaceful. Present. Nothing would be said. All would be felt. Together we would speak the language of the heart. 'Let's get along. It's not too late.'

MOTIVATION COACH, AGE 35,
BLAIRMORE, AB

Please let us all pause, breathe, listen and hear deeply that we are held, that we are loved and do not need to live out of a spirit of scarcity. Please pause. Be filled so we can live generously with one another in that same love.

ARTIST, AGE 58,
ROSEBUD, AB

If we would learn this best way to live: Be slow to accuse, quick to forgive / Seldom in speech and often prayed / The last to hurt, the first to aid.

HEALTHCARE WORKER, AGE 40
LETHBRIDGE, AB

What a beautiful creation God made of you!

RETIRED MECHANIC, AGE 56,

Oh, Ocean, so long we have lived by you, and on you and still we ignore your lessons. The waves coming and going, and through the ever-changing tides you show us the impermanence of life, of love, of all things in time. Yet, we try to hold onto the fabric of our material lives, trying to gather more, until it passing through our fingers as though holding onto water.

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR/MASSAGE THERAPIST, AGE 40,
COLEMAN, AB

Gravitas. Gravitas in the face of the eternal; gravitas in this impermanence. Recognition of these opposites crack and fragment my worldview, and it comes as a relief. I welcome your instruction, Ancient One. My knees are bent. Eyes downcast. Yet my inward gaze is piercing and fixes on you as I lean toward your voice-beyond-words. I have longed for the carousel to slow its incessant turning on this thin surface. I have yearned for eyes to see beyond my hand, ears to hear through engine noise, to be liberated from my small here-and-now. This is your gift to us. Sober, yes, but brimming over with grace and redemption. And so I swim through open sky, and breathe in the deep seawater that circumvents my patch of earth. I am here. Being made anew even as I work the dirt through my toes. This is my offering.

ARTIST/TEACHER, AGE 62,
FRANK, AB

I am feeling profoundly sad... We are all of water... though many humans think they are better than ocean creatures. We will return there one day... and perhaps then, life on this beautiful blue planet will heal.

ARTIST, RANCHER, AGE 65
PICTURE BUTTE, AB

I'm looking for a small clown fish

AID WORKER, AGE 25,
CALGARY, AB

[note: regular font is for humanity; italics for ocean]
fleeting, *timeless*, pressure, *reprieve*, consume, *provide*, contaminate, *cleanse*, forgetful, *origin*, unrelenting, *enduring*, linear, *cyclical*, sporadic, *rhythmic*, progress, *balance*

SKI ACADEMY DIRECTOR, AGE 49,
COLEMAN, AB)

How far have you been today, and where have you gone?

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR, AGE 62,
CALGARY, AB

'He waka eke noa', a New Zealand proverb that holds significance for this whole journey of where the world is right now [with the pandemic], meaning , we are all in this canoe together.

TEACHER, AGE 24,
CALGARY, AB

You migrate through a polar sea to the southern tip of North America. I have navigated the mountains and studied migration. You have traversed oceans from north to south and your species has returned for eons. I have traversed the mountains up and down over 62 years. We are far away on scales of distance and time. The creation of the earth has embraced who we are; we are connected. In a global ecosystem, I pray our different, but intertwined niches will prevail and include each other. As it should, in a humble, respectful world.

CONSERVATION BIOLOGIST, AGE 62,

In this now / Of love and plague / This viral leviathan / Sifts through our vulnerabilities / Plunging to our fearful depths / With its baleen then / Sorting out / Our mortality / And rendering our desires / As a song / Heard briefly / In the background of our vanities / ...then I draw / Another thankful deep breath.

ORIGINAL POEM WRITTEN FOR THIS PROJECT
BY TONY PARTRIDGE, ARTIST, AGE 72
COLEMAN, AB

Finally, I understand.

STAFF, AGE 40+
LUNDBRECK, AB

In the ocean
Without motion
There's commotion

What a notion
A devotion
My emotion

When she tosses you around
All the distant spilling sounds
So here's to all the ones when she finally
dragged them down

As I see the land behind me I feel
everything will start to wash away
Floating in the salty nectar of the gods I
seize the day

Idle years and idle faults by idle sails she
pushes me away
You can beg for her forgiveness but never can you have
your debt repay

It wasn't our first fight you know she's
spun around and pulled me down before
Every time I fought with everything I had
and always came up for more

I'm sure she had her reasons maybe
loneliness took hold the deep blue sea
She could have had a king, a queen, a prince
but she settled down with me

ORIGINAL WORK SUBMITTED BY RESPONDENT, AGE 35
WINNIPEG, MB

I understand now, we are not so different.

NURSE ON THE FRONTLINES, AGE 33,
BLAIRMORE, AB

Life is like an ocean – sometimes calm, sometimes rough,
but always beautiful.

PROJECT MANAGER, AGE 64,
HILLCREST, AB

Your spirit-filled groans are being heard / one day all
manner of things will be well / for all of us together

RETIRED TEACHER, AGE 64,
LACOMBE, AB

**When I look at the whale, I think, 'serenity'; when I
look at the hands, I think of helping hands to keep
oceans healthy and well. It's our responsibility.**

POWER ENGINEER, TRANSPORT COMPANY, AGE 57
MAGRATH, AB

Who are you waving at, whale?

UNIVERSITY STUDENT, AGE 24,
CALGARY, AB



ORIGINAL PIECE OF ART FROM PARTICIPANT, AGE 33
WINNIPEG, MB