

ART, WATER, AND CIRCLES: IN WHAT WAYS DO STUDY CIRCLES EMPOWER  
ARTISTS TO BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS AROUND WATER ISSUES

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A DISSERTATION

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*Gaia*

By artist "MP" (reproduced with permission)  
WaterWorks Art Exhibition, Duluth, MN July 2009

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

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ARTISTS TO BECOME COMMUNITY LEADERS AROUND WATER ISSUES

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## Abstract

This research explored the use of study circles as a means of engaging artists in dialogue with their peers about water related concerns. The question driving this research was, “In what ways do study circles empower artists to become community leaders around water issues?” Secondary questions focused on emerging environmental, water, and social justice themes as well as examples of increased water awareness and behavior change occurring as a result of individual participation in the study circles. Artists have a unique way of commanding attention and communicating about environmental concerns while functioning as catalysts for activism on a variety of social topics. Barndt (2004, 2006, 2008) has written extensively about the nexus between community-based art, activism and action research, as well as identifying the important differences in participation and intent behind community-based art versus art as commodity. This research incorporated the use of study circles (also known as dialogue groups, dialogue circles, or talking circles) with artists to learn how study circles empower artists to become community leaders. Literature focusing on civic engagement and the arts has looked at the process of utilizing the arts to engage the public in dialogue about a social concern. This research differs in that it focused on how a dialogue process impacts artists. Seventeen artists participated in four study circle sessions that encouraged in-depth dialogue on water quality concerns. Lohan’s (2008) *Water Consciousness: How we all Have to Change to Protect our Most Critical Resources* was used as a study guide and to focus the dialogue sessions. The artists participated in one-on-one semi-structured interviews to help clarify the relationship between the study circles and their own water awareness as well as community building, collaboration, and/or leadership among the artists. A focus group

was used to obtain feedback on the value of study circles for social change. Key findings from this research conclude that the study circles brought about new methods for problem identification and solving, individual behavior changes, a deeper understanding for others, and the dialogue provided a powerful catalyst for collaboration, leadership and relationship building. The electronic version of this dissertation is available in the open access OhioLink EDT Center, [www.ohiolink.edu/edt](http://www.ohiolink.edu/edt)



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## Chapter I: Introduction

What is it about water that draws us to the banks of a river to hear and feel the thunder of a waterfall, or entices us to throw a stone into a pond and watch the ripples until they fade, or just to sit silently and watch a rising sun lift off of the edge of Lake Superior? Water is, quite simply, the element that sustains all life on our planet Earth, but water is more than biological nourishment for human life, water also replenishes our human spirit (France, 2003). For example, many cultures around the world treat water as sacred and often integrate water into rituals and ceremony (Garcia & Santistevan, 2008).

Despite the vital importance of water, one can look anywhere on our planet and find stressed water systems (Brown, 2008; Gore, 2007; Lohan, 2008; Marks, 2001). Glaciers that once replenished rivers, irrigated crops, and provided drinking water are now disappearing due to climate change. Around the world, groundwater is being pumped for industrial agriculture at a rate far faster than precipitation can replenish. Water is being privatized in developing countries forcing people to pay for what they can't afford.

And if you want the perfect symbol for the high-consumption 21<sup>st</sup> century, look at a plastic bottle of water, fast replacing the SUV as the ultimate metaphor for our craziness. To take a product that is freely available to everyone in the West, and to turn it into a commodity, and to burn incredible amounts of energy shipping it around the world, and to create small mountain ranges of empty bottles – that is enough to tell you how out of control our consumer society has become. (McKibben, 2008, p. 10)

To further emphasize the craziness that McKibben speaks to, a consumer can now find bottled water for dogs at pet supply stores.

This imminent water catastrophe that is at our doorstep boils down to a crisis of leadership, and the command and control regulations of the past are no longer appropriate

to deal with environmental concerns. Communities are beginning to turn towards localization and away from globalization, especially for energy and food resources (Brown, 2008). Democracy is becoming more deliberative, more meaningful, and more inclusive than ever before (Lappe, 2006). Likewise, leadership is beginning to look more like collaboration than the hierarchies of the past. As we move into the uncharted territory of climate change, I'd like to argue that we need more diversity in our collaborative decision making efforts, and that artists have a crucial role to play in increasing a community's environmental awareness, in developing common areas such as green space, and in being involved in the redesign of cities to create sustainable communities.

This research explored the use of study circles as a means of engaging artists to come together in dialogue with their peers to learn about and discuss water related concerns. The research behind this study was driven by the question, "In what ways do study circles empower artists to become community leaders around water issues?" This research focused specifically on the use of study circles as a means to raise awareness, leadership identity, and efficacy amongst artists. This research and dissertation was one component of a larger action research project that occurred in Duluth, Minnesota, and which included the creation of art to raise awareness amongst the public about water.

### *Positioning the Researcher*

It was in a northern Minnesota stream three decades ago where I witnessed an aquatic ecologist flip over a rock and point out a bug that she called a Water Penny (Psephenidae Family). In a matter-of-fact voice she stated that this particular bug was an indicator of clean, unpolluted water. At that time I had no idea that some aquatic macro-

invertebrates could live only in unpolluted water, and that others were quite tolerant of pollution. That moment, in that river, became a pivotal point in the direction that my life has taken, and I have spent many years since then both learning and teaching about water and the environmental policies that are designed to protect water quality. I have come to realize that environmental issues are human issues and that I had spent much of my scholastic energy learning about environmental laws and aquatic ecology. It was this budding awareness that drove my desire to enter Antioch's Ph.D. program in Leadership and Change and this dissertation is a reflection of my learning and growth in the social sciences and through that program.

I have great concern for our planet and all of the life that calls it home. As Dolman (2008) poignantly states, "Ecological illiteracy is the single greatest global epidemic we face as a human species today" (p. 100). It is clear to me that we need people who can bring about both leadership and change to our deteriorating environment. My passion and spiritual connection to water has led me to my life's work. This dissertation is another chapter of that work, and one that is helping me find the necessary pieces to make a difference in a world that desperately needs leaders who understand the principles of both aquatic ecology and human nature.

My research and dissertation brings together the often disparate disciplines of art, water, and community building dialogue, and weaves those disciplines together into a unified whole through the use of a study circle research project. It is a false dichotomy to place art and science into isolated units of study as is so common in the academy, and it has been my pleasure to merge these fields together in my research. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot addresses this as she discusses a research technique called portraiture:

Two decades of practicing portraiture have also taught me that the boundaries that we draw between scientific and artistic representations of reality not only produce distorted caricatures of each realm but also blind us to the similarities and resonances between them. (2005, p. 13)

My life as an educator changed course in the mid-1990s as I witnessed how art could both educate and motivate the public towards an increased environmental awareness. During that time I was involved in co-creating a regional art show (which was named Keepers of the Waters) with internationally renowned environmental artist Betsy Damon. We invited water scientists from federal and state agencies to educate artists about local water quality concerns. The artists then took that scientific and technical information to their studios to create their art. The result was a wide array of visual art encompassing all media types, and which spoke of passion and concern for Lake Superior. But what opened my heart and mind the most concerning this exhibition was how the art educated the public about water, and in a way that I had never witnessed before.

My experience with this water focused art exhibition led me to understand that art has a way of speaking that is much more powerful than words. It was through this experience that I realized that art could be a compelling way to educate people about the Earth, and that we desperately need the creativity and brilliance of artists to help the rest of us see through new eyes, and understand that another way is possible. Barndt (2006) echoes these sentiments by stating that the art medium is “not as important as their relationship to the context, the way they are produced and how they are used” and that the important questions behind activist art focus on the “*why* and *for whom* of artmaking” (p. 18). In the case of the Keepers of the Waters art exhibition, the *why* came from a place of passion, and the *for whom* focused on raising awareness within the viewing



public. The combination of the *why* and *for whom* merged to form a very powerful catalyst to educating the public on issues related to Lake Superior.

### *Statement of Issue*

Numerous and overwhelming challenges about water are facing humanity. These include water scarcity, effects of global warming on glaciers that provide drinking water for millions of people, toxic pollution, endocrine disrupting chemicals found in drinking water in industrialized countries, and the privatization of drinking water in several developing countries to name but a few (Brown 2008; Gore, 2007; Lohan, 2008; Marks, 2001). Closer to my home, Lake Superior faces a number of issues including: invasive exotic species, concern over the approaching VHS fish virus (currently in all the Great Lakes except for Lake Superior), fluctuating water levels (related to climate changes) that effect the shipping industry and aquatic life, toxic contamination, development pressures that cause habitat destruction and related stormwater runoff pollution (Bails et al., 2005). In short, humanity needs a crash course in water awareness.

Artists are visionary members of the “creative class” (Florida, 2005) who have an uncanny way of communicating social concerns. As discussed in Chapter Two, artists of all types have been involved in creating art to educate, raise awareness, and address issues of social concerns. This question occurred to me; what if artists from a particular community were provided with that crash course in water awareness and then had free reign to create art with the goal of raising water consciousness among the public? This dissertation was the first part of a more complex action research project that included the creation of art based on what the artists learned from the study circle process, as well as

an exhibition that was on display during Lake Superior Day (July 19, 2009), and questionnaires provided to the public to learn how the art influenced them.

### *Purpose of Study*

The purpose of this study was to provide the catalyst for a collaborative learning and dialogue experience amongst artists, and to understand how a “study circle” process (defined later in this chapter) affects each individual.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study led to the following research related questions:

1. What water-related environmental issues capture the attention of the artists and why? What themes emerge from their group discussions and in one-on-one interviews, and how do the artists frame those themes?
2. In what ways does the study circle process build a sense of individual or collaborative leadership among the artists?
3. In what ways does the project change the artists’ view of themselves?
4. In what ways did artists’ water awareness change, and has that brought about change in their own behaviors?
5. Since artists commonly work independently, how did the dialogue and group processes with other artists work for them?

### *Gap in the Literature*

After conducting an extensive literature review I found just a few art-based, action-research based, and/or art to dialogue programs. However:

1. Little literature exists on the use of study circles (as defined in Chapter Three) specifically with artists. Literature that discussed artists, dialogue, and/or study

- circles either addressed collaborative circles among artists created for friendship, group development and social support (Farrell & Shih, 2007 published as a conference paper by the American Sociological Association) or newsletter articles published by the Photographic Society of America focusing on portrait study groups (McCreary, 2004) or digital study groups (Photographic Society of America Journal, July 2008) created as a mechanism for critique of photographs as well as knowledge and skill development.
2. Art to dialogue projects such as the Animating Democracy project (see Chapter Two), where art was used as the catalyst for public dialogue on a topic, have been designed with the viewing public in mind and collected no data about the impact of these projects on the artists themselves. For example, the arts-based research projects found in the literature were designed for educating and raising awareness in the public about social issues. Even when the participants were involved in researching an issue (such as creating a play about that issue in order to educate the broader public), data were not collected on the impact on the artists themselves.
  3. Little knowledge exists about using study circles with artists and how the study circle process may facilitate behavior change, or the magnitude of the impact of such a project on those who create the art.

In addition, observations made about the Animating Democracy project stated:

“...while the civil impacts of this work have been observed in anecdotal ways, there is a need for more formal evaluation methods to truly illuminate the short and long-term effects of arts-based civic dialogue.” (Schaffer Bacon, Yuen, & Korza, 1999, p. 38)

Although the above quote is focused on the lack of information about the impacts of art and dialogue projects on the viewing public, the same lack of information exists regarding the impact of study circles on the artists who engage in them.

Finding this gap in the research literature, I have conducted a research project that used study circles focused on water awareness as a catalyst to facilitate dialogue amongst artists. At the onset of developing this research I anticipated that the dialogue would provide a rich tapestry of thoughts and ideas that would collectively raise the awareness of the participating artists. By asking specific interview questions of each artist, I have gained an understanding about the impacts of the dialogue process, how learning was internalized for each participant, how the process led to leadership and collaboration for some artists, and how the artists framed and/or reframed water issues.

### *Study Design*

Nineteen people were recruited (though two dropped out after the first meeting) from Duluth and vicinity to participate in an intensive study circle process consisting of four two-hour sessions. Study circle dialogue was guided by the use of water related readings and a video (see Chapter Three) and maintained an emphasis on both global and local water resources (discussed more in Chapter Two). Four study circles were held and all but the first were audio-recorded and transcribed. Upon completion of the study circles, one-on-one semi-structured interviews occurred with thirteen of the seventeen artists to determine the impact and value of the study circles. A focus group of five artists convened to discuss the value and role of study circles for bringing about social change. This session was audio recorded and transcribed. In addition, I maintained a journal to capture reflections and personal responses after each study circle session, the

focus group, and while engaged as both a participant and facilitator. Journal notes were also taken to summarize one-on-one interviews immediately after the interview was completed.

### *Research Statement Summary*

This research implemented a study circle process with seventeen artists with the intent of raising awareness about water issues and to gain an in-depth understanding on the impact of study circles on a small sample of artists. This research allowed me to examine the experiences of a self-selected group of artists, while the interview questions focused on significant experiences during the study circles. Audio recordings captured the dialogue and learning process of the group while semi-structured interviews helped to determine the impact of the study circle process on the individual participants.

### *Structure of the Dissertation*

In Chapter Two I discuss the types of issues that reflect a lack of water consciousness among the public and I further the argument that water awareness among the general public is sorely needed. Further in Chapter Two I delve into the leadership literature as it relates to artists, community building, and collaborative leadership; provide examples of activist art, ecological art, and background on Animating Democracy's art and dialogue projects; and position artists as leaders, by describing elements of activist art, identifying a gap in the literature and focusing in on local water issues.

In Chapter Three I discuss the study circle process in detail, as well as the overall study design, timeline, data collection and procedures, data analysis, ethical issues and limitations of this study.

Chapters Four and Five contain study results, discussion and implications of the findings.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

This chapter begins with an important discussion about some of the water related issues that humanity faces and for which a deeper awareness and consciousness is required. I then move on to discuss various forms of leadership as it relates to the role of artists in social change, community building, and collaborative leadership. This chapter also provides examples of activist art, ecological art, and provides background on Animating Democracy's art and dialogue projects. Chapter Two provides support of this research by positioning artists as leaders, by describing elements of activist art, and by identifying a gap in the literature related to study circles and artists.

### *A Lack of Water Consciousness: The Problem*

Most westerners expect clear water to flow when they turn on the tap, and don't consciously think about water until it becomes unavailable. Likewise, as long as our lights turn on, we tend not to question what environmental, cultural or social damage occurred in order to generate hydro-electricity. When a corporate entity has a business plan that encourages building in wetlands because they often provide inexpensive land, and when the populace is unaware of the stormwater management capacity of a natural wetland, then both ecological and societal damage occurs. Without obtaining a deeper understanding and connection to water, society cannot collectively develop the heartstring that is necessary to protect water resources and aquatic habitats. A question that is woven into this research focuses on how to raise water awareness amongst the general population so that the head/heart connection brings about a public response which then provides decision makers with the permission required to protect water resources (Cohen, de la Vega, & Watson, 2001).

Ninety-seven percent of the water on Earth is salt water; two percent is frozen (currently) which leaves one percent that is freshwater and available for maintaining life on Earth, and that small amount is not evenly distributed (Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). To date, humans have not worked in harmony with natural systems and resources, which may very well bring humanity to an end. E.O. Wilson addressed this lack of harmony when he stated, “If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos” (retrieved October 23, 2009, from <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/e/eowilson176373.html>). Humans tend to have an inflated ego as to their importance on the planet and perhaps that is part of the reason why many humans have a blatant disregard for natural systems and their role in the big picture of life. That is to say, water scarcity affects more than humans, and we should not forget the delicate web of life as we make our future resource policies and decisions.

It is an understatement to say that most people living in the western hemisphere are unaware or not concerned about the interconnections between a growing world population, the affects of climate change on water availability (drought, the rapid melting glaciers that currently provide drinking water), and subsequent food production. There are many current threats facing our water resources and those threats have morphed over time and changed in complexity. Whereas at one time technology could provide a fix to water pollution (for example the building of sewage treatment facilities), we are now in a period of time where only a change in human behavior and corporate governance can change the current circumstances. In order for such a change to come to fruition, the



human population needs to raise its water consciousness, as well as obtain and adhere to a water ethic.

*A Lack of Water Consciousness: The Threats*

As will be discussed in Chapter Three, I have used Lohan's book *Water Consciousness* (2008) as a guide for the study circles that I facilitated for this research. I chose this book because it provides a glimpse of both approaching water related catastrophes as well as solutions to steer us in new directions. In the following pages I provide more information on some of the pressing issues facing humanity and water resources, and I discuss why developing a water ethic and raising consciousness is so very important.

Water scarcity is a current problem and is expected to grow more severe with an increase in population occurring concurrent to climate changes associated with global warming. Brown (2008) authored a comprehensive work that connects population growth with global warming, and oil, food and water decline. For instance, Brown connects the concept of Peak Oil (that world-wide oil production has peaked and is in decline) to the oil and water intense production of food, along with ethanol production that forces competition between cars and food. He links rising temperatures to its effects on crop yield, and agricultural land loss due to rising seas. But it is Brown's commentary on water scarcity that brings out conflicts between water users as well as the connections between water and food.

When looking at the collective use of water on a global scale, agriculture uses the lion's share as a result of crop irrigation (Brown, 2008; Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). Forty percent of the world's food requires irrigation to grow; rain alone does not suffice

(Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). But in the United States we waste water through inefficient irrigation methods that allow for evaporation, and often the full price of the cost of water is not paid for by the farmer, which encourages waste.

Seventy percent of global water is used for agriculture and as populations grow and rainfall decreases in some regions due to climate changes, many countries are over pumping aquifers to continue an unsustainable yield. The Ogallala Aquifer in the United States has been so over utilized that its eventual depletion will bring an end to irrigation from this water source within the next few decades. The Ogallala Aquifer is located beneath eight farming states from Texas to South Dakota where irrigated agriculture is the primary economy. Increased water efficiency and conservation has slowed the rate of depletion, however, state and local government management plans focus on depletion of this aquifer, not on a sustainable use (retrieved October 26, 2009, from <http://www.waterencyclopedia.com/Oc-Po/Ogallala-Aquifer.html>). This shortsighted focus on the needs of the immediate will not only collapse a regional economy, the Ogallala Aquifer also provides water for industry and domestic uses. The depletion of this aquifer will directly impact a regional economy, a way of life, and reduce U.S. food production.

In many places ground water contributes to the flow of rivers and lakes and when groundwater levels decline, that effects the ecosystems of other water bodies. When groundwater tables drop that can cause land to sink, or saltwater can infiltrate the aquifer making it unfit to drink (Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). Additionally, as in the case with the Ogallala Aquifer, pesticide pollution finds it way back to the aquifer through groundwater recharge.

Adding more people to the Earth requires more food and subsequently the use of more water, although water use varies across the globe. In Kenya the average water use is 3 gallons per day, in the United Kingdom the average use is 30 gallons per day, whereas the average U.S. citizen uses 150 gallons per day (Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). To grow one ton of grain requires 1,000 tons of water (Brown, 2008) and 600 gallons of water are required to grow enough corn to feed the cows to produce one third of a pound of hamburger (Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). Industrial agriculture's use of water is a "self-perpetuating cycle of overuse, waste and pollution" (Hauter, 2008, p. 73). Serious water shortages have been experienced in China and India – countries with large populations.

Currently approximately 30 percent of Earth's population is living with water shortages and by 2025 that number will approach 60 percent (2.8 billion people in 48 countries as estimated by the United Nations). This situation is not limited to Africa or other developing countries, but also includes 35 percent of the people residing in the United States (Sterling & Vintinner, 2008). For example, the southwestern United States has been experiencing water shortages for many years. When the Colorado River Compact was created in 1922 as a way to share water among the seven states that border the river, water availability was over estimated creating a situation where the total amount of entitlements to water withdrawals were greater than what the river could provide. Combine that fact with the generous government subsidies allowed for agricultural water use, unsustainable water use, an increasing urban demand for water, and entrenched attitudes towards water use, and it is apparent why the Colorado River has been over-allocated to such an extent that it barely brings a trickle of water to the Sea of Cortez.

The Colorado River Basin provides an insightful case study into an unsustainable prioritization and allocation of water when there is not enough water to go around. Add into that mix drought that drops storage reservoirs, increased population growth in areas like Phoenix, unsustainable use of water (growing and watering grass in a desert environment, for example), and every possible drop of Colorado River water is used for human needs. When the original allocations were created fish, wildlife and sustenance fishing in Mexico received no consideration. In fact, ecosystem needs are met only through unused allocations and returning used water back to the river. The delta at the river's mouth, even in its current degraded state, creates an estuary that is critical for fish and wildlife. Any type of ecosystem restoration in the estuary is going to take an enormous amount of cooperation between several states, Indian Reservations and water users. That level of cooperation has been unprecedented to date and when push comes to shove, where will conservation occur? Will humans conserve water resources for ecosystem needs or for their own survival? But that is a false dichotomy and one that brings me back to the web of life. We cannot survive in isolation and without the other pieces of life on Earth. A water ethic can't be developed if humanity doesn't first value and recognize the gift of water, and then begin to remove factors that effect water availability such as climate change, pollution, over use, destruction of natural wetlands that help mitigate stormwater runoff, and a lack of reverence for water.

Let me provide another example of the need for a water ethic and why a raised awareness about water is so very necessary.

When I was 20 years old I had the opportunity to participate in a desert field studies course offered through the University of California-Santa Cruz. I left the comfort

of my familiar home surroundings and the people who loved me, and climbed aboard a bus for the cross-country trip from Philadelphia to Flagstaff. It was the first time I had traveled by myself, as well as the first time that I had traveled to a desert climate, and I felt as if I had entered another world. In fact I did, I had entered the world of the Hopi and Navajo Indians, and their starkly beautiful landscape of sand and cactus and lizards.

It was through this field studies class that I learned that the Hopi Indians are descendants of the Anasazi Indians and that their connection to the southwest desert region goes back to over 1500 years. As I hiked through the Grand Gulch Primitive Area in Arizona, I found tiny corncobs and the stone implements used for grinding that corn. I learned that the Anasazi, and later the Hopi, were considered great farmers, even though the land receives only about eight inches of rain per year. Water for these crops comes from springs and seeps – ground water that finds its way to the surface through cracks and fissures in the sandstone. Today's Hopi farmers:

...capture this runoff in terraced landscaped gardens, where they plant maize, beans, melons, squash, corn, onions, radishes, chili peppers, and some fruit trees. Skillful terracing and the proper timing of planting, aided by the blessing of occasional rain, allow the Hopi to cultivate these fields without supplemental irrigation. (Glennon, 2002, pp. 158-159)

My class traveled throughout northern Arizona and southern Utah, but one of the bleakest memories I have was traveling to Black Mesa, located in Arizona and between the Hopi and Navajo Indian Reservations. The name, Black Mesa, refers to a large deposit of low sulfur anthracite coal that is mined by the Peabody Coal Company (the largest coal company in the world). Although Black Mesa is located on reservation lands, the U.S. Department of Interior allows Peabody to mine the coal in exchange for payments made to both the Hopi and Navajo tribes (Glennon, 2002).

What is unique to Black Mesa is that the coal is crushed and mixed with water and then transported from the mine area to the Mohave coal fired power plant located near Laughlin, Nevada, a distance of 273 miles. It is this unusual method of commodity transportation that raises conflict as well as cultural concerns, for this is the only coal slurry pipeline in the United States and it is depleting the groundwater which feeds the springs that the Hopi feel are sacred to their life and well being. Water plays a powerful spiritual and cultural role in the life of the Hopi.

Hopi songs honor water, and easily 50 percent of Hopi surnames are related to water... Hopi religious ceremonies honor the rain, which connects them to the Creator. The first thing each morning, the Hopi look to the sky to see whether any clouds offer hope of rain. Throughout the year, elaborate religious rituals celebrate the balance of harmony in nature, especially the blessings of water. In Hopi mythology, Kokopelli – the familiar dancing flute player – plays his flute over springs to attract rain clouds. “Rain dances” evoke and celebrate the powerful role of water in sustaining life. (Glennon, 2002, p. 158)

Springs are critical for the Hopi. Whiteley and Masayesva state that, “It is hard to imagine anything more sacred – as substance or as symbol – than water in Hopi religious thought and practice” (1998, p. 14). The authors go on to explain “In general, springs and groundwater serve as homes for the deity Paaloloqangw, Plumed-Water Snake, who is a powerful patron of the water sources of the earth and heavens. The Hopi pray to Paaloloqangw during the Flute Ceremony to regenerate the springs” (p. 15).

During winter solstice ceremonies, the Hopi place feathered prayer sticks to protect the spring and to pray for help from the gods. They frequently make pilgrimages to remote springs to draw on the springs’ regenerative power. “Many Hopi believe that if the springs dry up, the Hopi people will return to the earth whence they came” (Glennon, 2002, p. 159).

Hopi elders say that in their lifetimes they have seen “90 percent of the springs on the Hopi Reservation dry up” (Glennon, 2002, p.158) and they believe that Peabody’s industrial ground water use is directly responsible for this. Meanwhile, corporate scientists and officials have denied that pumping of groundwater is the reason for the springs drying up, and continue to pump while disregarding the Hopi’s cultural values and beliefs. The Hopi are, as most Native Tribes, mistrustful of scientists and government, and for good reasons. The U.S. Justice Department and the Department of Interior have a long record of conflict of interests that have hurt the Tribes both socially and financially. Time and time again, corporations have reaped benefits to the detriment of the Tribes. The history of deceit and legal misrepresentation runs long in issues regarding Native Americans, and it is not my intent to delve into these legal issues, but to provide a brief introduction to corporate and government power and how it trumps subsistence farming, culture, and religious beliefs. This situation is a typical example of a community that lacks power, has high unemployment and poverty, suffers from discrimination, and who has been abused by those who are supposed to speak for their rights (U.S. Government).

As I suggested previously, when push comes to shove, plants, animals and Native Americans fall to the bottom of the water hierarchy. The cultural and environmental issues concern the transportation of coal by way of the slurry that is depleting groundwater and the springs that it feeds. In this desert region, over three million gallons of clean, drinkable, fresh water are used to move coal. The oversimplified reasoning to continue groundwater pumping revolves around the lack of political and economic power of the Tribes, coupled with the fact that the slurry pipeline already exists while train

routes, or the use of other water sources for the slurry, would cost millions of dollars to construct. With the current push in the United States to develop more domestic energy sources, and with huge profits that Peabody is making from its two southwestern US coal mines “12.1 million in fiscal year 2001” (Glennon, 2002, p. 165), mining from Black Mesa will no doubt continue.

The Hopi entered into a covenant with the deity Maasaw that charges them with the responsibility of taking care of the earth and its resources. The Hopi believe that if they break this covenant, a cataclysmic event will occur (Glennon, 2002; Whiteley & Masayesva, 1998). Whiteley and Masayesva report that in 1987 and 1988 two earthquakes occurred on Black Mesa that were attributed to the removal of coal and water from deep underground. “The perception of some elders is that this is the result of their souls having been sold out from under them – literally, in the link between groundwater and spirits of the dead – causes profound sadness and a sense of intractable religious desecration” (Whiteley & Masayesva, 1998, p. 26).

It’s apparent that shareholders are more important than the landholders of Black Mesa and that short term profits for Peabody is more important than desert riparian ecology, religion, ritual or survival of the Hopi. It appears that the numerous government bureaucracies involved with this case are committed to sustaining coal mining and Peabody’s bottom line. Coming back again to Whiteley and Masayesva, they provide the words to bring closure to this story.

If we are genuinely committed to sustainability, it is time to expand our understanding of it by listening to members of communities – for example, some Native American communities – that have practiced it for a very long time. If, to be realistic, we do not see an end to global markets as a mainspring of future economic frameworks, the key issue will be how to balance short-term profitability with long-term sustainability. The crux of that, surely, is



empowering local stakeholders in the decision-making process of companies themselves – but that will require corporate willingness to be inclusive, which may be the anathema to the current ethos and praxis of the market. Without that will, the only hope for stakeholders is the intervention of government regulatory agencies... that glimmer of hope offers precious little comfort. (1998, p. 29)

In March of 2009 two young women who co-direct the Black Mesa Water Coalition spoke at a conference called Powershift 09. Enei Begaye and Wahleah Johns, both Native people, gave a motivational speech encouraging native youth to become the new generation of eco-warriors that will help shift the balance of power on Tribal Lands.

In summary, this is a classic example of how corporate power trumps the religious, spiritual, and survival needs of a native people. When capitalism butts up against a people or the environment, historically capitalism wins hands down. But this is more than a story about power; it is also about how spirituality and religion relate to water resources and a blatant disregard for such spirituality by western capitalism. Westerners are very disconnected to spiritual aspects of water. In fact, I believe this to be a part of the problem we have with water and why I advocate the need for raising society's water consciousness and the need to develop a water ethic. If westerners had reverence and awe and respect for water as the Hopi do, we would no doubt take better care of our precious, life-giving resource.

In essence, the above discussion is about privatization of water, and that is a topic that has received media attention and subsequently has raised public awareness. Water privatization generally has two prongs: using water resources to create a commodity such as bottled water, or local governments privatizing water infrastructure and making people pay (or pay more) for water.

A recent controversy in the United States focuses on the privatization of public services, and this discussion has a strong foothold in water infrastructure. Over the past decade cities and municipalities have been struggling financially as they have seen federal and state dollars cut from their budgets. In the late 1970s the federal government covered “78 percent of the cost for water infrastructure, but by 2007 it covered just 3 percent” (Snitow & Kaufman, 2008, p. 45). Faced with near bankruptcy and aging infrastructures, cities are looking at many different ways to save money including selling their water systems, which are worth millions of dollars, to private companies. Such a scenario begs the question whether or not water is a commons for all, or a commodity for corporate sales and profit. The role of government (and the reason behind taxes) is to provide and maintain public goods and services, such as water infrastructure. There is no competition for water services and communities have no alternatives for the purchase of water, and when privatization does occur it often leads to a price increase and reduced service (Snitow & Kaufman, 2008). Furthermore, when water services are in the hands of for profit multinational corporations, there is no interest from the corporation to promote conservation and efficiencies. Once privatization occurs, it becomes very difficult and expensive for a community to attempt to reverse that process. Corporations have legal and public relations staff and a lot of money to fight citizen initiatives. The struggle of water privatization has stirred several US communities out of complacency, but it remains to be seen “whether these 21<sup>st</sup> century water wars are merely a last stand against an inevitable corporatized future, or the beginnings of a far-reaching revolt to reclaim citizenship, reassert democracy, and redefine how we interact with our environment” (Snitow & Kaufman, 2008, p.57).

To continue the discussion on privatization, I turn now to the issues surrounding corporate bottled water and its consumption. The U.S. bottled water industry is “a \$15 billion business” (Louaillier, 2008, p. 60) but the success of this industry has come at a great social and environmental cost, and the quality of bottled water is not regulated like municipal water sources are.

Multinational corporations such as Nestle, often move into rural communities, pump ground water for their product and use massive public relations campaigns to encourage the public to distrust the quality of municipal water sources (Louaillier, 2008). As mentioned previously in this chapter, when ground water is over utilized it can cause neighboring wells, rivers, and lakes to dry up which negatively effects wildlife and the community. Often the corporations offer a municipality attractively large sums of money to develop a bottling plant and in turn the municipality sells the water to the corporation at low rates. “As is the case with so many extractive industries, the bulk of the profits will be made elsewhere, while the local communities are left to deal with the externalized costs” (Louaillier, 2008, p. 63).

Coke (Dasani) and Pepsi (Aquafina) are also in the bottled water business, except unlike Nestle’s use of rural water, their corporate agenda is to filter municipal tap water. This “purified” tap water is no different from whichever municipal water it was sourced from and in a CBS News poll conducted in Chicago, “two-thirds of the participants preferred tap to the bottled brand names or couldn’t tell which was which” (Louaillier, 2008, p. 65).

Living on the shore of Lake Superior I have seen a number of water related concerns pique community interest, however the issue that quickly engaged multiple state

governments occurred when an Asian company filed for permits with the Ontario government to withdraw Lake Superior water for bottled water in the Asian market. This created a wake up call for the communities around Lake Superior to develop safeguards to prevent what later became known as “out of basin water withdraws.” A few years later when President G.W. Bush suggested creating a pipeline from Lake Superior to Texas, the governors of the Great Lakes states and provinces came together to develop the Great Lakes Basin Compact, which specifically addresses water withdraws. It took a threat as well as great foresight to bring the governments together to craft a protective compact. Great Lakes communities were fortunate, but many communities where bottled water plants have set up shop have seen their water tables depleted and their rural communities transformed by the noise and smell of several hundred semi-trucks coming and going on a daily basis.

In addition to the issues mentioned thus far, the bottled beverage industry has created a serious environmental problem, that being discarded plastic bottles. A story published in [Yesmagazine.org](http://Yesmagazine.org) (September 2009) discusses the findings of five artists who traveled to the Midway Atoll (between Asia and America on the Pacific Ocean) where circular ocean currents have collected and trapped huge amounts of plastic garbage. This area is known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and covers an area of ocean double the size of Texas. Pelagic birds that ingest the plastic are dying and nearly all the Laysan Albatrosses that nest in this area have plastic in their digestive system. “Midway is one of the places where human impact on nature is most pronounced; thanks to its remoteness and the long life of plastic, the island has become a symbol of the reach

and duration of human impact.” (Jarvis, 2009, retrieved October 30, 2009, from [http://www.yesmagazine.org/arts/journey-to-midway?utm\\_source=oct09&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=26\\_tnMidway](http://www.yesmagazine.org/arts/journey-to-midway?utm_source=oct09&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=26_tnMidway)).

The concerns surrounding bottled water has created a movement encouraging people to drink tap water out of reusable stainless steel bottles. Such movements help to raise awareness about the social and environmental issues concerned with the bottled water industry.

The previous discussion is meant to ground the reader with some of the current issues surrounding water and to argue for the need to increase water consciousness amongst the public. France (2003) discusses the need for reinvigorating the human senses as a way to reconnect humans with the natural world. He believes that the “secret is to indulge in a phenomenological relationship with the world through direct experience...” (p. 38). He connects the need for water restoration with the need for an increased consciousness about water and our environment and provides art-related ecological projects as examples of ways to increase both direct experience and raise awareness with the public.

In his book, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2007), Gore compares human awareness of global climate changes to what a frog experiences with hot water. If you put a frog into very hot water, it will jump out. However, if you put a frog in cool water and then slowly raise the temperature, the frog will just sit there and boil. Gore uses this analogy to show that humans are experiencing the latter, the temperature is slowly increasing and we are not alarmed by it. This is exactly why humanity needs artists to reframe environmental issues so as to wake us from our sleepwalking and shake us out of our comfort zone.

Many scholars have pondered the role of both art and artists in society. Clearly, art can communicate emotions or provide a sense of the way something feels, and this can be especially powerful when viewing art that has a goal of raising environmental awareness. Perhaps Eisner (2001) best captures the role of artists when he suggests that artists “invent fresh ways to show us aspects of the world we had not noticed; they release us from the stupor of the familiar” (p. 136). Artists have a role in helping to shape and focus humanities consciousness surrounding water.

I’d like to segue now to a discussion on the leadership literature that focuses on artists as leaders.

#### *Artists as Transformative Leaders*

A type of art called *community-based art* brings together art, learning and social change, things that are frequently thought of separately (Clover & Stalker, 2007; Goldbard, 2006; Knight & Schwarzman, 2006). Those who facilitate and create community-based art are interested in engaging people in learning about and then “representing their collective identities, histories, and aspirations in multiple forms of expression” (Barndt, 2008, p. 351). Community-based art has great potential for raising environmental awareness in any given community because of its emphasis on learning and social change. Goldbard (2006) uses the term “community cultural development” to describe the work of artists and community members collaborating to give voice to community concerns. This type of community-focused, message-oriented art provides a direct contrast to how most people define art: as an individual pursuit done for profit, sold in galleries, or viewed in museums. Barndt (2004) provides another perspective: that community art “...suggests a different context (community-based rather than corporate),

content (representative of local interests and issues), production (collective rather than individual), and use (educational rather than commercial)” (p. 223). This research study derived its core essence from these various elements of community-based art and is especially interested in educating artists towards an outcome of providing voice to water related concerns.

The creation of community-based art can be transforming for both the artists and the viewers of the art. Burns (1978) describes this type of transformation when he states “Leaders can also shape and alter and elevate the motives and values and goals of followers through the vital *teaching* role of leadership. This is *transforming* leadership” (p. 425). Transformational leadership in Burns’ words is “more concerned with *end-values*, such as liberty, justice, equality” (p. 426), and that is not much different from how Knight and Schwarzman define community-based art: “any work of art that emerges from a community and consciously seeks to increase the social, economic and political power of that community” (2006, p. xvi).

When we speak of community-based efforts that attempt to shift the status quo of social, political or economic power, we are often talking about a type of leadership called informal or indirect leadership. Heifetz (1994) provides a clear distinction between formal and informal authority by suggesting that formal authority is related to a position whereas informal authority is related to the ability to affect attitudes or behaviors. Using Heifetz’s framework, formal authority appears to be woven into one’s employment and the power related to job status, whereas informal authority is about the personal integrity that is necessary for leadership.

Digging deeper, informal and indirect leadership begins to provide applications

for activist art. For example, Gardner (2004) talks about indirect leadership in a similar fashion to how Heifetz (1994) discusses informal leadership. Gardner feels that indirect leadership is the ability to change minds indirectly through the use of scientific discoveries, scholarly advances and artistic creation, and he uses Marx, Darwin, and the arts as examples of indirect leadership because of the influence they have had on events or the public. Both Heifetz and Gardner discuss the fact that these types of leaders are more often found behind the scenes than direct leaders, but they have an equally important impact on a community. To exemplify this comparison, Gardner (2004) contrasts indirect leaders who change minds through their work with that of politicians who attempt to change minds through direct contact.

Burns (1978) distinguishes his thoughts on legitimate and expert power (related to authority) with that of transformational leadership, which is focused on a collective purpose. Burns states that the foundation of transforming leadership is focused on “the pursuit of higher goals” (p. 425) and his description of transformational leadership shares similarities with Heifetz’s informal leadership and Gardner’s indirect leadership.

The major implication of the above discussion is that artists can be transformative community leaders and that arts-based activism often uses informal, indirect, and transformational types of leadership. Thus, the use of study circles has great potential to empower artists, through indirect leadership, to bring about environmental awareness and change. Through the creation of their art, study circle participants help to change mental representations of water and environment indirectly through their artwork (Gardner, 2004).



*Art as Activism*

Speaking for a collective of authors and artists, Barndt (2006) provides a definition for activist art by stating, “Whether the modes are verbal or non-verbal, artmaking that ignites people’s creativity, recovers repressed histories, builds community and strengthens social movements is in itself a holistic form of action” (p. 18). I would add to Barndt’s description that art which stirs a passion for the Earth and raises people’s environmental consciousness provides a first step of building the necessary awareness required before an individual or community can engage in types of behavior change needed to achieve sustainability.

Eisner (2008) identifies the connections between art and activism when he asks, “Are the arts merely ornamental aspects of human production and experience or do they have a more significant role to play in enlarging human understanding?” (p. 3). Eisner clearly understands the connections among art, dialogue, and action when he elaborates on the contributions of the arts to knowledge including that the arts “...are about emotion, and emotion has to do with the ways in which we feel. Becoming aware of our capacity to feel is a way of discovering our humanity” (2008, p. 11).

This understanding of how art provides a new way of interpretation, how it can create empathy, feelings, and subsequent action provides a nexus to this research and to what I witnessed during the Keepers of the Waters Art Exhibition (discussed in Chapter One). Art has a way of communicating about environmental matters in a way that opens the heart and mind. I have witnessed the ability of art to educate and open people to issues in a way that is very different from films or books or lectures. If artists are

provided with a crash course in water awareness, the effect within a community can be like the ripples in a pond that are created by throwing a pebble into the water.

### *Examples of Activist Art*

From quilting to theater, agitprop and ecological art, artists have a unique way of bringing about social awareness and change, often with a sense of humor. What follows are some examples of activist art.

*The AIDS Quilt.* In 1989 I was an undergraduate student at Pennsylvania State University when I traveled to Washington D.C. to view the AIDS Quilt that was displayed on the National Mall. From an art and activist perspective, there are many levels of significance about the AIDS Quilt. One person began the Quilt as a memorial after the assassinations of gay San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone (retrieved September 10, 2008, from [www.aidsquilt.org/history.htm](http://www.aidsquilt.org/history.htm)). The project received an overwhelming response from the public who were inspired to add blocks to the quilt. The first display of the Quilt in Washington D.C. covered a space larger than a football field and over a half a million people viewed the Quilt (retrieved September 10, 2008, from [www.aidsquilt.org/history.htm](http://www.aidsquilt.org/history.htm)). In 1988 and 1989 the Quilt returned to Washington D.C. with 8,288 panels, a nineteen city tour and over a quarter of a million dollars were raised for AIDS organizations. In 1992 the Quilt included panels from every state and 28 countries.

The project has redefined the tradition of quilt making in response to a contemporary issue while also providing a collaborative voice to quilt making (West & Stalker, 2007). The AIDS Quilt is a fine example of several attributes of activist art. To begin with, the project shows what one person can do and how a good idea that reaches a

tipping point can resonate around the world. The project also shows how activist art can educate and create empathy within the general public. Through the Quilt project, communities organized to host viewings and people came together to create blocks for the Quilt. The project also challenged the status quo, most directly in terms of U.S. policy and lack of funding for AIDS research and education.

