

Video “Speaking to the Water” Pat McCabe <https://www.patmccabe.net/talks-and-interviews>

How is your relationship with water? Do you understand it to be alive, to have the ability to listen and communicate with us, to unite us?

It’s not something we, as European settlers generally understand and accept. Some might even say it’s just a bunch of woo-woo. But our indigenous siblings know it as part of their story, their understanding of creation and their awareness of the interconnectedness of all things.

Our scripture reading today, sometimes known as the second creation story, aligns with this thinking as it talks about the importance of water and the interconnectedness of all creation. There was no plant or herb in the fields ... until water started to come up from the ground. It was only then, the story goes, that humans came upon the earth and gardens were created and trees grew. Water: alive, conscious, necessary for all of life.

Here in Kelowna, we rely on water that comes from the Okanagan Watershed. It is a water supply “that spans from Armstrong to the US Border and includes six main lakes –Kalamalka, Wood, Okanagan, Skaha, Vaseux and Osoyoos, [as well as] the surrounding mountains. ... The Okanagan [Watershed or] Basin includes all the land that feeds water to our big lakes ... [It] is almost 200 km in length and 8,000 km² in area.”ⁱ The water from these lakes drains into the Okanagan River which “flows south ... as a small tributary [in]to the Columbia River, ... past the city of Portland, to the Pacific Ocean”ⁱⁱ and beyond.

Protection and care of these waters is essential for our lives, for our economy and for the world. According to research, “The Okanagan has the lowest per person water supply in Canada. [However] the average Okanagan resident uses ... more than double the Canadian average.”ⁱⁱⁱ Due in large part to the necessary use of water for our orchards and vineyards.

It will serve us well to be attentive not only to our water usage, but also to the ways in which we understand water. The indigenous peoples of this land know the gift of water, the importance of giving thanks for AND to the water. Their ancestors have taught them the interconnectedness of all things and thus they have a deep respect and concern for the well-being of all creation, starting with the water that sustains life. For us to take time to study, listen and learn from them is a step toward true reconciliation with their peoples and with creation.

So, I encourage you this week, when you are out for a stroll, walking by the creek or along the lake, stop and give thanks to the water; listen for how it may respond; and take action to protect it from harm.

After all, this is the same water that our ancestors drank, the same water that Jesus drank, the same water that our great great grandchildren will drink. How we treat the water here, in the Okanagan, will impact the quality of water around the world and for generations to come. May these waters hear and carry our prayers for a renewed earth, and a renewed relationship with the indigenous peoples, so that God's work might be done, and all life be sustained. Amen

ⁱ The Okanagan Basin. <https://www.obwb.ca/wsd/about/state-of-the-basin>

ⁱⁱ ibid ⁱⁱⁱ ibid