



SIGNS OF WATER: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON WATER, RESPONSIBILITY, AND HOPE

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V. RESPONSES: Two Canadian Community Models



Photo courtesy Robert Boschman

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Introduction

At this time, anything is possible.

—Sharon Meier MacDonald, Chapter 14

The new perspective is a blend of both views.

—Bill Bunn and Robert Boschman, Chapter 15

Signs of water exist in our communities in relationship to people in places—places and relationships drenched in sensory experience. As explained in the preceding sections, signs and practical responses to issues of water stewardship arise from the aesthetic, philosophical, historical, and cultural attunement to water. Immersed in sensation of sights, sounds, and scents, people and communities called to intervene may take on the solidity of a mountain, or the stillness or motion of water, as they respond to changes and challenges in their midst. Like the performances showcased in Harrison’s meditative poetry, Lin and Neumark’s stunning score, and Amos’ Red Alert piercing art project, different communities embody their attunement in locally relevant ways that signal more universal political and social relations of power. As this phenomenon is currently studied by those seeking to understand ecological grief and responses to climate emergencies, we ask ourselves how is it that some people and communities respond to the challenges before them, while others seemingly freeze, hoping instead that by not responding the troubles in the waters will simply float on by. How is it that communities and people turn away from the practical responses that will support their own survival?

These questions, and other important contexts rich in community experiences, are explored through two Canadian case studies. The Ghost River story by Sharon Meier MacDonald is filled with descriptions of everyday qualities and characters found in any good ghost story: the community regrouping various protagonists ready to face the ghost of clear-cut logging at a crucial headwaters site. Bunn and Boschmann go on

to showcase the impact of resource extraction on the waters of Uranium City, through powerful sensory experiences in the story-telling traditions of knowledge-keepers and photographic accounts. In both these cases, we are brought into the slow, unglamorous muddy work of learning and listening, which is essential for communities to respond to water stewardship—and the opportunities only available therein.

—Robert Boschman and Sonya Jakubec, editors