*Rebel Clowning.* Part of the activism brought out by street performance is a challenge to the definitions of public space and the types of activities that are sanctioned (Hutcheson, 2006). For example, who owns the space in skyways (a mostly mid-western phenomenon of putting downtown corridors in the airspace between buildings so that people don't have to walk outside in the winter)? Or, as shown by the recent surge of Guerilla Gardeners through out the United States, who has the right to plant gardens on city boulevards or right of ways?

Rebel clowning is a form of street performance as well as a means towards creative social change that merges political activism, non-violent direct action, and clowning (Fremaux & Ramsden, 2007). Known formally as the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA), these clowns combine popular education and direct challenge to the status quo of hierarchy and power. As stated on their web site, "nothing undermines authority like holding it up to ridicule" (retrieved May 20, 2009, from <http://www.clownarmy.org/about/about.html>). Although she was not writing specifically about CIRCA, Burns (2006) contributes to this discussion by stating, "One of the most effective means for subverting dominant paradigms is humor" (p. 27).

Rebel clowns see themselves as educators who use play and amusement to explore social issues and dominant culture, because, "clowns can survive everything and

get away with anything” (retrieved May 20, 2009, from <http://www.clownarmy.org/about/about.html>). CIRCA has taken part in a variety of actions including President’s Bush’s visit to the United Kingdom in 2003, G-8 meetings, and the handover of Iraq. In Minnesota, the Rebel Clowns were visibly present at the Republican National Convention held in St. Paul in 2008.

*Activist Theater.* Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal passed away on May 2, 2009. In an obituary titled “The Most Influential Man You Have Never Heard Of” Rohd states: "Boal created theatrical techniques and a philosophy of performance that not only transformed the theater but became a vehicle for social change" (retrieved May 20, 2009, from <http://www.politicsdaily.com/2009/05/11/the-most-influential-man-you-have-never-heard-of/>).

Boal founded *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which is a form of radical popular education along the lines of Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. A unique aspect of his type of theater, which Boal called a “rehearsal for revolution” (Rohd, 2009), included an active role for audience members. It was common for a story with a social justice conflict to be played out on the stage. The play would then start over from the beginning but this time with an opportunity for audience members to step in with alternative strategies for dealing with the conflict presented (Paterson, 1999; Rohd, 2009).

When Boal was a Vereador (city councilman) in Rio de Janeiro, he created a new form of theatre called legislative theatre to give his electorate the opportunity to voice their opinions. “The focus of the production is based on a proposed law and members of the public can take the stage, express their opinions, and help create new laws” (Gewertz,

2003). In similar fashion, Etmanski (2007) has used Boal's legislative theater work as inspiration in her attempt to use theater to create legislation in Canada.

Boal's legislative theater takes this discussion of art as activism in a new and important direction, more so than other examples discussed thus far. Legislative theater provides an opportunity for the public to become directly involved with decision-making and change in a very creative manner. I find that many activist art projects, as well as action research efforts, focus on education and awareness, but stop short of offering a direct opportunity for change. An art-to awareness-to action cycle of such arts-based projects has not been very apparent in the literature I have reviewed; yet creating such an opportunity provides a most powerful form of activist art.

*Agitprop.* Environmental and social activists have used protest graphics to highlight topics such as AIDS, concerns related to globalization, the abuse of corporate and government power, warfare, and human rights. The art grew in popularity in the 1960's and has been generated by professional and non-professional artists found working in collectives and collaborations such as ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power), as well as that created by individual artists. What all Agitprop has in common is that it provides powerful images that bring voice and visibility to a wide array of social issues and injustice.

Paging through McQuiston's (2004) book *Graphic Agitation 2*, I find some of the art to be profound and sobering. For example a PETA campaign shows the British pop singer Sophie Ellis Bextor holding up the carcass of a skinned fox along with the words "Here's the rest of your fur coat" (p. 59). Some of the art is exquisitely simple and striking in its message, such as one image from the *Water for Humankind* image bank

that is a large black poster with the word water written in capital letters in white in the middle of the page. A red circle representing the registered trademark logo surrounds the R in WATER (p. 66). Another image that strikes a cord with me and also falls into the exquisite and striking category comes from a British fashion magazine focused on “beauty in disability.” A photograph of a very beautiful and shirtless Aimee Mullens is on the cover. Aimee is a double amputee and is wearing skintight black tights and running prosthetic legs; the words under her photo state: Fashion Able? (p. 209).

McQuiston (2004) has captured the essence of Agitprop in her book: it is art that comes with an argument, is designed to make the viewer think, and can show up on posters, T-shirts, journals, buttons, or the Web. Any topic, person or corporation is fair game for Agitprop: Nike, McDonald’s, politicians from all parts of the world, human rights issues, as well as environmental concerns. Agitprop is activist art with some very powerful messages.

*The Yes Men.* Rather hard to categorize, *The Yes Men* fall somewhere between Agitprop, activist theater, or perhaps an alternative news outlet. Their preferred mode of operation results in a spoofing of corporate propaganda in order to provide the world with a message about corporate lack of ethics. For example, they often set up fake web sites similar to a corporation’s name as a way to get invited to conferences or for interviews. Once invited, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno pose as corporate executives and give speeches and press conferences as a way to “wake up their audiences to the danger of letting greed run our world” (retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://theyesmen.org/theyesmenfixtheworld>).

On December 3, 1984 a Union Carbide Corporation plant in Bhopal, India leaked poisonous gas into surrounding neighborhoods. According to Corp Watch (retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=6768>), as well as the British Broadcasting Company, (retrieved May 27, 2009, from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/3/newsid\\_2698000/2698709.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/december/3/newsid_2698000/2698709.stm)) a chronology of events unfolded including the arrest, the release, and the subsequent fleeing of Warren Anderson, the U.S. Union Carbide chairman. The government of India filed a \$3.3 billion claim on behalf of the victims as well as homicide and criminal wrongdoing charges against Union Carbide. The accident caused 3,000 deaths and 50,000 injuries over three days. In 1989 Union Carbide provided a cash settlement but worldwide outrage was expressed over the inadequacy of that settlement. In 2001 Dow Chemical purchased Union Carbide and denied any responsibility for the Bhopal accident.

Twenty years later, The Yes Men, purporting to be Dow Chemical spokespersons conducted an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation World News announcing that Dow will spend billions of dollars to clean up the site of the Bhopal catastrophe and accept full responsibility for the largest industrial accident in history. As a result of this BBC news story Dow's stock value plunged two billion dollars, pointing out that the market system does not support environmental cleanup or restitution to victims of industrial accidents (retrieved May 27, 2009, from <http://theyesmen.org/theyesmenfixtheworld>).

*Group Material. Democracy* was a project created by a collective of artist activists who call themselves Group Material. They identified four areas of democracy

that they felt to be in crisis: education, electoral politics, cultural participation (focused on consumer culture), and AIDS and Democracy (Deitcher, 1990). The project was comprised of three distinct components that were organized for each of the four topics: a roundtable discussion, an art exhibition, followed by a town meeting. Informal roundtable discussions allowed for a diversity of perspectives on the four areas of democracy, and were designed to help the artists prepare for the art exhibitions as well as to provide agenda items for the town meetings. A main emphasis of the project was to engage a diversity of voices and participation in all three events. The town meetings were developed in a way as to “eliminate the demarcation between experts and the public” (Wallis, 1990, p. 2) and allow an opportunity for people to discuss issues related to the topics.

I find Group Material’s use of the four areas of crisis in democracy exciting. Likewise, their use of various methods of public involvement from roundtable discussions, to art installations, and town meetings is a very creative way of building community dialogue around issues. The use of roundtable dialogues clearly informs the art, and the installations would inform the topics of a town meeting.

Group Material’s work and project goals have some similarities to my research, yet has its differences as well. Their artists are exposed to elements of dialogue and consciousness raising in the roundtable discussions, art-making for social awareness, and a public viewing of the art along with a town meeting. My research is different from the Democracy project in three ways: 1) a self-selected group of artists have come together to dialogue and learn about water issues; 2) The artists used a book (Lohan, 2008) as a catalyst for learning and dialogue; 3) The emphasis of my research is on the use of study



circles with artists as a vehicle for leadership and social change. Based on what I have found in the literature, my study breaks new ground in the use of study circles to inform artists and their art, as well as the impact of study circles as a leadership-building tool for artists.

*Environmental Art.* I'd like to segue now into a discussion on a variety of types of environmental art. To begin I'll discuss Land Art which was at times is a very destructive practice, but which gave rise to a more holistic ecological art. Next I'll discuss an exhibition focused on sustainable design which attempted to "balance environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic concerns" (Smith, 2005, p. 13) necessary to bring about a sustainable future. I'll conclude by providing some examples of ecological art which emphasizes ecological restoration and public education.

*Land Art.* That old adage "never judge a book by its cover" is exactly what I did when I purchased a book titled *Land and Environmental Art* (Kastner & Wallis, 1998), thinking that it would be a book relevant to what I hold as an image of environmental art. What I have learned since is that a genre of art called Land Art began in the mid-1960s by a group of artists who were "disenchanted with the modernist endgame and animated by a desire to measure the power of the artwork isolated from the cosmopolitan comodifications of the white cube..." (Kastner & Wallis, 1998, p. 12). Land Art is an unpredictable type of art and is also referred to as earth, eco, or environmental art.

Kastner and Wallis say that in its early days Land Art was a genre of

...diesel and dust, populated by hard-hat-minded men, finding their identities away from the comforts of the cultural centre, digging holes and blasting cuts through cliff sides, recasting the land with 'masculine' disregard for the longer term. (1998, p. 15)

Because of their wide-open spaces, the southwest deserts of the United States have provided many a backdrop for this type of art. In 1970 Robert Smithson created a work called *Spiral Jetty*, which was constructed in Utah's Great Salt Lake. Two dump trucks, a tractor, a front-end loader, and 6,650 tons of earth was used to create a spiral shape that was "derived from the local topography as well as relating to a mythic whirlpool at the centre of the lake" (Kastner & Wallis, 1998, p. 58). Another example is Michael Heizer's work *Double Negative*, found in the Nevada desert where 240,000 tons of earth was moved with bulldozers creating two horizontal ramps measuring 457 x 15 x 9 meters.

Not all land art is this destructive or permanent. *Running Fence* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude (1972-1976) included 39 kilometers of white nylon fabric attached to 2,050 steel polls that was created, and later dismantled, near Highway 101 north of San Francisco (Kastner & Wallis, 1998). Likewise, a collective of artists called Circlemakers are known for creating the crop circles that popped up in British farmlands in the mid 1970s. Over the years the circles have evolved into "...fractals, Fibonacci spirals, and the golden ratio, and can sometimes be as large as two football fields" (Natural World Museum, 2007, p. 82). The environmental nongovernmental organization Greenpeace hired the Circlemakers to create their formations in a Mexican field of genetically modified corn which turned out to be more effective than destroying the corn because of the wide ranging media attention the act received.

Land art holds a place in the evolution of environmental art and it is important to include this genre when discussing environmental art because the art was about leaving the confines of the gallery and commodity art and being able to work in an unrestricted

fashion. It is clear that Land Art can be permanently destructive to the Earth and one would question its “eco” prefix. In fact, Heizer’s *Double Negative* received harsh reviews from critics who saw his work as environmentally destructive. Likewise, when Smithson proposed *Island of Broken Glass* and his plan to dump two tons of glass shards on rock outcroppings near Vancouver, his idea was met with protests and the work was canceled (Kastner & Wallis, 1998). It was also Smithson who later advocated for art that would reclaim former industrial sites with the art becoming a “resource that mediates between the ecologist and the industrialist” (Kastner & Wallis, 1998, p. 32).

Other pioneers of Earth Art took a much a softer approach by planting seeds, releasing turtles or simply involved observation of the natural world. What these pioneering artists, dirt movers and seed planters alike did was to open the door out of the gallery and onto the land for the ecological artists who would eventually follow. Kastner and Wallis eloquently provide a summary and segue to a discussion on sustainable and ecological art.

The great earthmovers who worked to forcibly rearrange the stuff of the natural world in an effort to mediate our sensory relationship with the landscape were succeeded by artists who sought to change our emotional and spiritual relationship with it. They, in turn, spawned a third approach, that of the literally ‘environmental’ artist, a practice which turned back to the terrain, but this time with an activity meant to remedy damage rather than poeticize it. (1998, p. 17)

*Sustainable Art and Design. Beyond Green* was an exhibition of thirteen artists and artists’ groups that explored creating sustainable ways of living and working. The thirteen artists conducted their work in a variety of mediums – but each piece had a focus on sustainability, activism and/or the environment. Some of the projects focused on the built environment and used recycled building materials, others focused on everyday living and included a shoulder bag with solar panels that could be used to power a cell

phone or iPod, and still others focused on food transportation and local food alternatives. The beauty behind this exhibit was encouraging artists to become designers of materials that reduce their destructive imprint on the Earth. I advocate in this dissertation that artists should be integrated more into decision making and this exhibit provided an example of what happens when decision making is inclusive of artists.

*Ecological Art.* Ecological art falls into the category of activist art because the artists who create such work tend to understand and highlight the interconnections of land, water, and air as well as the environmental threats to life on Earth. This type of art clearly has a purpose beyond art as commodity, and focuses on raising environmental awareness, and/or addressing environmental degradation. Many ecological artists are educating the public, and often at the same time are attempting to restore ecological services, while simultaneously facilitating community-based projects. Since the 1970s, artists have responded to environmental issues in two ways:

...by proposing or creating ecological artworks that provide solutions to the problems facing the natural and urban ecosystems; or by interpreting or framing problems through a variety of media – photography, painting, sculpture, multimedia installations, or performances. (Matilsky, 1992, p. 57)

There is a dire and immediate need to educate and connect people to the importance of water. France (2003) provides passionate arguments for nonacademic ways of providing water-based experiential activities for people as a first step in raising water awareness. Part of the rationale for my conducting this study circle research is to raise the awareness of the artists so that they can then frame and interpret water related problems for the broader public. Raising the public's awareness about water is critical, "for one does not protect what one does not love or respect, and one does not love and respect what one does not first recognize" (France, 2003, p. 100).

Jackie Brookner is an ecological artist (sculptor and professor) who collaborates with ecologists, designers, and communities to develop water remediating public art for wetlands, rivers, streams and stormwater runoff (retrieved October 19, 2008, from <http://www.jackiebrookner.net/>). In her article *The Heart of the Matter* (1992) Brookner asks what the relevance of art is in the context of human actions that have harmed the Earth. Many artists, she says

...are aiming their imaginative powers at real-world problems – cleaning up rivers, planting trees, detoxifying water and soils, working with the garbage and wastewater systems. These activities, which demand collaboration with scientists, engineers, landscape architects, and municipal authorities, are important beyond their practical value. They feed our imagination with positive images of participation and regeneration. (1992, p. 9)

Collaboration with the public and specialists from all fields is a foundation to the creative process for many ecological artists. Ecological art has many levels of collaboration and is often sponsored by an institution such as a museum, college, or state arts organization, and such work often becomes a joint venture between the artists and a community (Matilsky, 1992). This expansion on who participates in ecological art and restoration projects reflects back to what Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests is also important for researchers:

Many of us are wanting to expand our audiences and welcome more voices into the public dialogues... If we want to broaden the audience for our work, then we must begin to speak in a language that is understandable, not exclusive and esoteric . . . a language that encourages identification, provokes debate, and invites reflection and action. (2005, p. 9)

The methodologies of ecological artists are not cast in terms of what medium the art is produced in, but on how the art affects its viewers (Sanders, 1992). Likewise, the projects that fall under the umbrella of ecological art are as varied as the artists who create them. France (2003) discusses a wide array of water related projects that expand

both audiences and the nature of art and he provides examples of artists taking on many roles including that of teachers, choreographers, narrators, and most importantly as integrators who bring people and places together.

*Art and Climate Change.* To conclude this section on Activist Art I want to discuss an exhibition that has the elements of activism, art focused on an environmental topic, an attempt to raise awareness in the viewing public. I am referring to an exhibition that was curated by Lucy R. Lippard, organized by the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art in collaboration with EcoArts, and held in the Boulder, Colorado area from September 14 to December 21, 2007. The focus of the show, along with the name of a subsequent book of the artwork and artists statements, was titled *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change* (Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007). From the earliest conception of the exhibition it was agreed that the artists would have “access to scientists working in the fields that they hoped to address” and that the exhibition would be “beautiful, accessible, and alarming, but not alarmist” (Lippard, 2007, pp. 4-5). Fifty-one artists (including 29 women, 12 men, and 10 collaborations) who were “committed to reaching out to their audiences” and were willing to “enter into dialogues with scientists and/or community” (Lippard, 2007, p. 5) were invited to participate in the show. The bringing together of art, science, dialogue, and community shares elements of what I hope to achieve with this research and subsequent art exhibition focused on water.

### *Collaborative Leadership*

Study circles are community oriented dialogue groups that focus on issues relevant to the community. The final steps of study circles are to make plans for action and change (McCoy, 2007) and are embedded in increasing civic engagement and

bringing about social change (Casarez, 2007). The possibility for action and change as an end result of a study circle process has the potential for building strong collaborative leadership.

Generally speaking, collaboration is the sharing of responsibility and accountability while working towards common goals (Chrislip & Larson, 1994). A central idea behind collaborative efforts is that citizens work together on public concerns, which in turn makes their communities stronger while building civic community. I am over-simplifying this main concept, because, as previously mentioned, collaborative leadership also challenges the commonly practiced hierarchical leadership methods and replaces them with dialogue, trust, and affirming ways of working together.

Collaborative processes are also about building community by identifying skills, interests, and assets within a community. Simply through the introduction process of any group meeting, skills can be identified along with interests, past experiences, and other assets that may lead to collaboration. Identifying these assets helps to identify talents in a group (Borup, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Linn, 2007) that can help shape the direction and success of collaborative efforts.

In his community-oriented work Borup (2006) pays attention to identifying assets but his interest is on bringing the arts and culture into this type of community building. His premise is that through the use of the arts and culture, combined with identifying local assets, a community can build strong social connections. Goldbard (2006) also speaks to building community through the arts by focusing on community cultural development projects (defined earlier), which are built around learning experiences where participants learn more about their communities through others in the

group or through research. Chrislip (2002) calls people who provide this type of community background information “content experts.”

In this study I have used a currently published book and video (see Chapter Three) to provide educational material about water to the participants. In addition, there were various types of content experts in the group of seventeen artists who participated in the project.

#### *The Role of Facilitators in Collaborative Efforts*

Bringing the appropriate people together for dialogue or collaboration is one step in a process, but that process needs to include facilitators, as they provide the leadership necessary to help people achieve meaningful dialogue. Numerous authors discuss the value and requirement for catalysts, conveners, or facilitators to assist with collaborative leadership efforts. Often collaboration simply begins with one individual who functions as a catalyst and whose energy or vision motivates people and projects (Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Diers 2004). Chrislip (2002) brings this idea to a deeper level as he discusses the need for facilitators who help to create a safe environment so that deep dialogue can occur. Facilitators need to make certain that all voices are heard (Hanson, 1998) as part of their role in ensuring a safe space.

Facilitation is not just a function during group meetings. The empowerment that arises during collaboration will be most powerful if it continues on long after the meetings. This in fact was part of my research question: I am interested in knowing if the study circle process becomes a catalyst for future artist projects and community interventions. That requires the facilitator to be on the lookout for, and to place an emphasis on leadership building. In facilitating study circles, the process along with



relationship building is often more important than the product (Korza, Schaffer Bacon, & Assaf, 2005) and in community organizing, building leaders is often more important than fixing a problem (Jacoby Brown, 2006).

### *Using the Arts to Foster Dialogue*

The Ford Foundation helped to build a significant bridge connecting culture, the arts, and dialogue in a project it called *Animating Democracy*, which was administered by Americans for the Arts, a non-profit organization. From 2000 – 2004 thirty-six organizations experimented with stimulating civic dialogue through the arts throughout the United States. As stated in the introductory remarks of *Civic Dialogue Arts and Culture* (Korza, Schaffer Bacon, & Assaf, 2005):

Art is vital to society; civic dialogue is vital to democracy; and both create unique opportunities for understanding and exchange. Beyond what is commonly known as the potential of art to stimulate spontaneous and incidental conversation, *Animating Democracy* set out to nurture artistic work that was intentional in its civic goals, deliberate in planning civic dialogue activity, and conscious of the role that the art could play in generating dialogue. (p. 4)

A focal point behind *Animating Democracy*'s work was the realization that arts and cultural organizations can provide an avenue for civic engagement. The essence of these projects focused on providing opportunities for intentional conversation with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems, and questioning thoughts or actions. The goal of building greater community awareness about any given topic through the use of arts-based dialogue is to assist in bringing about a shift in public attitudes and to facilitate action.

For these very reasons I was attracted to the idea of utilizing a study circle process with artists. However, I am going about it in a different fashion from the *Animating Democracy* project. Instead of using art to foster dialogue to awareness, I am using the

dialogue process with the artists to inform their art. This study assessed the effectiveness of a dialogue process on raising artists water awareness, developing leadership, and effecting and framing their art.

### *Conclusion*

Compared to counting dragonflies (my previous scholarly research), engaging people in dialogue lacks that certain simplicity. What I find especially exciting about the potential of blending arts, water awareness and dialogue, is that not only is it work that crosses boundaries between art and science, but it also has potential to link heart and head. It was this very connection of my own head and heart that so opened me to the power of art in raising environmental awareness when I engaged in the Duluth Keepers of the Waters project in 1995. The authors of *Civic Dialogue Arts and Culture* will help me end this discussion with some pertinent questions:

How do you facilitate a productive movement between “heart space” – the emotional experience or affective response that art evokes – and the “head space” of civic context, impact, and systemic thinking? And how do you move from the personal space of direct response to the collective space of civic dialogue? This dual challenge opens up an opportunity to consider the unique role of art at the intersection of the personal and the public. (Korza, Schaffer Bacon, & Assaf, 2005, p. 98)

This chapter has focused on artists as leaders, has provided background on community building and collaborative leadership and has introduced the concept of using the arts to initiate community dialogue. Chapter Three will provide an overview of study circles and the specific research procedures I have used in this study.

## Chapter III: Methodology

### *Introduction*

Many scholar-practitioners, especially Paulo Freire in Brazil and Miles Horton in Appalachia (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990) have made great strides in social change by simply providing a forum for people to come together to talk and learn from each other. In this research I used study circles (also known as dialogue groups, dialogue circles, or talking circles) as the vehicle to bring artists together to talk about, and then create an action component (their art on public exhibition) related to water concerns (the action component is beyond the scope of this dissertation). The use of study circles is not all that different from Horton and Freire's work of bringing people together to learn, become educated, and then to use that knowledge for social change. I believe that study circles and related offshoots (such as the World Café which I describe at the end of this chapter), have the potential to assist in bringing about the personal transformation required for environmental, social, and organizational change.

This chapter provides a description and etiology of study circles while building a rationale for their use in this research and providing a description of their intended use. Secondly, the chapter provides details on how the study circles were assessed and their potential for activist art.

### *Study Circle Beginnings and Background.*

A study circle is a facilitated group dialogue, and dialogue is as old as humanity and today there are many efforts underway to renew community dialogue. But what is needed is more than talk: what is missing is the ability of people to think together (Isaacs,

1999). The environmental problems that face humanity are enormous and will require us to learn how to talk and think together in order to bring about change.

With their strong emphasis on dialogue, as well as listening and understanding, study circles can be designed to address a variety of urgent social needs from school reforms to current environmental concerns (Northwest Earth Institute, 2008) while simultaneously empowering and teaching participants. In fact, I believe that this level of community consciousness awakening may help humanity transition from “Empire to Earth Community” (Korten, 2006).

The study circle is a popular form of adult education in Sweden, and topics range from civics to literacy to arts and crafts. Educational associations receive funding from the national government to sponsor study circles in Sweden. Many Swedish study circles were developed to provide workers, the undereducated, and the disenfranchised with a forum for gaining greater awareness and public participation (Oliver, 1933). This type of use for study circles is very similar to Horton’s approach of teaching literacy skills based on social change at the Highlander Citizenship School (Bell et al., 1990). Swedish study circles, like the programs at Highlander Citizenship School, seek to further social equality and social justice, and imbalances in obtaining an education (Oliver, 1933).

In addition, to study circles sponsored by educational associations, the Swedish government has created “priority circles” which are study circles and materials specific to civic affairs (Oliver, 1933, p. 7). One such nation-wide priority circle was held to discuss nuclear power (Christensen, 1983; Oliver, 1933) prior to the public voting in a referendum. In this case, the study circle was used as a way to examine a topic in-depth (nuclear power) through democratic dialogue with community members. The

government used priority study circles, and funding was provided, to allow its citizens to discuss a topic of national importance so that they could become educated prior to a national referendum.

With such a strong emphasis on community education and dialogue, it should not come as a surprise to learn that Sweden has taken the lead in developing eco-municipalities which focuses on a community-driven systems approach (practices and policies) to developing sustainable communities (James & Lahti, 2004). Swedish eco-municipalities differ from many other sustainable community efforts in that a strategic visioning process that involves community members, industries and government officials is developed right from the beginning of the process. In fact, the participatory approach that Swedish municipalities have taken is attributed to the success of creating and implementing eco-municipalities, and the approach used mirrors that of study circles.

Henry Blid was a Swedish study circle leader who described study circles as “ a living, activist process that relates knowledge to action and social change, to development and creativity, and to social intercourse and collective development” (Oliver, 1933, p. 23). Blid developed pedagogical principles for study circles that include equality and democracy among participants; liberation of members’ inherent capabilities and innate resources; cooperation and companionship; study and liberty and member self-determination; and, continuity and planning.

Study circles have been in the United States in various forms since the 1870’s and were sponsored by the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle in New York (Oliver, 1933). These early study circles offered organized group reading and discussion for adults who had no education beyond high school. Other early forms of study circles

include Jane Addams' urban settlement house, which was used as citizenship centers for immigrants and the poor. Since its earliest days the League of Women Voters has been focused on increasing awareness in civic affairs. During the Great Depression the U.S. government sponsored public issue discussion programs such as the Studebaker Public Forum Movement. Studebaker was the education commissioner under Roosevelt and created public forums for adult civic education, which were held at schools, libraries, colleges and civic organizations. Following Studebaker the US Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service created seventy "schools of philosophy" in thirty-nine states to train farm leaders (Oliver, 1933).

*Contemporary Use of Study Circles.* The city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire has engaged residents in study circles and the outcome has created a more democratic method for community decision-making. McCoy (2007) describes how the town became involved with study circles: "...200 sixth-graders from Portsmouth Middle School and 75 adults discussed bullying and other school safety issues. The circles led to new school policies and a decline in bullying" (p. 283). She goes on to describe how study circles were used for a variety of purposes in Portsmouth, from school redistricting to citizen input on the city's master plan. The master plan input program took two years and included participants defining what "quality of life" meant to them and recommended ways to sustain it. Following that the participants identified issues affecting quality of life and conducted discussions about what to do and made recommendations to the planning body.

Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) is a national organization that works with communities to create ways for all kinds of people to think,

talk and work together to solve problems. Created in 1989, the organization has worked with over “550 communities on public issues including: racial equality, education, neighborhoods, youth issues, poverty, growth and sprawl, diversity, immigration, police community relations and violence” (Retrieved May 30, 2009, from <http://www.everyday-democracy.org/en/Page.AboutUs.aspx#>).

Everyday Democracy has worked with urban growth and sprawl issues, but not specific environmental concerns. On the other hand, the Northwest Earth Institute has developed seven study guides focused on different environmental topics that can be used to facilitate small group dialogue. Over “95,000 people” (Northwest Earth Institute, 2008) have participated in Northwest Earth Institute discussion courses with a focus on food systems, sustainable living, voluntary simplicity, healthy children, sense of place and deep ecology. These are four week long, small group dialogue circles which focus on exploring personal values, attitudes and habits. Each discussion course comes with a book that participants purchase, read and use to facilitate meaningful discussion throughout the four weeks. The intended outcomes for discussion groups include a deeper understanding of environmental issues, a feeling of empowerment, and a responsibility for Earth (Northwest Earth Institute, 2008).

The work that the Northwest Earth Institute is conducting with environmentally oriented dialogue circles is the only information I identified where a study circle process revolved around environmental concerns. The Institute does not have a course focused on water.

*Study Circle Attributes and Procedures.* Isaacs (1999) argues that an atmosphere focused on dialogue can get us to focus on what is really important. His guidance for creating that atmosphere includes:

To listen respectfully to others, to cultivate and speak your own voice, to suspend your opinions about others - these bring out the intelligence that lives at the very center of ourselves – the intelligence that exists when we are alert to possibilities around us and thinking freshly. (p. 47)

Study circles, as described by McCoy (2007), are small and diverse groups of people (usually 8 to 15) who meet together for several 2-hour sessions. They set their own ground rules, are led by a facilitator who helps manage the discussion, starting with individual stories, then helps the group look at a problem from many viewpoints and explore possible solutions. The final step of a study circle is to make plans for action and change. McCoy also writes that a study circle program:

- Is organized by a diverse group of people from the whole community.
  - Includes a large number of people from all walks of life.
  - Has easy-to-use, fair-minded discussion materials.
  - Uses trained facilitators who reflect the community's diversity.
  - Moves a community to action when the study circles conclude.
- (2007, p. 285)

Brown and Isaacs (2005) have created a study circle hybrid called *The World Café*, which is a process for fostering dialogue and creating possibilities for action. Unlike most study circle processes, The World Café is designed to work with very large groups of people and large scale change efforts by breaking participants into groups of three to four people to facilitate smaller, more intimate conversation, which then builds as people move between groups and start to discover new insights and share knowledge.

Brown and Isaacs have developed seven core principles that when used in combination will help create “authentic dialogue and actionable knowledge” (2005,



p. 40). These include:

- Set the context: Clarify the purpose and broad parameters within which the dialogue will unfold.
- Create hospitable space: Ensure the welcoming environment and psychological safety that nurtures personal comfort and mutual respect.
- Explore questions that matter: Focus collective attention on powerful questions that attract collaborative engagement.
- Encourage everyone's contribution: Enliven the relationship between the "me" and the "we" by inviting full participation and mutual giving.
- Cross-pollinate and connect diverse perspectives: Use the living-system dynamics of emergence through intentionally increasing the diversity and density of connections among perspectives while retaining a common focus on core questions.
- Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions: Focus shared attention in ways that nurture coherence of thought without losing individual contributions.
- Harvest and share collective discoveries: Make collective knowledge and insight visible and actionable.

(Brown & Isaacs, 2005 p. 40)

*Study Circle Summary.* A key attribute to study circle engagement is bringing a group together and asking deep questions that can help raise the awareness of individuals in the group and assist in bringing about change (Casarez, 2007). Study circle methodologies break down isolation and help to harness collective thoughts to address social and environmental problems (Brown & Isaacs, 2005). Humans are but a strand in a very complex planetary network, but many do not realize the web connecting us to our larger earth community. Our environmental crisis stems from a human disconnection to the web of life. Reason and Bradbury (2008) address this notion succinctly by saying, "...we will not be able to address the ecological devastations wrought by humans until we fully experience the universe and Earth as a community of subjects rather than as a collection of objects" (p. 9). The study circle process is a solid step towards helping people relate to the Earth and each other as a community.

### *Research Design and Procedures*

This dissertation research used study circles as a means of initiating study, raising water awareness, facilitating community building through dialogue, and framing and reframing water-related environmental issues.

Study circles are community oriented dialogue groups that focus on relevant community concerns. The final steps of study circles are to make plans for action and change with a strong emphasis on increasing civic engagement and bringing about social change (Casarez, 2007; McCoy, 2007).

*Statement of Issue and Research Questions.* Humanity is facing numerous and overwhelming challenges regarding water. These include water scarcity, effects of global warming on glaciers that provide drinking water, toxic pollution, sources of groundwater being pumped dry for industrial agriculture, endocrine disrupting chemicals found in drinking water in industrialized countries, and the privatization of drinking water in several developing countries to name but a few (Brown, 2008, Gore, 2007, Lohan, 2008; Marks, 2001). Closer to home Lake Superior faces a number of issues including: invasive species, fluctuating water levels (related to climate changes) that impact the shipping industry, toxic contamination, development pressures that cause habitat destruction and related stormwater runoff pollution (Bails et al., 2005). In short, humanity needs a crash course in water awareness.

As discussed in Chapter Two, artists of all types have been involved in creating art to educate, raise awareness, and address issues of social concerns. The focus of this research was to provide artists with that crash course, by way of study circles focused on

water, and observing and interpreting the outcomes of the study circles as a mechanism for artist-driven social change.

*Purpose of Study.* This study engaged a group of seventeen artists in an intense study circle process on water-related issues to understand how study circles empower artists to become community leaders around water issues. This study provided the catalyst for artists to:

- Learn about current water issues.
- Learn about and participate in the dialogue through a study circle setting.
- Engage with their peers in a cooperative setting.

*Research Questions.* This study provided the opportunity to understand how a study circle process affects artists in several areas. The research questions driving this study included:

1. What water-related environmental issues capture the attention of the artists and why? What themes emerge from their group discussions and in one-on-one interviews?
2. In what ways does the study circle processes build a sense of collaborative leadership among the artists?
3. In what ways does the project change the artists' view of themselves?
4. In what ways did artists' water awareness change, and has that brought about change in their own behaviors?

*Recruitment and Selection of Participants.* A total of nineteen people were recruited for this research, including both myself as facilitator (although I don't refer to myself as an artist, I did create a collaborative piece for the exhibition with MA using his

photography and my poetry) and RT who curated the show and participated in the study circles, but did not make art for the exhibit. Out of the nineteen participants that began the study circles, two dropped out after the first session leaving a total of seventeen participants. The number of participants (seventeen) that I reference throughout this dissertation includes both RT and myself. The participants were recruited primarily by sending an e-mail announcement (Appendix A) to Sweetwater Alliance's (nonprofit arts and environmental organization) list of local artists and arts organizations. I had conversations with individual artists to ask them to forward the e-mail announcement to any appropriate lists they maintained. In addition, five hundred letters (Appendix B) were snail-mailed to Duluth addresses which were provided by the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council (located in Duluth, Minnesota), a state-designated Regional Arts Council whose primary function is to facilitate and encourage local arts development by providing funding and various forms of assistance for the creation and presentation of arts. When artists registered, either by e-mail or phone, they were asked who else should be invited and were encouraged to invite colleagues (a snowball approach to recruitment modified from Etter & Perneger, 2000). A media release was sent to the daily paper (*Duluth News Tribune*) and two weekly papers (the *Budgeter* and the *Reader Weekly*) inviting local artists to participate in the project. Art department faculty at the University of Wisconsin/Superior, the University of Minnesota/Duluth, and Lake Superior Community College were also sent information by e-mail encouraging both their own and their students' participation. Fliers were hung on bulletin boards in coffee shops and other venues to encourage participation (Appendix A).

Upon notification of a desire to participate, I then e-mailed the letter (Appendix B) and/or spoke directly with the artist via phone to discuss the project more fully. An informed consent agreement (Appendix C) was handed out and discussed at the first study session.

My goal was to attract at least fifteen participants, which is considered the optimum upper number of people for dialogue circles (Hengel, 2000; Lausten, 2005; Northwest Earth Institute, 2008; Wright, 2002). In reality I allowed nineteen artists to register with the notion that not all would come, and ended up with seventeen artists for the first study circle session (two dropped out leaving a total of seventeen). Recruitment began on March 1, 2009 and ended two weeks later when I had nineteen participants. Study participants are identified below with their specialties, using their initials as identifiers (see Appendix G for artist statements along with photos of their work which was exhibited in Duluth, MN).

*The Study Circle Participants.*

MP – creates large puppets out of recycled materials and uses them in parades, protests and theater presentations.

LN – artist and filmmaker whose work has been shown on public television.

JV – oil and watercolor artist.

KP – photographer and recent graduate of a four-year college art program.

MA – photographer, singer, actor, and teaches canoeing.

AK – sculptor, photographer, painter, art critic and editor.

RB – glass artist well known locally for his large glass mural outside of Duluth's Whole Foods Co-op.

SM – creates large stone carvings and sculptures.

SR – elementary school art teacher and artist.

JH – graphic designer and recently retired from a public relations firm.

JL – art student at the University of Wisconsin in Superior, creates landscapes.

JD – creates landscapes and does photography.

KA – fiber artist with a biology background.

KM – graphic artist.

PH – sculptor.

LM – poet.

RT – artist and will curate the art exhibit related to this research.

JJ – Jill Jacoby group facilitator, researcher and Executive Director of Sweetwater Alliance.

*Study Circle Format.* As facilitator I strove to set a tone that would create a welcoming and safe space where people were comfortable to learn, deepen, and broaden their perspectives on water (my goal was to create a holding environment as per Heifetz, 1994). Following the protocol of the Conversation Café, I suggested consideration of the following agreements and ground rules:

- Open-mindedness: listen to and respect all points of view.
  - Acceptance: suspend judgment as best you can.
  - Curiosity: seek to understand rather than persuade.
  - Discovery: question old assumptions, look for new insights.
  - Sincerity: speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning.
  - Brevity: go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.
- (The New Road Map Foundation, retrieved January 10, 2009 from [www.conversationcafe.org](http://www.conversationcafe.org))

My intention was to follow a similar dialogue format for each session following the Conversation Café (though as you'll see in Chapter Four, that format was altered):

1. Welcome – from the facilitator, theme for the dialogue, remind participants of the ground rules and agreements, set ending time.

2. Round one – each person speaks in turn going around the circle while holding the talking object. Everyone says their name and speaks briefly about what is on their mind regarding the topic. Everyone is asked to speak succinctly to allow time for all to speak. No feedback or responses.
3. Round two – progresses in a similar way to round one except that if participants want to respond to another’s remarks they can during their turn. Again, no feedback or responses during this time.
4. Spirited dialogue – the conversation is open and people can speak in any order. This conversation will take up most of the time.
5. Closing – a few minutes before the end the facilitator asks everyone to go around again and state what he or she is taking away from the conversation.

(The New Road Map Foundation, retrieved January 10, 2009, from [www.conversationcafe.org](http://www.conversationcafe.org))

*The Study Circle Duration and Learning Materials.* The study circle sessions met for two hours over four consecutive Mondays in April (i.e. Monday April 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009) and occurred from 6:30 PM until 8:30 P.M. Study circle literature suggests two hours as an appropriate time span (Hengel, 2000; Everyday Democracy retrieved January 10, 2009, from [www.everydaydemocracy.org/en/DiscussionGuides](http://www.everydaydemocracy.org/en/DiscussionGuides)).

The meetings were held at the Chester Creek Café, located at 1902 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Duluth. This café has a downstairs room separate from the main dining area that was utilized for the sessions, and provided a comfortable atmosphere where food and beverages could be enjoyed. Holding study circles in familiar places that offer comfort and a café-like atmosphere is consistent with the design and purpose of Study Circles (Brown & Iaascs, 2005; New Road Map Foundation, 2005). The downstairs room also housed DVD equipment to view the video.

The study materials I used to provoke discussion included the video, *Flow* (Salina, 2008) and the book *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008). I chose *Water Consciousness* because it provided an overview of current social problems related to

water while also offering solutions and suggested opportunities for change. The documentary video *Flow* was selected because it provided discussion material for the first study circle session (prior to when participants received their book) and because it blended well with the information provided in the book. In addition, both the book and video were chosen for the diversity of water-related issues they present, the fact that both were 2008 releases and contained current information, and both were developed to educate the general public.

*Study Circle Syllabi.*

Session One - April 6, 2009

For this first session I intended to set the tone to create a safe space that would build trust and allow for an opening up to each other. I began the session by introducing myself, discussing my research, the pending art exhibition, and by providing general concepts about study circles. I explained the concept of a study circle and that when each person receives the talking object (I used my big Lake Superior agate) that signifies the speaker, and all others should listen without feedback. I suggested that remarks be succinct so that everyone had time to speak. I also provided the guidelines for our dialogue and invited additional guideline to be added.

Just prior to taking a break I discussed the informed consent for my research and asked participants to read it during the break, ask questions of me and if comfortable, to sign and return it.

Since this was the first session and the artists had not yet received the book, I showed a 40-minute portion of the video *Flow* (Salina, 2008) that focused on water privatization in developing countries, and then followed that with one round of a talking



circle to get their impressions on how the video affected them. I concluded with closing remarks, distributed the books, and pointed out the suggested readings for the next session (see below).

#### Session Two – April 13, 2009

Sessions one and two were designed to create a holding space that provided safety for the participants to explore, question, and feel vulnerable (the head and heart connection). Sessions one and two were also designed to provide a big picture scenario of the trouble humanity faces in regards to water resources. These first two sessions set the stage for deeper exploration into the how and why things are the way they are.

Suggested readings for this second session included:

- Chapter 1 – How Much is Left? An Overview of the Crisis by Eleanor Sterling and Erin Vintinner, pp. 14 -25
- Chapter 2 – Is There a Plan for Drought? By Tom Engelhardt, pp. 26 - 33
- Chapter 3 – The Crisis and Solutions: A Conversation with Peter Gleick, by Roger Stone, pp. 34 - 43
- Chapter 4 – The New Corporate Threat to Our Water, by Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman, pp. 44 - 57
- Chapter 5 – Thinking Outside the Bottle, by Kelle Louaillier, pp. 58 - 71
- Chapter 6 – Agriculture’s Big Thirst: How to Change the Way We Grow Our Food, by Wenonah Hauter, pp. 72 - 81
- Chapter 7 – The Age of Consequences: A Short History of Dams, by Jacques Leslie, pp. 82 - 97

### Session Three – April 20, 2009

The preparatory readings for session three in Lohan (2008) included:

- Chapter 8 – Watershed Literacy: Restoring Community and Nature, by Brock Dolman, pp. 98 - 109
- Chapter 9 – Acequias: A Model for Local Governance of Water, by Paula Garcia and Miquel Santistevan, pp. 110 - 119
- Chapter 10 – Can We Conserve Our Way Out of This? By Christina Roessler, pp. 120 - 133
- Chapter 11 – Natural Solutions to Our Water Crisis, by Erin Vintinner and Eleanor Sterling, pp. 134 - 145
- Chapter 12 - Water Neutral: New Technology and Green Design, by Eric Lohan and Tara Lohan, pp. 146 - 159

Session three encouraged participants to make a shift from understanding the problems to developing solutions.

### Session Four – April 27, 2009

Session four again encouraged a shift from learning about the issues to moving towards change through action. The chapters from *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008) led us neatly into discussion on the future. The readings for this dialogue session included:

- Chapter 13 – On Developing “Water Consciousness”: Eight Movement Building Principles, by Tony Clarke, pp. 160 – 167
- Chapter 14 – The Sacred Waters, by Vandana Shiva, pp. 168 – 175
- Chapter 15 – Making Water a Human Right, by Maude Barlow, pp. 176 – 185

- Chapter 16 – Why We Need a Water Ethic, by Sandra Postel, pp. 186 – 191

### *Data Streams*

There were four sources of data derived from this study:

1. Transcribed audio recordings of the second, third and fourth study circle sessions.
2. Transcribed audio recordings from one-on-one interviews with artists.
3. Transcribed audio recording of a focus group.
4. Journal passages of my personal responses as I was engaged in the role of both participant and researcher including self-reflection on my facilitation of the group and my own growth through the process.

I was interested in what themes emerged during the dialogue sessions and utilized the method of close observation to allow me to simultaneously be both a participant and observer (Lichterman, 2002; van Manen, 1997). Dialogue is a shared inquiry process of both thinking and reflecting together and provides a lived experience of inquiry (Isaacs, 1999). To capture that lived experience I audio recorded and transcribed three study circle sessions and the focus group so I could search for themes amongst the dialogue.

In the role of researcher and facilitator I maintained a journal throughout the process. I took detailed notes focused on accounts of specific people, interactions between people, group processes, individual dynamics, as well as participants' thoughts and feeling (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). Detailed journal notes enabled me to reflect on my own growth and leadership as well as on the entire project.

Another data source was from semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with the artists. Semi-structured interviewing is often used in social research because it is helpful at gaining insights into studies focused on exploration, discovery, and interpretation of

social events and processes, and it doesn't require that the researcher spend a long time engaged in the lives of those being studied (Blee & Taylor, 2002).

I used a focus group setting to obtain feedback and data on the usefulness of the study circle process for social change. The outcome of that session was unexpected and exciting.

There is no better way to capture a person's experience of both the process and topics discussed in the study circles than to obtain this in the artists' own unique voice (Atkinson, 1998). The three data streams of transcribed study sessions and focus group dialogues, along with the one-on-one semi-structured interview questions have provided me with a rich tapestry of the artists' personal experiences and perspectives gained from this research project.

*Making Meaning of the Project.* How does one measure evidence of success in such a project? Through the collection of my four data streams, I was searching for evidence of several different outcomes:

1. Increased water awareness – I was searching for evidence that the participants were gaining a more complete picture of water related issues.
2. New relationships and community building – Artists normally work alone, often in isolation, and I was looking for evidence of successful relationship and community building.
3. Ownership of water related issues – How have the artists transformed what they have learned through the study circle process into behavior change and/or action?
4. Leadership – Did I see evidence of leadership amongst the artists?
5. Collaborations – Did any collaborative efforts arise from the study circle process?

6. When the artists described the art they would make, was there evidence of art that would make viewers stop and think, or evidence of creative problem solving or education focused on water?

In qualitative research the objective is to collect “open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes for the data” (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). For this research I have created a qualitative, descriptive and interpretative study paradigm utilizing the above mentioned four streams of data collection.

### *The Ethical Challenges*

According to Whitehead and McNiff (2006), ethical behavior includes respect and doing no harm. These authors go on to discuss three basic categories of ethics: “access, which includes obtaining permission; safeguarding rights, which focuses on revealing identities, withdrawing from research and confidentiality; and assuring good faith which includes distribution of ethics statements and their archival, and issues of permission” (pp. 77-78). To address this level of ethical research behavior I sent appropriate documentation to Antioch University’s Human Subject Committee Approval. Study circle participants received and signed an informed consent (Appendix C) that was distributed and discussed during the first study circle session. Participants understood that their involvement was voluntary and that they could stop participating at any time. Following (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005) I negotiated the use of identifying information and all agreed that initials may be included in the dissertation. The use of photos of the artwork was granted with written permission of the artist, and discussed in the consent form.

Brydon-Miller (2008) suggests that ethics begins with an “individual critical examination including our own core values, our multiple identities and locations of power and privilege, and the ways in which these understandings influence our interactions with others and our research practices” (p. 203). I have been mindful not to impose my own values or views (Brydon-Miller, 2008; Ebest, 2001) about the state of our water resources onto the artists. As an educator, I feel I have developed an understanding of how to let people come to their own conclusions. During the first study circle I spoke about my previous work with water related issues and revealed my own biases that may have influence on this study. I have ensured that the study circle process allowed each participant to have an active and authentic voice in the project. Finally, I made use of my journal for my own reflection and to work through challenges that arose during the management of this project.

*Position Statement.* In Chapter One I informed the reader as to my position in terms of my background in water quality, my passion for water, and my concerns about a nearly universal absence in the United States of water awareness. My professional experiences may also affect the research, and I recognized that when I shared my thoughts during the study circles that I was also generating data (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). I am the Executive Director of a community focused nonprofit organization called Sweetwater Alliance and I have taught a variety of environmental and government classes at Northland College, which is known as an environmental liberal arts college. My awareness, values and beliefs are influenced by my environmental knowledge.

### *Funding*

As Executive Director of Sweetwater Alliance (a non-profit organization located in Duluth, Minnesota with a mission to increase water awareness through the arts and sciences) I applied for and received two grants (both under \$5,000) that supported this work. Funding was used to pay for the *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008) books that were provided to the participants. Additionally, grants funds paid for the room rental fees at Chester Creek Café, supplies, equipment, postage for recruitment letters and \$3500 in salary for my organizational roles in these projects. Please see Appendix E for a generic grant proposal and budget. These grants were written for a more inclusive project than this research and included an art exhibition and a separate project working with secondary school students and a clay mural project focused on Lake Superior. I have identified and thanked these funding sources in the Acknowledgement section of this dissertation.

## Chapter IV: Results

### *Purpose and Objectives*

The purpose of this study was to engage artists in an intense study circle process focused on water-related issues and to understand how a study circle process empowers artists to become community leaders around water issues. This chapter focuses on the processes, discussions, and resulting themes from four study circle sessions, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the participants, and a focus group. I also provide my personal insights, education, and reflections scattered throughout this chapter and which were captured through the use of journal entries. In this chapter I provide the completed transcribed dialogue from the second study circle session to give the reader a flavor for the conversation and processes that occurred. The first session was not audio recorded because consent had not yet been given by the participants; for the third and fourth study circle sessions, as well as the focus group and one-on-one interviews, I have summarized the dialogue and generated themes and commonalties. The complete transcribed dialogue from the study circle sessions 2, 3 and 4, the focus group, and one-on-one interviews can be found in Appendix F. Names have not been used in this dissertation, but their initials identify the participants.

### *The Setting for Dialogue*

Four study circles sessions with a two-hour duration (6:30 – 8:30 PM) were held at the Chester Creek Café (Duluth, MN) over four consecutive Mondays in April 2009. We had access to a private room on the lower level of the restaurant where light food and beverages were provided. Tables were arranged to form a circle with food and beverages set out of the way of the meeting space. This provided an area where people could enter the room, get some food and then informally talk and mingle until it was time to start the



study circle process. This facility also provided a DVD player, screen and speakers set throughout the room, which allowed for the showing of the video *Flow* (Salina, 2008). This restaurant was chosen for the facilities it had to offer, as well as its use of organic and local foods, and a neighborhood-oriented focus.

*Study Circle Session One: April 6, 2009.* My goal for this session was to facilitate introductions, to provide a warm welcome, and to create a safe space conducive to building trust and allowing deep dialogue to occur. I had several organizational challenges with this session because the group had not yet received *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008), which would provide stimulus for future sessions. I also needed to discuss the research components of this project with the participants and to obtain signatures on consent forms. These two situations led to several decisions in how I would facilitate this first session. I chose to show a 40-minute portion of the video *Flow* (it is a 90 minute video) and to use the video as a catalyst for discussion towards the end of this first session. I also chose not to audio record this session because I did not yet have consent to do so, and I did not want to make the participants feel awkward during a session that was designed to build trust and comfort.

To begin this session, I briefly introduced myself and provided background on study circles and how they have been used in various communities to build dialogue over issues concerned with race, schools, community planning, and other topics. I suggested that the group adopt the etiquette shown below, (New Road Map Foundation, 2005, p. 3) and invited additions:

- **Open-mindedness:** listen to and respect all points of view.
- **Acceptance:** suspend judgment as best you can.
- **Curiosity:** seek to understand rather than persuade.
- **Discovery:** question old assumptions, look for new insights.
- **Sincerity:** speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning.

- **Brevity:** go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.

One suggestion was made that we take a short break in the middle of the session and that was agreed to. I introduced the concept of the talking circle where an object is passed from person to person and while a person has the object, all others were to listen and not interrupt. For this purpose I used my very large (envy-making) Lake Superior agate.

I then suggested that we go around in a circle with introductions, what type of art each person did, and what attracted them to participate in the study circle project. Nineteen people attended this first session (including myself) making for a large group and requiring substantial time for going around in a circle. I did not limit this project to any particular form of art, which provided for a wonderful assortment of personalities and types of art including: a giant puppet maker, a glass artist, a poet, a filmmaker, two photographers, a stone carver/sculptor, a graphic designer, an art teacher and an art student, as well as oil painters, watercolorists, and fiber artists.

I was the last in the circle which allowed me to describe some of the community-oriented water work that I had done in the past, and to speak of how I came to a place of doing this research for a Ph.D. dissertation. This allowed me to segue into the need for, and value of, an informed consent. I passed out the consent form, explained what was on it, asked people to read it during the break, ask questions of me, and then if comfortable to sign and return it to me by the end of the evening.

After the break I showed 40 minutes of the video *Flow* (Salina, 2008) which covered topics of water privatization in both developed and developing countries. We then reconvened into a circle and conducted one round of dialogue focused on the video.

Prior to ending for the night it was suggested that we all bring a small container of water from a place that is meaningful to each one of us, and that we use this for our first dialogue circle next week.

I found it awkward and not very polite to take notes while people were in dialogue in the circle and therefore I chose to write about the first session in my journal. I also had a conversation the next morning with RT, a “critical friend” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, p. 78) who participated in the study circles and who will curate the exhibition. This discussion allowed me to go deeper in my thoughts about the first session.

My journal entries from this first session revolved around the participants who came, the large size of the group, and how that may impact the dialogue. Most of my reflection after this first session focused on how wonderful it was to be in a room full of people who came together knowing they would be asked to think, talk and reflect, and who came guided by their passion for water. There was a strong sense of harmony surrounding our passion for water, and that we were among kindred spirits. One person stated that the “spirit around the room felt like it was igniting a fire” and another commented on “how it felt right to be mixing dialogue with water and then to make art out of that experience.” I reflected on the meaning of leadership and wondered if leadership, in part, is about inviting people to sit together in a circle – the invitation being the act of leadership.

My main goal for this session was to facilitate introductions, to provide a warm welcome and create a holding space. My Tuesday morning talk with RT confirmed I did a good job at this. I discussed a concern that I had about people’s energetic sensitivity

and quietness, and the different roles people take that provides different levels of energy. I was pleased with the people who were participating and that some were already thinking about collaboration versus individual art, and that this exhibit provided opportunity for growth and expansion. RT and I both agreed that the idea of everyone bringing in water next week was great and that we would start our circle from there.

*Study Circle Session Two: April 13, 2009.* Two people dropped out, bringing the group down to seventeen participants. We began the evening with the water circle that LN had suggested the previous week. She explained the intent behind this ritual to the group:

The idea is to put your water in the container and share your appreciation for the water. We can share our names and intention and let the water inspire us as much as our thoughts. When we are all done we will put the container in the center of the table and at the end of the night we will place the water as an offering to the land on the East side of a tree. The copper bowl represents the copper from this area and the person to the left will hold it as we speak and pour our water into it.

The water circle was well received by the participants and provided a focus on a “sense of place” while also allowing us to explore and share why our water is important to each of us. All reintroduced themselves to the group and then spoke about the water they brought. In their own words:

LN - This water is from my well, I drink this water every day and bathe in it. It’s very precious and I am grateful to this water. My intention is to join with others and honor in some small way the beauty of this water.

SR - My water is also from my well. I am grateful to have fresh water for my family and it comes from under our property that we homestead. I often hear people say how fresh the water is here. Thanks water for all you do. Water ties us together globally. I’d like to pass on what I learn here to my students.

RT - This water came from the tap where I live. I cook with and drink this water, bathe myself and my child with it. It refreshes me, nourishes me, cleans me, sustains me and I am grateful for it.

JJ - My water comes from the ephemeral creeks and ponds on my property. The spring frogs emerge from these temporary bodies of water and the woods around my house are full of the songs of chorus and wood frogs. Not so much spring peepers any more – they are gone now because of the winter with no snow which froze the frogs.

JH - I didn't have chance to get to my property, I'll bring water from my well next time. The amount of shampoo you need there is 1/20 compared to Duluth. It sudzes all over– people who come to visit me talk about the water, not about the cooking.

JL - This is Lake Superior water [pours water from a drinking glass]. My feeling is that water is my heart. It is so powerful it can cut through stone, but also so pliable – it is a force unto itself. Water is mystical and magical because it can evaporate and reappear in another form and continues in cycles – the water that Christ was baptized in is still around today – that is powerful. I care about water and hope to be part of helping protect the source that all of us have to have. Water is life.

JD - I took a walk yesterday, the water on my property is not accessible because of snow and ice. The Lester River is on one side and a creek on the other – but it is not accessible right now. Water is very important to me – I live on a little peninsula. I honor and respect water and feel blessed that I have my own well. Many people in other countries don't have wells. I am grateful for water.

MA - This water is from Lower Ox Creek, which is a tributary to the St. Croix River. The Lower Ox is a river I paddle every year and I usually write something after I paddle. It's a very sacred, powerful experience listening to water babble down the creek, hearing and listening and feeling the healing.

SM - While doing the reading for today I was remembering a time when I used to live in a cabin and water was 1.4 miles away and we had to pump it ourselves. Then we found out about an old dump from the 30s – car batteries were left in that dump and we were told not to drink the water anymore. Our water filter here in town gave out, so I used a hand pump for camping – purified water is more precious than you know.

KA - We have 40 acres and a vernal pond on our land in the woods where my children play. The pond is very sacred to us and part of that is the life that is in that pond. Once the kids hear the peepers – they skirt around the water. I home school our children and I want the kids to be outside and to be taught from the outdoors. I went to the pond and had my daughter gather water – I told her to take some water off the top so we don't disturb the creatures in it. But lo and behold it is filled with beasties – so I'll put in a little drop but I have to bring this back home. I invite you to look at the life in the water – water is life.

KM - I had a really hard time deciding where to take the water from because I have so many places I love. I spend a lot of time paddling on the Mississippi River and so that is where mine is from – downstream from where we put in there is a huge dam and I wonder at the water quality there. There is lots of wildlife, trumpeter swans – it's a big part of my life, the Mississippi River.

LM - My water is from my well in Esko and it is the water I grew up drinking, I cook with it, bathe in it and water the garden, it's very important to me. The container is a nalgene bottle from the Scenic Café and on the back are names of rivers from Lake Superior and how far away they are from Duluth. I saw an eagle in the tree when I got this bottle and my friend said to set down tobacco to honor the eagle and the water.

AK - This is water from where Lester River flows in to Lake Superior, which is where I put my kayak in – those are important water sources – I studied the Lester when I did sculpture and paintings of water forms. Today the water was incredible – it was pouring out brown sediment from the peat bogs so there were brown standing waves charging into the Lake, and the lake water is clear and blue and meets with these big standing waves so it was really a gift to go down there to get water.

KP - I don't have water with me today but my favorite water source is from San Francisco and Hetch Hetchy [dam]. When you say sweet water – that water is so sweet you don't need tea, it's great warm, so here I dream of having that water. It is a valuable resource there and as I read about water shortages I thought about how much water is consumed on that peninsula.

MP - I was really excited about this assignment because it reminded me that I have been collecting water. My favorite water sources are oceans. My water is from one of three places, I didn't label the bottle – it's either from South America or from either side of the Indian Ocean. I feel really blessed to have been able to go there. Water's been sacred to me for a long time and I had forgotten about it.

PH - I grew up sailing and rowing on the St. Louis Bay and that formed my mission of what I like to do with water. I like water that is just water and not like St. Louis River and Bay – it motivates my mission to push for clean water. The water I brought today is from an under sink filtration system. When I travel I bring my own water – I have never met anything that can match filtered Duluth water.

As the bowl completed the circle it now held a little bit of everyone's water and we all had a deeper sense of one another and in context to water. The copper bowl was placed in the middle of the table where it remained until the end of the evening. I heard a

resounding sense of gratitude for water as well as a strong connection to place regarding as people described their water sources. The stories shared allowed us to learn about each other's passion for water and provided insights into the breadth of personalities involved with the study circles.



Illustration 4.1 - The Water Circle

After a short break we came back together and I began by passing around a paper that showed the Chinese character for “listen” (Study Circle Resource Center, 2006, p. 65):

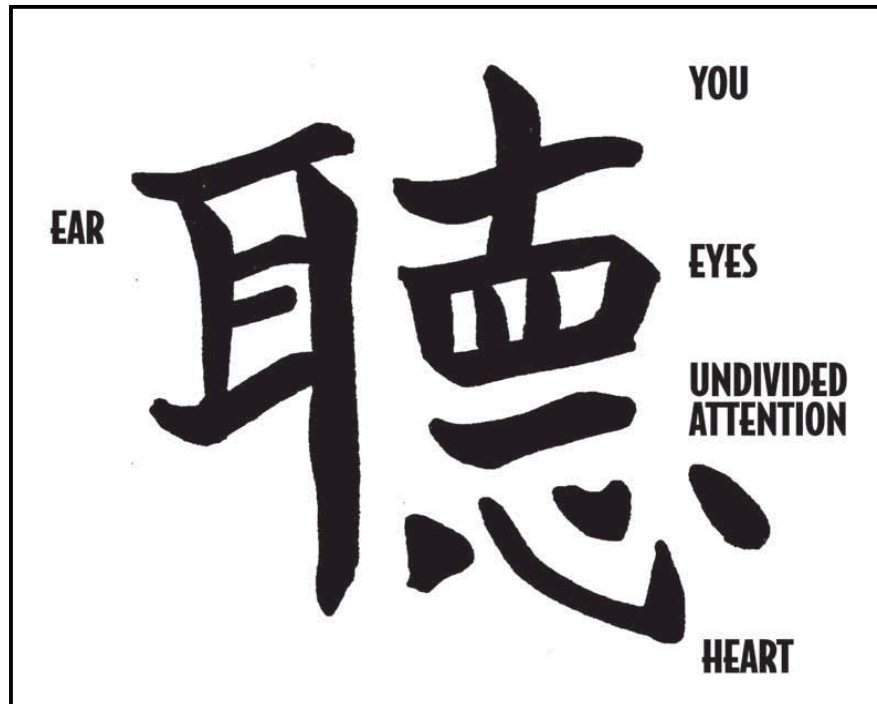


Illustration 4.2 - Chinese character for “listen”

I encouraged the group to connect head and heart as we discussed one thing from the reading that had a particularly strong meaning. I also read the ground rules (New Road Map Foundation, 2005, p. 3) that the group had adopted the previous week and again asked if there were any additions.

I passed the Lake Superior agate to my right, and we began a round of a talking circle (where one person has the floor and others listen with no cross dialogue) focused on the first set of readings (Chapters 1 – 7 in Lohan, 2008, see Chapter Three).

RT - There was no one thing that stood out – all of the information was tremendously powerful – so much that I woke up through out the night thinking about it and I needed to look ahead to find out that there is hope. It’s not that I was completely unaware of how dire our situation is as a planet, and in preserving this resource and continuing to allow it to be accessible to everybody, it’s that I feel a particular sensitivity to this sort of thing and so I tend to isolate and guard myself so that I don’t become overwhelmed by the energy of the situation. I



realize how important it is for people like me, and there are a lot of us who are sensitive, to allow ourselves to feel the extent of the pain and grief and damage and suffering so that the healing can occur, because you can't sublime what you don't first acknowledge. And so again I am really grateful that I'm having this opportunity to increase my awareness and continue learning and hopefully to grow and be a viable part of the solution and do some healing.

SR - It's so nice to sit next to a sensitive person – last week I felt I could barely speak I was so choked up, but that is how I get. I am doing this to give myself some time for a study but I realized I can't get away from being a teacher. I have young students and they need this knowledge really bad and so part of my intention is to go through this process and gather things that I can transfer into kid language and teach them. Things that I used with them were descriptions, like what forms water comes in ecologically like streams, wetlands, rain clouds, rivers, oceans, and I had the kids brainstorm to realize all the different forms that water comes in. And then also the other end of it – there was a quote talking for “advocating for the graceful communion that a glass, a splash, a spray, a wave...” of all these descriptive words that were used to describe water and help to bring some of that language out of the kids, and to them. So I was attracted to that, as well as the overwhelming facts and numbers and things. The other thing was being responsible for the way I or we use water as an individual – I noticed in the back of the book there is a quiz about how you use water. I thought that would be fun to take some time to really pay attention to how much water we do use and to challenge my students to think about that too, so they can get their family involved. And the last thing is that we do all live down stream, so just to be aware of that.

LN - I scanned the book and quickly reviewed the chapters I was supposed to read but jumped to the part that was the most exciting to me - the part about sacred water. I was very surprised because it was about India which is what I spoke about last time; my first experience overseas as an adult was with water at the River Ganges and Jumna at the Kumbh Mela festival in India, so oh my gosh there is a little circle going on and so that was fun. I find myself resisting some of the reading and the reason is because I truly believe in an attraction based universe – I believe that if I focus on what is wrong I give more power and strength to what is wrong, and if I focus on what is right and what I can imagine – I really like to imagine the best that can possibly be and in giving strength to that. So I don't like to sit and feel my body physically get uuuhhh when I see some of these things because I don't think I am contributing to the future in the way that I want. I know that there is plenty to be concerned about but I refuse to be afraid and refuse to be in a fear base or in an emotional base that is in that type of negativity. I am very excited about the future. I read pages that had summaries – fascinating about how much water we use for different things like bottled water and I thought we could really do a lot with that and I found more excitement in trying to work with it in that light.

PH - I am a sucker for statistics and scientific facts and was I astounded that we haven't begun a discussion on conserving water. Generally discussion revolves around conserving water at the end of the tap and I didn't realize how much water, an immense amount of water, is used in agriculture and in the production of meat. I always like to search for holistic tie-ins and I was surprised how water ties in to so many environmental and humanitarian issues and a lot of the chapters were powerful metaphors for the effect humans are having on earth, like reducing aquifers and how geophysicists can measure that we have changed the tilt of the earth based on dam building. Things like that I think are really powerful and move me – it's very interesting to learn some of these things. I'm enjoying the book.

MP - I am not a sucker for statistics – but what did stand out in my mind was that if a gallon of water represents all of the water in the world – the amount of usable water is one tablespoon and how amazing that was. The chapter by the Indian woman activist – talking about how water from the Ganges are really healing, and all I have heard about is how polluted they are – I did not know there is a healing element to that water.

KP - One thing that stuck out and in the back of my mind is that by 2050 the earth's population will increase to over 100 million people. I think that a lot of what we are talking about, and what the book talks about, is in effect overpopulation and in talking about water we also have to keep in our minds that this is a problem because of other issues.

AK - I am grazing the book to get an overview first. I'm keeping it in the bathroom so I can read it in the bathtub and other places – so I tend to flip through it several times a day. I note things for future reference and the thing most fascinating to me currently is the notion that we are privileged enough to be very concerned about the micro purity of our water and how much waste it can induce us to participate in like the bottled water craze and how much damage that does. We don't see that here so much because our waste is tucked away in landfills, but when I was in Mexico – the roads were paved with plastic water bottles – water bottles were everywhere. American and European tourists drink bottled water for safety – keeping themselves safe, and they are concerned about purity of the water but they are trashing this place because of it. I have a conundrum from a childhood experience in Africa and LA – water in LA is hugely charged – this sort of fetishism of personal safety regarding what westerners let into their bodies compares to what we allow our practices to do to other people's personal safety – so that is a theme that is always in the back of my mind when I read the book I look for that.

LM - So far I have been enjoying reading the book. I was talking with someone before tonight's study circle started about how we didn't know everything that was going on and I told her some things I knew, and a lot I didn't and I was shocked by how much corporations and conglomerates try to shanghi the common

sense and water resources from the common person into what they think would be good for them – for example – the Stockton water debacle bringing in multi-national corporation to run the city's water facility and public water utility and what a debacle that turned out to be and staying with that particular story – a grassroots campaign came together and even though they were at the last minute trying to get signatures they won their water rights back for the city to keep, for the local people to keep control of the water and I am cheering because I think that in reading all this I think that water resources and enjoyment needs to be handled locally and state wide and not through corporations with people sitting blindly in offices making these decisions. The fact that I think that you can also choose what to eat but you can see the cause for people to be vegetarian because of how much water it takes to feed conglomerate livestock. So far it's very interesting and a lot shocking and a few cheer points like the people from Stockton.

KM - I have read chapters 1- 6, however I did look around in the book. I had a four-hour car ride with my family and it was a great opportunity to have a lively conversation in the car about water and I don't know that we would have had that if we were at home. Then I arrived at my parents' house and I got into a great conversation with my Dad who, I guess I knew this, but he has been involved in water conservation in west-central Minnesota for years, and I had forgotten that about him. So we had a wonderful conversation and I felt like I hadn't connected with my Dad for a long time so that is another way that this book gave me a great opportunity. And then, the more I thought about it – every person I have talked to in the past week I have talked to them about water because I can't help it, it is so important and everybody has something to add and I thought wow this is just from reading one book and being involved with this group. It made me feel like I have to give this book to someone else. What a great way to keep on spreading the word about water and so even though it is a basic book, it is a lot of information for me. I'm having a really great time reading it.

KA - One thing that I have walked away with is that feeling of a better understanding of consequences. And I feel like we have this inner feeling of basically knowing what the right thing to do is when you walk through life and a pretty good idea of what a gentle way to tread is, and I think this answers the question as to why. It is a very consequences oriented book and it helps us to say yea here there are 74 gallons of water that go into this one cup of coffee and now I know that – it makes you look at your cup of coffee different – very empowering, it makes you look at your decisions with a keener eye and try to have a more conscious life as you're walking that path in life and I think that is very empowering. Kind of like when you go into the grocery store, now you know this pepper came from Chile – are you still going to buy it. We know we need to eat lower on the food chain, but why? When someone tells you it takes 400 gallons of water to make that third of a pound of beef – that is really powerful and so I think that is pretty amazing.

SM - I am hearing people saying they enjoy the reading and I wish I could say the same thing. I was very upset by the reading. I am not a numbers person not because I don't like statistics – but what I was seeing was jumping off the page and it was not filling my heart with rest. I would read the chapter and walk away. I like to mediate but my mediations didn't go to nice places and that hadn't happened before and in the last reading and last mediation it started to work itself out with some real nice colors and I get the understanding that it is not the planet in danger – the planet is comfortable where it is, it is mankind and our species' superiority on the planet that is in question because in 4000 years these polluted springs are going to be pure again. It brought the awareness of here and now of what is going on – I wish I had an answer but I don't. That's when our water filter broke and I pulled out the hand pump and wondered what I would say.

MA - It's good to hear everybody's feedback on the reading. I also found the first chapters difficult to read because of the incredible challenge that we need to look at and address and I can only do what I can do. It's hard to read some of that stuff. One thing that spoke to me was the issue of Stockton –where the bureaucracy and dishonest politicians had ulterior motives. The same thing happened over in Superior in 1982 when they wanted to put 1.3 million cubic yards of dredge spoils in the city forest and it came to a 4:4 tie and the mayor cast the deciding vote to accept the contract with the Army Corps of Engineers to allow that, so it was like revisiting the whole thing. Knowing the role that I played in trying to – the coalition of activists really spoke to me in that way. It just burns my butt to see those things happen and what can I do without destroying myself with my own anger. So I have been looking to find ways to do it that that wont destroy myself or create bigger barriers. My art is one of those things that's significant. Tough stuff, and at the same time trying to not deal with that fire or trying to use it in a good way and that is the challenge in reading some of this, it comes up again. There is nothing wrong with having it reawakened as long as I can focus on something that is positive for me and also makes a difference in the world that I live in – supporting and understanding other people's work, and for me to understand why I do what I do because sometimes you have to ask why am I doing this.

JD - As I was reading the book there is a part about the privatization where corporations are buying some of the water system. Isn't our mayor trying to privatize the water and gas department, is that not happening here? What do we know, I kind of heard that and I didn't pay attention. I think it is something that I need to figure out what's going to happen and I want to send him a copy of this book and specifically that chapter. He is acting out of ignorance so we have some challenges that we have to do right here and now and I think it is a serious issue and it's like we read what happens when they do that, it's awful. Part of me wants to do something about that particular issue. We have to pay vigilance to our water here. I know that on the creek I wanted to get water from, people own property up a little higher and we had this big thing in our township where one of the lawyer people wanted to fertilize with WLSSD sludge, which would leach

into the creek which goes into Lester River and I know my kids are older now 39, 37, but they used to swim just below and play in that water below where that creek went into Lester River. And there are all sorts of kids that play down along that way – we have to be vigilant with what is happening and wake up. I had no idea about the bottled water thing that they will drain – how can they drain the water table and somebody who was able to use that well no longer can – it’s just incredible that that can happen and that a court can support that corporation to have more rights than individuals. Guess we already knew that. Anyway I needed this information for my own personal awakening to what is happening here.

JL - The image that hit me the most was the little kid standing on the beach with a sign that said, “harbor area polluted by raw sewage” – that’s been happening down on our beaches here. Get up into Two Harbors or Knife River and I am struck by the clarity of the water you can actually see the water, but down in Duluth there is all this garbage. WLSSD is doing what they can. We’ve talked about corporations but also people want houses, and children and land, I want, I want, I want – but we are at a critical mass on the planet, there have never been as many people on the planet as there are now and as long as everybody is thinking about me and what I want and what I need eventually the planet will be here, but we won’t. So what’s going to be left for children, grandchildren, great-great grandchildren? I have no children; I made the political choice to not have children, to give up motherhood, that is my sacrifice to help serve the planet. So for people who decide to have children, my question is, what are you going to do to contribute to a planet out of balance? Because whether we want to talk about it or not we all have to understand that we have over-populated our planet – we are the problem and we can be the solution, but the me, me, me thing has got to go because, what we have here is a wealth of water, but as it says further on in the book, as the glaciers melt and no longer provide water sources for people in poor countries, what then? And not to be afraid, statistics are important, it’s important to have this knowledge so those of us who can speak and write about it know from where we speak. We have to be able to talk to people who relate to statistics and don’t care about the creative mystical parts. We have to be able to teach our children and speak to them in a way that they can understand because they are the future. We have to find a way to teach our friends and neighbors, we have to find a way to reach across to people who maybe we would not be friends with but we need to be friends about this issue. So to me it is not that I enjoy reading this because it breaks my heart to read some of these things – it is very emotional and makes me want to cry – heart breaking, but there is hope too. We draw to us what we think about. Every thing that everyone has said around this table tonight I am so impressed by because only good can come from this and I believe in my heart that the change will come because I believe that ultimately we don’t want to reach such a critical mass that we can’t go back.

JH - When I was reading the first chapters I was devoid of hope and that’s not normally the way I see things. One of the things that was upsetting to me was that

it was very definitive as to what the problem is. But the Universe provides solutions to problems and if we have 97 % of the world covered by salt water – there is desalination processes being developed and there are ways of converting that water for human use. I’m not saying that we should not do what we can to save what we have. One chapter that spoke to me, because I just finished reading William Least Heat-Moon’s book called *Blue Highways*, he had gone from the east coast to west coast on all the rivers in the U.S. and sometimes he had to take his large marine boat – he talked about all of the rivers and lakes he went to and what he talked about was the Corps of Engineers and what they have done to the interior water systems to this country in terms of damming up everything and now it doesn’t work. Mother Nature has it right to begin with and why they were dammed was for the multi-national corporations that have large cattle. That tied into chapter 6 with the dams, but I think there are solutions and you have to open yourself up to change and hope and sometimes you have to open yourself to the Universe to allow it to provide solutions to problems. But Water Consciousness is a good name for this book.

When the agate returned to me I used the opportunity to pull some topics and thoughts together:

JJ - I didn’t read the book! [Lots of laughter] We’ve talked about being sensitive and I think I walk a balance between being very sensitive energetically both to the earth and to people, and sometimes that can be overwhelming for me, but I also get balance from being a teacher, I very much see a need to raise awareness about water and the environment in general. I really like this book because although the first section is hard information to take in, it gives you some hard and fast facts and statistics but it doesn’t leave you in a place of hopelessness or depression because as you will see the readings for our next two sessions are much more uplifting. They are about solutions and maybe it’s that when we are in crisis – that is when we start searching for hope and alternatives and new ways. And although through my lens as I see the world, I see a lot to be concerned about environmentally, I also think we are right on the brink of a really great time because people are starting to look at things differently. The fact that you are all here and willing to give up your time to sit with people to discuss water is testimony to what I am saying and what I have been seeing. There are some really exciting breakthroughs that are starting to happen with alternative energy and so on and so forth. So that’s what I would like to share. Let’s take a five-minute break and next let’s do an open dialogue.

I find the above dialogue full of “ah ha” instances, where it is evident that the information provided in the readings helped to raise the participants awareness. This is what I had hoped to achieve from the readings for the first two study circle sessions; that

the information would allow people to look at their consumerism and lifestyle decisions as well as the related consequences. As we went around in the circle I heard people connecting the readings to their own lives (RT being sensitive and JD connecting the readings to local political decisions), to their work (SR incorporating the readings into her teaching), their passions (LN to the sacred), and to what they are learning by reading the book (PH and statistics). Some things stuck out for the participants: the amount of water available in the world, population numbers and impacts, the case for being vegetarian (choosing what you eat mindfully) based on the amount of water used in livestock production. There was discussion that showed how the statistics in the book brought the problems into the light and that the information was raising their understanding of the consequences of consumer choices and how to make better informed and more conscious decisions. For some the readings (consequences) made them uncomfortable or unsettled, but those feelings also are about awareness being raised.

When we returned from our break I suggested opening up the discussion and I asked if anyone had anything additional to add or ask.

LN started the discussion by describing some of her research on springs and suggested that they are a gorgeous water resource waiting to be recognized.

Several questions were asked about the location of the springs and LN explained how to get to the Nopeming spring and stated that it is the only one tested and therefore it is the only one they [the health department] will publically acknowledge exists. This brought out stories from other people in the group who have been to the spring.

AK – Suggested to the group that we keep a sense of humor and a sense of history. She told a story to exemplify the need for hope. A creamery was located on

Buttermilk Creek and dumped milk into the Creek. Recently she followed a northern pike several miles down that creek, whereas six years before it had been stinking. She also talked about her experience living in Madagascar where people had to worry about their health related to water borne diseases like malaria, tumors, liver and blood flukes. The discussion then shifted to the concerns about medicines getting into water bodies. In the participants' own words:

JH – I have been involved in advertising and its abhorrent to me to see on TV how many commercials there are pushing medications where the side effects of what can happen if you take it is 4/5 of the commercials - it's ridiculous governmentally and it's all based on greed. It draws attention to how unwell you are when you are just fine. I have an older woman that every time she sees one of those she calls her doctor and she lives on a soup of these medications. The doctors that prescribe these things should be talked to.

JL – All these medicines are ending up in the water. The worst thing anyone can do is flush these things down the toilet – nursing homes and other places where a person dies and they have medicines – are they flushing them down the toilet, how much is flushed down the toilet and into our water system? And how much comes out of the body in urine?

AK - The pharmacy near me made a policy to take duct tape and tape up the bottle and then throw it away.

[Not sure who said this] - WLSSD [Western Lake Superior Sanitary District] household hazardous waste will accept prescriptions that are no longer needed. Or, you can put medicines into used coffee grounds that will destroy the outside gel but you can still put it in a landfill. The landfill is better then putting them into a direct water source. Flushing down the toilet is the worst thing anyone can do.

[Not sure who said this] - At a WLSSD presentation they talked about narcotics coming into WLSSD and getting into sewage system. They will take medicines at WLSSD or wrap in newspaper or sawdust to dissolve and throw away.

PH – What really concerns me is that I have been researching chemicals in foods and medications and trying to deal with getting those things out of my life and finding how difficult that is, even things that are supposed to be ok like the liners in tin cans, how do you get those things out of your life. I want to apply a precautionary principle to my life and hope our laws will reflect this and I think we are playing with fire by what we are putting in things and how little we study



this. Not just the things we eat but in everything and how these effect our water supply. It's scary.

LN – I would like to imagine these great glass bottles – that were all kinds of interesting shapes that were somehow available – so people would carry water in glass bottles. I want to challenge you all to come up with something that you can do that would be really fun and really a neat change if it ever would happen, and what it would look like and be, and I'd like to hear a bunch of those besides the problems we have with drugs in water. What would it look like? What could we do about that? This is the most creative group I will ever sit with.

Someone asked, "Why glass?"

LN – Glass doesn't leach chemicals like plastic. People could knit things around the bottle so they wouldn't break.

SM – There were three of us in the house and we all used the same bath water. I was just glad it was still warm. Talking about recycling water to go from this to that, it'd be nice for everyone's house to have a swamp next to it to filter water through cattails but that is utopia.

LN – I am looking forward to when you get paid to return your pills, because they are valuable and they will give you a refund.

JL – There should be incentives for people – if they used less than x gallons they could get money back or win a refrigerator. There should be some type of water credit that could be measured – people need motivation because people are always about "me". The City meters how much water you use.

AK – Actually how much water goes down the drain is what you are charged for. When I was little we kids shared bath water and everyone took a bath once a week.

JH - I am Finish and grew up with sauna – it's healthy, spiritual and you get clean at the same time. Sweat lodges are the same principle – you get clean. I was talking with someone from Finland and they turn on water to get wet, then off to soap up and then on to rinse. My Father would fine us for leaving lights on or taking too long of a shower. It makes you aware of your actions. In Canada meters were put on the inside of homes and consumption went down because people were watching the meter going around. I wish there was something like that for water. It illustrates how visual people are and then of course the money piece – if you can save money by doing simple things like not letting water run when you brush your teeth or not flushing the toilet every time. There's so many things that people don't think about.

JL - New lights were put up at supermarket and women feel safer because there are more lights. Why aren't the management escorting women to their cars instead of getting bright lights? People aren't thinking out side of the box. Like stadium bright.

KA – When you said it's so easy to turn off lights and we have all this water in front of us, but I think, not to get negative, but to explore the beauty of inconvenience like when you were talking about three people sharing tub water – that is a beautiful thing. I think that artists understand the beauty of the process, and that is one reason why I spin; I could buy a sweater very easily, but the beauty of the gift of a sweater that you have made – the beauty of inconvenience. Someone says - That is becoming popular with younger generation – anti-Wal-Mart. Recycled clothes.

LN - Simplicity and seeing the process of something reminds me of a story –a friend of mine in his village every time something converts, if you make a pot every time you take clay or fire it, you give a gift, if you build a building you measure with your arms and legs so that you are in relationship to everything and every step as it transforms. Our society comes to something like a video camera or computer – everything has come from the earth and all those transformations – there has never been a gift giving or relational set up in each of those transformations, and so it is a hungry beast. Feeding is the beauty of that process, it's being in relationship to what you wear, what you own, what you eat. Young people are getting excited about that. We all are getting excited.

JL – There was something in the book that relates to this– having access to your own water and if people are involved locally – work at the plant and live in the community you are more concerned about what comes out of the tap. I was thinking about spinach – I can buy it at the store or grow it – frozen spinach looks just like what you can grow – but without packaging, and you don't have to drive to store. There are different intensities of choosing to eat that way.

Someone mentions a Kingsolver book and that it is about local food sources and that she left Arizona due to water consumption and challenged her family to localize food sources.

JH – So much of what we have in our homes is to save time and we need to develop a relationship – that's why slow cooking has come back –the process of having a relationship with the food that will nourish your body. I am just coming from Easter - the blessings were over the foods – a hands on for foods, a spiritual hands on. That is missing in our culture now. Food isn't what it should be.

MA – What is lost in the process of convenience?

PH – Our role as artists is to remind people that the things around us are of value and that everything isn't just encompassed by convenience. I know when I search

in myself about what makes me happy – it is not what is easiest or what’s convenient. I realize that I can make these things myself or the things that I buy from Asia to clothe myself, I realize that I can actually make these things myself in my spare time. I make my own stuff and I can be original and that’s an important part of our role as artists, to remind people that they can do that and to keep that alive and spread that to other people we serve both an environmental cause and a humanitarian cause.

JL – I had a box elder tree near my house and I hated that tree. Big winds knocked it down and even though it was on my neighbor’s land, I paid for cutting it down. When people help each other out and help someone in need and make the effort, that is community. It was a small thing but it created good will with him and it would be nice to see more of that. If someone needs a home, people come together to do that – like habitat for humanity. If someone knows something that can help someone else and its not a big deal – it’s exciting that we are experiencing a downturn because people are having to look more towards things they can do that don’t require money – people have to be more creative.

MA – That is the power of kindness and good will. The joy and good feeling that no money, no convenience, nothing can be any more satisfying than that. Again, what is lost in the process? That is what has been going on in my mind the past hour. What’s lost in the process? I went paddling yesterday and I talked about the springs and seeing eagles flying – little birds coming up into the sand, up and down, up and down and the little kid in me said “oh my god look at that” and so how powerful is that. Again, what is lost in the process? When we begin to see the simple level of things that are so powerful and profound, but so simple. And Grace says “why – why is that” – stay open to that, to how does this work and how beautiful and profound that is. And again what is lost in the process of convenience and complexity?

JH – I was involved in a heavy process and I couldn’t get peace about it and a friend told me I should kayak – she said “you are very in touch with water but you have lost that” and what happens to me is when I kayak I paddle until my mind runs clear and if I can be as clear as the water it alleviates some of the suffering you are going through and brings things into focus. That is the biggest thing and why I still kayak – it is a spiritual journey that helps everything.

LN – In February I was in Alabama in Mobile Bay after Katrina and an elder there was leading a water ceremony and gave everyone a large chunk of turquoise and she said to “give thanks and give a prayer and put the turquoise out into water to give thanks.” Afterwards a lady asked, “why did we throw this turquoise away, I just don’t get it?” She turned to her and said, “What would be enough of a gift for water? What is enough to give? That was nothing. We are giving a gift back because the water gives us a gift everyday we can’t live without it.”

JJ – That’s a great statement for closure for us.

On closing the group decided to do the water circle again the following week. I reminded them of the readings to do for the next week and several people volunteered to take the water in the copper pot outside and to water a tree with it.

Summarizing this round of discussion is difficult; the dialogue started out firmly rooted in a discussion about medicines getting into water sources, but it appeared to broaden and lost focus. The medicine discussion had two prongs to it. The first discussion focused on the correct way to dispose of medicines and correctly identified that flushing medicines down the toilet is not appropriate for disposal. The second prong of the discussion focused on the precautionary principle and how to keep unwanted toxins out of food and water. After a while the dialogue shifted to solutions such as artist designed glass bottles (as an alternative to plastic water bottles that leach chemicals), as well as incentives that could sway consumer behavior. This led to shared thoughts on the role of artists in society in regards to consumerism and the power of community and good will as a way to bring about change.

Later that evening I took time to collect my thoughts and reflect on the session. Beginning dialogue with the water circle and with a focus on water worked well because it allowed people to talk about places they love or activities they are passionate about. The water circle provided a great way to introduce people and it brought people into deeper dialogue than the usual name, location, and type of work introductions.

When the discussion shifted to feeling the effects of our environmental situation on an intuitively sensitive level, I knew exactly what was meant. People who are energetically sensitive have a tougher time coping with environmental, or other types of crisis, than those who are not sensitive. I feel like we have quite a few “sensitive’s” in the

group and it is also interesting to me that the group is almost all women (three men). I wonder if creativity and an energetic sensitivity go together.

My thoughts take me to a place where I remember the descriptive words of some of the artists and how they provided a strong visual image for me. For example, AK's description of how the Lester River enters Lake Superior, "pouring out brown sediment from peat bogs so there were brown standing waves charging into the Lake and the Lake water is clear and blue and meets with these big standing waves." These words provided me with a vivid mental image of brown roaring river waves crashing to a calm and blue Lake Superior. Also, SR's discussion of descriptive words for water, along with how she recited them in very poetic manner, left me with visual images: "advocating for the graceful communion that a glass, a splash, a spray, a wave..."

As we went around in a circle I caught myself smiling, and jotted in my notebook that "I am just so amazed at the people that were brought together by this project." I continue to feel that this was an amazing group of people to be in dialogue with. The depth and quality of the discussions makes me smile.

A statement was made about living in an attraction based Universe (you attract the energy you put out) and how it is important to not give energy to the negative, and that was such a powerful reminder for me that it brought me to a new place of awareness about leadership and change. It is a reminder for me to pay close attention to my thoughts and feelings and to make more of an effort to shift my thoughts and energy towards the positive. I tend to trivialize the positive and accentuate the negative.

Another statement that stuck with me after the session was one that addressed "the political choice not to have children and what those with children are going to do

about a planet out of balance.” If I set aside the tone that came with the words, I find agreement with the statement, but I am left wondering how the statement resonated with those in the room who have children. I understand where the point originates from and I agree that population is a fundamental problem and the place to start from in bringing about change. However, when I heard some of the people in the group talk about their kids and how they teach their children to respect and love nature, I found myself feeling hopeful for the future.

As dialogue moved around the circle, I found myself aware of process, of topic, and of intention. The discussion had drifted to medicines in water and chemicals in food, and the lack of scientific understanding about what chemicals are found even in liners in metal food cans and how that might impact human health. That was an important discussion, but I noticed that the dialogue was not empowering. LN attempted to shift the discussion from one of identifying and complaining about problems, to one of solutions. She suggested imagining a glass bottle that could be designed and used for drinking water instead of plastic bottles. She tried to redirect the discussion and empower the artists by suggesting a shift in focus from the chemicals in the water to solutions and change, and she stated that, “this is the most creative group I will ever sit with.” That was an attempt to take the discussion from one level (awareness) to another (action) and to tie the artists into a solution. I noticed it, but the discussion and idea did not develop any further.

*Study Circle Session Three: April 20, 2009.* We began the evening with the water circle and I suggested that everyone state his or her name again before introducing his or

her water. As we went around in a circle the participants described their water in ways that allowed us to know each other on a deeper level, for example:

MA - I tend to immerse myself in whatever project I am in and I happened to be at the mall shopping for a low consumption toilet and there is a creek that goes through there with significant wetlands, and it is part of Miller Creek. It's a beautiful little creek that certainly has its challenge with the Miller Hill Mall and all the other stuff going on, but it is so close and it's a trout stream and a sacred sanctuary in the middle of that thriving whatever you want to call it - commercial enterprise. I parked in the Kohler parking lot and took a walk down from there. So this water is from Miller Creek.

SR - This is my well water – 280 feet – oh dear water, thank you so much for all the contributions in here. I just want to express my thanks for your beauty and how you brought me to the woods and I could hear your sound and I followed you and I brought my kids and we got to wear our mud boots. It is just so beautiful to be focusing on you at this time of year and you are just pouring out from every crevice and showing your beauty and shininess, and your sound and touch and smell, it is so fresh. I am so grateful to be able to play and take time to honor this time of year and your beauty. So thank you so much.

In general, most people brought water sources from their well, from their land, or from creeks and rivers that hold significance for them. It was the stories that came with the water that allowed us to begin to know one another and that identified the beauty of this particular dialogue event.

After the water circle I suggested that we do another round and this time focus specifically on the readings. The diversity of what piqued people's attention from the readings was very interesting and ranged from personal change and action, to connecting ideas from the readings to artwork, to the sacredness of water. Chapter 8, *Watershed*

*Literacy: Restoring Community and Nature*, by Brock Dolman (in Lohan, 2008)

resonated with several of the artists.

KA – I wanted to talk about one of the images from the book, from Chapter 8, the image was about the watershed and it talked about the watershed as a cradle and I love that image and I have done some cradle art in the past so it was very exciting to me to have that image come in and I can just picture it in the medium I am

working in but I just think of the cradle as the place you put your most prized possession and I think of water that way and so I was appreciative for the connection and all these connections to the art and images coming out especially in this next batch of chapters.

SR – I too was struck with Chapter 8, I did like the cradling effect with the hands. I meditated on that for a long time. Putting my hands together like that and I have done a lot of images and work with hands, so that was a nice image. But what got me was the word “restoration” – kind of like retelling, refiguring out what your story is or what I believe. That is a big thing for kids to be able to tell their story and so getting them to tell stories about water in their lives is really just cool. And so what I had them do was to write letters to the water. Dear water or whatever part of the earth they wanted to write to. It was really neat to hear their words what they are thankful for and how water plays a part in their lives and the creek they play around in, in West Duluth. So that restoration was an important part for me.

MA – I love metaphor and I see dendrites and watersheds. It’s so much of a metaphor for our lives physical, psychological, and spiritual, all paths coming together into one.

I also observed that in this round several people talked about personal changes (awareness and/or actions) that have come as a result of their participation in the study circle process. For example:

RT – I have really started paying more attention to how I use water, everything from when I brush my teeth, I’ve stopped holding my tooth brush under the tap, I fill up a cup of water first, and I use that to rinse my brush and whatever. I could go on and on about the different water practices that I have begun to do as ritual, as a conscious living ritual, and that is such a beautiful thing and thank you for inspiring me. The other thing is that I have talked to the woman who owns the house where Grace and I live into getting a low flow toilet for the bathroom because each time we flush the toilet I think “there goes 7 gallons into nothing and for what.” So there are lots of really beautiful, positive changes going on in my life.

RB – I have been thinking about water all the time now. Some of you know I did the big mural at the Co-op that’s all water, and now I am working on this new thing, the Freshwater Society called me today and I am working on a proposal for them. It seems that everywhere I turn everything is coming back to water for me and glass is so well suited to water. I am drowning in this stuff and I live out in the country and my shoes, my feet are soaking wet all the time and I am trying to dry them. [Laughter]. I was thinking about art and activism, and I was also thinking about you, Jill, and that you talked about how it’s policy that is going to



really make things change and that it's not enough to just think about stuff, it is action, it's not visualization, it really is about getting out and doing stuff and I feel that one way I can contribute is to create art that will make people aware of this stuff. The more people who know, it's like little drops at a time and maybe things can change. That is what was going on in my head the last week or so.

JD – Much like a lot of you I have been paying attention to my water usage too and making resolutions like to get the laundry soap that you can get at the coop, certain commitments I am starting to do.

As we completed the circle our dialogue shifts to the movie *Flow* (Salina, 2008) that was recently shown in its entirety in town, and that there was a large audience, which speaks to the possibility that people are awakening to water issues. Several people offered stories about how nuclear power, and freeways have been kept out of Northern Minnesota because people have been willing to work to keep them out.

I suggested taking a break and while we did so, I rearranged the tables and covered them with large pieces of paper and spread different colored markers on the tables. When the group returned I provided a handout on some topics suggested for small group (four people per table) conversation and explained that I would give about 20 minutes in group, and then one person stayed at the original table to act as a host to the incoming group, while the rest of the group rotated to another table. The host then explained the drawings and shared what the previous group had talked about. This was a modification of the World Café methodology (Brown & Isaacs, 2005) as discussed previously in Chapter Three.

#### Small Group Discussion Handout Etiquette:

- Contribute your thinking and experience
- Listen to understand
- Connect ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions
- Focus on what matters
- Play, draw, doodle to make your conversation visible

Questions to get you started:

- What is important to you about water and why do you care?
- What has been your major learning or insight so far?
- Where does power reside concerning water in NE Minnesota?
- From the readings you have completed so far, what transfers or applies to the Lake Superior watershed?
- Is water conservation necessary in the land of ten thousand lakes?
- Do you have an idea what you will create for the exhibition?
- Who needs to be invited to the exhibition and why?
- What would someone who has very different beliefs than we do say about the water situation?

As the participants met and discussed I wandered from table to table to listen in, take a few notes, and pay attention to how the paper and markers were being used. It became apparent that most groups were brainstorming ideas for the exhibit. After the groups rotated several times, I asked everyone to come together and report back to the whole. The discussion focused on inviting other people in to do performances, if there would be some sort of celebration for the exhibition, and questions about cohesiveness of the art and artist statements, amount of space per person, and how people can work together on art.

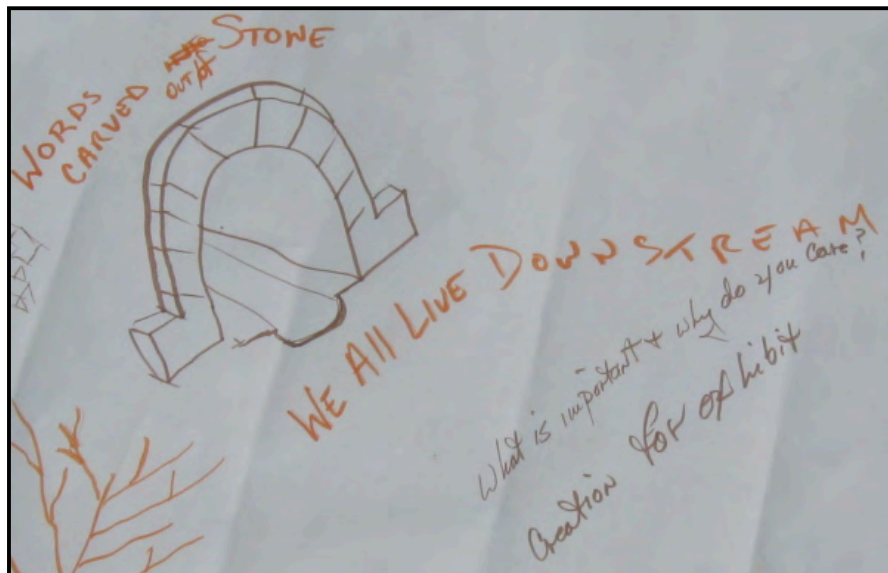


Illustration 4.3 – Small Group Drawings

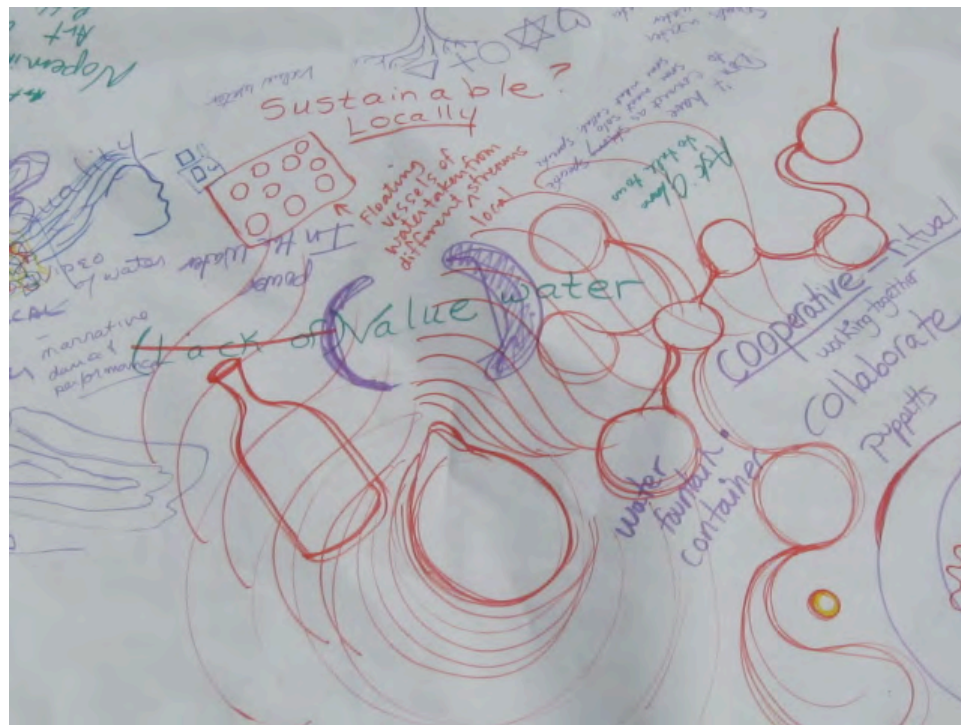


Illustration 4.4 – Small Group Drawings

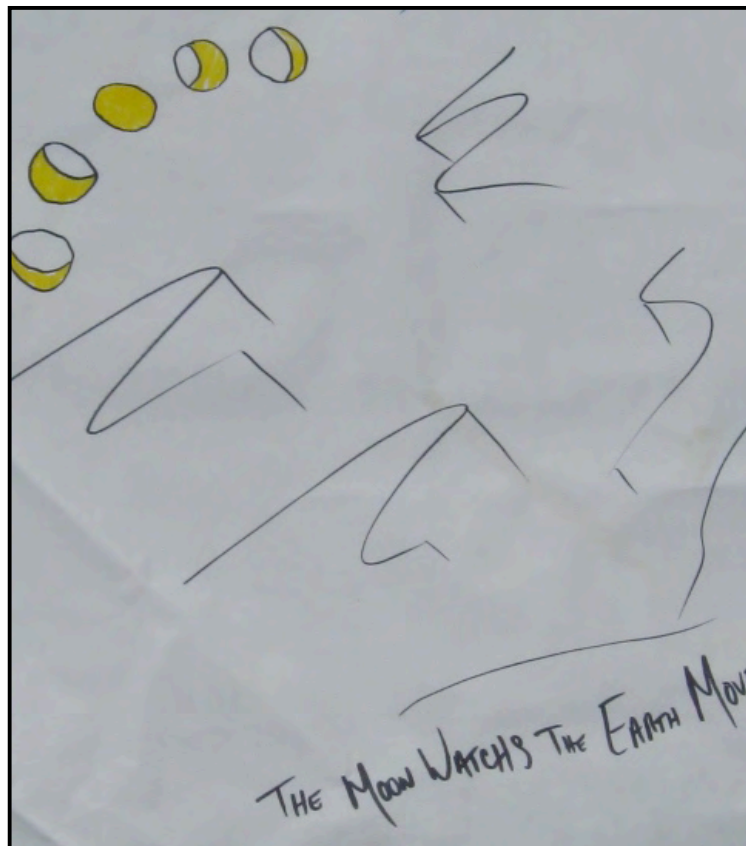


Illustration 4.5 – Small Group Drawings

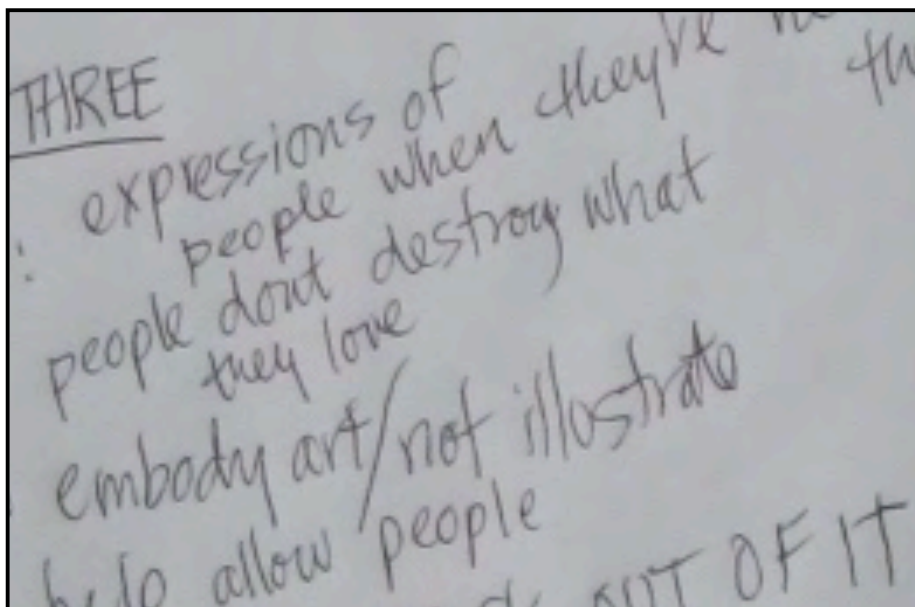


Illustration 4.6 – Small Group Drawings

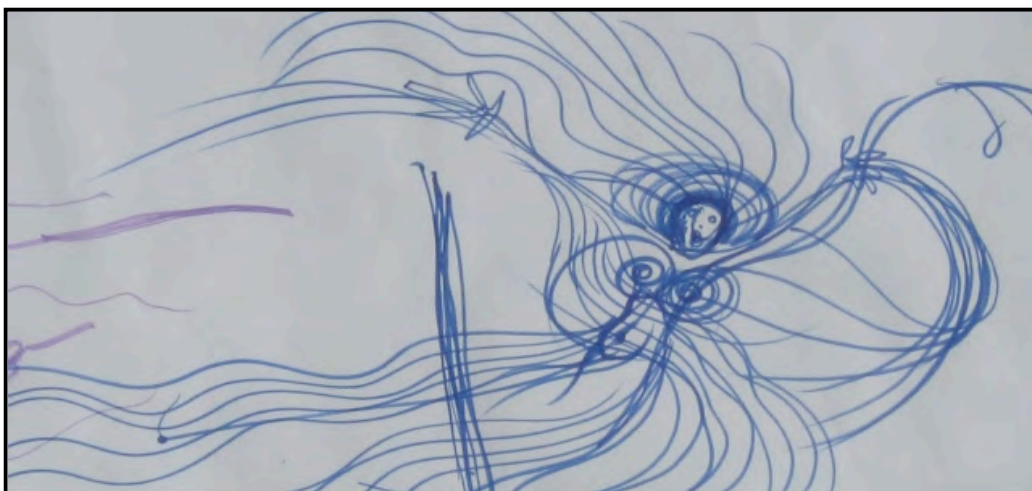


Illustration 4.7 – Small Group Drawings

Later that evening as I reflected on this third study circle I realized there were some significant transitions for people. MA and RT both talked about the purchase of a low flow toilet for the residence where RT lives. This was significant because it marked a transition from understanding the big picture to making personal changes and pointed to one success of the readings and study circles.

The image of watersheds and the language found in Chapter 8 resonated with a number of people. The analogies that Dolman used in Chapter 8 between the human body and a watershed had an affect on the artists as evident in their discussions.

I chose to break the group into four small groups, mostly based on the previous week and what appeared to be a lack of focused discussion. I utilized a modified World Café approach and used paper on the tables for people to doodle on. I handed out possible topics, but quickly realized that groups were focused on brainstorming art ideas and discussing what each person was going to create. It seemed that this was the most important thing on everyone's mind and there was a collective curiosity to find out who was going to create what. There was a lot of talking and high volume in the room during this activity. When the groups reported back to the whole, it was apparent that the small group discussion had stimulated thoughts about the exhibit and individual artwork. From the volume in the room, it appeared that the small group work further facilitated people getting to know each other, and focused the artists' thoughts on their artwork. I felt this was a good kick off for the art component of the project.

I also noticed that some people did not bring water for the opening water circle and wondered if that activity was beginning to lose appeal. The downside in making that a priority each week is that it had taken time away from linking the readings to local

water problems and Lake Superior. In retrospect, I feel that the water circle should have been used just for the first session. It was most powerful then, and since that first session several people have not brought water and the activity no longer seemed as significant to the group as a whole. Although the group stated an interest in continuing the water circle as an opening for each session, I witnessed its loss of power and significance over time.

This inner conflict I have between letting participants set the direction versus my setting the direction has come up previously for me. It is a facilitator struggle that I wrestle with. On the one hand I want to have the flexibility to go with a “teachable moment” or another direction that emerges, and I want the leadership to be more democratic than not. On the other hand, that flexibility means something else gets put on the back burner. In this case, perhaps I should have asserted my preference for dialogue on local water issues and cut the water circles off after the first or second session. The water circle really was powerful the first night and everyone felt that and wanted to continue it. But something happened along the way to make it less significant with some people who did not bring water.

One thing that was reaffirming to me was that the group showed spirituality and sensitivity in many ways, from having conversations with deer, to saying homage to water, to identifying the sacred in water. I continue to feel this is a very special group of people who were brought together by this project and I feel honored by their presence and participation.

*Study Circle Session Four: April 27, 2009.* We began the evening with the water circle and I offered to go first.

JJ - My water today is water that I know needs healing. The last two times I brought clean water, one was snow melt, and the other was practically snow melt, this is snow melt too, actually, but snow melt that comes off of I-35 and so its laced with all sorts of contaminants including road salt and oil and whatever you would find on a road is in this little vial. Many of you know that I have worked for a number of years trying to build a Stormwater Garden on the Bayfront property and that is where this water came from. It is a little stream of water that has no name, it travels under the Freeway and catches stormwater from the Freeway and Messaba Avenue and goes under Railroad Street and then right into Slip 2 if you know the Bayfront area. This is the water I have proposed to treat through the Stormwater Garden. I bring it for healing for me as well as healing for this particular water source because the political process that I have been engaged in has been very, very draining and not fun and I don't want to go back to it, I don't want to do it, I don't want to go back to where I have been, so if I am going to finish this project I need to find a new light and a new way and that may actually be happening. So that is what this water is all about.

Interestingly, several other people brought water in need of healing and that had not occurred before this evening.

LN – I brought water today from the spring that is down by Gary – New Duluth, the one that is kind of abandoned, it's way on the side with a little pipe coming out, it bubbles. I think it could use some attention and a little TLC and so I thought I'd bring it here. I feel this week excited and joyful. More then ever I believe that change is happening and I am excited about what I am seeing and the way it is coming and I think this group is part of that. Water that does need lots of love and attention is in here and I think that is what we give and that is what we are doing. I want to ask the water to inspire me for this art project and give me clarity about how to go forward. I'm excited. I also wanted to say that anyone who wants to go down and clean the springs I have a notice about that.

MA— I grew up in the east end of Superior and went to a catholic school and walked 6 – 7 blocks to school and my mother always knew when we were playing at the creek because we'd come home smelling like gas and oil from Murphy Oil Company. Over the past few years Murphy has been taken to task to clean up the pollution they have caused. At the mouth by Hog Island, they had to dig out all of that stuff down there and stop dumping their wastes into Newton Creek. So this water is from Newton Creek. Let's see if it smells like gas and oil [opens container and smells it]. When we talk about solutions and changes we talk about things not being like they used to be, but we still have a lot of work to do. So here's to solutions.

Several people did not have water and so the circle went faster than usual. I concluded this round by sharing that I had listened to the audio recordings of previous sessions and what fun it was to listen to our dialogues for a second time. There were a few loose ends that needed to be discussed, such as the focus group date and time, coupling that with time for the artists to visit the exhibition space, and to address questions about the exhibition and brainstorm a name for show [Flush gets lots of laughs]. I brought several books to this session for the participants to look at and which were related to activist and environmental art: Emoto (2004) on his ice crystal work; Earth Aware Editions (2007) *Art in Action: Nature, Creativity and our Collective Future*; The Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (2007) *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change*; and McQuiston's (1993) *Graphic Agitation 2: Social and Political Graphics in the Digital Age*. I also passed around a sign up sheet for the one-on-one interviews.

When we returned from our break I suggested we conduct another round of the talking circle to bring some closure to our time together in whatever way that people feel to be appropriate. I began by stating:

JJ - I was thinking about how I wanted to do that and kids kept coming up in my brain today. I want to connect with those of you who have young kids, and teach young kids, or remember when you were young kids, whatever. When I do this kind of work and when I get into this, I think about the next generation, I think



about the children. I have heard such great and wonderful stories from you guys about how you are teaching your children to respect and love water and to know that water is more than something you get when you turn on your tap. That water is life and you have brought in that life.

RT – Jill you are going to make me cry.

JJ – Water is life and it is ok, crying is good. We all came to this with different levels of awareness and we all leave with I think a greater awareness but I believe that there is a responsibility to that as well and that responsibility has to do with action and the greatest part of that is that you all have this gift of being artists and being creative and finding that creative, unique way to say something. So I just want to encourage you to tap into your creativity and share that with the public through this art show that we are going to put on. And thank you so much for being here.

Several people chose to talk about ideas for their art:

JH – When I was thinking about doing a piece of art and I was gone last week, half of me wants to do one admonishing people to take better care of Mother Earth but I finally came to the point of celebration for what is.

RB – I have had this water thing going in my art for a while and it seems like it is all focused and coalescing somehow. I have had this design for about half a year and three places wanted me to do it but they can't afford it. Culligan can't afford me, the Freshwater Society can't afford me, the Arboretum, so I thought I might as well do it for free, because the best art is the stuff you do for yourself and so if it helps with the cause, that's what counts.

KA – I have ideas swirling. Lots of going back into other mediums that I haven't touched in a while, so I am hoping for clarity and looking forward to taking time and going on a walk and being out in nature and having quiet and thinking about it. I love that time when I am ready to work on something and I don't know what it is yet.

The audio recorder was accidentally turned off and I lost 10 people's narratives. I turned it back on after the recorder returned to me and I realized what had happened. The remainder of the discussion focused on details about the show: how to work collaboratively for those who so choose, size/space limitations for each artist, security and safety for the art, and discussion on visiting the Maritime Museum to see the exhibit space.

My journal passages from this session reflect my feeling relief and accomplishment that the sessions were done and that they seemed productive and useful. My mind was racing with thoughts of how to conduct the focus group. I felt that the most useful time for the focus group would be after the artists read Chapter Four of my dissertation, and after the art exhibit. Such timing would allow for a more complete reflection on the usefulness of study circles for social change. But since the art exhibition is not part of my research, that necessitated the need to schedule the focus group for two weeks out.

I found it very interesting that several people brought water that was in need of healing. That hadn't happened in our previous water circles and I wondered if this occurred because it was the last session.

The last study circle session was full of energy, art ideas were beginning to take form, and at the same time there was excitement about moving to the next stage of the project, but also sadness that the study circle sessions were ending.

The next section of this chapter focuses first on interviews conducted with thirteen artists and then on the results of a focus group. Through the interview process the artists answered a number of questions that asked them to reflect on their experiences with the study circle process and allowed them to expound on their ideas for art they would create for the exhibition.

#### *One-on-One Semi-structured Interviews*

I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with thirteen out of the seventeen study circle participants. During the last night of the study circles I passed around a calendar with time slots and dates for the one-on-one interviews. Three people

chose not to sign up for an interview and one person became unavailable for the date that had been set. These interviews took place during the two weeks following the conclusion of the study circle sessions and were conducted in a variety of settings from homes, restaurants and coffee shops, a church, outside, or over the phone. Interviews lasted anywhere from 20 minutes in length to slightly over one hour. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. A grouping of all of the responses to each of the nine interview questions can be found in Appendix F.

As with the study circle sessions, I was alert to the themes emerging from the interviews, but I was also interested in several indicators of study circle success, such as:

1. Ways that the participants were gaining greater water awareness and a more complete picture of water related concerns.
2. An increased ownership of water related issues. Specifically, I wanted to know if and how the artists transformed what they had learned in the study circle process into behavior change and/or action.
3. Many artists work alone and often in isolation; therefore I was curious how relationship and community building would develop within and from the study circles. I was interested to see if collaborations would arise from the study circle sessions, and I was also looking for signs of leadership amongst the artists.
4. Finally, although the art exhibit was not part of this research, I was interested to learn if, when describing the art they would make, there was evidence of art that would raise the public's awareness about water, make viewers stop and think, or art that exhibited creative problem solving about water related issues.

To make these types of analysis I transcribed the one-on-one interviews, grouped the questions and answers together, and then looked at all statements to see if they addressed these areas of interest.

*Interview Questions.* The nine interview questions were devised to gain responses to help answer my research questions. Again, I was searching for evidence of:

- Increased water awareness, ownership of issues, action and/or change
- Themes from dialogue sessions
- Relationship building, community building, collaborations
- Signs of leadership
- Art that might raise the public's awareness to water

The interview questions either directly or indirectly addressed these five areas. To learn how water awareness increased, how participants owned water issues, and how action and/or change occurred, I asked the following questions:

- What changes have you experienced as a result of your participation in this study circle project?
- Think for a moment about the study circle discussions and identify one that was particularly important for you.
- What next steps or actions do you wish to take individually or as a group?

To gain a sense of the themes that emerged from the dialogue sessions, I asked:

- As you think back over the study circle process, what descriptors come to mind?
- What major themes came up for you during the readings and/or study circles?

To identify relationship building, community building, and collaborations, I asked:

- What led you to participate in the study circles?

- What was it like being in a dialogue circle with other artists?

To understand leadership roles of artists, I asked:

- Before the study circle sessions, what did you think were the most important roles of artists in society? How, if at all, has that view changed since the study circle sessions?

To learn more about the artists' ideas for their art, I asked:

- Do you have an idea for the art you will create, and if so, can you describe the art and what it represents?

*Themes from Interviews.* For the results of semi-structured interviews I have summarized themes, as well as commonalities and differences for each question and I provide quotes to exemplify some key responses from the artists. Participants are identified by their initials.

*Objective - Increased water awareness, ownership, action and/or change*

Interview Question - What changes have you experienced as a result of your participation in this study circle project?

The answers to this interview question developed an obvious pattern. Participants spoke to the fact that water was consciously on their minds as a result of their participating in study circles. Several stated that discussions about water, specifics from the readings, and their involvement in the study circle came up in discussions with partners, co-workers, friends, parents, children, and through teaching children. Some of the participant's friends went to see the video *Flow* (Salina, 2008) or purchased *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008) as a result of these conversations. Other participants spoke about their desire to pass along the book to someone else when they were done with it.

KA - The main changes that I have is that I have water on the brain all the time and it comes through because I teach a lot through out the day.

KP - I guess I have had a lot more discussions, like everyone in the group, about water because you tell people you are part of this group or doing this project. I have friends that have bought the Water Consciousness book, and two friends that rented *Flow* as a result of these conversations, so I guess a change I feel is sharing amongst friends or peers and having them come back with questions and concerns and wanting to see the work [exhibition].

Another common theme found in this question was a raised awareness about water issues, water consumption, and waste. There was a consensus that most were more consciousness with home water use, conservation, preservation, as well as issues with water privatization and bottled water. Some spoke of developing more of a compassion for people around the world who don't have access to clean water:

MP - When you think about the abundance of water we have here and you think about people who don't, like Cochabamba where they were trying to charge people for their water and making it almost impossible for people to afford it. People are profiting from something that should be a right. How low can you go?

Being involved in the study circle raised awareness of water issues through the facts that were presented in the book. For some that change in awareness led to actions such as changing laundry products to those without chemicals, reusing water, or purchasing a low flow toilet:

RT - We are very much aware of our water consumption here in our household. We always try to be aware when we brush our teeth or wash our hands not to leave the water running. But now we try to reuse water, we catch it in the sink and use it again if it is clean enough. We use it to water the plants and we have more of a conscious relationship with water, we thank and bless the water a lot... And, we have a new low flow toilet just because it so grievous to flush 5 – 7 gallons each time we flush, even though we don't flush every single time, especially after having read that the average person in Kenya uses 3 gallons a day and one flush of the toilet is 2 and 1/3 person's water consumption for a whole day in Kenya. That put it in a totally different light for me... This toilet is amazing – it's a dual flush – one button is .9 gallon and the other is 1.6 gallons. I have yet to use the 1.6 button because of the design of the bowl is such that every thing goes right away... And then my laundry habits have changed. I wear my

own clothes more often instead of washing after one wearing...and I am reexamining her [child's] clothes because kids do get dirty, but we are letting some of the dirty get by for a couple wearings now. That feels good to me; I am doing something that matters on a very small scale. I have a much more conscious partnership with water as an entity in my life, it is a spiritual thing and it's a practical thing.

As exemplified by the above statement, the sacredness or spirituality of water came up during interviews, and a clarification of the role of ritual in meetings was also addressed in answer to this question. Experiencing the viewpoints of others, participating with a wide range of people with different perspectives, and the development of an interest in working collaboratively were also mentioned as changes experienced as a result of participating in the study circles.

Finally, some participants mentioned their art as a change resulting from their participation, as the following quotation illustrates:

JL - Something is getting clear with me about my role as an artist. I feel I am coming into my own now and doing what I was always meant to do, partially as a result of the study circles. I am evolving and in the middle of the process, so it's hard to be objective about that right now, but I feel really honored to be part of this group and I hope I can give as much to it as I am getting out of it.

*Objective - Increased water awareness, ownership, action and/or change.*

Interview Question - Think for a moment about the study circle discussions and identify one that was particularly important for you.

Important moments for the participants ran the gamut from the first session to the last, from open large group discussion to small group discussion to drawing on big paper and the opening water circle! The range of answers attests to different dialogue preferences from small groups, to an open dialogue where anybody could speak, to a focus on discussing artwork and the exhibit. However, there was nearly universal agreement that the second dialogue session was important. Some felt that during the

second session the group had more of a familiarity with one another that led to more confidence in the conversations. For many it was the focus on the Watershed found in Chapter 8 of *Water Consciousness* (Dolman, 2008) during the second session. The metaphors of a watershed and comparisons of a watershed with the human body resonated with the artists. For example:

MA - The watershed moment, that “ah ha” moment where suddenly things are washed away. That was a very powerful topic.

LM – I think the watershed one, people seemed really impassioned by that and it was the first chapter on the second Monday we met – people seemed really taken by that and that was a good discussion and you can see how your body is like a watershed. That was a fun discussion to listen to and give feedback. People were really pumped by that. Six to seven people all seemed to feel the same thing. Other significant statements that came out around this question focused on

changing perspectives or becoming aware of another viewpoint. The group was spiraling toward being overwhelmed and despondent by the enormity of water issues, but with the help of one person the entire group had a major shift in perception. RT explained it during her interview with me and in these words:

RT - That same night was the night that LN helped the group shift from discussion that was very, very negative and full of fear and anger, all of which are important, and it’s true you can’t sublime what you don’t first acknowledge, but she did challenge us to sublime and she was successful and the group was willing. In answering this question, several people spoke about gaining an awareness of

other people’s thought processes, opinions and paradigms in regards to water and that an understanding of “other” was particularly important for them:

MP - I really liked the time that we had the white papers, the big paper where we could talk and draw at the same time. Then I learned a lot about people’s thought process and what was important to them. People could doodle when they were talking and it was interesting to see if they were trying to be very specific in what they were mapping out or if they were abstractly drawing unconsciously while they were talking – so maybe just scribbling. Other people were very direct, like I think we should have little vials of water with our names on it and that’s how we’re going to identify our artwork and it was very focused and specific. Other



people were looking at the overall flow or the theme. It was good because it wasn't critiqued, it was just quick and by the time we ran out of ideas we were rotating to another group with new people. It was important in that I could see then how different types of personalities could work together – different ways of approaching art and ideas.

AK - People seemed to seize on the scope of the issues and have more focus on how they directly related to it, so yea, the second session was good, it structurally worked well and people didn't wander off topic as much. That's the one I remember the most distinctly. People seemed to talk and recognize that water issues are different in different places, there is a commonality to it, but certain places have certain issues and that was good, and an interesting thing to think about the politics of water being really different in different locales.

SR - I think the very first one was pretty striking watching the first part of Flow and seeing the sadness on people's faces and maybe, I don't know what anyone else expected to find out by participating in this, I don't know if they knew how sad that was going to be, so to have that raw emotion of that sadness of what is happening globally. That was a peak point for me, the vulnerability of all of us.

JL - The first session where people who lived elsewhere talked about their experiences with pesticides and farming and coming home and washing their hands and having the skin peeling off their hands. ... Once again that awareness hits home to hear other people's perspectives, sometimes you don't know what you have got till its gone kind of thing.

*Objective - Increased water awareness, ownership action and/or change.*

Interview Question - What next steps or actions do you wish to take individually or as a group?

Responses to this question reflected an interest in maintaining ties to the group and feelings about isolation. Discussions on isolation came up in relation to doing one's work alone, and in how difficult it is to build community in Duluth. Several people mentioned an interest in doing some sort of collaborative piece for the exhibit and that they planned on meeting with the group of people who expressed an interest in collaborative work during the last session. In general, people were excited about getting to know others through the study circle process and/or were looking for ways to engage other groups of people (by creating a Friends of Springs group, for example). There was

interest in maintaining some sort of group identity (creating a Water Warrior society), keeping in touch with each other, and ways to use the Internet to organize people to respond to local water issues. Some did not want the process to end and wanted to find a way to maintain contact and to celebrate future successes. Others felt the amount of time given to the study circles was perfect and because of living out of town did not plan on maintaining a group connection. There was also mention of wanting to research local water organizations and to become involved with some.

Several people mentioned the importance of continuing their own water awareness and conservation at home and to continue to build relationship with place and making a commitment to take care of certain places.

Some participants answered this question with a focus towards their art including the need to spend time doing research and getting their piece ready for the exhibit, or the long term effect the study circles will have on their art, as exemplified in this quote:

PH - I think this will definitely have a profound effect on my art and I can see myself continuing to make art based on these social concepts of society clashing with its water resources and how that is typical of man's activities and how it ties into industrialization. I can definitely see myself working with similar themes in future art work and as far as my personal political and social views I definitely have marched water up the ladder to a priority, it changed the color of the lens with which I view, and ties in holistically with many other pet issues of mine.

*Objective – Identifying themes from dialogue sessions*

Interview Question - As you think back over the study circle process, what descriptors come to mind?

Some participants used descriptive words to answer this question and then provided a narrative to further explain their experiences. The descriptive words mentioned by the participants ranged from positive to negative and included:

An AA group for water lovers.

Powerful, delightful, surprising and safe.

Moving, instructional, informative, personal, expansive, emotional.

Relaxation, being able to open up, cohesiveness, passion, interests, intelligence.

Evolving, evolutionary, spiritual, creative, very powerful.

Action oriented.

Interesting, creative people comes to mind, thoughtful and heartfelt discussions.

Eye opening, there were many different viewpoints expressed.

Openness, warmth, appreciative of each other.

I felt like I was confessing something bad.

Sometimes frustrating because sometimes I have some difficulty with people and personalities.

I was nervous with the size of the group and the looming questions of the art at the end, questioning my ability to be an artist or my ability to fit into the group.

Personalities, I think working through that and working around them; overwhelmed, frustrated, spinning wheels; I was a little impatient and wanted to move forward.

Common ground for a number of people included the water circle that was used as an opening ritual for the dialogue sessions. In addition, numerous people spoke to the fact that the group of people that had come together was very powerful and included descriptors such as:

LN - They are authentic people, no one was putting on an act and it wasn't about who is a better artist – just very down to earth talking about what matters.

RT...delighted to see how enthusiastic and how powerful the discussion was...it was a safe group to be in.

MP – It was a warm group of people who were truly caring about the process and each other.

AK - ...people were really appreciative of each other and because of the openness pieces of information would come in that maybe otherwise wouldn't have

happened. It was expansive not inward. It had a generosity that made things come up; people would bring things to the group.

SR - It was a creative group of people with an ability to be focused yet open to new ideas.

*Objective – Identifying themes from dialogue sessions*

Interview Question – What major themes came up for you during the readings and/or study circles?

The themes that came up for people varied considerably in this question. There was no one over-riding theme that collectively came up, but several general themes such as people and water, water quality, and spirituality focused on water. Several comments addressed water and human connections. For example, the following quotes:

RT - The major themes for me in both the readings and study circles is the necessity that we have to make this a cooperative effort.

MA - The theme for me is letting go of my own stuff – people and things, to understand that there is so much more there that we are not getting.

SR - Water is life and how everything is connected around that and how it is such a resource that we need. From the tiniest thing to the largest, and humans are just a tiny little part of that and how we consume so much of it.

JL - Population and the political – I think everything we do is political. The choice to not have children is political. I chose not to have children. I am very conscious about that. I see women getting pregnant, having children, having more children; I just want to say “do you understand that our planet can not sustain all the people who are on it already?”

The theme for water quality and water use also hosted a wide range of opinions:

MP - Water quality versus quantity, because we are sitting next to this gigantic lake and I remember someone saying why should we focus here in Duluth, but one thing was the pharmaceuticals, that’s very disturbing...

AK - The virtues were in the details for me – the really specific stories and details, getting the details and empirical stuff right, that was the virtue of the readings and a lot of the discussion for me, not the generalities.

PH - From the readings the themes that came up is that this is a very serious condition that we need to address right now, not enough is being done. The themes in the readings were broad and overarching. The discussion had a very regional feel about it – discussing our water resources here. But I felt the book maintained hope and the overall message was one that was very serious and of very serious trouble; the bigger role we can play is through our diets and consumer purchases and that's how the discussion raised my awareness the most. The massive amounts of water used in production of things and while that is depressing, it affirms my overall belief that doing the right thing is immensely more complicated than most people can imagine.

JD - In particular hearing the story about bottled water and how companies can go in and drain the water table and once that has happened people are left out because corporations are just interested in making money.

LM - Protection for water and the public utilities that bring water to people. Bottled water and related marketing was a theme.

KM - We are far removed from water and every resource we have, and I have to tell myself not to use as much water and I can cut back and it's hard to see why it makes a difference, especially in Minnesota where it feels so abundant.

One person related the topic of themes back to her art and the exhibit:

KM - The image of a river. I just have to do that in a piece of artwork - the meandering river. I got out the maps, we spend so much time on the river, looking on a map is so incredible, when paddling it you don't feel like you are doing so much twisting and turning but when you look at the map its amazing how much back and forth we do. And how many times we are just a small distance away from where we just were because we've wound around. So that to me is a major theme that I have to do on an artistic level.

Sacred and spiritual connections to water were also mentioned as important

themes:

LN - ...the sacredness of water, when we separate our spiritual connection from water we separate ourselves from life. There is a huge connection between water and that spiritual path and the journey we are on. We came from water – that creation thing.

SR - The sacredness of water, looking back in history and even now how different cultures honor water, and what ever got us away from that in the U.S. and even in different parts of the world. I think trying to do more ritual around that and creating sacred water and reminding people to be thankful so it's not taken for granted.

*Objective – Relationship building, community building, and collaboration*

Interview Question – What was it like being in a dialogue circle with other artists?

This question interested me because many artists work alone on their art, leading me to wonder about feelings of isolation, artists as introverts, and the process of communication among people who often communicate through their art. I wanted to get the essence of how it felt to dialogue with their peers and if being engaged in a study circle process would open doors for future collaborations. Some artists explained the thought processes and ways that artists think and communicate; others compared artists to business people and contrasted the differences.

MA - Artistic awareness and consciousness is different than business people, and a lot of people and I enjoyed that depth of exchange. It also gave more permission to go into that space and share. In some cases you don't talk about stuff like that, but there was more permission to talk about some things in the dialogue circle. ...The artist does hear things and see things and is aware of things and has a need to express that which whispers in the wind, which speaks to us in many different ways.

LN - I also think that artists have the characteristic of taking a subject and looking at it, not just in a linear way from A to B to C to D, because that's not how they process. I think artists process in ways that are more brainstorm, try it this way, because that is partly how they come to their creations is through a process of brainstorming and playing with the topic. So I think they don't always go a direct route and I appreciated this group for that.

AK - It reminds me of why I love artists and why I hate them. We all tend to approach conversation from a kind of a spatial non-linear thing that artists do in their talk that can be totally crazy making if your trying to get anywhere, or really nice if your trying to be somewhere. You have to shift gears and step back and say ok we can't expect this, so it definitely reminded me of what is annoying about artists and what's really great about them.

[This artist also answered this question while talking about another question and I add it here to this discussion because it is relevant.]

AK ...For me it was a kind of opening up or opening out process, so what was interesting about it was to some degree it was sort of a solvent for language. Language is often related to the analytical and this was a process that was not about that kind of use of language, so for me it created certain areas of silence that

were kind of nice. Not that there isn't meaning in those places but that the meaning is perhaps best not transmitted by language. So talking about it is in a way talking about how it isn't transmittable by talking which is weird but that's how it felt. ... That was intriguing to me because the last few years I have made my living solely by writing and fixing other people's writing and that is totally a language driven practice and this was a way to think about making meaning and making stuff that language is to the side of, so that was nice. An artists' talking circle is almost a contradiction of terms, but it was a good idea. It did allow for artists' own eccentric uses of language, which aren't usually tolerated. So that was good. Artist's use of language is usually considered wrong and this was an allowing of those wrong uses to make something that was very right. You've started your own asylum!

PH - I don't think [artists] have any special perceptive ability but their creative approach to things and their general progressiveness, they all march to the beat of a different drum, so it's interesting bringing people like that together and to watch their different opinions and viewpoints unfold. Artists are always interesting people with something interesting to say. It was interesting to see what came out of it and people's different approaches, many approaches were very different from my own, but the format lends itself well towards me realizing that it is not only my approach that is valid.

JL - I think it was pretty amazing all these different people and I was reminded again about the sensitivity and vulnerability of artists and how it's very hard for people to come out and really share themselves on a personal level outside of their art. It's an interesting situation. It could go either way and I think this particular group was very positive.

*Objective – Relationship building, community building, and collaborations*

Interview Question – What led you to participate in the study circles?

This was the first question I asked each participant and my intention was to use it as an icebreaker and to get us into the flow of an interview. In retrospect, I see this question as providing potential information on relationship and community building.

Response to this question was usually brief and provided information as to the motivating factors for their participation in the study circle sessions. Most respondents mentioned the topic of water, the opportunity to meet and discuss water issues with other people and/or the chance to exhibit their artwork. Some referred to knowing me personally, talking with me on the phone to get more information, or knowing of my

work as providing a catalyst for their participation. The following two interview quotations illustrate the importance of the combination of art, an environmental topic, and connecting with people.

PH - I got a letter in the mail, but what drew me into it was the possibility of having an art exhibition and the discussion aspect, the idea of coming together and talking about social issues with a variety of artists appealed to me because I tend to appreciate the way artists think in general and I always look for a way to tie in my artistic background and roots with social conscious and social aspects, so it interested me. Also to do something local – to work with issues we have in Duluth seemed to be a natural fit between art, social consciousness, and discussion – three things that I like a great deal.

KM - It was a series of events. I had been in Duluth a few weeks before I heard about the study group. I went to an art show that I thought would be great, but it was left overs of artist work that got put together in a last minute show. It wasn't very inspiring, but I thought hmmm there are all these artists over here and I am feeling a bit unconnected in the Grand Rapids area so I should start looking for a group to get to know Duluth artists. Coincidentally a few weeks later my friend KA called and she forwarded the e-mail and I read it and it was everything I am interested in, and having a concern for the environmental was a fit, and the artists was a fit, so I joined up as quickly as I could.

*Objective – Identifying leadership*

Interview Question – Before the study circle sessions, what did you think were the most important roles of artists in society? How, if at all, has that view changed since the study circle sessions?

With the use of this question I was attempting to first identify how the participants view the role of artists in society, and then to determine if their understanding of that role had changed as a result of their participation in the study circle sessions. Most participants came to the study circles with a strong association of artist as social change agent, as teacher or translator of information, and as inspiration to others. All of the participants stated that the study circle process did not change their opinions on the role of artists, but served to affirm those feelings. Several participants spoke to the



importance of the artist's intuitive understanding of social issues and their ability to communicate that issue to the general public. The following statements capture some thoughts on the role of artists in society.

LN - The role of artists in society is being an entrepreneur and translator and conduit for another viewpoint/perspective, for utilizing various mediums to express the pulse of society, what's going on, and also to express something from their spiritual perspective outside of the world we claim. They... bring forth bigger, universal, profound perspectives, so that one experiences new knowledge but in a profound way – that it touches your emotion and not just facts, not just your mind – it touches your heart. If you don't get a feeling or an emotion then it hasn't done its job. I don't think that has changed for me during this process, I think it just echoed a perfect match to this topic, but not like a change in my thoughts.

KM - I think that it affirmed what I believe the importance of artists in society to be. I believe that artists are visionary and more sensitive than the mainstream public. They are in tuned to what's happening and really feel that. But I don't think other people really notice. The study circle to me affirmed that somebody else believed that, that being you, by putting the group together. I didn't know exactly what your goal was, but I think that it must be that you believe that also, that artists have a sense and concern about things that are very important and I felt valued in that way. So I would say no, I don't think it has changed, but as an artist I feel valued, but as a whole as a culture nothing is coming to mind feeling like the big picture has changed. I think having this show is a way that the public can be impacted and sometimes I am concerned that people just want instant gratification of something moving and fast and the whole media thing, rather than appreciating hand made beautiful objects. Other cultures treasure and really respect traditions of their culture, but ours, we are not so good at it.

JL - I have felt for a long time that artists have a responsibility to be activists in their community to do something with their art besides being self-indulgent. There have always been two kinds of artists: artists who do pretty things and artists that do political things and I think artists can do both. But I do believe that artists have a responsibility to raise consciousness in their immediate circle and where it goes from there is like a drop of water and a ripple in a pond.

PH - I have always seen the artist's role as an informative role, an explanatory role. ...I believe in public art and interactive art and that's part of the reason I thought this would be interesting because I knew doing the exhibit at the Maritime Museum would not be as ideal as an art gallery. I didn't want that to be a stumbling block because I knew it would be an opportunity for a lot of people who wouldn't normally view art to literally stumble across the art that we made and be able to draw some interesting conclusions to that. So regardless of the

actual exhibit opportunity I thought it would be good because it would be bringing the art directly to people who weren't consciously there to view it. That is what I thought was unique about this and part of the reason why I wanted to participate.

MA - ...all of the facts and figures in the world don't change people's perception of an issue. But in art, that area of sentimentality, where people's souls and hearts are touched, then there can be a transformation and change in consciousness. I don't think my vision of the role of artists has changed. The importance of the role of artists in some of the issues of water I see as more important now.

*Objective – Transformative art*

Interview Question – Do you have an idea for the art you will create, and if so, can you describe the art and what it represents?

I wanted to know if and how the artists were utilizing knowledge from the readings and dialogues in their art and whether they were developing ideas with the intention of bringing about awareness, transformation and/or change in those viewing that art.

Some of the artists responded that they were going to utilize a piece of art that had been created at an earlier time. Some artists were embodying an issue that was personal for them and were using their art as a way to communicate that issue to the public. Some verbalized a spiritual direction for their art, whereas others wanted to juxtapose the human and natural worlds. Below are the artist's descriptions of their thought on what they would create provided at the time of their interviews. I provide further discussion on some of the art concepts in Chapter Five and provide photos and artist statements from the exhibition in Appendix G. Some ideas changed radically from the time of these interviews to the opening of the exhibit.

Below are excerpts from the artists on what they were thinking about creating either at the time of their interview or during the last study circle session.

KP – I have photos to create a piece that is three large panels and it is the surface of the water and little reflections, but only a tiny bit of white reflective surface, so it is three big black panels that when you put them together they are 8 feet wide... It's not the most cheery piece because of black and it's heavy when you look at it, but there are little flecks that give you the idea that you are looking at water. It's abstract in that sense but given the context people will know what it is, but it is not a beautiful picture of a lake. It conveys a mood.

MA – A photo from the archives.

LN – Several ideas: The first is a gourd bowl that has hands on it and a ring of blue around that and the hands are not painted so you see the hands holding that bowl. In the bowl is blue water and on the other side is a blue butterfly. Another one is a little faucet that drips one drop very slowly and there is a light shining and a video camera zoomed in close up so you can watch and it is projected with an internal loop on a white wall so you see the drop forming slowly and it gets rainbows in it and it finally gets big enough and then it drops onto a drum, that goes thunk. Then there is another one - a video of water and light and it shows it as vibrational and how it moves and changes and how it's alive, to really portray the aliveness. In the movements of light and air and water where you get those moving patterns – it's simple but I love that image. Another one is water in a container where people can talk to it, put your words into this or speak your gratefulness to this water; something that people can put stuff into – like a bowl for the public.

LM – I'm thinking in terms of a triptych where the words can flow and make it look like it is flowing to a source, or maybe something about how we are birthed in water and water makes up our bodies and when you are dying water is very important even though you are dying.

MP - I'd like to do a Lake Superior puppet to represent the lake and make it be a sculpture that hangs on the wall.

AK – I have a couple ideas. One idea is a really big drawing that uses the body to investigate the ideas of flow but I am not sure how that will work with the space. Then I'm thinking about a cast iron piece that is about water flow that needs a lot of work and maybe I should bring that into the land of the living and drag out this solid cast iron piece and get out the grinder and go to it. The other thing I am thinking about is the one art practice I have been doing, which is my writing practice – Haiku on Twitter, haiku and tanka – short forms that are ideal on twitter and I have been saving them up and then I revised them at my leisure and I want to do a business card project with them. I want to make a selection of a set of 20 in a little deck of cards with texts. Then I was thinking it would be cool to do double sided business cards and I could do drawings on the other side so I could pick water related ones and do that and it would be a small miniaturized thing it would be multiples and I like multiples – cheap art that everyone can have is what I really like.

SR - I am really into collaborating so I hope that piece can work. I'd like to create a puppet performance or dance or something outside where there is a celebration. For the art piece I am thinking of a big mandala – a circular design and I have been tossing around a sculpture with hands out of clay and put holes in the middle of them and have a rod and have all these hands and drip water over the hands.

JL - Lady of the lake. Probably in two pieces. She is in my mind's eye and I see her face and the water flowing like her hair and a separate piece is a collection of garbage and junk.

JD - I am going to do watercolors primarily, however I don't think I want it in a traditional frame or mat. I don't know if I want to do some kind of backing to it and have it look like it's flowing more. I don't know if I want to get lighter images or sketches underneath the watercolors – so there might be images of fish or other things underneath. I don't want it to be just a watercolor, I want to bring more of a message to it about the beauty of water and the essential part of life that it is.

KM – I'm toying with a lot of ideas but the one I really want to do and don't know how to do it yet. It is a large scale meandering river and it would be a really simple form, pale translucent blue on white paper, and I want to do a print making process where it embosses the paper, but technically I'm having some issues because I want to do it big and I never work big I always work very small, and for some reason it feels like it has to be big, and I don't know how to do it.

SM – After our last meeting I was hoping I would be more focused or at least resolved in what it was I was going to be creating and directing energy towards the water and awareness towards the water, but I am not where I was hoping I would be.

JH – When I was thinking about doing a piece of art and I was gone last week, half of me wants to do one admonishing people to take better care of Mother Earth but I finally came to the point of celebration.

RB - I have had this design for about half a year and three places wanted me to do it but they can't afford it. Culligan can't afford me, the Freshwater Society can't afford me, the Arboretum, so I thought I might as well do it for free, because the best art is the stuff you do for yourself and so if it helps with the cause, that's what counts.

JV - I'm playing with whether I should be in your face, like this book [Agitprop], or to be more celebratory. Ideas are coming of how to merge those together. The idea that if you look at something one way and then another way it gives you different interpretations.

RT - I have an idea for an acrylic on canvas piece, and a play of color and light and I see a really light filled background and some small falling water against a blue background.

PH - What I am thinking of doing is making an organic triangular pond about 3 x 3 feet and in that I want to have different materials represented. On one side I'd like to have a Lake Superior beach and another part of the triangle – sticks like a beaver dam coming down and the other side perhaps sand and then have a woven reed on the outside part of it and I'd like to have this elevated 6 inches off the floor with sticks, rocks and sands emanating from their sections of the pond and the sticks overflowing over the side, obscuring it. I'd like to have it filled with water and I am not exactly sure what I want in the water I want there to be some sort of organic materials. I may put leaves in the water or something but coming out of the water logs sticking haphazardly out of the bog. I plan on having 3 skyscrapers or obelisks without a pyramid on top perhaps an abstraction made out of compressed steel wire that is rusted and oil has been removed to allow it to rust and I think I want three of those about 9 – 13 inches long sticking out at different angles, one straight, one mid-lean and the other propped up and I toyed with the possibility of putting an oil slick on top of the water, small amount of oil and then tadpoles in the water and the idea would be to invoke the reaction of people like how can a person put tadpoles in water, a living thing in the water because the water is polluted and then to realize that what I am doing is no different from what we are doing as a whole. This is a representation of reality.

KA - I was drawn by the idea of aquifers and I'm still toying with this idea, to represent that in felt because felt has a neat-layered look to it. It is so interesting to me when you layer the colors and all the textures and compress it and I do wet felting so I stomp on it and do things to get it to form into felt. So when you cut away the felt after all layers have been compressed it has an interesting land form feel to it, and I was thinking of putting the image of aquifers in there and showing the image of empty aquifers or somehow mapping out where aquifers used to be. Also I helped to form the group against the coal-fired power plant that wants to come in to this area. We have been doing work looking at hydrology maps – the flows of water underground, where the water flows to and we have had a geologist working with us and putting these maps in front of us and they have been a really important tool in helping us determine and make our case. For example the company, Excelsior Energy, wants to pollute this huge mine pit lake that is also a trout lake and they will put bleaching chemicals in and cooling for their machinery and they said “we'll figure out something, we'll line it and if water levels will drop we'll be able to manage it” and then someone passed this map around and showed that all the water flows into the drinking water supply for the surrounding towns and they [Excelsior Energy] said it came from a different supply, but the maps confirmed it came from the Canestio Lake. I love the idea of recreating maps and telling a story with maps. Because people can't see it they are very disconnected from an underground water source. I want to show that

with a big felt piece of a landscape but then coming over the top of that with embroidery that shows the flow.

Collaborative art-piece between LM, SR and JD. A clay sculptural piece of hands holding a glass bowl of water. The viewing public will be invited to speak thanks to water. The artists will also make small clay tiles with the words “thank you” that the public can take to hang near their faucet or source of water.

Responses from follow-up calls to each participant during the first week of July, 2009 showed that of the seventeen artists who completed the study circle sessions: one participant who missed two of the four study circles chose not to be involved in the exhibit; three are using previously created artwork; several have changed their minds about what they will create; and there will be a total of seventeen individual pieces and two collaborative pieces exhibited.

*Focus Group – May 11, 2009*

Midway through the one-on-one interviews I conducted the focus group. The goal behind the focus group was to provide an opportunity for group reflection on what had transpired during the study sessions.

There was strong consensus that the focus group happen on the same date that we visited the exhibition space in the Maritime Museum. The group was asked to meet at the Maritime Museum on May 11, 2009 at 5:00 PM and then to reconvene at 6:30 PM at Chester Creek Café for the focus group. Five people attended the focus group, which lasted about one hour. The dialogue format was totally open: anybody could talk at anytime and to any topic.

I asked the group to reflect on the meaning of the study circles and the usefulness of the process as a tool for social change. Based on their experiences, I wanted to know how well the process worked to stimulate energy for action and social change.

Immediately responses were focused on the power of study circles to bring like-minded people together and the potential of developing networks as a catalyst to affect change. The fact that the study circles had a very specific focus on artists interested in water allowed people to meet and connect and have discussions with one another. It also created a safe space where people felt that their voice was heard and that was a result of the sincerity of the group, the ability to bring focus onto the speaker, as well as the ground rules set during the first evening together. One participant summed this up by stating:

SR – I felt like my voice was heard. I think I join a lot of groups or I am asked to join groups or somehow I end up in groups and they put it out there that they want your input so you are there in a creative environment and then everything is discarded. Or you think you are going in there to be empowered and to have your opinion heard, when in the end they really have it all figured out what they are going to do. This felt like a group that was pretty honest and sincere and had depth and where you felt like you were heard and respected and there would be some action and you would have input into it, and that being the artwork of course as a motivator around water. I think the theme of the topic is what brought us all together, so putting out a call for a study group on a specific topic you're going to get a specific type of people. I like the idea of having a talking stick or stone or something that adds a sense of ritual or sense of creating, like the ground rules – I thought that was really important. In fact I used that for a meeting they were calling [at work] and I said I'll come if you set ground rules because I don't want to come in to a bitch session with everybody stepping on each others toes, so I borrowed some of those things and that was a really nice way to set up a meeting. It feels like everybody listened to them and that was really empowering for me.

The discussion shifted to events that motivate us to do something, such as the threat of development to a place we love and how sometimes it takes anger to get us in touch with our sentiments and to rekindle that inner fire which helps us focus and do something which might make a difference. I asked the group:

Is the study circle process a good way to light that fire that MA is talking about, to bring about change? I am curious to what your thoughts are. In my lens as I see the world we need change – behavior and attitude change and understanding about the earth. So how do we do that?

MA was the first to respond to my question with an emphatic feeling that people need to physically go out and experience and touch the earth, and that what is required is more than just talking, but experiencing. MA's statement led the group to think together on how to maintain the energy [keep the fire going] from what was experienced in the study circles and to bring that into their artwork; for example:

LM – We were all sitting around and listening to each other and you could tell at the end of the evening, you could tell that people were very animated and talking to one another and may not have originally approached that person but you find that you have a common interest and it's human nature that if you have common interest with a person you begin a dialogue or a group discussion. If there is a way for us to individually go back into our lives and into our art work to maintain that energy and I am not sure how to do that, if you think about the group and start to work and keep your mind focused on what we discussed that evening. That can be hard when you are separated from the group and where you get your energy and how do I translate that to working alone that's where I think – at least myself that's where I stand, how do I keep that energy with me and keep on with the work and to write something that would be part of making people think or change and keep that passion going?

There is a dynamic that occurs when you bring people into a circle to talk and learn and experience other viewpoints. The above quote describes the energy this participant received from being engaged with the study circle process. This theme continued on in our discussion with a look at what helps and what detracts from building energy within a group. We talked about the tables that were used at Chester Creek Café and that they acted as an inhibitor of energy being passed between people. LN provided an account of a circle process she was involved with that was very powerful for her:

We did a series of three circles with women that had never met each other – had nothing in common and we talked about the earth and the land and what could we do (it was at a women's conference and the theme was when the grandmother's speak the earth will heal) and they chose a question – “how do you relate to the environment?” and each had their own personal stories. Next round was what are you doing to enhance that effectiveness and relationship. The last one was what can you do in the future – the commitment for future was huge and witnessed by everyone else. Each person said what they would do and that one round brought it



to such a pique that I believe those women are still doing what they said they would do. It was change and action heightened by the circle, a circle does something dynamically with energy. I believe that the process is very useful.

Discussion then centered on the power of having other people witnessing what you say you are going to do, and feeling support from those people who sat in circle with you: how powerful and helpful that would be when you are doing your own work and wondering how to carry it out. The power is in the energy of speaking what you plan to do and having others witness and then support your commitment.

The conversation segued back to our circle and that the size of the group kept it from reaching a deeper level of energy. That was evidenced by the depth of the dialogue that was occurring among the six of us during the focus group, summed up by the following statement:

MA– I can even see the sharing that is going on here, the commitment and passion is better. There's a real commitment on the part of everyone. This is good that we have this opportunity to talk...

Again, the conversation went off in several directions from personal stories of empowering group events, to questions about study circle groups [the name, number of sessions], to whether we would have a private session in the Maritime Museum to reflect on the art and the outcomes, to the level of questions that need to be asked to get more depth from participants during a study circle. LM expressed how the study circles had affected her personally:

LM – I know personally I am paying attention to water issues more than I have before, maybe I used to for awhile and fell away from it, anything coming up in the news is piquing my attention and I am listening to it and paying attention to the nonprofits doing work and what they are doing and reading the Water Consciousness book which I thought was really good. So having the tools from that and the discussions to move ahead with whatever action I decide to take in terms of taking care of our water supply what I can do on a personal level, write a congress person or make a phone call or however far I want to take it, but I know

for myself that's how this group has worked on me, listening more and paying attention.

This statement brought the conversation back to the question of the value of study circles for social action. We talked about the water circle and how powerful it was when people told personal stories and how strong everyone's appreciation was for water. Not only were the personal stories engaging, but also the process of sharing stories about water helped people open themselves up to one another and created a safe space for people to reflect on the significance of water and to discuss the repercussions of human actions. The discussion concluded with one final statement:

JD – ... There is a bond with this group that will outlast the group itself, we will have that connection which we all need. Even though I go to all types of group things and meetings, its good to have a more solid group and it's a different level of talking, a different level of thought processes. It's more truth knowing than just intellectual.

*Journal Passages From the Focus Group Session.* I felt that the outcome of the focus group led to some surprising and exciting results and later that evening I turned to my journal to reflect. One surprising outcome was an emphasis placed on how study circles provided empowerment to be heard. There is so much emphasis (in the literature) placed on how study circles provide a safe space for dialogue, but very little emphasis is placed on the need to be heard and the value of study circles to provide this opportunity.

I felt excited by the results of this session because this small group of people was able to go to a deeper level in discussion than the large group had been able to reach. The feedback I received on what inhibits dialogue and energy from occurring, coupled with the results of where this small group was able to go with their dialogue, taught me a lot about group facilitation. As a result of this feedback, in the future I would be more

mindful of the room set up and the furniture used so as to not impede energy. I would also reduce the number of people who participate in the study circles.

In Chapter Five I will provide a summary of the results as a way to move into a discussion and evaluation of study circles for community building, raising awareness about water issues and bringing about environmental and social change.

## Chapter V: Interpretation of Results

### *Introduction*

I set out to conduct research that would determine the ways in which study circles empower artists to become community leaders surrounding water-related concerns. My conclusions and discussions reveal much more than what I set out to study.

When I was conducting my literature review for this dissertation I came across a book that contained interviews with Miles Horton and Paulo Freire (Bell et al., 1990). The interviews focused on Horton's work in Appalachia with the Highlander Citizenship School and Freire's social justice work in Brazil, both of which were designed to bring people together in dialogue to learn from one another, and with the goal of bringing about social change. Both of these men understood the power of providing a forum for people to come together and discuss what was important, to collaboratively develop solutions, and then move those solutions towards action.

When I attempt to determine the ways that study circles empower artists to become community leaders, I have to begin by looking at the process of the study circle. The beauty and power of the study circle is as simple as providing a safe space for people to come together to discuss things of importance. The practice of sitting together in circle, with a deliberate intention of understanding, suspending judgment, and connecting heart, mind, and ear has brought about profound results for those who engaged in the dialogue sessions I have written about.

In the pages to come I discuss why this study is important, how it fills a current void in knowledge and practice, the implications of this work for environmental and social change, and I will conclude with the implications of this research for leadership and change.

### *Summary of Results*

The research questions driving this study included a focus on the issues and themes that emerged, how the study circle process built community and/or leadership, how the role of artists might have changed over time, and what changes occurred in both awareness and action. These questions were answered through study circle sessions and one-on-one interviews as presented in the previous chapter and are summarized below.

What water-related environmental issues and themes capture the attention of the artists and why? The second, third and fourth study circle sessions began with a round of the water circle, which is where each person brought a small amount of water in and told the group about the source and why it held importance. The stories people told were deep and personal and allowed the group to know one another on a more significant level than the typical opening of introductions. The water circle also allowed us to bring ritual and appreciation for water into the study circle format.

The main theme from the second study circle session was on the power of the facts, figures and statistics found through out the first seven chapters of *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008). Some people found the information disturbing; others felt the statistics added a sense of urgency to the water crisis facing the world. This led the group to an important dialogue on negativity and an attraction based Universe (attracting to oneself the same energy that a person projects). This was significant for the group in that it encouraged us to not go in the direction of anger and fear, but to focus on what type of future we want to see. Many participants touched on how the chapters gave them a sense of the consequences of over population, corporations taking over public water supplies, and the amount of water used in the production of beef and other food products,

and that this awareness allowed them to understand what the correct decisions are and the consequences of indecision.

Also of interest during the open dialogue of the second session was discussion focused on prescription medicines getting into sewage effluent and then being discharged into the St. Louis Bay by the sewage treatment facility. This discussion was local to our watershed and carried concern for the health of humans and aquatic life that comes in contact with the water.

One theme that almost universally resonated with the participants occurred during the third study circle session and focused on Chapter 8 of *Water Consciousness* and titled Watershed Literacy: Restoring Community and Nature (Dolman, 2008). The artists were attracted to the image of cupping hands together to create a vessel and how the author used this image to allow readers to envision a watershed. Other common interests from the chapter included the metaphors connected to the word “watershed” and the comparison of a watershed to various parts of the human body. Dolman also left a strong impression on the artists with his suggestion that water restoration requires humans to engage in “restoration”(p. 102), which includes developing social relations between people who share a watershed. The term “restoration” came up several times as a theme.

Another important theme that was brought up during this session revolved around awareness and change of personal actions. Paying more attention to personal water use, having more discussions with friends and family about water, and seeing the connections to other interests and issues came up for several people.

During session three I broke the group into four small groups and provided a list of possible topics of conversation. Universally for each of the groups, discussion

centered on what type of art would be created for the exhibit (though this was just one of several suggested topics that I supplied).

At the last study circle session we again opened with the water circle and it was interesting to note that there was a theme of water in need of healing (polluted water sources) that was brought to the circle. In the previous water circles the water was from favorite rivers, Lake Superior, drinking water sources or from people's land. After the water circle we went around with dialogue focused on closure of this part of our work together. The theme for this round focused on ideas people had for their art and the excitement to see it all come together in one space.

In what ways does the study circle processes build relationship, community, collaboration, or a leadership among the artists? The process of coming together in a circle for dialogue provided a powerful catalyst for trust and relationship building. The use of the water circle facilitated a deeper understanding of one another than a typical introduction process would have.

During the third session and while in small groups, several people shared an interest to work collaboratively on a piece for the exhibition. This led to a separate meeting organized by those interested in collaboration.

During the last study circle session, several participants spoke to the fact that they did not want the study circles or the relationships built during them, to come to an end.

One artist in particular exhibited leadership in several ways and at several times. LN suggested the water circle idea to the group; she successfully shifted dialogue from one of anger and fear towards discussion that was more positive and solution focused. She challenged other members by stating "I've never been with a more creative group"

and encouraged the group to think about the design of a glass water bottle as a solution to plastic water bottles. LN was also one of the members that organized a meeting for those interested in collaborating for the exhibition.

In what ways does the project change the artists' view of themselves as artists? During the one-on-one interviews I asked a question about the role of artists in society and if their perception had changed at all after participating in the study circles. I was interested in learning whether or not the study circle process had changed their notion of the role of artists. Interestingly, all said that they viewed artists as social change agents prior to their engagement with the study circles, and that the study circles helped to affirm their previous beliefs, but did not change this view.

In what ways did artists' water awareness change, and has that brought about change in their own behaviors? Through reading *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008) and subsequent dialogue about the chapters during the study circle sessions, participants attested to the fact that both awareness and behavior change had occurred. Increased awareness on water related topics were expressed primarily during the second and third study circle session. During the interviews participants spoke to me about having conversations with others about the book, about the study circles they were attending, water issues directly, and of teaching others (friends, students, children, etc.) about water as a result of their participation. Some felt it was important to understand the facts presented in the book so that they had knowledge to draw on when in conversation with others, and that those details were more important than the generalities found in the book. One person purchased a low flow toilet, and several became more aware of, and then subsequently changed their behavior surrounding their own water use, as a result of



their involvement with the study circles.

When describing the art that participants were thinking about creating, I was surprised to learn that some were going to use pieces already created. Some artists spoke specifically about creating art that was thought-provoking in nature (art that would make people stop and think, raise awareness or bring about change).

Finally, the Focus Group was a small but very dedicated group of people who provided insights about the usefulness of study circles for social change. Much of the feedback focused on how to bring more depth to the dialogue through the use of deliberate questions, smaller groups of people, and the removal of physical barriers to conversation such as tables. While some participants focused on what could have been done to create more meaning, others shared with the group what changes and awareness they had personally gained as a result of their participation.

#### *The Importance of Involving Artists in a Study Circle Process Focused on Water*

Artists create a visual manifestation of a topic, an item, a landscape, or an environmental concern, and through this visual representation they reach out to others with a message, or a feeling, or they convey a mood. Artists can also provide a form of communication while educating and raising awareness about social issues. Artists have a level of intuitive sensitivity and creativity which allows them to cast environmental issues in a new light.

Combining their artistic talent with dialogue specifically focused on water initiated a collective consciousness with the potential of bringing about collective action similar to what has been found in social movements (Goodwin & Jasper, 2004). Why it is important to engage artists in study circles has everything to do with the synergistic

effects that accompany a focused discussion about water with people who have the capacity to transform that dialogue into meaningful artistic social commentary that speaks to the beauty, fragility, and the dire plight facing all life that requires water for survival. As a result of this research conducted on the process of study circle with artists, it became clear to me that the process did empower artists, who then demonstrated leadership in several ways.

### *Leadership and Empowerment*

Leadership and empowerment comes in many forms. One of the strongest signs of empowerment that I witnessed came not only from an opportunity for dialogue, but also from the opportunity to be heard. I mused in my journal that perhaps leadership is simply the act of inviting people to come together in dialogue. Several times, in different contexts and from numerous participants, there was talk of working in isolation and how wonderful it felt to find like-minded people with whom they could explore both deep conversation and their art. For most of us, life today is nearly devoid of opportunity for dialogue – but once it is provided, we find we are not so alone in our concerns, or our passions, or our desire to profoundly connect with others. The feedback I received from interviews and through my observation of the study circle sessions attests to the desire for dialogue and the empowerment that was received spiritually, artistically, and socially by being in a study circle with other artists interested in the topic of water. The use of the water circle during the study circle sessions provided participants with an opening ritual that allowed for a deeper level of knowing one another and was a catalyst to the empowerment I speak of. There was energy, a passion, and sincere interest amongst the artists to sit together, to learn from each other, and to discuss water related issues. As

time went on and we reached the third study circle session, a strong curiosity developed to learn how others would embody this knowledge into their art. I believe this marked a transition from empowerment to leadership, a transformation from discussion and learning about water to teaching and sharing information about water with the public. This change occurred in the small group work during the third session and all of the participants felt that shift as evidenced by the dialogue and drawings created by the artists.

Finding confidence to speak in a group can be empowering, but equally important is the feeling that one has truly been heard. Several times during the interviews artists spoke about the process, the facilitation, the ground rules, and the trust that was built among the group that left them knowing that their voice had been heard. The community building that grows from the process of a study circle should not be understated.

Another way that I witnessed empowerment was observing how participants gained a greater awareness and subsequently a deeper empathy for water issues. Some artists liked learning about the statistics and details behind various water issues and felt that such information built their knowledge and gave them more confidence to discuss water issues. Others clearly gained more of an understanding of water issues in developing countries and that brought about more empathy for people struggling with issues of corporate water privatization. Knowledge gained through the study circle process was empowering at one time or another for every person in the group.

For one participant, a new understanding of water use, waste, and scarcity in some regions motivated her to install a low flow toilet. Several artists spoke about teaching their children or sharing with their family and friends what they had been learning about

water. One teacher was so inspired by the book that she generated activities and lessons to conduct with her students. These are examples of both leadership and change as a direct result of participation in the study circles.

The desire for creating a collaborative work became very strong for three of the artists in the group. They organized separate meetings after the last dialogue session for anyone interested in working collaboratively on a piece for the exhibit. The end result was a piece that allowed the viewing public to speak their appreciation to water. Small clay tiles with the words “thank you” were made available to the public to hang near their faucet or source of water. There was also a statement by the artists explaining Masaru Emoto’s (2004) work where he subjected freezing water to various words producing different shapes of ice crystals. This collaborative work provided a bowl of water from Lake Superior and encouraged the public to speak words of gratitude to the water. It was the nature and spirit of group discussion and which is characteristic of study circles, that fed the desire for a group piece and fostered collaborative leadership among these three participants. A second collaborative piece was created between MA and myself and addressed the plight of Ash trees with the introduction of the Emerald Ash Borer from China. I wrote a poem based on facts of devastation that will occur as this insect spreads into northern Minnesota; MA provided photos of Ash trees.

In Chapter Four I mentioned that I was surprised that some artists stated that they were going to use previously created pieces, and that some of the artistic ideas expressed by the artists did not seem to reflect the chapter topics or the dialogue that came up during the study circles. I feel a need to suspend judgment about the power of their art to raise awareness amongst the general public for I do not believe the capacity for such a

transformation is diminished if the art creates a feeling or focuses on a mood provoked by the natural beauty of water. Different people are moved in different ways and artists have a capacity to touch heart and mind simultaneously. Still, I was surprised that what was experienced during the study circle sessions would not motivate an artist to create a new piece that would reflect his or her learning or experience from the study circles. I never directly asked why these participants chose to use an existing piece and therefore I can only speculate as to why.

On the other hand, there were times when some of the artists described to me what they were thinking about creating for the exhibit and I was clearly able to see the dots being connected to form a circle. The empowerment began with new knowledge and understanding, or maybe a metaphor or something that touched them in a symbolic or spiritual manner. Empowerment spills over and begins to look like leadership as the artist finds ways to represent and embody that information within their art. That representation turns into a message, a way to teach others, or another way to view the social issues surrounding water. That is the transformation of artist into leader and study circles can, as I have witnessed with this research, assist in that transformation.

Take, for example, the collaborative piece mentioned above. Three artists were especially moved by chapters in the book that spoke to the spirituality of water, of water-based rituals found among people of other countries, and of simply speaking their gratitude for water. What touched them deeply from the readings came out while they spoke during the study circles. Their collective next step was to transform what had moved them so meaningfully during the study circles into art that would touch the hearts of those who viewed their work.

Another example of this transformation of taking in information and then creating art that speaks to the broader public is exemplified by PH's thoughts of what he would create:

PH - What I am thinking of doing is making an organic triangular pond about 3 x 3 feet and in that I want to have different materials represented. On one side I'd like to have a Lake Superior beach and another part of the triangle – sticks like a beaver dam coming down and the other side perhaps sand and then have a woven reed on the outside part of it and I'd like to have this elevated 6 inches off the floor with sticks, rocks and sands emanating from their sections of the pond and the sticks overflowing over the side, obscuring it. I'd like to have it filled with water and I am not exactly sure what I want in the water. I want there to be some sort of organic materials. I may put leaves in the water or something, but coming out of the water logs sticking haphazardly out of the bog. I plan on having 3 skyscrapers or obelisks without a pyramid on top perhaps an abstraction made out of compressed steel wire that is rusted and oil has been removed to allow it to rust and I think I want three of those about 9 – 13 inches long sticking out at different angles, one straight, one mid-lean and the other propped up and I toyed with the possibility of putting an oil slick on top of the water, small amount of oil and then tadpoles in the water and the idea would be to invoke the reaction of people like how can a person put tadpoles in water, a living thing in the water because the water is polluted and then to realize that what I am doing is no different from what we are doing as a whole. This is a representation of reality.

PH provided the most in depth description of art as compared to the other artists. What is unique about the piece he described was the juxtaposition of the natural world and the human-created world, as well as his “representation of reality” by placing tadpoles into oily water. He described a powerful, albeit disturbing piece, and his intention was clearly to make people stop and think about that juxtaposition.

A third example of art specifically designed to raise awareness is described by KA, a fiber artist.

KA - I was drawn by the idea of aquifers and I'm still toying with this idea, to represent that in felt because felt has a neat-layered look to it. It is so interesting to me when you layer the colors and all the textures and compress it and I do wet felting so I stomp on it and do things to get it to form into felt so when you cut away the felt after all layers have been compressed it has an interesting land form feel to it, and I was thinking of putting the image of aquifers in there and showing

the image of empty aquifers or somehow mapping out where aquifers used to be. Also I helped to form the group against the coal-fired power plant that wants to come in to this area. We have been doing work looking at hydrology maps – the flows of water underground, where the water flows to and we have had a geologist working with us and putting these maps in front of us and they have been a really important tool in helping us determine and make our case. For example the company, Excelsior Energy, wants to pollute this huge mine pit lake that is also a trout lake and they will put bleaching chemicals in and cooling for their machinery and they said “we’ll figure out something, we’ll line it and if water levels will drop we’ll be able to manage it” and then someone passed this map around and showed that all the water flows into the drinking water supply for the surrounding towns and they [Excelsior Energy] said it came from a different supply, but the maps confirmed it came from the Canestio Lake. I love the idea of recreating maps and telling a story with maps. Because people can’t see it they are very disconnected from an underground water source. I want to show that with a big felt piece of a landscape but then coming over the top of that with embroidery that shows the flow.

I can hear the passion in KA’s voice as she talks about the felting process and what intrigues her about it. That passion persists as she talks about a water related issue near her home and then how she plans to use her art to teach the public about ground water and the potential threat to that water. Through KAs description of her work I hear the dots connecting. She has a passion for the issue and clearly has thought through how to use her art as a way to both capture and share this issue with the viewing public.

It became apparent after making follow-up phone calls to the artists that all but one was able to fulfill the commitment to making art for the exhibit. Whether or not their art will raise public awareness about water remains to be seen, however, from information gathered during the follow-up calls, it is apparent that some art will have a message that both raises awareness and educates, while others pieces may stir a passion through tranquil beauty.

*Filling a Void and the Contributions of this Research*

Very little literature was available on the topic of bringing together artists in study circles. Two projects had purposes similar to mine, although they utilized different methods to achieve their results. The Ford Foundation's Animating Democracy Project utilized the arts as a means to facilitate public dialogue on a community issue (often race). The Ford Foundation recognized the value of the arts and arts organizations as partners to bring about civic engagement, better understanding and addressing pressing issues within a community.

The method utilized by the Animating Democracy project was to work with thirty-six different arts and cultural organizations throughout the United States as catalysts to utilize the arts (often theater) and then afterward to engage the public in dialogue. The focus behind the use of the arts was to increase education and awareness among the public around a local issue of concern, and then to engage the public in dialogue about the issue. This differs from my use of study circles, which directly educated the artists with the goal of creating art that would educate the public. In addition the Animating Democracy project collected only anecdotal information from observations and which was focused on the civic dialogue, not on the artists themselves.

The second project I found in the literature was Group Material's Democracy Project, created by a collective of activist artists. Group Material identified four areas of democracy that they felt were in a state of crisis: education, electoral politics, cultural participation (focused on consumer culture), and AIDS and Democracy (Deitcher, 1990). An informal round table discussion occurred on each topic and was devised to bring a diversity of people into the conversation. The artists utilized the information brought out



in these round table discussions to inform their art, which then went on exhibition for the public. The art exhibit was followed by a town meeting which allowed for discussion to occur related to the four topic areas.

Again, the goals are similar, but the methods differ from my research. In this case, the roundtable participants (who were people familiar with the four topic issues) helped to educate the artists who then created art to educate the public, and then the public engaged in dialogue in a town hall format. In my research I utilized *Water Consciousness* (Lohan, 2008) as my primary means to educate the artists and then I encouraged dialogue among the artists to bring the topics to deeper level. Their art then went on display with the goal of raising water awareness within the public.

#### *Implications of this Research for Leadership and Change*

The outcomes of this study suggest that artists do not often have an opportunity to come together to think, study, discuss, and then share creative thoughts, and that providing a safe space for these elements to come together can be profoundly empowering in building community. The implications of building community through study circles include developing trust, feeling heard and understood, and relationship building which can lead to collaborative leadership and art works. The strength of bringing artists together in a study circle process and to focus on an environmental or social issue is the opportunity for social change to occur both individually for the artists (they internalize the change first) and then for the community through the art. On several occasions the artists talked about how the readings and then the dialogue within circles allowed them to come to a deeper understanding about a water issue. Sometimes this manifested as a deeper understanding about people in developing countries and the

struggles they face on a daily basis for clean drinking water. Deeper understanding moves a person towards empathy for “other” which is the essence of social change. Another example was how an understanding manifested itself in the realization of how wasteful western society is with fresh water and what personal actions are required to reverse this behavior. This is clearly an example of social change.

These examples of internal learning were then transformed into art and this is where Burn’s (1978) discussion of the teaching role of leadership is modeled in this research. Each one of the artists who participated in this research attempted to teach and/or transform the public with their art. Artists as transformative leaders are artists who teach and lead through their art and their presence by attempting to educate and even provoke the public to take action or make personal changes regarding social and ecological issues. This research demonstrated that artists are indirect leaders (Gardner, 2004) and informal leaders (Heifetz, 1994) who attempt to use their art as a method to bring about social change.

This research clearly demonstrated that study circles, especially when used in combination with artists, has great potential for educating, raising awareness and mobilizing energy to address social issues.

### *Conclusion*

Many organizations and/or authors that facilitate study circles agree on a similar set of outcomes, which can attest to the ability to empower participants of study circles. For example, the Study Circle Resource Center (2001, p. 5) suggests the following outcomes for a study circle process:

New learning (participants see a more complete picture of the issue and of others) in the community.

- New relationships and networks (across typical barriers).
- New ownership of the issue (the issue is no longer “someone else’s problem”).
- New Leadership.
- New Collaborations.
- New policies.
- New processes for community problem solving.

Comparing these outcomes to those of my research, all except for new policies were a result of the study circles that focused on water. It is clear from the narrative of both the interviews and the study circles that relationships were built, and that this was an important component of participation for the artists. New levels of ownership and learning were achieved through examples of participants making direct changes in their lifestyles, their consumption, and through an enhanced understanding of the larger picture of worldwide water issues. Leadership emerged from the study circle process and that directly lead to two collaborative endeavors between artists. Finally, the participants engaged in brainstorming about problem solving as evidenced by the discussion of creating glass bottles to replace plastic, discussions on corporate entities taking over water supplies and relating that directly to Duluth’s Mayor and his interest in privatizing certain utilities.

Authors Brown and Isaacs created the World Café, which is very similar to study circle processes except it is designed for very large groups of people and organizational change. They also discuss the empowering attributes of these methods but their focus is on the dialogue itself. For example, they state, “The World Café can make a special contribution when the goal is the focused use of dialogue to foster productive relationships, collaborative learning, and collective insight” (2005, p. 6).

After witnessing the outcomes of the artists’ dialogue process, I would agree that the process does create an environment that is conducive of relationship building,

collaborative learning and collective insight. Many artists expressed that this was the first time they had been able to gather as a group of artists and not have turf issues, power plays, or debates, but instead were able to get to know one another, think together, and explore the topic of water within a context of art.

My research took on a special emphasis of engaging highly creative individuals into a dialogue process focused specifically on water. I have found no literature that speaks to the same combination of participants, topics, and with an action component focused on creating art to educate the broader public.

By providing a non-competitive opportunity for artists to learn from and dialogue with one another, this research has brought together some of the most creative people in our community, who now have a deeper understanding of water issues and a better understanding for each other. There are multiple layers of benefit that have developed as a result of this research and includes community building (trust, relationship, collaboration), education about a social issue, an ongoing commitment towards personal awareness and change, and the potential for this awareness to have a ripple effect throughout the community in terms of the exhibit. An e-mail sent to me on July 6, 2009 from LM sums this up by stating:

This has been a fun process and I'm staying in touch with water & land issues more than before. This has been good for me.

#### *Further Research and Future Work*

This last section of this Chapter will be broken down into three categories: my next steps with this research; what I have learned and how I would do things differently

in the future; and a broader view on the value of engaging artists in study circles for social and environmental change.

*Next Steps.* The immediate next step in this research was the creation of art and the organization and promotion of an art exhibit. Again, the art component was excluded from this dissertation research, however Appendix G provides photos of the art as well as the artists' statements.

Another next step for my own research was to observe how the art exhibition affected the viewing public. To capture this I developed a simple questionnaire to determine:

1. What the most popular works were and why.
2. How effective and/or moving people find the works.
3. Which works are most energizing towards action and change.

I also observed and talked with some viewers while the show was on exhibit in order to gain an impression about the impact of the art.

*Changes for Future Study Circles.* Three items come to mind when I think about what I would do differently: group size, questions to enhance dialogue, and facilitation. A major difficulty I had as a facilitator revolved around the size of the group. This was an especially difficult dilemma because I had multiple objectives of facilitating a study circle process and putting together an art exhibit. The literature suggests an idea size for a study group is eight to twelve people, but how many people will make for an interesting art exhibition? And, as I witnessed, people drop out and life events happen that prevent their full participation. So, how many people is optimum for dialogue and an exhibition? These are questions I wrestled with as I was recruiting the participants.

If I were to replicate this project, I would invite 15 participants and assume that I would lose at least 3 to attrition. It was clear to me, and was evident by the feedback presented in the Focus Group, that the group was too large and that this inhibited reaching a deeper dialogue. The large size of the group also required a lot of time to complete a circle and that limited getting to the next step of asking more meaningful questions, which may have brought the conversation to another level.

Along similar lines the suggestion to use the water circle was an incredible gift to the group and was most effective the first time we used it. It apparently lost appeal with some group members as fewer people brought water during successive meetings. I think the strength of the water circle is to allow participants to get to know one another on a more meaningful level and in the future I will use this activity only during the first meeting.

A way to make dialogue sessions more powerful includes “discovering the right questions to ask in relation to a critical issue” (Brown & Isaacs, 2005, p. 52). Because of the size of the group and time constraints, I was not able to ask questions which may have provoked further questions and deeper discussions. Likewise, time constraints prevented me from focusing discussion specifically on local water quality concerns. The lack of time for these two components became a loss for all involved and I would make certain to remedy this in the future by either extending the amount of time for the discussions (from 2 hour sessions to 2 ½), reducing the number of participants, and/or using the water circle for the opening session only.

*The Value of Engaging Artists in Social and Environmental Change*

Simply reading the newspaper provides part of the story of why we should broaden public discourse on environmental and social issues to include artists. In the United States, as of today, our society is facing crisis financially, ecologically, and in leadership, and it is conclusive to say that the status quo has brought us to this crisis. Why wouldn't society welcome artists into the dialogue? They bring a refreshing sense of humor, a creative element, and a new lens with which to see and solve problems.

I personally found the study circle process to be a very powerful and dynamic way to address a social issue. I find myself viewing community-oriented problems through a news lens of dialogue and problem solving. As way of example, my community is currently embroiled in a battle over a multi-million dollar proposal to tear down, fix-up and build new school buildings. This issue has pitted neighbors against one another based on which proposal they prefer. The "us and them" manner of dealing with decision making in Duluth is very destructive. This issue is now moving into school board elections with those in favor of the plan voting for the incumbents and those opposed urging for a clean sweep of newly elected board members. What I have learned from my participation in this research is that reaching a decision within a community doesn't have to be divisive. Through the use of study circles, community members can come together, research and read about other models in other communities and together craft a proposal that has the support of the community. I have witnessed how study circles foster relationships and community building, collaborative learning, collective insight and problem solving, and my experience provides me with tools for both my environmental and educational community work.

The artists that came together to participate in this study circle research spoke to how they felt honored to be part of the process, that through the invitation to participate they felt that their gift as artist and change agent was being valued, and they appreciated an opportunity to learn about water with their artist peers.

Community leaders need to embrace a change from the status quo. Too many voices sit on the sidelines of decision-making. Too many good ideas go unwelcomed because of insider/outsider issues. Formal power has cards stacked against informal power and there is no greater opportunity than now for those odds to shift.



## APPENDIX

Appendix A  
Recruitment Flier  
**CALL FOR ARTISTS**

Throughout history artists have provided new ways of understanding social justice and environmental concerns. Whether through graphic expression, theater, music or other visual arts, artists have raised awareness about contemporary issues.

Are you interested in joining other artists in developing art focused on water related concerns? Our location at the head of the Great Lakes will provide a backdrop for discussion. We will learn about water related issues with the help of Tara Lohan's book, *Water Consciousness* (2008). We may also explore topics such as activist art, power and powerbrokers, public space, and other areas of interest that arise during discussions.

- There will be four two-hour sessions on Mondays in April, 6:30 – 8:30 PM
- An exhibition in July
- Free book
- Free food
- Priceless collaborative experience
- Endless possibilities

To register, or for more information, please contact Jill Jacoby at 218-724-9786 or [pumilios@aol.com](mailto:pumilios@aol.com)

This project is part of a Ph.D. dissertation and more information will be provided when you register.



Appendix B  
Recruitment Letter

A CALL FOR ARTISTS

Are you an artist concerned about the environment? Would you like to learn about water related environmental concerns? Sweetwater Alliance is a Duluth nonprofit organization with a mission to merge art and water awareness, and would like to invite your participation in an upcoming project.

Participants will be asked to commit to engaging in four two-hour dialogue sessions focused on raising water awareness. You will be provided with the recently published book, *Water Consciousness* (2008) by Tara Lohan, and we will watch the video *Flow* (Salina, 2008) to help educate us and to provide discussion material.

The dialogue sessions will be held at the Chester Creek Café (also known as At Sarah's Table) located at 1902 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Duluth, on Mondays from 6:30 – 8:30 on April 6, 13, 20, and 27<sup>th</sup>.

As a participant you will be asked to create at least one piece of art incorporating what you have learned about water. The art created by participants of this project will be displayed at the Lake Superior Marine Museum in the Canal Park area of Duluth. The exhibition will focus on Lake Superior Day events on July 19<sup>th</sup> and will be held from July 18<sup>th</sup> through August 9<sup>th</sup>.

The dialogue sessions will be part of a Ph.D. dissertation research and will be audio-recorded so that I can use these to help me reflect on the learning that is occurring in the group. Participants will also be asked to have a 60-minute audio-recorded interview with me at the end of the dialogue sessions to explore the project's impact on them and their development. If you are interested please call or e-mail Jill Jacoby, Sweetwater Alliance Executive Director, at 218-724-9786 or [pumilios@aol.com](mailto:pumilios@aol.com)

Appendix C  
Consent Form

You are invited to be a participant in a research project looking at the process of study circles. You have been selected as a possible participant because you have expressed an interest in being involved. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to the study.

The purpose of this study is to provide the catalyst for artists to learn about water and participate in a dialogue process in a study circle setting. If you agree to participate you will be asked to do the following:

1. Attend four two-hour long study sessions focused on water to be held on Mondays from 6:30 – 8:30 at the Chester Creek Café (also known as At Sarah's Table) on April 6, 13, 20, and 27<sup>th</sup>. These four study circle sessions will be audio-recorded. I ask that you consider allowing me to record these sessions so that they can help me make meaning from our collective experience. Recording is not mandatory for your participation.
2. Attend a two-hour focus group to help review and make meaning of the information collected by this study. Tentative date is Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 – 8:30 PM and more information will follow
3. You will be asked to read chapters in *Water Consciousness* (2008) by Tara Lohan and come prepared to share in dialogue with other participants.
4. You will be asked to create at least one piece of your art that reflects what you have learned about water through the study circles.
5. Allow your art piece to be displayed from July 18<sup>th</sup> – August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at the Lake Superior Marine Museum, in Canal Park, Duluth.
6. One-on-one interviews will be conducted with each participant at a mutually convenient time and will last for approximately 60-minutes. The contents of these interviews will help me in writing my dissertation. If I quote you directly, you will have the opportunity to read and approve all excerpts prior to their inclusion in my dissertation. If you prefer to remain anonymous I will use a pseudonym or just your initials.

7. I ask that you consider allowing the use of photographs of your art to be published in research journals, newsletters, books, web sites, or newspapers with appropriate credit to you as the artist. The artwork will remain the property of the artist and will not be used for personal gain by the researcher. Although you are encouraged to participate fully in all study circle sessions, the focus group session, create art, and participate in one-on-one interviews, your participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty.

The study itself has no foreseeable risks, however art will be on display in a room of the Lake Superior Marine Museum without staff supervision or protection. Benefits to participants may include a deeper understanding of water related issues and Lake Superior, an opportunity to learn about study circles and to engage in dialogue with colleagues, an opportunity to make and exhibit your art and have it displayed during Lake Superior Day in Duluth, Minnesota.

Responses to any questions are confidential and as a participant you have the right to decline answering any questions or being audio-recorded. Likewise, if you prefer that your artwork is not photographed, identified or used in publication, you have the right to opt out. The interviews and my notes of this study will be kept private and any published material will not include information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a password protected computer file.

The researcher conducting this project is Jill Jacoby and she may be contacted at [pumilios@aol.com](mailto:pumilios@aol.com) or 218-724-9786. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Carolyn Kenny, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Ph.D. in Leadership & Change, Antioch University, [ckenny@phd.antioch.edu](mailto:ckenny@phd.antioch.edu), and 805-565-7535.

Statement of consent:

*I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in this research project.*

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow photographs of my art to be reproduced in research journals, newsletters, web site, books, or newspapers with appropriate credit to me as the artist.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix D  
Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. What led you to participate in the study circles?
2. As you think back over the study circle process, what descriptors come to mind?
3. Before the study circle sessions, what did you think were the most important roles of artists in society? How, if at all, has that view changed since the study circle sessions?
4. What other changes have you experienced as a result of your participation in this study circle project?
5. What was it like being in a dialogue circle with other artists?
  - a. Community building,
  - b. Getting to know others in a new way,
  - c. Ways in which relationship was built in the circle.
6. Think for a moment about the study circle discussions and identify one that was particularly important for you.
  - a. What was it about the discussion that made you think of it in this way?
7. What major themes came up for you during the readings and/or study circles?
8. Do you have an idea for the art you will create, and if so, can you describe the art and what it represents?
  - a. In what ways has the dialogue process or the readings influenced your art?
9. What next steps or actions do you wish to take individually or as a group?

Appendix E  
Sample Funding Request and Budget

Organization:  
Sweetwater Alliance  
PO Box 3100  
Duluth, MN 55803  
Jill Jacoby, Executive Director  
218-724-9786  
[www.sweetwateralliance.org](http://www.sweetwateralliance.org)  
[info@sweetwateralliance.org](mailto:info@sweetwateralliance.org)

### **Organization History**

Sweetwater Alliance Mission Statement: To organize and implement community based aquatic restoration and education projects that bring together environmental education, the arts and artists, cultural and natural history, while encouraging the understanding of aquatic ecosystems. Sweetwater Alliance received IRS nonprofit status in 2002.

### **Request**

Sweetwater Alliance is requesting the XXX Foundation's financial assistance in developing a community art and water awareness project to coincide with Lake Superior Day, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2009. We have two projects that will be placed on display at the Lake Superior Marine Museum in Canal Park for Lake Superior Day.

### **Dialogue Circles with Artists and Focused on Water Awareness**

A maximum of seventeen local artists (utilizing any art medium) will be recruited by using the Duluth Art Institute and Sweetwater Alliance's artist mailing lists. Participants will be asked to commit to engaging in five dialogue sessions focused on raising water awareness. We will use the recently published book, *Water Consciousness* (2008) by Tara Lohan as well as the video FLOW (For Love of Water) to help raise awareness and provide discussion material.

After the first four dialogue sessions (April) the artists will take what they have learned from the dialogue sessions and create art focused on Lake Superior. Artists can work in collaboration or independently.

The artwork will be displayed at the Lake Superior Marine Museum during the week of Lake Superior Day (July 19<sup>th</sup>) as a way to educate the broader public about Lake Superior. We intend to work with the media to gain attention for both Lake Superior Day and the art exhibition.

The fifth dialogue session will be held on July 27<sup>th</sup>, one week after the Lake Superior Day exhibition, as a way to conclude the project and bring closure to the dialogue group process. This last session, as well as individual interviews with artists, will help assess the impact of the project (see more below).



### **Clay Mural Project**

The second project we are developing will be held in conjunction with the Eighth Biennial Lake Superior Youth Symposium (supported by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), which will be held at the College of St. Scholastica from May 14 – 17, 2009. The event will bring together 300 high school students from throughout the Lake Superior watershed to address the issue of global climate change and its implications on the region. Sweetwater Alliance has been invited to offer a workshop on creating a clay mural (see enclosed letter). On May 16<sup>th</sup> we will work with all of the Youth Symposium participants to develop a clay mural that gives voice to what the students have learned. Each student will make a clay tile focused on something that they learned about Lake Superior during the symposium. The tiles will be mounted to create a mural that speaks about Lake Superior through the eyes of youth. This Clay Mural will also be placed on public display at the Lake Superior Marine Museum during the Lake Superior Day exhibition.

### **Benefits**

There is a phenomenon where people tend to take for granted what they see everyday, including Lake Superior. Art provides fresh ways for us to see aspects of the world that we hadn't noticed and "releases us from the stupor of the familiar" (Eisner, 2001). The art that will be created by the high school students and local artists will allow the public to see Lake Superior through fresh eyes, and this, we believe, will increase awareness and therefore improve quality of life in our community.

There are multiple partners helping to make these art and awareness opportunities possible. Our supporters includes the Lake Superior Marine Museum (exhibition space), the Institute for Sustainable Future (who will co-facilitate the clay mural project), the organizers of the Lake Superior Youth Symposium and St. Scholastica as the host for the symposium, the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council who will provide mailing lists and we hope, several funders who see the benefit of this project.

**Amount being requested:** \$4,000

**Timeframe:** April 1 – August 1, 2009

**Program Evaluation:** We view this as a one-time project and future funding is not necessary. We will evaluate success in several ways. Success of the dialogue circles will be measured by interviewing the artists to learn how the dialogue circles impacted their awareness and art. Their art will reflect the dialogue that took place and that in itself will be a form of evaluation. The student tiles will address what was most important and memorable about their learning during the symposium. Finally, we would like to interview and video record people (with their consent) viewing the art to capture how it may have impacted them. Videos and photos will be displayed (upon consent) on our web site and photos will be used in our newsletter to further educate and share this project with the public.

**Recognition:** We will have a thank you poster listing all contributions on display during the art exhibition at the Marine Museum. Additionally, we will thank you in the newsletter and on our web site.

**Project Budget**

Salary	\$3,500
Travel	\$ 100
Supplies	\$ 850
Equipment	\$ 426
Contractual	\$1,400
Newsletter/postage	\$1,076
Indirect Costs	\$ 876
Total	\$8,228

Appendix F  
Transcribed Dialogue from Study Circle Sessions Three and Four, Focus Group  
Dialogue, and Interviews

Study Circle Session Three: April 20, 2009

The Water Circle

LM - My water is dirty looking but it has lots of character – it has cedar in it from the big cedar that we have in our back yard. It's one of my favorite trees and I wanted to get the last of the snowmelt. So this morning I went and did that, I'll put a little in to share. It's got cedar and pine needles and snowmelt.

MP - I brought some water from Stewart Creek, which cuts across our land, back where they were going to build a golf course a couple years ago. There were people disputing whether it was the beginning of a trout stream, right now it is about 4 feet across, it's usually just a trickle.

MA - I tend to immerse myself in what ever project I am in and I happened to be at the mall shopping for a low consumption toilet and there is a creek that goes through there with significant wetlands, and it is part of Miller Creek. It's a beautiful little creek that certainly has its challenge with the Miller Hill Mall and all the other stuff going on, but it is so close and it's a trout stream and a sacred sanctuary in the middle of that thriving whatever you want to call it - commercial enterprise. I parked in the Kolar parking lot and took a walk down from there. So this water is from Miller Creek.

KM - I brought water from my tap – we have a well that is 300 feet deep and amazingly cold when it comes out of the tap. Then I got on this purist kick and I was distilling it and then I heard you talk last week and I thought that is so over the top that I am going back to drinking my tap water, it's fine. So here it is I am back to my beautiful tap water.

AK - I didn't bring water this time, cause I was engaged in running around but we can think of the virtual water that went to make this – there's a big chunk of Hetch Hetchy in here – this is wine from California. And how much water did it take to make this glass of wine?

SM - I have water from the tap. Last week the water filter was broken and I had to do it by hand but I am happy to report that we got a new water filter and this has been filtered by a gravity machine, not by hand. In thinking and mediating on water today I found myself down by the mouth of Chester Creek near Lake Superior by the lake walk where it goes under the railroad and by the Highway there are steel head fish hanging underneath the tunnel and guys fishing down there. I started collecting stones for a mural and forgot about collecting water. And so it goes.

JD - I have tap water from my 195 foot well. Wonder why I know that? It is an old well and I had to get the PVC pipe replaced because it was leaking and my husband at that time, he died, we had someone come in to do the well and we asked how much it is to do this and we heard a hundred dollars a foot, but what he really said was under a dollar a foot.

SR - This is my well water – 280 feet – oh dear water, thank you so much for all the contributions in here. I just want to express my thanks for your beauty and how you brought me to the woods and I could hear your sound and I followed you and I brought my kids and we got to wear our mud boots. It is just so beautiful to be focusing on you at this time of year and you are just pouring out from every crevice and showing your beauty and shininess, and your sound and touch and smell, it is so fresh. I am so grateful to be able to play and take time to honor this time of year and your beauty. So thank you so much.

LN - Its special to hold all of these different waters in my hands. I brought water from the Nopeming Spring you know the spring that you heard me talking about – I love that place. Yesterday I was there and we gathered nine bags of garbage and we did it last year so that is just over one year. There is no garbage can there I am going again next week because there is a whole bunch more if anyone wants to go there. Sunday morning. There was a little girl with us and it was cold and she had gloves on her little hands and she brought a flower to put in the water at the end and she pulled every petal off and put it in the water – it was such a beautiful thing I will remember that forever. That little hand putting the flower in the water. I am grateful for water. I am grateful for all those who have come before us and have been nourished by the water.

RB - I have an unconventional contribution – I am going to breathe – the little Knife River runs through my property and I was looking at it today. In the years past an indication of the pollution in the river was based on how much foam builds up – when you have years where people’s septic systems freeze they just pump out the liquids in the watershed and it trickles down and there is soap and everything. A couple years ago there were mountains of soap six feet high and it was just wiggling in a Dr. Seuss kind of way and it’s bad stuff. And then all summer long it is green. This year there is no foam so that is cool and I breathed in the Little Knife and came back to exhale this water!

KA - I don’t have my water with me but maybe you remember that last time I brought the pond life water and we were looking at the tiny little creatures and I came back late at night about 10:30 or so and the first thing I did was go to the pond and put it back in there which felt good, and felt like I brought it back home. Then my daughter this week brought a big jug of that water into the house and we looked and I thought these creatures are different from last time and sure enough it was the mosquito larva. Water is life! It’s all good. So anyway, just a reminder that the larva and then pupa which is 4 -5 days and then, we have a little time yet.

RT - This week I brought some water from part of Tischer Creek, which flows by the house where my daughter and I live. Part of our daily tradition when the weather is nice is to go for a walk after dinner and today we did it after she woke up from her nap and we went down to the creek and this is a place where we love to go and look at the ducks and watch the birds and listen to all the wildlife and she is always full of questions and that is the most wonderful thing of all, until it isn't anymore. Why did we hear that sound Momma? How do you answer that? I don't know. It was pretty wonderful. She said, "You have to ask the water if it is ok to take it first." So I did and then I said "what did the water say" and she said "sure!"

Jill - Last week I brought my ephemeral spring – not really a spring it's a creek, and because I am thinking about watersheds, I was thinking where does my little creek go, which brought me to the cards I am sharing with you. Amity Creek is where my water goes, so I brought some Amity Creek water. It is kind of cool because it is a neighborhood creek in a lot of ways. It has potential to tie people together in that neighborhood.

#### Dialogue on readings.

RT – I want to say KA, you are my water angel. One of the comments you made last week about the beauty of inconvenience, struck me in a new way, although it is nothing new to me or any of us I'm sure, sometime it takes things being spoken in the right gentle way for it to sink in. That thought has been percolating throughout my entire week. And I have really started paying more attention to how I use water, everything from when I brush my teeth, I've stopped holding my tooth brush under the tap, I fill up a cup of water first, and I use that to rinse my brush and whatever. I could go on and on about the different water practices that I have begun to do as ritual, as a conscious living ritual, and that is such a beautiful thing and thank you for inspiring me. The other thing is that I have talked to the woman who owns the house where Grace and I live, into getting a low flow toilet which MA was out shopping for and will install, thank you MA. But I have talked her into doing that for the bathroom that Grace and I share because each time we flush the toilet I think "there goes 7 gallons into nothing and for what." So there are lots of really beautiful, positive changes going on in my life. The other thing was that I took a nap before I came here, when Grace was sleeping, and I had this fabulous flying dream where I was flying all over the place looking for a house and I found a water source and I was following this water source and I woke up before I got to the place where I am supposed to live, but I have a feeling it is near a water source.

KA – [hugs RT] We go way back a long time. I wanted to talk about one of the images from the book, from chapter 8. The image was about the watershed and it talked about the watershed as a cradle and I love that image and I have done some cradle art in the past so it was very exciting to me to have that image come in and

I can just picture it in the medium I am working in, but I just think of the cradle as the place you put your most prized possession and I think of water that way and so I was appreciative for the connection and all these connections to the art and images coming out especially in the next batch of chapters, so that was nice.

RB – I’ve been thinking about what is it that I missed last week here. I have been thinking about water all the time now. Some of you know I did the big mural at the Co-op that’s all water, and now I am working on this new thing, the Freshwater Society called me today and I am working on a proposal for them, it seems that everywhere I turn everything is coming back to water for me and glass is so well suited to water, I am drowning in this stuff and I live out in the country and my shoes, my feet are soaking wet all the time and I am trying to dry them. [Laughter]. I was thinking about art and activism, and I was also thinking about you, Jill, and that you talked about how it’s policy that is going to really make things change and that it’s not enough to just think about stuff it is action, it’s not visualization, it really is about getting out and doing stuff and I feel this is one way I can contribute is to create art that will make people aware of this stuff. The more people who know, it’s like little drops at a time and maybe things can change. That is what was going on in my head the last week or so.

LN – I was struck by this chapter on the sacred and some lines in it in different parts that I wanted to talk about at some point. Where it says things like “no market economy could make millions of people walk hundreds of kilometers in the muggy heat of August to bring the blessings of the sacred water.” They’re wonderful statements in here, “sacred waters carry us beyond the market place into a world charged with myths and stories and beliefs and devotion and culture.” It’s the valuing and cherishing and when I was at the Nopeming Spring yesterday in the snow and seeing the way it was treated, it was so contrary, I thought why, what is this, and yet while I was there, there was a steady stream of people coming there and I talked with some people about why they get their water there and some said “my well is broken” and one said “I came up from the Cities once every year and I get water here.” But it was constant people there and I know they value it but at the same time there isn’t a sign there, there is nothing there to indicate what are some practices we could do, or what it is about, or some beauty of any kind. I keep chewing on it. And then I had a talk with a friend of mine who is an Ojibwe woman living in Odanah, Wisconsin on the Bad River Reservation, and they just did their water ceremony, because the ice finally went out. And they have a whole belief system around this and there is a disconnect between their culture which is right here, and all the rest of us who are here, and anyone knowing how they see it and I would love those voices to come out and share with others so that are the things I have been thinking about. I am loving the season and loving to see the waters running, and the movement is so stimulating so I feel revved and ok, let’s do it.

SR – I too was struck with chapter 8 and the word that was sitting with me, I did like the cradling effect with the hands. I mediated on that for a long time. Putting

my hands together like that and I have done a lot of images and work with hands, so that was a nice image. But what got me was the word “restoryation” – kind of like retelling, refiguring out what your story is or what I believe. That is a big thing for kids to be able to tell their story and so getting them to tell stories about water in their lives is really just cool. And so what I had them do was to write letters to the water. Dear water or whatever part of the earth they wanted to write to. It was really neat to hear their words what they are thankful for and how water plays a part in their lives and the creek they play around in, in West Duluth. So that restoryation was an important part for me. All of the words were getting overwhelming for me, but it is fun to pick out things that really stick with you and I too have been paying more attention as to how water is being used in my household and my life and already my family is like “oh boy here we go, Mom’s on a kick, look out”. We already do a fairly good job at being conservative, but it is the next level. I am talking about getting meters on our water and bringing it into the house so it is visual to people and talking with different people about it, so it has been an exciting adventure and I am anxious to start and hearing everyone ideas on the art part of it and the activist part of the art.

LN – could I add one sentence that I forgot “each of us has a role in shaping the creation story of the future” and that is exactly what you are saying (SR) and “Each of us is responsible for the Kumbh, the sacred water pot.”

SR - And empowering all of us, we all have a part of the story and kids too, empower them, they are part of this whole story too. The other thing that struck me was the comparison of the body parts to parts of water. “Our body mirrors the watershed branching patterns of waterways, branching patterns of our lungs, capillaries, neural pathways, wetlands provide a similar environmental service for the watershed health as our livers and kidneys”. So I am thinking on that. I am also working on my internal stuff – what you put in your body, and how your body reacts and that kind of stuff, so comparing the body to the earth and the waterways and the veins, and just that language was really interesting to me.

JD – Much like a lot of you I have been paying attention to my water usage, too, and making resolutions like to get the laundry soap that you can get at the co-op, certain commitments I am starting to do. I do hear the Lester River from where I live, I can really hear it this time of year, it’s pretty exciting. It feels like water is coming up more often. I happened to pick up a PBS movie on melting glaciers, just another reminder about some things. The movie had a lot of focus on India, an activist was talking about that on the show. It’s important and I guess we need the connection with everybody. It is not just a local issue: it is, but it is beyond that.

SM – this week was different than last week in that while we did have regular water service back in the house, the time around the house has sadly come to an end and is coming up fast. My wife says she is sick of renting and we are looking for a house. It’s funny running around to different houses and seeing how people

have lived their lives and how their houses are arranged and how they have lived their lives. The idea of getting land and building our own place is now the topic at hand. I helped two other people do this and I know the commitment it will call for and I don't believe it would be a successful reality about this point. We have had discussions about water usages this past week. I haven't gotten a chance to get to the reading. I spent a lot of time meditating by Chester Creek at the ski hill and below the falls by the iron bridge and this morning down at the mouth. The life of that river is really cool and incredible. I wish I were making a point. I am not.

AK – I would like to talk about the Chester but I can't I have to write it. [tears, sadness, deep breathing]. I'll bring it next time. The other thing I was thinking about was the dendritic form of water and it ties into dendritic forms in general. I have been doing tree drawings for years now. I have a whole environment of drawn trees. That dendritic tree form, rivers are also dendritic. I have been fascinated by that form because it is the form of maximum exposure and that is why trees and rivers take that form. It is a form for maximum exposure to bring in maximum quantities to a single point and to disperse maximally from a point. It is a form taken by light and water and living things and information systems like dendrites in your head or computer systems. As an artist that has been the thing that relates to form the most as I look at water, it is the dendritic form. I throw that out there for the visual artists.

KM - I love that maximum exposure. I do a lot of athletic things and I'm trying to get more capillary systems in the body and it's all related. I guess since last week for me I have been seeing all the connections between doing birding and things like that and it all came together, there is a reason I am studying water, and all these other things that I thought were separate are all part of this big picture of water. It is exciting to me to feel like I am doing the right things. I had a call from a local organization and they want me to do some work for them. Some exciting things are happening in our community about monitoring water in our lakes and starting a college program for water quality monitoring which is one of the first. I think that to have a study group about water it's that same thing – there is a trickle and it all seems to be coming together. I said this last week, but I want as many people as possible to study a book, or learn more about water and I think so many people would be receptive to that idea, it just needs to be suggested to them.

MA – the show that I saw last week on receding glaciers on Friday night talked about recession of the glacier that feeds the Ganges River. It was a really powerful hour-long special. I love metaphor and I see dendrites and watersheds, it's so much of a metaphor for our lives physical, psychological, and spiritual, all paths coming together into one. All branches leading into one. Also the concept of watershed, I have been frequenting a retreat center in the Ozark Mountains and last May I had chance to go there and shoot [photography] a graduating high school seniors retreat from the cities. The school was called "Watershed" and it



was an alternative school. But for those 20 people to go in there and spend four days in the Ozark Mountains with no running water and the transformation they professed to have gone through was so powerful and it was all about water and mountains and valleys. The transformational process of leading towards a watershed is such a powerful metaphor.

MP – I spent the last three days in a suburb of Chicago with a dear friend and teacher who is gathering people together, and who just finished a book called Sacred Activism. His name is Andrew Harvey and he is from England and has an endearing accent. I had four classes with him and we are on first name basis. His book will come out this fall. At the end of the weekend he was saying to go back to your local community, think globally but act locally, which is something I grabbed out of the air the first night we were together, you know, what can we do here. His point is that activism is so much stronger if you have a spiritual base. We haven't talked a lot about a specific spiritually and I don't think that is important, but I think we all agree that water is sacred and it is sacred in every culture. So I thought, wow, this is really cool because it started before I went to see him and it's going to be ending after this program so I feel like, oh good that piece of my homework is done. People came from all around the US and not all of them have done activism and that was what his point was: a lot of people are getting the spirituality now and it's a lot of sitting and meditating and clearing your mind and disconnecting from things. Anyone looking at the state of the world right now knows that we have to take that and move to the doing part. So anyway, I had to have a roommate and I went to flush the toilet, and at our house, if it's yellow, let it mellow, and I felt weird to keep flushing because of how many times a day you have to do that, so I didn't and thought I am going to catch her later and tell her why. Not everyone gets that. There are a lot of people who live in the country here and have septic systems and understand that pretty well, but she was from Cleveland so I did catch her and she was a little uncomfortable. I thought for just a tiny bit of activism, just push you a little bit – it's like one of the few things you can do, like recycling an every day activity.

SM – yellow let it mellow, I'm embarrassed, I didn't want to mention it – last week we were letting it mellow and making interesting observations. Like Brothers - ... my wife and her sister – she can understand that, but we noticed that when we mixed – just male urine is one thing and just women's is one thing but when you mix them together it's a really foul smell.

MP – Andrew Harvey has written like 30 books and a lot of interfaith stuff. He's an Oxford Scholar with mystical experiences like flashes of light that have knocked him on the ground. He is really on fire now on the environment and cruelty to animals.

LM – I had some time after work before I came here so I stopped at the Coop and then took a little drive around and drove up Woodland and down Arrowhead to Victoria, which is a dead end. I thought I'd go to the end and then turn around

and come to Chester Creek Cafe. At the dead end a deer and myself surprised each other. She was a doe and was grazing and didn't bound away, she just wandered to what she felt was probably a safe distance and kept nipping at the buds. I got out of the car and, it may be goofy and whatever, but I just wanted to talk to her so I talked to her a little bit and said, "I am glad you survived the winter and hope you have a good summer." I know that's goofy but, and she was just calmly grazing as I was talking to her and I thought it is a residential community with woods she is probably used to a lot of people. I wanted to share that. There was a snow patch on the ground and spring is coming and eventually that snow will melt and that water will go somewhere. The second thing is that my sister was visiting this weekend from Minneapolis and she works at Aveda Corporation and Aveda is having their walk for water this week. It's 6 kilometers or 4 miles, and they walk as long as it takes someone from a developing country to walk for water and then each department is raising money and then donating the money to a water fund. So my sister's department is doing Great Lakes Alliance and Clean Water Fund.

JL – I've read through chapter 6 and I would like to make a brief comment on that, "harvesting the political will, we have the technical know how to solve the problems caused by industrial agriculture but the political will for solving these problems is missing" I want to touch on that because I know that after reading the Stockton story and I remember seeing something on Frontline on the water issue. People didn't want their water privatized and they had a Mayor in power who went ahead and made a back door deal with a very powerful water company and he privatized that water and they fought and fought and it took years, but now they have their water back. Of course they have a mess that has to be straightened out and be resolved. Interestingly Arnold Schwarzenegger backed that mayor and he lost. He wanted to run for another political position in California and he lost. I think what is interesting about this whole political will business is that people have a lot more power than they know. You've touched on the spiritual piece and we are here because of that and when people come from a spiritual center it is very powerful. Of course when you are looking at a handful of companies that are looking at enormous profits this is going to be an ongoing thing. And of course these companies attack and go after smaller communities where people don't have the political know-how, or they think the people don't have the political knowhow, but I think they are going to be finding that it is like David and Goliath, there are lots of Davids out there. There are a lot of people who cherish their water sources quietly. After reading the first part I did not feel hopeless, I felt very hopeful. Which leads me to my water source which is Miller Creek, and that takes me back to my childhood. You talked about the little girl with the flower and you talked about children and their stories and your daughter who so gets it, children so get it they are like little angels. Sometime I see little children walking down the street in day care and its like the sound of little angel voices – it's the sound that is so musical and happy and from another world. They are really connected to spirit much more so then we are. So when your daughter said RT that you had to ask permission and the water said "sure" of course the water

would say sure. I want to close with two last things. I do Tarot card readings for my own knowledge and self awareness mediation and connecting Druid and Celtic circles and animals that come to me and what it is they are trying to tell me and spending time in the woods in mediation even if it's just over in Lincoln Park or Miller Creek where it comes into the city where I see fishes, and that helps me connect to what I feel is important and I find it curious that one of the cards that has come up most frequently in my Tarot card readings is the ace of cups which is water, the hand and cup and water flying out, so this is very appropriate that this is happening. Then the last is to say that for me, I have had a lot of changes in my life in this last year, I'm finishing up school and people are talking about their week, and I am working to get my Bachelor's degree in fine arts and minoring in psychology and I would like to make a living as an artist and I would like to help people through art and be politically active and raise consciousness through art and I have had to learn that instead of clinging to one thing and hoping it will work out in the temp job thing to support myself, I have to think like water and that has come in my Tarot card readings to just go with the flow. In stead of staying in one place just let it go and keep on moving and flowing around and through and over and underneath and maybe evaporating and coming out as rain someplace else. Be flexible and versatile like water.

#### Study Circle Session Four: April 27, 2009

We start with the water circle and I offer to go first.

JJ - My water today is water that I know needs healing. The last two times I brought clean water; one was practically snow melt, and the other was practically snow melt, this is snow melt too, actually, but snow melt that comes off of I-35 and so it's laced with all sorts of contaminants including road salt and oil and whatever you would find on a road is in this little vial. Many of you know that I have worked for a number of years trying to build a Stormwater Garden on the Bayfront property and that is where this water came from. It is a little stream of water that has no name, it travels under the Freeway and catches stormwater from the Freeway and Messaba Avenue and goes under Railroad Street and then right into Slip 2, if you know the Bayfront area. This is the water I have proposed to treat through the Stormwater Garden. I bring it for healing for me as well as for healing for this particular water source because the political process that I have been engaged in has been very, very draining and not fun and I don't want to go back to it, I don't want to do it, I don't want to go back to where I have been, so if I am going to finish this project I need to find a new light and a new way and that may actually be happening. So that is what this water is all about.

KM – I have no water to contribute tonight. I spent the weekend planting trees, planting 5,000 trees with 9 kids and 5 adults and so my mind was really shifted to trees and as we all know they definitely need the water. Friday night we had all these kids and a primitive cabin that we were staying at and it was snowing and raining and I was thinking tomorrow is going to be hell but we'll do this, and the

next time I looked up it was sunshine and that beautiful moisture had softened the soil; it was so easy digging, even the 12 year olds were digging and loving it. So I want to say thank you to the precipitation that came down.

KP – I spent my weekend farming again. My parents grow strawberries and raspberries and so we were setting up irrigation for that, and so I guess the water that goes into the irrigation comes from a drainage ditch, so that really concerns me and that's what we had a big discussion about that over the weekend. The water from the drainage ditch is filled with anything that the surrounding farmers put on their fields and this is watering all the strawberries and since they have such a high water content I feel like we are eating it all. But my Dad doesn't agree. So that's my discussion I guess, I wouldn't want to put that water in there unless this is a healing pot tonight.

SM – (places his hand over the pot of water) Blessing and healings upon this as words are spoken and the circle goes around may it be complete.

RB – I can drink this now [laughter].

KA – I brought some, well I thought of it late so there is hardly any in there. This is a little rainwater that was coming off the roof and I saw a few drops falling and it was nice to see it. I had been to the Cities last week and it is so dry there already and they are talking about major drought coming. So when the rain comes you are so thankful for it. I heard that there are hundreds of little wildfires around us and so the rain is wonderful to have. So this is a bit of rain.

PH – the water that I brought comes with a little story. I gathered it from the ravine from my family home. Earlier in the century someone built a wonderful tea garden that included a creek that had flowing water and my family and our neighbors tried to fix it up and our neighbor built a wonderful teahouse by the water. It's is a piece of art practically surrounding the idea of hearing the flowing water and being able to see it. And then one day they re-did our water main and we learned, or likely concluded, that this beautiful clear water coming down this little creek that had been carefully manicured into the landscape, probably wasn't from a natural source but from the water purification plant up the Shore and had probably had been either leaking or more likely someone had bribed them to tap into the water main so that they could have their beautiful creek, which is what we concluded. More than likely that was the story behind the beautiful clear, I drank it once it tasted delicious, water flowing down the creek. So that creek doesn't flow water anymore and I was thinking tonight, we all considered that as a tragedy at the time because our beautiful creek doesn't flow with water anymore. But it wasn't really our water, probably millions of gallons, this went on for 60 years, 10 gallons a minute you can imagine that would add up. So my family and our neighbors consider ourselves environmentalists and that kind of thing, so that was a powerful metaphor that really positive change hit home but we were still disappointed because we felt that we had lost something because of the disconnect

between the reality, which was we were wasting precious water leaking away, but we enjoyed it, so I brought some of the really mucky water that is in the channel that is now overrun with grass and only runs when it rains. I would not drink this anymore.

Three people come in and we pause to get chairs and help them settle in.

JV - I have a virtual water story – I was so impressed with the book and its anti-bottled water campaign because what really irks me is that I go dancing every Thursday night at the American Legion and they will not give you tap water, they want you to buy their bottled water for \$2.25 and the tanker of beer there is \$2.75 cents. So that's my water story. If they don't give me water, I don't have any drinks.

JL – I have been working with watercolor on the image that I came up with during our last discussion so that's been something that I have been concerned about. I took my dogs for a run and they went swimming in the St. Louis which I know is not clean yet, but at least there are living critters in there – herons and ducks and that kind of thing. I hope that eventually it is cleaned up the way it needs to be.

LM – My water tonight is from Lake Superior. I went to Brighton Beach and did some looking out at the Lake and listened to the radio a little and then before I came here I got some water and I am just thinking about how appreciative I am for getting to be a part of this and getting to meet all of you. I had known some of you already and getting to know some other people too, and so I reflected on that while getting water from Lake Superior. Last week I had seen two water bottles that someone had dumped lying in a gutter so I picked them up and recycled them because I thought of the water bottle stories. I'll put a little of the water in here and return the rest back to the Lake.

SR – I participated in two water ceremonies one on Earth Day with my kids down on Stoney Point and it was fabulous and the other was near Lutsen by the Onion River with a couple of ladies. I am so thankful for all of these opportunities opening up honoring water and I brought Lake Superior water from Brighton Beach, I stopped there and had some time to reflect and just feel really bonded to Lake Superior and that big body of water, just feeling grateful. I want to do all I can to help preserve that source and so I am grateful to be part of this group. I feel it has opened up a lot of communication and network so blessings for this water.

JD – Well I am connected to water but I didn't get the water today. ... Lester River flows into Lake Superior, but all water is sacred. And it's all connected.

LN – I brought water today from the spring that is down by Gary – New Duluth, the one that is kind of abandoned, its way on the side with a little pipe coming out, bubbles. I think it could use some attention and a little TLC and so I thought

I'd bring it here. I feel this week excited and joyful, more than ever I believe that change is happening and I am excited about what I am seeing and the way it is coming and I think this group is part of this. Water that does need lots of love and attention is in here and I think that is what we give and that is what we are doing. I want to ask the water to inspire me for this art project and give me clarity about how we go forward. I'm excited. I also wanted to say that anyone who wants to go down and clean the springs I have a notice about that.

MA— I grew up in the east end of Superior and went to a Catholic school and walked 6 – 7 blocks to school and my mother always knew when we were playing at the creek because we'd come home smelling like gas and oil from Murphy Oil Company. Over the past few years Murphy has been taken to task to clean up the pollution they have caused. At the mouth by Hog Island, they had to dig out all of that stuff down there and stop dumping their wastes into Newton Creek. So this water is from Newton Creek. Lets see if it smells like gas and oil (opens container and smells it). When we talk about solutions and changes we talk about things not being like they used to be, but we still have a lot of work to do. So here is to solutions.

MP – I brought water from our well, which is only 30 feet deep, and behind Spirit Mountain. Some day we might have to drill a new one.

RT – As I stated before my daughter Grace and I are in transition. We're living in the home of a friend of ours and all of my books are in the basement of this house and that is a lot of books and as grateful as I am that water is abundant as it is here, I am also really grateful for the places it is not, and this water came from the sump pump of our house.

JH – I was going to bring lake water, which I did, but the only thing I had to bring it in was a coke bottle. When I thought about it I thought it is probably absolutely right, because when I was painting in Mexico City in San Miguel and when we went to small villages you couldn't get water, but every village had a coke machine. I thought that this is probably the first time that this bottle has seen pure water.

AK – I have only thoughts of water to add to the container, but I do have other things you might want to know about. I just finished editing a collection of articles for Public Art Review on the theme of public art and sustainability and a number of articles concern water. They are written by artists, curators, writers, on the issue of how artists working in the public realm can promote ideas of sustainability and can interact with water systems and other systems. Water is a huge concern of a lot of artists in the public realm. This issue celebrates the 20th anniversary of Public Art Review, published in St. Paul and is the only magazine about public art in the country or the world. I wanted to say a little about Forecast's grants to artists who have projects that they themselves have generated. This is unusual. You can come up with a public art idea if you get the

collaboration of a site or site owner, and you can apply to Forecast Public Art Works and they will give up to \$4000 to enact your idea. So those of you who are artists and want to do art on issues of sustainability and water, look at the web for Forecast Public Art Works and they have this grant program and the deadline is in the fall, so you have time to plan ahead and think about what you might want to do and if you want to know more about Forecast, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue will come out in May and focuses on sustainability. The other thing, I read something cheery in Harpers – it takes 1,000 gal of water to produce a serving of milk but only 300 gallons to produce a beer. So drink beer and help Mother Earth. The difference between water used in beer production vs. milk production is astounding.

When we return from our break I suggest we conduct another round of the talking circle to bring some closure to our time together in whatever way that people feel to be appropriate. I begin by stating:

JJ - I was thinking about how I wanted to do that and kids kept coming up in my brain today. I want to connect with those of you who have young kids, and teach young kids, or remember when you were young kids, whatever. When I do this kind of work and when I get into this, I think about the next generation, I think about the children. I have heard such great and wonderful stories from you guys and how you are teaching your children to respect and love water and to know that water is more than something you get when you turn on your tap. That water is life and you have brought in that life.

RT – Jill you are going to make me cry.

JJ – water is life and it is ok, crying is good. We all came to this with different levels of awareness and we all leave with I think a greater awareness, but I think that there is a responsibility to that as well and that responsibility has to do with action and the greatest part of that is that you all have this gift of being artists and being creative and finding that creative, unique way to say something. So I just want to encourage you to tap into your creativity and share that with the public through this art show that we are going to put on. And thank you so much for being here.

JH – When I was thinking about doing a piece of art and I was gone last week, half of me wants to do one admonishing people to take better care of Mother Earth, but I finally came to the point of celebration, celebration for what is basically, what you said that was funny, I took two of my granddaughters kayaking in an end of the lake that is quiet, and I think for kids these days the world is so loud that they are either twittering, e-mailing, and their world is very, very noisy and I think that took them absolutely away when we sat there and I said we would be quiet. But then they tuned in to what the real noise of the world

was, which was the rushes and the wind in the trees and pines and there were a couple of eagles nesting in a tree not far from us. Then they were looking down and were a little afraid – too many Jaws movies, when you look down from a kayak you are at water level. I asked them “how did you feel about that” and they couldn’t describe it except a few days afterwards, they said “it was so noisy, but it was good noisy.” So with that, I think mine will be celebration.

KM – I’m not ready to say anything really. I don’t feel like we are ending I feel like I am just starting and I get sad when I think about ending. I feel like we are going to work together for a while and I can’t wait to see what comes from all of this. As always I am grateful for the experience.

KP – I felt funny coming in tonight too because this is the last one, I am just starting to remember people’s names, which is hard for me I guess. In respect to kids I was a nanny for seven years prior to coming here, in Montana first and then in San Francisco, and seeing the differences in the kids I nannied in Montana where we would go to the mountains for the day and they would run free, versus in San Francisco, we’d go to the Bayshore, but the kids in San Francisco were much more conscious of their actions in terms of water and recycling, and in making an effort and part of that is a San Francisco lifestyle, but part is that they saw more of the effects versus in Montana, which was pretty fascinating to me. These were 3 – 6 year olds in both situations and it is fascinating in that they are the ones who will carry this on and they do it better then we do for the most part, they are a lot more effective.

SM – After our last meeting I was hoping I would be more focused or at least resolved in what it was I was going to be creating and directing energy towards the water and awareness towards the water, but I am not where I was hoping I would be. But here is where I am and this is not a bad place. What’s going to happen is anybody’s guess; intentions are wonderful things especially when they are followed through with actions and beliefs. I came across a quote, “knowledge without experience is philosophy, and experience without knowledge is ignorance and the interplay between the two produces wisdom.” So I imagine that our art is gonna be producing that wisdom somehow and somewhere and I pray it all comes easy and smoothly for us.

RB – I was thinking about when the lake is frozen, when you throw rocks across it and it skitters and the cool sound that it makes... [RB is holding my big agate] [Laughter]. Actually I have had this water thing going in my art for a while and it seems like it is all focused and coalescing somehow. I have had this design for about half a year and three places wanted me to do it but they can’t afford it. Culligan can’t afford me, the Freshwater Society can’t afford me, the Arboretum. So I thought I might as well do it for free, because the best art is the stuff you do for yourself and so if it helps with the cause, that’s what counts.



KA – I have ideas swirling. Lots of going back into other mediums that I haven't touched in a while, so I am hoping for clarity and looking forward to taking time and going on a walk and being out in nature and having quiet and thinking about it. I love that time when I am ready to work on something and I don't know what it is yet. A good friend passed on a quote to me, maybe you know her (KM, you can correct me) "if you know exactly what you are going to be doing, it's probably is not worth doing, if you know what the end result is going to look like, maybe its not worth doing." I am excited about the process of working towards whatever is going to happen.

PH – I, too, am having an evolving process of the art that I'll be making, but my thoughts on the matter, some things that were flipped in the past were naturally inspired but more industrial aesthetic objects situated in a pool of water or a pool of something that suggests some other type of liquid. So I think I'll be working something like that, but the idea is still evolving and that is a good thing. We'll see where it goes.

JV – The thing that strikes me the most is the bottled water thing and it is frustrating thinking about children, because being divorced I don't see my son every day and so he is more influenced by the other side of the family. Interesting because he thinks bottled water is the most wonderful thing in the whole world. So it's like, hmmm, and then the other thing that has struck me is that on public radio they were talking about a restaurant in England that offers their guests gourmet water that can be as pricey as \$70 and from special places. It is like the new wine – paying for the name and the label. Last time I checked water is still H<sub>2</sub>O. I'm playing with whether I should be in your face, like this book (Agitprop), or to be more celebratory. Ideas are coming of how to merge those together. The idea that if you look at something one way and then another way, it gives you different interpretations.

The audio recorder was accidently turned off at this point and I lost 10 people.

#### One-on-One Semi-structured Interviews

##### 1. What led you to participate in the study circles?

KP - I've only been out of grad school for two years and so being in a formal group and talking about a subject matter with other people in that style seemed very familiar to me and something I missed. And it was about something I am interested in.

RT - Your invitation Jill. Your work has always appealed to me and the timing hasn't been right prior to this and I felt open enough to allow you to persuade me that the timing was right and I am grateful to you for that and acknowledge that it was an invitation and I emphatically said yes. I am grateful that you wanted me Jill and I see the beauty of how you see the bigger picture and you see how

people's energies work together and I value that quality very highly and I think you need to hear that.

MA - RT said something about it and I was wanting to explore deeper my connection with water and it seemed to be a natural to step into a study group. Water and political issues and artistic expression is natural. I had no idea how it would be done, but it seemed to be a natural fit.

LN - I have personally made a commitment to water by doing different cleaning and ceremony's related to springs. When the idea of water comes up I immediately perk up and want to contribute. And my art is my second love and I love to dialogue with other people. I work in isolation a lot and it's fun to connect to others who have a similar interests and importance and then share with them and see where that takes you.

LM - I wanted to see what other people thought and I know how I feel about the issues we have been discussing about water and it interested me and I thought it would be interesting to see other people's view on it as well and to get other people's feedback. It's been very fun and very rewarding and empowering to listen to all of that.

MP - Water is one of those things that has come up and gone away and come up again. I got your letter and e-mail and so it was coming up. When we did the Council of All Beings class and Kathy was playing the cello – several people had water images come up. It was one of those things that kept hitting me over the head and I had to pay attention.

AK - I know of your work on water issues and you have a lot of history with it and I knew it would be an interesting project. I have been working on water issues and I am really interested in flow in general, how flow works and what it looks like. When I have my gas fireplace on the plasma flow – the shape of flames that's a flow, it's a fluid plasma, a kind of fluid, and water is a fluid and I am interested in the question of the morphology of flow and that would be why.

PH - I got a letter in the mail, but what drew me into it was the possibility of having an art exhibition and the discussion aspect, the idea of coming together and talking about social issues with a variety of artists appealed to me because I tend to appreciate the way artists think in general and I always look for a way to tie in my artistic background and roots with social conscious and social aspects, so it interested me. Also to do something local – to work with issues we have in Duluth seemed to be a natural fit between art, social consciousness, and discussion – three things that I like a great deal.

SR - Receiving the letter was important and having the note from you on the top triggered some stuff and the topic water – I have been for a long time trying to figure out where to donate my time or money to help water, particularly Lake

Superior. So I thought I would meet people who could help me with that and when it fit into my schedule I thought ok, it's supposed to be.

JL - It was the topic and what it was about. When I moved back here to Duluth after living on the East Coast I realized what we had here. And after living in Philadelphia and not being able to drink the water, you know I couldn't drink the water in Philadelphia, I spit it out and I'll never forget the experience of arriving on Philadelphia in 1984 and taking a drink of tap water and literally spitting it out, I thought I was going to be sick, it's the worst tasting water I ever had in my life. So when I moved back here and I saw what we had I realized I needed to do something to protect this source, but of course how do you do that one-person protecting the source – that's not possible. So when I got the invitation to participate, since I am an artist, it was just the right fit.

JD - Being around artists, which I value, and working on issues that are important to me – water.

KA - The theme of the program drew me in. The work that I am interested in doing is environmentally based and that's what gets me jazzed as far as what I want to spend my time doing. I read the e-mail, it was brief and well written, but speaking with you and hearing your story and why you do what you do and your background was the thing that led me to the position of I have to do this, this is really important. I believed in what you were doing and learning more about the issue and figure out how to respond to that in an artistic way.

KM - It was a series of events. I had been in Duluth a few weeks before I heard about the study group. I went to an art show that I thought would be great but it was leftovers of artist work that got put together in a last minute show. It wasn't very inspiring but I thought, hmmm, there are all these artists over here and I am feeling a bit unconnected in the Grand Rapids area so I should start looking for a group to get to know Duluth artists. Coincidentally a few weeks later my friend KA called and she forwarded the e-mail and I read it and it was everything I am interested in and having a concern for the environmental was a fit and the artists was a fit, so I joined up as quickly as I could.

2. As you think back over the study circle process, what descriptors come to mind?

KP – Funny, because in study circles are you always passing something around or is that something we just used? That part of it made it seem like an AA group for water lovers. You know say something emotional about our love for water or something personal and then pass it on. The water circle, like when we poured the water, that aspect too. I felt like I was confessing something bad. I guess that I just explained it to other people that we got together and talked about water.

RT - The process itself was very powerful. I was, pleased isn't the right word, I was surprised and delighted to see how enthusiastic and how powerful the discussion was and there were a lot of people involved in the process who already knew a lot about water. I knew a little, and I have a great love of nature and a connection to nature, but I choose because of my sensitivity, to protect myself from a lot of the negative parts of awareness and this was a safe group to be in, a safe group to explore that. So it was powerful, delightful, surprising and safe, those are a few descriptors.

MA - Sometimes frustrating, because sometimes I have some difficulty with people and personalities. So one of the programs I am in talks about the principle of personalities – so the principle here is people being willing to take a look at some of the themes that came up in the study group and some of the issues that come up with water. People come together and reflect on some of those big issues, suddenly it's important for us to come together as people and personalities to make connections. And there were times that it felt really good to be in the group and there were times, depending on where I was at, that I'd just as soon be off paddling on my own again, which is important for me to nurture my own life forces and ability to believe in myself without getting stuck in some of the issues. So I've been able to heal that with art and photography and my writing. So again getting back to group process, I thought it was a good thing to meet the people who sometimes for me... addressed some of my issues with people and personalities. It will be interesting to see how things evolve because now it is a dialogue going on. Did that answer questions?

Jill – descriptors.

MA - Powerful, reflective, empowering, to be able to process my own reactions to the readings with other people, that can be really empowering. Humbling, in a good way, for me to own my part of the process, empowering in knowing that I have been a part of that process. When I am reminded of my concern it brings back some of that pain of that early reminder of waste. Reminder of being unconscious of waste and water or not holding water in reverence. It was my dad who taught me about wasting water, so when I see people letting faucets run it's painful and what do I say about it? I shouldn't feel ashamed about saying "there is a lot of water going down the drain there" and sometimes reality... the change shouldn't be on me, it should be on everyone, even if we live in a place where water is abundant. That may not be the case but the reality is we take so much for granted, we don't hold things to our breast. I remember talking about this at a conference and the reaction was not good, but then I listened to Gandhi's son talk about water and he said the big thing about water going down the drain is not so much the waste but that we are not holding water in reverence, we are not seeing it as the gift that it is. So much of life is not something to take for granted, until we no longer have it. When we see our own morality or climate, we don't hold life as sacred. It's so empowering.

LN - moving, instructional, informative, personal, expansive, moving, emotional.  
 Jill - any you want to say more about?

LN - Informative part – it's not that I didn't know the facts, I knew a lot of them, but when you read them again they hit you in a new way, another impact of reading the material and hearing the statistics. But the group itself, they are really committed people. I like the integrity of the individuals and the sincerity. Everyone seemed to be extremely sincere about their perspectives and their ideas and their willingness to be there. They are authentic people, no one was putting on an act and it wasn't about who is a better artist – just a very down to earth talking about what matters.

LM - Relaxation, being able to open up, I think because we weren't a large, large group nor small, it made it easier for people to talk, cohesiveness, passion, interests, intelligence.

MP - Warm group of people who were truly caring about the process and each other and so it was very welcoming and I enjoyed the rituals we came up with of sharing water. The spring cleaning which came up, I thought that was a neat thing that came out of it immediately. I learned a lot from the book but I tend to not think in statistics, but the impression of the fact that our attention needs to be on water was important and then there is an emotional part of water. I think water represents emotion and so people are really attached to bodies of water like Lake Superior and Stewart Creek. I liked that both sides were acknowledged.

AK – Warmth, an openness and warmth that was really nice. People were really appreciative of each other and because of the openness, pieces of information would come in that maybe otherwise wouldn't have happened. It was expansive not inward. It had a generosity that made things come up; people would bring things to the group.

PH - Eye opening; there were many different viewpoints expressed. I thought it was a very open format, welcoming, we are a diverse range of backgrounds and there were diverse approaches to the subject matter that we were handling and it was interesting to see other people's approaches to the matter. Great group of people – that was the best part.

SR - I think at the beginning I was nervous with the size of the group and the looming questions of the art at the end, questioning my ability to be an artist or my ability to fit into the group. But then all that went away when I realized the way it was set up, the way the study circle was set up with the stone and everybody gets an equal opportunity and dialoguing and I realized the importance wasn't all about the end product of the art that it was more about the dialogue and the process. I really got linked in when LN did the water ritual part of it and the sacredness was a really key piece for me. And the ground rules, having concrete ground rules to follow and knowing that there was someone who was going to

monitor that and the group being respectful and monitoring themselves. It was a creative group of people with an ability to be focused yet open to new ideas.

JL - Evolving, evolutionary, spiritual, creative. Evolutionary because the group evolved in the four sessions that we were there; it is a process and an evolving process the thing that is amazing about the talking circle is people connect, come apart, connect and grows into something else. It doesn't stay a talking circle it becomes a process where people are growing and evolving and changing and hopefully affecting other people and the environment will grow and change and that's where the creativity comes in. Very powerful.

JD - Interesting, inspirational in the direction of information on ground water and wanting to do more in that area, towards the end when people talked about their art, I thought that was inspirational. The water ceremony made it more than facts and numbers and details, it was personal.

KA - Personalities, I think working through that and working around them and enhancing certain personalities that you want to bring out more. We all come to the table with our own sense of who we are and the way we express ourselves and when you mix all that up it's interesting to try to get to the bottom of what someone is trying to say and where they are coming from. A lot of time it comes out in those initial personalities that people emit which is interesting to me. So personalities are one descriptor. Overwhelmed, I think there was a little time when I felt – after the first meeting I felt inspired, completely inspired like I want to go out and do something. The second one was when the personalities came in and I was more frustrated with the second one. I think it felt like spinning wheels, and I look back on it now and was it spinning wheels or phase two in the whole process, and it all had to happen we had to get to know each other because I was a little impatient and wanted to move forward and maybe that is my personality coming into play. The third meeting I felt like ok yes, now we are getting somewhere and we could discuss something more concrete – it was more action oriented if I can use a descriptor in there. And I walked away also inspired. After the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting I felt like there was more closure, that the group was tighter in a really good way and I felt like that was a good time to be done with that piece of it and I felt ready and prepared and ready to start the process of making art.

Jill – I'm curious about the third session and what made it more right for you.

KA - By nature I am more task oriented and an introverted person. After the second session I think it was the personalities, like some people I wanted to say ok that's enough it was a little too much from some people and it felt directionless. The third one, in the small groups we were able to connect in a more intimate way and have more conversations about where do we want to go next. I think a lot of us were in a very forward thinking ok, what's going to happen next, start planning and start talking about images. It was a more intimate conversation. When you have a whole group and one person speaking to the

whole group its more like one person on a pedestal one person has the floor as opposed to the third session where we broke up into small groups and it was more discussion oriented. I think it lends itself really well when people break up into small groups and I think that is really effective and in a group like that a lot of artists tend to be more inclined to open up in that situation, there are a lot of introverted artists out there and it was nice to have the opportunity to be expressive with each other in that way.

KM - I liked what LN said – something about that she may never sit in a room with so many creative people again. I thought it was a wonderful opportunity to do that, so - interesting, creative people comes to mind, thoughtful and heartfelt discussions. Even though I knew all these people were very creative, it was interesting having conversations but not visually seeing that creativity. Just knowing and you can hear it in the words that were chosen, but that was interesting. Usually when I meet other artists it's because I've seen their work and I am drawn to them or I want to talk to them about their art. This was a reversal because I knew they were artists but I had no idea what their art was about. Over time I did look them up on line and had more info on what they did, but I thought that was an interesting way to get to know artists. It keeps me intrigued about this group because I can't wait to see what the show will turn out to be. I have little idea of how it will turn out although I think it will be good and I trust RT's ability to pull it all together.

I think the amount of time given is perfect – the show is not so far away to put it on the back burner, but there's enough time that I can get something done. I think everybody will be on top of it. For a couple of reasons –number 1 because of the issue; number 2 a dedication to the project; and 3, it's a way to express ourselves to all these people that we now know within the group and to the larger population. It is as much about our expression and showing what we do to each other in this tight little group.

3. Before the study circle sessions, what did you think were the most important roles of artists in society? How, if at all, has that view changed since the study circle sessions?

KP - Well I think that artists could have more of a role in society through doing things like this. It's a really good way to show how artists could communicate and influence change. I am excited that Obama might start this artist corps and get artists more involved in society. Something to get artists in schools more and get artists more involved like they did after the Depression, a similar situation. Even through that you can see that artists and especially photographers, my interest, you can really document change and what's going on at a certain time period. It's nice to be able to have the means and the platform to get your work out there. Artists are consistently making stuff based on what is going on in their

lives during a time period in society, but there's not always the platform to get it out there. So this gives a platform for everyone to participate and put their work out there. That article that you sent about San Francisco was very similar in that sense that even though it is not directly related to the economy, there are a lot of artists documenting social change and that is really fascinating.

RT - I've always felt that it is the artist's role to inspire others to become aware of their own process. That's always been my thought about what an artist's role is – it's inspiration. The study group only served to reinforce that belief. It's even more critical that an artist enter into that consciously, some artists do and other artists don't, and this was a group that has a heightened degree of awareness of their responsibility in inspiring others. It's a good group, a really good group, no exceptions.

MA - Well I think we talked a little bit about this even before we started the circles. It's come to that all of the facts and figures in the world don't change people's perception of an issue. But in art, that area of sentimentality, where people's souls and hearts are touched, then there can be a transformation and change in consciousness. I don't think my vision of the role of artists has changed. The importance of the role of artists in some of the issues of water I see as more important now. The intellectual stuff – facts and figures don't do it until we can see, some of the pictures were more powerful for me than the numbers – kids swimming in garbage. We don't see that around here, we hear about levels of contaminants in the Bay but we don't see all of that other stuff, like turds in the water. But when we start seeing that or even sometimes hearing about parts per million, and start thinking about things, but does that change things, at that point we have the expectation that WLSSD has to do something about that. And at the same times there are some things we can do, and a role that we can play too. Something I shared with KM - there is a Don McLean song called "Tapestry" the lyrics are beautiful, but at same time it talks about dichotomy of the issue that every beauty of life – *Every pulse of your heartbeat is one liquid moment that flows through the veins of your being. Like a river of life flowing on since creation. You're now just a stagnant and rancid disgrace that is rapidly drowning the whole human race.* It talks about dichotomy and the song itself is so beautiful. The dichotomy of the human condition is that through the behavior of extremes we find ourselves so powerful. That helps me to understand the beauty of the writing and the song.

LN - The role of artists in society is being an entrepreneur and translator and conduit for another viewpoint/perspective, for utilizing various mediums to express the pulse of society, what's going on, and also to express something from their spiritual perspective outside of the world we claim. They bring the two together in a very unique way. Not just be in the nitty gritty – but bring forth bigger, universal, profound perspectives, so that one experiences new knowledge but in a profound way – that it touches your emotion and not just facts, not just your mind – it touches your heart. If you don't get a feeling or an emotion then it



hasn't done its job. I don't think that has changed for me during this process, I think it just echoed a perfect match to this topic, but not like a change in my thoughts.

LM - To tell the truths, to be the spokespeople when no one else could speak. I really felt that around 9/11. It didn't really change too much. I haven't studied protest art and there is a whole genre of people who do protest art for protest art's sake and some people do art for art's sake and some people just feel a certain passion inside and then it comes out and can be seen as that; maybe they didn't necessarily mean it that way to be social activist art but I guess I didn't see it too much different from what its coming to be – people speaking out about a passion and make people aware about protection of water and taking care of resources. I guess I should say I think artists can say it, but I don't think they always get together to say it. But I think when they come together and have that kind of focus it can be very powerful. All artists have the potential to be socially active its what people bring to the interpretation of the art that makes it so. If you tell people this is a social activist exhibition then they will see it that way.

MP - I have always seen the connections between politics and art because of my work with In The Heart of the Beast Theater and you can't separate it so I guess I saw art as political before and after the process – that hasn't changed. Artists feel on an intuitive level what's coming down the pike and so the fact that water is getting to be more and more important, I've seen water as a theme and now many books and films. I've seen a lot of people exploring water and art in the region because the Lake is such a part of us. Yea, so I think artists are important in society, whether they are recognized by people that don't think so, I'm not sure. Because I think they need things to hit them over the head a little longer and harder than those of us who are more intuitive. I think in advertising they say people need to hear something eight times before it finally registers, so I guess the more people who are doing activism around water the better it is for the general public because it will eventually get out.

AK - Not different but intensified or nuanced. I have always thought that the primary job of artists which has pretty much been forgotten in America, is to be the conduit between the human and non-human world, to communicate each one to the other. Being an artist is kind of like being an RND person for the union of consciousness of the body. Cutting edge research on what it is for an animal to think in the way that we think. Animals think obviously, but we have this added self consciousness and we don't know how to use it; it's a new piece of equipment and its pretty untried and it was an accident and we fuck up with it all the time and the job of artists is to try and work that out and figure out how we can use this added piece of evolutionary stuff and mainly that involves being a conduit between the world of language and significance, and the world of the non-human which we participate in we're not wholly what we consider to be human, we think of human to be abstract we are not that at all, we kind of shade up out of the ground and then get really articulate up at the top. The artist's job is to figure

that out, to take the messages back and forth which is something that more artists are now interested in, so participating in a group it's like ok, a lot of people think along that lines. I am an art critic so I write about a lot of current art and that is not a common modality in the art world, but here it is.

PH - I have always seen artist's role as an informative role, an explanatory role. Exposure of where the art is makes a difference. Also if the art is commercial or political in nature. I view art that is stuffed up in a gallery and viewed by the elite essentially, I view that type of art, although I value it on an intellectual level, I think it is of limited value for social change because you are generally preaching to the choir or preaching to the enlightened, or people who are more interested in the art than any social message accompanying it. And most higher level art, world art doesn't have a really strong social message or an aesthetic quality. That's why I believe in public art and interactive art and that's part of the reason I thought this would be interesting, because I knew doing the exhibit at the Maritime Museum would not be as ideal as an art gallery. I didn't want that to be a stumbling block because I knew it would be an opportunity for a lot of people who wouldn't normally view art to literally stumble across the art that we made and be able to draw some interesting conclusions to that. So regardless of the actual exhibit opportunity I thought it would be good because it would be bringing the art directly to people who weren't consciously there to view it. That is what I thought was unique about this and part of reason why I wanted to participate. I think the format getting it to the general public who may not be so aware and not preaching to the choir and that is what I intend to do with my artistic process – something that will have a message for the more everyday person, I'm still developing how to do that.

SR - As an art educator for me it's the story telling, because everything kids do has a story, even though professional artists don't want to have a descriptor with their art, even though you have to write an artist's statement if you're gonna have a show, I still think there is some kind of a story behind it, either emotional or whatever, political or whatever, you are creating the art with intention. That didn't change really, it just affirmed and it helped me focus on my work, some ideas for my work, and meeting MP and seeing how her statement about it's time to get out of mediation, not to give that up, but it's time to move toward the activist part, that was really important. Her work is so active and activist based that really struck a chord with me. It more affirmed what I thought.

JL - I have felt for a long time that artists have a responsibility to be activists in their community to do something with their art besides being self-indulgent. There have always been two kinds of artists: artists who do pretty things and artists who do political things and I think artists can do both. But I do believe that artists have a responsibility to raise consciousness in their immediate circle and where it goes from there is like a drop of water and a ripple in a pond. If it is the right thing at the right time, think of the smiley face! So I have felt that way for a long time, but there has to be the right kind of opportunity to be political and

there's different ways of doing that and it's always risky. It's always risky. But I think that those opportunities when they appear you either take them or you don't, so I thought I'd take this opportunity to be a part of a group of people and hopefully we can raise consciousness. People don't think about water very much without hitting them over the head with it.

JD - Artists are a necessary role by adding dimension and depth to our life and part of spirituality – it enhances that area for people who see it or do it because it's not so much an intellectual process although it can be. Did it change my viewpoints? I found it interesting that there were so many different types of artists, fun to hear what their media was, so we're going to do sculpture, glass, rocks, so how is that going to come together. Artists do all sorts of things and with some of them it's deeper than just making something. There is more of a purpose to what artists do and they serve a purpose that way. Sometimes words don't motivate or move people but images or words other than intellectual words, descriptive words can increase people's understanding of issues.

KA - I have always felt that artists have something to contribute to society and personally I don't like shoving a message down somebody's throat. I like artists as informers, artists as educators and I think for me that's what I was interested in. The types of show I have been in I have done a couple of pieces centered around an environmental theme or theme that's been interesting to me and usually it's an awareness-building theme for people. I think the neat thing about this project was that we all got to sit around and really talk about what that looks like to be able to create something that is going to perhaps shape people's ideas. For me the theme has been out there and you respond in a very personal way to that theme. And this is going to be personal plus a group experiential reaction and the group guides what it might look like to a certain extent and I think that would come out especially in the collaborative pieces. I don't know if the way I see art, one of the goals for me has changed a lot. But this type of show versus others I've been in have more depth and exploration in them because of the discussions.

KM - I have struggled with this question as an artist. It's a very good question. What I have struggled with is, [sigh] I question sometimes how much our culture as a whole does value art and that's very frustrating to me. Because to me it's one of the most important things, and as a mother, that has been a huge part of what I was determined to develop within my own children, is having them have a sense of creativity as they grow up even in our culture, and it's hard. Our culture is so overwhelmingly plugged in and this is the first generation of kids who are really growing up immersed in it and I am probably a bit extreme as far as no TV, we didn't have computer for a lot of years, that was my way of dealing with it and hoping they would retain that part of being creative by not having that exposure. Restate the question again? I think that it affirmed what I believe the importance of artists in society to be. I believe that artists are visionary and more sensitive than the mainstream public. They are in tune to what's happening and really feel that. But I don't think other people really notice. The study circle to me affirmed

that somebody else believed that, that being you, by putting the group together. I didn't know exactly what your goal was, but I think that it must be that you believe that also, that artists have a sense and concerns about things that are very important and I felt valued in that way. So I would say no, I don't think it has changed but I as an artist I feel valued, but as a whole as a culture nothing is coming to mind feeling like the big picture has changed. I think having this show is a way that the public can be impacted and sometimes I am just concerned that people just want instant gratification of something moving and fast and the whole media thing, rather than appreciating hand made beautiful objects. Other cultures treasure and really respect traditions of their culture, but ours, we are not so good at it.

JJ – I'm wondering if there is a connection there between our culture's lack of reverence for water and lack of reverence for art and artists. What other cultures do is pay more attention to respecting and being thankful for skills or for life bringing things like water.

KM - And maybe that's partly religion and culture and valuing what their ancestors did. Here what did our ancestors do? They worked in coal mines, or they were lumberjacks or they harvested and really raped, not harvested in a sustainable way, so maybe there is some thread there. It's how we ended up not appreciating those things. The Canadian national anthem is all about their beautiful resources and ours is about blasting and war, and I wonder how things like that effect you.

4. What changes have you experienced as a result of your participation in this study circle project?

KP - I guess I have had a lot more discussions, like everyone in the group, about water because you tell people you are part of this group or doing this project. I have friends that have bought the Water Consciousness book, and two friends that rented Flow as a result of these conversations, so I guess a change I feel is just spreading that, what we were sharing amongst friends or peers. Having them come back with questions and concerns and wanting to see the work [exhibition]. People sometimes need a reason to start a dialogue, that is just one more reason to make that move.

If you ever do this again, I would like it to be longer over an extended period of time and a smaller group. I felt like I was just coming to an understanding of others and really getting to know them and the platform was just being built, and then it was over. But it is hard to commit to that. April is a good month because there's not a lot going on. I could have gone a longer period of time each evening too, when you called for a break and we had just started and then have to break up and get started again. If the group was smaller – 10 people – maybe the

discussions would have developed more over that time period so that it wouldn't have to be a longer commitment.

RT - On a personal level by allowing myself to take in information that previously I protected myself from, I found not a sense of being overwhelmed, but I found a safe place to explore what I can do on a smaller scale in my own life. I always felt that I have been pretty green, but there are so many more things that I can do that are green and Grace teaches me a lot about that too because she is so receptive right now and hasn't had a chance to put out the filters that I have put out. We are very much aware of our water consumption here in our household. We always try to be aware when we brush our teeth or wash our hands not to leave the water running. But now we try to reuse water, we catch it in the sink and use it again if it is clean enough. We use it to water the plants and we have more of a conscious relationship with water. We thank and bless the water a lot as we use it and that is the cool thing about having a 3 year old around, you can play like that and explore the beauty of "inconvenience" as KA so beautifully put it. And, we have a new low flow toilet just because it so grievous to flush 5 – 7 gallons each time we flush, even though we don't flush every single time, especially after having read that the average person in Kenya uses 3 gallons a day and one flush of the toilet is 2 and 1/3 person's water consumption for a whole day in Kenya. That put it in a totally different light for me. It was really good for me because I had an opportunity to stand up and speak my own voice in this space, which I don't feel is my space. I feel like I am doing something good and at the same time it makes living here more palatable. This toilet is amazing – it's a dual flush – one button is .9 gallon and the other is 1.6 gallons. I have yet to use the 1.6 button because of the design of the bowl is such that everything goes right away – it's designed as it should be. And then my laundry habits have changed. Since Grace came I wear my own clothes more often instead of washing after one wearing. Part of that is time and now there is the consciousness of the water and now I am reexamining her clothes because kids do get dirty but we are letting some of the dirty get by for a couple wearings now. That feels good to me; I am doing something that matters on a very small scale. I have a much more conscious partnership with water as an entity in my life. It is a spiritual thing and it's a practical thing.

MA - I don't know if it is change as such, but there is an asserted effort towards educating my life towards conservation and preservation that has pulled in the sacred. The importance of that is a fine line between developing resentment towards behavior or maintaining a sense of sacred, which is probably more positive way of holding that. Like last night's paddle was a meditation and an empowering exercise in going back to that place, stepping back into nature and going for walks with RT and Grace down by the water and seeing that flow of the creek and certainly there is debris and litter, but for the most part it is still there the way it naturally occurs. So staying connected with that, and to take pictures and share that in connection to how I see things.

LN - I am clarifying in my own mind the role of ritual in different contexts. There was a big awakening when being in meetings, and I would have probably a couple years ago, I would have just gone to meetings and talked and I never would have suggested bringing in water. I am at a different stage of my life where I am not afraid to say, "I think we need a little mini ritual and that we let water speak." I am learning how to bring that element, that I feel deeply, into other contexts and I feel brave enough to say so. That was a biggy for me, that I am learning how to do that and what's the place for that and what's the appropriate place and not in inappropriate ways, but in a good healthy way. There are all different forms of that and that is what I am learning in this process, and it was helpful for me to refine my understanding of what my roles in groups are. I was probably one of the older people there and it's interesting to me that as I age and become an elder in the community and in groups, what is that role about.

JJ - Glad you did suggest that water circle, it was perfect.

LN - There was part of me that said, "like did I do that" and there would be times when I wouldn't dare do that and know I feel like I am older and I feel more empowered about that aspect being part of everything.

LM - Thinking more about water issues is a change I have experienced. Being more conscious about water and paying attention to things like water privatization, bottled water. I was at the grocery store and I walked by the bottled water section and they had several different kinds and I turned them around and I'd say that 3 out of 4 were by Nestle, it's really huge – that's what's changed with me being more aware and thinking that art can express that. It's made me be more aware of water issues.

MP - We were already doing a lot of thinking around the house about saving water and reading a lot of tips. One thing is that it has refocused me on continuing that. When people were talking about how deep their wells are and I found out mine is about 3 feet deep, we live next to a swamp and our water ends up sandy if we get too low in our well. So I thought it would be really nice to have a really deep well that would never run out and would be really cold. Then when you think about the abundance of water we have here and you think about people who don't, so having more compassion around lack of water issues. I get kind of angry when I think about Las Vegas and their complaint that there is not enough water to run their electricity. So there's sustainable issues like if there is such a water shortage, why are people living there? Then there are other people who don't have a choice where they live. Like Cochabamba where they were trying to charge people for their water and making it almost impossible for people to afford it, like how low can you go, that was pretty low. People profiting for something that should be a right. But I think there needs to be some heavy thinking around overpopulation, which I never hear anything about. Where it always goes when I talk about overpopulation is people go, well look at China when they tried to limit population – all the girl babies were killed or given away

for adoption and suddenly the boys were coveted. So it is true, how do you implement it – it's a deep issue, but it's not going to happen if no one wants to talk about it. So – a refocus is the change I experienced as a result of this. I remembered in the process of bringing water in to show people, that I had collected water in our travels, I don't know if it was "in" to do that a few years ago, or why we did that. But we brought back bottles of water and sand from major places we went to, but I didn't label them so they're in my basement with big question marks on them. It is cool to think about water. I don't call myself Christian anymore, but if you focus on a person in history like Jesus and you say this is the same water that he drank or there is some molecule of it because it circulated throughout the whole system and the same thing with breathing air – we are breathing the same air as Gandhi.

AK - Mainly it has revived certain ideas of art making and it woke that up again and that's a nice thing. This is the first stuff I have done in a long time, several years.

PH - Yea. It was an eye opening experience in experiencing other people's viewpoints. Most of my personal history with dealing with stuff in social issues has occurred among my friends, my family, or in an academic setting. I don't think I ever experienced something with a wide slice of the community and it was interesting to see some people's approaches to the issues, a lot of my generation has over riding negative sentiments, or pessimistic and to some extent I have reveled in those assumptions because it's very easy to get pessimistic but it was very interesting to hear people's different approaches. One approach I haven't had a lot of experience with is what I would characterize as the vaguely spiritual approach to social issues. That doesn't really define it. But there were some people who had a whimsical spiritual approach and it was something I hadn't seen before and it was interesting to experience that kind of thing. What was the question again? I think it was good for me in that it was a very egalitarian circle and no one took control of anything. It was an interesting environment for me because I am much more used to either one person lecturing to a group or a group debate, a contest of sorts or someone intentionally trying to dominate the proceedings and I found this to be a very good environment for the expression of one's ideas, whereas certainly my experiences in the past have often times been in environments that I wouldn't necessarily characterize as good for fostering of ideas. I think if it had any changing effect it opened my eyes to an egalitarian format for discussion that placed more value on everybody's ideas and was much more of a positive experience.

SR - I feel more knowledgeable about water facts. With the kids and students it was helpful for me to be in the middle of it, studying it and this immersion made it easier to talk about it in my classroom to my students and get their opinions and stories about water and how they related to water. My family and my kids, even my parents and all the different layers of perspectives from all these different people that was an eye opener for me. I'm trying to be more aware around the

house and now I am looking at my well shaft and think I need to do something to honor this and decorate it and that is going to be a nice fun project to do with the family, I am thinking of a tile project, its just a steel shaft right now, so bringing art into honoring that little spot.

JL - I am becoming more focused. Something is getting clear with me about my role as an artist. I feel I am coming into my own now and doing what I was always meant to do, partially as a result of the study circles. I am evolving and in the middle of the process so it's hard to be objective about that right now, but I feel really honored to be part of this group and I hope I can give as much to it as I am getting out of it.

JD – It's made me a lot more aware in terms of my own personal use and what I want to start changing in terms of products I want to use, trying to get the best products without chemicals for washing dishes and clothes washing. I am more motivated to permanently switch the products that I use. It made me do more to conserve water in my house. I have been talking to people more about water and finding out what organizations work on what. I went to a legislative update to get a general gist about what's going to happen with water. So it's getting me more interested in doing more political work. More of an appreciation of water, taking more pictures of water because I want to get more in touch with watching water so I have been taking pictures of Lester and other areas.

KA - The main changes that I have is that I have water on the brain all the time and it comes through because I teach a lot throughout the day. My kids are interested in what I am doing so we talk about it a lot. We talk about using water, we have always done that but I think it is putting the factual information gleaned from the readings with it and all of a sudden you get a different kind of a click in your brain, of ah ha! Maybe it becomes more permanent when you have a tired and true reason why it is a good idea to do this. So perhaps changes that way. I am thinking about a different kind of art right now. I am thinking about my response a lot and I don't know that is a huge change, but I think about it all the time, but it's good because I need to start working on it, I have a little anxiety to get going.

KM - It's given me more interest in working in groups, honestly the groups I have been involved with as an artist have not been very successful and I think this one will be successful when it's all done and has been successful along the way because you were really open, I didn't feel like you were trying to control anything. You set a few guidelines at the beginning but then we were just there talking and sharing. Maybe there's part of that along the way that I was a little frustrated with, but in the long run it was a good way to keep it all happening and you were just open to anything anyone said - like "sure go ahead and do what you want to do." Maybe it takes that kind of a leader in a group of artists. The other groups I have been in were led by an artist that was actively involved in the project and they just fell apart cause that person either tried to control things too



much because they had a vision or it was too open and it never came together. So anyway I am interested, especially with this environmental part, it just answers who I am; I am both very aware of the environmental and concerned about it, and an artist, so it was such a great fit. I may actively look for group shows that I can be involved in. I also think it gave me an opportunity to see how other artists talk about themselves and I am always interested in that. Maybe it gave me more confidence. Conversing is never that easy for me, but I found it fairly easy in this group because I felt it was uncomfortable to talk in front of people for quite a few people there. I usually feel like one of very few people who feel that way, but because of that I felt more open to sharing what I really thought and felt fine about that. What was the question again? It gave me a whole network of people that I would really like to work with, I went through a lot of thinking of how that study group could have gone, I was in a daydream. A lot of times I am able to talk better if I really can get in a relaxed state and usually when I'm out in a room with a lot of people I am not super relaxed, so I thought I wonder what it would be like if MA, who is into working on breath as far as relaxing and a lot of areas in your life it could help with, what if MA lead us in some sort of relaxation before the meetings and we shut the lights off and still passed the rock and talked, but first got into a relaxed state and we couldn't look at each other because the lights were low, so we could close our eyes and just listen to that person. I wondered what that would be like and if we would say different things. And you could do that with that group of people where you couldn't do that as successfully with a mainstream group. One of many things I thought about. I have done a lot of surrealist games where the top ¼ of page would be drawn by the first person and then they fold it under and pass to the second person just leaving little lines, it's passed between 4 people to complete – usually a figure. It's fascinating because you don't know what the person before you has done. I was wondering what we could do related to water with something like that?

5. What was it like being in a dialogue circle with other artists?

KP - I am pretty used to being in dialogue with other artists, but the times I was there we didn't really talk about art so it was interesting to talk with artists about something else. I am sad that I missed the art conversation.

RT - I found it really stimulating. There were some things that were said that just hit me the right way. You can hear something over and over again and it registers in your mind but doesn't crystallize in your being. Some of the things that some of the participants shared touched me in a way that made me feel like I could own it finally. There is no longer that lapse dissonance, between conscious awareness and reality. Realizing of that conscious awareness. And it was fun. It was fun, too. I was especially pleased that although we could have chosen to go in the direction of anger, outrage, regret, remorse, we were challenged continually by one member or another to put a positive spin on it and I think that ultimately that is more helpful to society as a whole and to individuals as well. So it was really a very positive experience. And it makes me feel like I want to create too. Whether or not I will remains to be seen.

MA - Artistic awareness and consciousness is different than business people and a lot of people and I enjoyed that depth of exchange. It also gave more permission to go into that space and share. In some cases you don't talk about stuff like that, but there was more permission to talk about some things in the dialogue circle.

For me as a photographer, as a writer, as a singer and speaker to articulate some of that has been really challenging because statements are powerful and have to be powerful to turn the corner about what has become an accepted norm.

The artist does hear things and see things and is aware of things and has a need to express that which whispers in the wind, which speaks to us in many different ways. The artist has a need to express because it is full of pain, a blessing and a curse we have an opportunity to heal and understand the pain. As I talked with other artists in other situations I began to understand more of my own. I don't think there was enough opportunity to share at that level and when just artists come together in a group like that there is more of an opportunity if we can get past the personalities and get more into understanding our own creative process. Sometimes it happens one on one and sometimes it happens over the course of time in any support group that has a certain focus; there is more of an opportunity for that openness to be there and talk about the need to create based on an unrest or on a message that is brought in. We all have our own areas of creative unrest.

LN - It was interesting; I am still groping to define what is different about this group from other groups I've been in. One aspect I felt with all of them was the passion and I think that is characteristic of artists because they can't do what they do if there isn't passion because it isn't something that will give you great remuneration or society's blessings, you are kind of out there, so they have to be passionate and I thought this group was extremely passionate. I also think that artists have the characteristic of taking a subject and looking at it, not just in a linear way from A to B to C to D, because that's not how they process. I think artists process in ways that are more brainstorm, try it this way, because that is partly how they come to their creations is through a process of brainstorming and playing with the topic. So I think they don't always go a direct route and I appreciated this group for that. And they come from experience a lot – it's not from an academic approach, when I read this or quoting – they are coming from a personal relationship and I love that. Artists typically work from their personal experience from the world, you don't typically see an academic approach and I love that – its very personal.

LM – It was very fun seeing what artists of other genres have to say about a certain issue. Learning to listen as well as give feedback and making that equal. Seeing what other people's passions are and how they went off into different directions if a thread of a conversation would start and someone else would pick it up – it was really fun to listen to that. It is not so much about the art but what's behind making the art.

MP - That was interesting. I'm an introvert and there are people who tend to be more extraverted, so I find myself being a little shy but I learned a lot from the people who spoke up a lot. I felt like I didn't maybe contribute enough but I know we had time constraints. So I just wanted to be there and listen to what was going on. It was interesting that so many people are feeling something about water right now. I actually ran across a few people who couldn't be there but wanted to.

AK – It's sort of familiar, most of my friends are artists. It reminds me of why I love artists and why I hate them. We all tend to approach conversation from a kind of a spatial non-linear thing that artists do in their talk that can be totally crazy making if you're trying to get anywhere or really nice if you're trying to be somewhere. You have to shift gears and step back and say ok we can't expect this, so it definitely reminded me of what is annoying about artists and what's really great about them.

PH - It was interesting and I haven't had the opportunity to discuss social issues in an official context with a group specifically made up of artists. I have many artist friends, most around my age, but social change rarely enters the picture and that to some extent has played a role in my disenfranchisement with the art world as a whole because I feel it is not wholly relevant to the really important things. I have always had a difficult time reconciling what I like to do – create art, and what I am more passionate about which are social issues. But it can be difficult to reconcile that with how I think – social issues are more important. What was the question again? Interesting because I don't necessarily put artists up on a pedestal I don't think they have any special perceptive ability but their creative approach to things and their general progressiveness, they all march to the beat of a different drum so it's interesting bringing people like that together and to watch their different opinions and viewpoints unfold. Artists are always interesting people with something interesting to say. It was interesting to see what came out of it and people's different approaches, many approaches were very different from my own, but the format lends itself well towards me realizing that it is not only my approach that is valid. I have internal debates; I'm a closeted intellectual about these ideas and it's interesting to get ideas out in the open and see these ideas thrown around with more people because any idea with its merit has to go through a vetting process, it doesn't just include one's immediate surroundings or unconditional supporters and I found the format with artists to be open minded people. Now do I think this type of thing could be just as effective with other members of the community? Sitting around the table I felt that the biggest thing that tied us together wasn't necessarily art, because art can be so diverse and artists don't necessarily inherently share a bond. I might argue it's different from being a writer, though you could argue that there is as much diversity in the art world as there is in any type of world. What I felt a closer bond to was with people's bend towards progressive politics or progressive to some extent lifestyles, but more their political and social leanings and belief in social change and progressive beliefs.

SR - I loved it; something I craved and I spend so much time with kids that to bring it to the adult level of conversation was nice. To find some depth and a hunk of time. At art shows you can kind of just get these conversations going, but to really have the intention to dialogue about it. The creative process, when we split into small groups, that was more focused on the art part and getting people's ideas and talking about how they are forming their ideas and hearing their creative process and how they are digesting this info and what kind of form its going to come out in. Some people are more process oriented and others aren't; it's all just going to come together and some people are so much more concrete and planned and I am in between them. I like to really listen and see what it is going to be and wait for the moment of ah ha.

JL – [Smiling] This has been a real eye opener for me. Because as artists we all have a tendency to be in our own realm, the master of our own ship or mistress of our own vessel. We are all independent thinkers. So bringing independent, creative people who have to be somewhat self absorbed to do art, into a group to get along; I was totally impressed that people, you know there were a few moments there where it was clear to me that some of the dialogue, some of the things I said seemed to strike a chord, there were a few responses that came across that way, I was approached later with some discussion and I made the decision that where that person was coming from had nothing to do with me, and let it go and there was a time I might have taken that personally but I am mature enough now that not everything that people say is about me. I think it was pretty amazing all these different people and I was reminded again about the sensitivity and vulnerability of artists and how it's very hard for people to come out and really share themselves on a personal level outside of their art. It's an interesting situation. It could go either way and I think this particular group was very positive. I think a lot of that had to do with you and how it was set up and the guidelines from the very beginning were very good to remind people that we are not here to criticize each other or to get into that negative piece because that can destroy a group. This is bigger than we are, this is more important than our egos and our personal crisis of the day and we don't have to be in competition with each other. I think artists get this idea that they have to compete with each other for attention or clients and it isn't necessary – there is a place for all of us, there's room for all of us, there is plenty out there, so we can let that go and focus on what matters - raising consciousness about water, valuing water, recognizing its importance and helping raise our own consciousness.

JD - It was good, though I wish there had been more time for more dialogue. The group was large. I would have liked to explore more about what was moving people and what their ideas are. It was good, it was nice, I knew about 4 – 5 people and it was nice to get to know other artists and by having that connection I think I'll be doing more artwork. I do more art when I do a workshop or when I am around artists more; it gets me to do more artwork.

KA - I really enjoyed it. I was really wanting to know other people's stories of how they came to the table. I really liked hearing about how water had impacted their lives. I wanted to know what kind of art they did, and you only have so much time, but I would have loved to have known more of the stories of how did you come to that art, but I was able to connect with several people to hear their stories of what they are working on now. That's so interesting and inspiring to me and afterwards googling people and finding out even more about what they are doing. This is a really strong group visually, holy cow. I really loved working with the other artists. This was a really good group. I have had a tough experience working with other artists before and that was also personality problems – there was somebody who just had a tough time leading it, but this was gently lead, it was really well lead. I like your leading style and that is really important. I think it is more of a facilitating style and it was well done.

JJ – to pick up on that I had to be very conscious to not fall into a teaching pattern, which is normal for me, because that was not my role, my role very much was as facilitator and not teacher – they are very different and I had to be mindful of that, that was one of my challenges.

KM – It was very freeing and comfortable and I completely understood the people there and what they were saying. It felt very natural. I said a lot about it previously.

6. Think for a moment about the study circle discussions and identify one that was particularly important for you.

KP - I liked the discussion we had the second time when we talked about something from the book and then we had an open discussion, although it got a little sidetracked, there were good things that developed from it and we got to connect more with each other and I felt that I am not very good talking when I am on the spot so I felt more comfortable in that platform because we got to connect with each other more because people said what they were feeling and there were more emotionally driven statements than confessional type of statements.

RT - They all held a great deal of power so therefore all are important to me. I have to say the most powerful discussion is when we were in smaller groups and we were discussing our ideas for the exhibit and you had provided us with a list of questions and I was trying to redirect the artists down the line of questions and the question that kept coming back to me was how do these artists, how do they feel they can illustrate the importance of water conservation in this area where water is so seemingly abundant. It was AK who said, "I don't illustrate, I embody." That's significant, although I don't feel that there is anything wrong with illustration; I think illustration is an important part of our lives since we are such visual people and that's how we sometimes get the message. But it made me see how seriously she does take this and that she is choosing to embody the qualities

that she feels are important in heightening other people's awareness about water. So I have to say that was pretty strong and I could have chosen to take it personally, but in the greater scheme of things she said an important message. Another really powerful statement that had its affect on me was KA discussing the beauty of inconvenience and if you can allow that to sink in that is nothing short of life changing because how we choose to perceive our inconveniences can make or break us. I was feeling pretty trodden upon by the inconveniences in my life and just that little shift, a slight changing of perspective makes a huge difference. That same night was the night that LN helped the group shift from discussion that was very, very negative and full of fear and anger, all of which are important, and it's true you can't sublime what you don't first acknowledge, but she did challenge us to sublime and she was successful and the group was willing. So that's three really powerful things.

MA - The chapter about the watershed and the metaphor of the watershed. I love metaphor – it speaks to us on many different levels. One of my favorite sayings is that it takes a pretty smart fish to know it lives in water. Whether we are talking about our paradigm, our way of seeing or understanding things, these are all the waters that exist and the more clear the water is, the more unmuddy, and we are all poisoned in a sense by what our clarity is, by our ability to focus, depends how open we are as to what water is. The watershed moment, the ah ha moment where suddenly things are washed away. That was a very powerful topic. I remember when I had verbal diarrhea the last night, part of that was I was tired of hearing other people talk, damn it now it's my turn to talk. A significant part of my process, and my own recognition as an artist is the strength and power of my own voice. Here again we are talking voice, not a vibrational voice or tone, singing voice or speaking voice, but the voice has to do with one's heart and speaks in many different ways just by our presence. I am becoming more aware in my advanced years. I think there are some things that mature. What was the question? At a certain point I begin to see how little things feed my vision – all the little events and things in life lead towards something, an ah ha moment.

LN - I think the most important for me was the going around in a circle in the beginning when people would check in and describe a personal relationship with water. Their descriptions were profound, I loved that. Which was part of their putting water in the bowl, but when we each talked about what we were grateful for and appreciation for water and to describe water I thought that was inspiring and beautiful. The hardest part was when we did the work on the paper. I found that somehow there was a lot of tension in the group. There were those who wanted to do collaborative projects and those who didn't, and it didn't gel for me and I went away feeling like are we going to get into where product is more important, a statement of I want to do this, someone comes with an idea of Lady of the Lake – well maybe, what are you thinking – trying to get collaborative; I felt more tension in the group then I had felt before. And coming away from it – there was not enough time to work it through. I wished we had more sessions like that one to get to more of a good feeling place where it is inclusive of all

perspectives and yet there is some thread tying it other than general water. So that was the one chunk – I went home feeling discouraged because I didn't feel like we could take it far enough so we could have a good feeling about what we are going to do. We had a good feeling about who we are and how we feel about water but not a good feeling about now what.

LM – I think the watershed one and people seemed really impassioned by that and it was the first chapter on the second Monday we met – people seemed really taken by that and that was a good discussion and you can see how your body is like a watershed. That was a fun discussion to listen to and give feedback. People were really pumped by that. Six to seven people all seemed to feel the same thing.

MP - I really liked the time that we had the white papers, the big paper where we could talk and draw at the same time. Then I learned a lot about people's thought process and what was important to them. People could doodle when they were talking and it was interesting to see if they were trying to be very specific in what they were mapping out or if they were abstractly drawing unconsciously while they were talking – so maybe just scribbling. Other people were very direct, like I think we should have little vials of water with our names on it and that's how we're going to identify our artwork and it was very focused and specific. Other people were looking at the overall flow or the theme. It was all good because it wasn't critiqued, it was just quick by the time we ran out of ideas we were rotating to another group with new people. It was important in that I could see then how different types of personalities could work together – different ways of approaching art and ideas. It's multidimensional to be able to talk and draw at the same time. That and going around with the water and finding out people's different sources and that we managed to come up with almost every creek in the area.

AK - It seemed like the second one was. It was after the introductions and we had familiarity with each other and people were confident and people brought water and there was a kind of focus on a commonality that was good. People seemed to seize on the scope of the issues and have more focus on how they directly related to it, so yea, the second session was good. It structurally worked well and people didn't wander off topic as much. That's the one I remember the most distinctly. People seemed to talk and recognize that water issues are different in different places, there is a commonality to it, but certain places have certain issues and that was good, and an interesting thing to think about the politics of water being really different in different locales.

PH - The second time when we brought the water and we had a very interesting discussion that stretched through all sorts of different issues and particularly about people's reactions to reading the book. It was interesting to see people's different reactions to the book and I specifically remember saying that I really liked doing the first readings in the book, that it was eye opening and interesting to me and

then other people said it was terrible and what was said was awful, and I realized to a great extent they're right. What's contained in there may be interesting, but it is not necessarily positive. It doesn't necessarily paint a good picture nor should it, because the picture is relatively bleak so I found that particular discussion very interesting and a prime example of how my viewpoints and approaches to things are very different from other people's and that particularly I have a much more fatalistic approach to these things. I enter a room with the overly negative assumption that while it is not futile to try to do something, we are not doing so well, and most things that we don't know about yet, they're probably not going to be great things, not happy things. It affirmed what I expected. I didn't know a particular lot about the water issues facing our society and world, but I didn't expect it to be good. I think that is my generational expectation coming in because it didn't have to be bad terrible news or something else we have to be concerned about in our society, in some other way humans are destroying our planet in unprecedented ways. But I revel in the scientific approach and statistical analysis and it was interesting to me for people to have their own opinions on that and as I stayed in discussion I always latch onto statistical information and I realize that approach has facile, because what can't be justified with numbers. But it was interesting for me to see how some people eschew that approach, that it's a lot more about the feelings about it or the emotions surrounding it – I am not trying to saying that it is an irrational approach, it is just a very different approach than mine. I also thought the discussion group had a breadth of people of different ages involved, it was interesting to see people's different mind sets. I can't draw any conclusions based on people's age, but I think there were different approaches based on background and age. That was interesting for me to see why people approached things the way they do. I have grown up to have a very positive personal life and a negative view on the world as a whole and I come to the table bringing that and it's interesting to see people who don't assume that sort of thing. That was eye opening for me.

SR - I think the very first one was pretty striking watching the first part of Flow and seeing the sadness on people's faces and maybe, I don't know what anyone else expected to find out by participating in this, I don't know if they knew how sad that was going to be, so to have that raw emotion of that sadness of what is happening globally. That was a peak point for me, the vulnerability of all of us. I also liked everyone's opinions about the second meeting about all the different little facts about water. To re-hear the statistics again or bullet points and everyone brings in a personal story about that.

JL - The first session where people who lived elsewhere talked about their experiences with pesticides and farming and coming home and washing their hands and having the skin peeling off their hands. That hit home with me because I traveled with a college student back in the 90s to Taos and he had to drop off his children in Illinois and we spent the night at a house that didn't have running water and I saw this depressed part of our country that I had never seen and listened to people talking about their experience of going back home and then



talking to farmers who use pesticides and their parents are farmers using pesticides, and the denial. Once again that awareness hits home to hear other people's perspectives. Sometimes you don't know what you have got till its gone kind of thing. Here we don't have agriculture and pesticides – the whole pesticide issue is different and that hit home with me, that and artists who were feeling kind of depressed and expressing doubts and fears and the importance of understanding that no one of us is going to fix all of this. But if we can help support each other and keep our spirits up we can keep moving forward on what needs to be done.

JD - The last one – the focus group session. The group was small enough so it felt like a dialogue was flowing and people were reaching deeper in terms of what the process was and what it meant to them - it enabled people to get past two or three statements so it flowed more but there was more of a depth to it because each person got to respond back. If there is too large of a group you might hear from everyone but there is not a lot of back and forth. When people talked about their connection to water that was pretty meaningful. I looked forward to the Monday nights and seeing everyone and talking with them. I thought Flow was very powerful and that's why I went to see the rest of it.

KA - The first one and I can't remember anything in particular, I think that whatever was said at that first meeting. Perhaps it was me with Pollyanna glasses and just so happy that this was even happening. It was sort of dreamy, all these artists coming together to work on an environmental project, someone pinch me. So incredible that this is going to happen. Then you hear about the work other people are doing and you think these people are big and very serious about this. I walked away feeling a lot of passion in that room, passion for their individual art and the issue. I really got that sense after that first meeting. So that overall feeling of passion that I got from the group and wanting to do something.

JJ – I was pretty blown away by the passion too. I had no idea when I put out the call for artists who would show up. I didn't know all of the people before hand and I was pleasantly surprised by the passion and that these people really want to be here. That was such a pleasant thing for me.

KA - If people would have shown up and had an attitude of “yea what are we going to do” then it would have had a totally different feel and I probably would have walked away thinking eh. But I walked away feeling like I want to do something fabulous because everybody is so into it and it's so important and it means so much to so many people especially this group. I feel like the quality of the work will respond to that feeling. It's inspiring.

KM - What comes to mind is not so much about water but more about people's stories that would come up. I really thought it was interesting listening to KP talk about growing up in SW Minnesota on a farm and how the water took the skin off your hands and the reaction that her parents had about it. The personal stories are what really stand out for me. It's hard to imagine how her parents couldn't

understand that, but I think of my own parents and than I get it. They might not see it that way because its what they are used to and everyone else acts like its normal. SM talking about boy pee and girl pee that sticks in my head and I think about it now when someone doesn't flush. I think he's right that's the funny thing because I hate it when my partner doesn't flush; the combination is a bad reaction. Though I would have to do a scientific experiment first!

7. What major themes came up for you during the readings and/or study circles?

KP - I don't know. Conversations seemed similar each time. I wish we would have been able to talk more about specific details or specific pages or topics more than having the conversation flow to backyard neighbor or something. That is more how I am geared but my underlying feeling was not a specific thing, but I wish we could get at a specific thing and so the lack of one maybe.

RT - The major themes for me in both the readings and study circles is the necessity that we have to make this a cooperative effort. That our individual efforts are of course important but it is the cooperative effort, the dendritic tendency of itself to branch out and touch many. That is what we need to cultivate.

JJ- There is such powerful stuff in all of this. I hope I can do this justice by putting it on paper.

RT - You already have done it justice and I have every confidence that the material is there and that is what your energy is about. You are a good channel and you know that about your energy too. You can see the big picture, it's like you were able to bring all of these little rivulets together and direct them into one very powerful cohesive stream. You can do it.

MA - LN's idea of bringing water in was important for me. As I focused on bringing in water, opportunities came that were significant. Not a theme as much as it brings all these things that I have done up even more. When I am in the water or on the water I am feeling things, I'm more aware that there is something there than my puny little mind can get. The theme for me is letting go of my own stuff – people and things, to understand that there is so much more there that we are not getting.

LN - Water is precious. Is that a theme? I felt like water is precious. I have frustration with the lack of – people aren't as aware as they could be about the value and the vulnerability of water and their role in relationship to water. People and water – that relationship is a theme that I feel is just starting to come and that appreciation and sometimes the lack of understanding and realizing the impact that has. That was big. Also I am grateful for water, gratefulness is a huge word and that in itself can have a huge impact. A lot of what should we do and people

feeling that frustration about knowing how to put some of this into practice in the world around us. Water as valuable, water as powerful.

JJ - I think it was you who said something about noticing spiritual connections in different ways, maybe with the Ganges.

LN - Yea – all water is connected and that the sacredness of water, when we separate our spiritual connection from water we separate ourselves from life. There is a huge connection between water and that spiritual path and the journey we are on. We came from water – that creation thing. I've said before, I don't think in the fear – which one could, but I really believe in the excitement of the possibilities that are at hand, we have more opportunities to do more exciting things in this time than we ever had, all the resources are there. So it's understanding the spiritual value of water. I believe that we will; I am very positive and expectation of an incredible resonance of a water connections.

JJ - And I appreciate your bringing that perspective to the group because it shifted the energy and we didn't go to a place of despair, and we could have.

LM - Protection of water. How important our public utilities are and how important city water municipalities are. You see the water and gas people walking around and being in their truck but they really do have an important role. That tap water is really no different from bottled water. The constant marketing that you see and I noticed a lot of people drinking bottled water and I think wouldn't it be neat to have your own container to bring to events. You see people at a concert on stage and they have bottled water. They could have their own containers and their band stickers on them. The watershed was a big issue. Where does your water come from, how polluted water is. When I lived in town I used to live near Buckingham Creek, which runs through Twin Ponds and down to Lake Superior, and it was one of the most contaminated creeks in Duluth. It's a pretty little creek fed by Twin Ponds. I liked the sacred waters issue – Vandana Shiva – is a really big activist and I think reading more about water – they referenced a lot of other books and I think I'd like to read more about water issues, that piqued my interest.

MP - Water quality versus quantity, because we are sitting next to this gigantic lake and I remember someone saying why should we focus here in Duluth, but one thing was the pharmaceuticals that's very disturbing and comes and goes in people's consciousness and how do we ever get that out of the water. Quality – someone made the comment that we could always get water from the oceans, but in the book it talked about how difficult it is to get fresh water from seawater. So we should talk about conservation before we talk about some miracle cure.

AK - A plethora. The virtues were in the details for me – the really specific stories and details, getting the details and empirical stuff right, that was the virtue of the readings and a lot of the discussion for me, not the generalities.

PH - From the readings the themes that came up is that this is a very serious condition that we need to address right now, not enough is being done. The themes in the readings were broad and overarching. The discussion had a very regional feel about it – discussing our water resources here. I think the book served as a supplemental text and expanded our knowledge and in the discussion people talked about what they were interested in regarding the issues. It was very interesting to see some people's emotional connection to water. I appreciate those types of view points that try to foster a more holistic approach to the natural environment around me not just one where I want to protect it but one where I can also learn to enjoy it and revel in its beauty or scientific explanations. I'm someone who looks for the negativity in things, to some extent I want to find it, I think that is a generational thing and I found a lot of hope in the group discussion. There was a lot of excitement for the process we were going through. I didn't find that, fortunately, it wouldn't have been much fun, to focus on what was depressing. I never felt like walking out of there. If it had been me and my friends it probably would not have been particularly uplifting and I realize that my approach may need some tweaking, I am not going to change who I am, but often you can't find the positive in something, but I also feel that some people need to find positives and sometimes those things aren't there. There are small victories, but I look at the battle to improve water resources and it seems impossibly an uphill battle, but to me that doesn't seem a reason not to try. Some people in the group needed to have a positive look or bent on it before they willingly approach it, which is something that I understand and actually think is necessary, because I don't think negativity is effective for bringing about change, but it certainly is a driving factor in that. But I felt the book maintained hope and the overall message was one that was very serious and of very serious trouble, and that affirmed for me as I perused the news headlines over the past month looking more for what news headlines would actually correspond to the water issues and I found half a dozen or 4 or 5 main-stream articles that pertained to very serious water issues in SW United States or India. It was really unhappy stuff, one headline was 1,500 farmers commit suicide in India because water tables had dropped and they couldn't farm anymore. The world headlines were predominantly small victories in the war for water resources, maybe small victories for those who apply cautionary or sustainable approaches. But overall the outlook does not look particularly good to me, but for me I don't think that is a de-motivating force, at this stage I am mostly focused on this personally, searching out these issues and seeing what more I can do about them. I didn't get a good picture of water issues facing us locally or how this all ties in. I'm still somewhat unconvinced, especially since my water comes from Lake Superior. A question I have for you – I know the water goes through water treatment, but it seems like we are not taking from ground water, the question is how does conserving water in Duluth is a gallon of wasted water from Duluth as bad as waste in Iowa. Certainly it takes electricity but I would argue that the bigger role we can play in through our diets and consumer purchases and that's how the discussion raised my awareness the most – the massive amounts of water used in

production of things and while that is depressing, it affirms my overall belief in that doing the right thing is immensely more complicated than most people can imagine which solidifies my belief, not that I have great faith in the government, but in top down regulation on a national level because I think it is too complicated for any average person to do. I could devote my life to living lightly on this planet and there would still be things I would gloss over, but maybe not. It's very difficult, that's been reinforced.

SR - I guess how water is such a connector. Water is life and how everything is connected around that and how it is such a resource that we need. From the tiniest thing to the largest and humans are just a tiny little part of that and how we consume so much of it. The sacredness of it looking back in history and even now how different cultures honor water, and what ever got us away from that in the US and even in different parts of the world. I think trying to do more ritual around that and creating sacred water and reminding people to be thankful so it's not taken for granted.

JL - The political – I think everything we do is political. The choice to not have children is political. I chose not to have children. I am very conscious about that. I see women getting pregnant, having children, having more children; I just want to say “do you understand that our planet can not sustain all the people who are on it already.” And this is something we have to talk about and nobody wants to touch it because everyone thinks it's their divine right to have children. Then what, were will we put them all. Scientists are talking about it, and it is very uncomfortable and yes they are very cute, but whether we like it or not we are all consumers and were all sucking up the planets' energy and there has to be some consciousness and thought given to having children and how many children. I am using less resources. I have not contributed to the on-going destruction of our planet because everything we do contributes to the ongoing destruction to our planet. There is very little that we actually do that builds sustainability on the planet. We are consumers and all you have to do is see an invasion of any insect and how it will decimate an area. So that is the theme that comes up for me – population. Why aren't single people being rewarded for not contributing to the population?

JJ – Even our tax structure rewards people for having more children, not less.

JD - How valuable water is and what's been going on with water in terms of dams and that the water table is being used up, I didn't quite grasp that before. In particular hearing the story about bottled water and how companies can go in and drain the water table and once that has happened people are left out because corporations are just interested in making water.

KM - The image of a river. I just have to do that in a piece of artwork the meandering river. I got out the maps, we spend so much time on the river, looking on a map is so incredible. Paddling it you don't feel like you are doing so much

twisting and turning, but when you look at the map it's amazing how much back and forth we do. And how many times we are just a small distance away from where we just were because we've wound around. So that to me is a major theme that I have to do on an artistic level. One thing that comes to mind, there was a story in there that impacted me, I remember it was about killing an animal and this person was right there when the animal was dying and there was a fire in the eyes of the wolf, a fierce green fire that was dying in her eyes. And how interesting that is to me as far as how far removed we are from what we do, the whole thing with eating meat and how far away we are from that process where we just go to the store and buy a package of meat and you don't have to kill anything or feed anything or even realize that it was a life. It is the same thing with water – and every resource we have, how far removed we are and I have to tell myself not to use as much water and I can cut back and it's hard to see why it makes a difference especially in Minnesota where it feels so abundant. So even for me when I feel pretty aware, I don't see the whole process, so that stood out for me and how important it is that everyone have an awareness and I am interested in making that one of my personal goals to try to help get that message out in one way in the show and another in a design project to get publicity about it. It's not obvious if you are an average reader. I don't watch TV so I don't know how much it is talked about. It is so important and not many people get that. The privatization of water was interesting to me and I learned a lot from that section of the book.

8. Do you have an idea for the art you will create, and if so, can you describe the art and what it represents?

KP - I have images to create a piece that is three large photographic panels and it is the surface of the water and a little reflections, but only tiny bit of white reflective surface, so it is three big black panels that when you put them together they are 8 feet wide and so I am thinking about using those partly because with the lighting in the room they are something that will work in that space and it seems that not a lot of people need wall space and so I can do something bigger – 5 feet high. Not the most cheery piece because of black and it's heavy when you look at it, but there are little flecks that give you the idea that you are looking at water. It's abstract in that sense but given the context people will know what it is, but it is not a beautiful picture of a lake. It conveys a mood.

RT - Well, my job is akin to yours, what I see myself doing is channeling all these little streams into one cohesive larger, more powerful stream. It remains to be seen what each of the artists and the artists collaboratively bring together, and sometimes that is a little scary but I am choosing to trust the process and know it is going to be a lot of fun. At times I have a little vision of what it will look like, and it probably will be completely different from that vision, but I am allowing the vision to come in. I am really eager to see what they start producing. If I were to produce something myself, I have an idea for two acrylic on canvas, and a

play of color and light and I see a really light filled background and some small falling water against a blue background. I don't know if I'll do it or not but when there were discussions about not many wall pieces that's when I started thinking about it. So, my idea needs to remain fluid and opening up the fluidity. I'm good at that. So my hope is to do what you do, what you do on paper and what you do with a group of people, is what I hope to do with a group of people and an exhibit space.

MA – I'll be pulling something out of the archives. I want to go the next step just to see what's there. I trust the process.

LN – I have too many ideas! I have three and I think looking at the space will determine that. One is so simple that it's a must – simply a gourd bowl that has hands on it and a ring of blue around that and the hands are not painted so you see the hands holding that bowl. In the bowl is blue water and on the other side is a blue butterfly – and what it simply is, is that by holding the vision, holding the intention, holding the focus, it is the whole spiritual element of believing and transformation happens through that holding the belief that all is well, its going to be ok, it's that holding the intention. That is something that speaks to my belief of future, of change, when we hold the vision of clean water we can do a lot to help water get clean. That one is so simple. But the other one is a little faucet that drips one drop very slowly and there is a light shining and a video camera zoomed in close up so you can watch and it is projected with an internal loop on a white wall so you see the drop forming slowly and it gets rainbows in it and it finally gets big enough and then it drops onto a drum, that goes thunk. And I love that in one drop is the whole universe. Then there is another one a video of water and light and it shows it as vibrational and how it moves and changes and how it's alive, to really portray the aliveness. In the movements of light and air and water where you get those moving patterns – it's simple but I love that image. Another one is water in a container where people can talk to it, put your words into this or speak your gratefulness to this water; something that people can put stuff into – like a bowl for the public.

LM – I'm thinking in terms of a triptych where the words can flow and make it look like it is flowing to a source, or maybe something about how we are birthed in water and water makes up our bodies and when you are dying water is very important even though you are dying, and then the third piece I am thinking of is the walk I did with friends from Grand Portage the *Walk to Remember*, Al Hunter is a friend and he and his wife wanted to do that and Walt Brisset is a Native American activist from Bayfield thought of the idea to walk around Lake Superior with car and bike support and camp along the way but let's do it as Native Americans and our friends to make people aware of the Lake. It was a very powerful experience. It started and ended in Bad River. I'm thinking of having that be one of the pieces. April who grew up in Bad River brought tobacco. I am not Native American, I read a lot of things about Native Americans and I have some native friends, I don't try to posture that I am a Native American spiritualist,

I don't do anything with the religion, I just appreciate the culture. She is Ojibwe or half Ojibwe and she brought tobacco and had talked to everyone about how we need to honor every little stream and river because it all winds up somewhere and that stayed with me, I thought that was very powerful and somehow incorporating those ideas into one and make it into a triptych.

MP - Well we already have a water puppet but I think I'd like to do a Lake Superior puppet to represent the lake or a sculpture that hangs on the wall and not on a stick that would be another way to go. I haven't gotten very far in my thinking.

AK - I have a couple ideas. One idea is a really big drawing that uses the body to investigate the ideas of flow but I am not sure how that will work with the space. It's a big group show so we'll have to be diplomatic about space - unless I can do it on the ceiling. Then I'm thinking about a cast iron piece that is about water flow. That needs a lot of work and maybe I should bring that into the land of the living and drag out this sold cast iron piece and get out the grinder and go to it. The other thing I am thinking about is the one art practice I have been doing, which is my writing practice - haiku on twitter, haiku and Tonka - short forms that are ideal on twitter and I have been saving them up and then I revised them at my leisure and I want to do a business card project with them. I want to make a selection of a set of 20 in a little deck of cards with texts. Then I was thinking it would be cool to do double sided business cards and I could do drawings on the other side so I could pick water related ones and do that and it would be a small miniaturized thing it would be multiples and I like multiples - cheap art that everyone can have is what I really like. The idea that a piece of art costs \$2000 is crazy it has to pay, but multiples make it easier to ask less money so that's an idea. So three possibilities and it depends on the space and what feels right.

PH - What I am thinking of doing is making an organic triangular pond about 3 x 3 feet and in that I want to have different materials represented. On one side I'd like to have a Lake Superior beach and another part of the triangle - sticks like a beaver dam coming down and the other side perhaps sand and then have a woven reed on the outside part of it and I'd like to have this elevated 6 inches off the floor with sticks, rocks and sands emanating from their sections of the pond and the sticks overflowing over the side, obscuring it. I'd like to have it filled with water and I am not exactly sure what I want in the water I want there to be some sort of organic materials I may put leaves in the water or something but coming out of the water logs sticking haphazardly out of the bog. I plan on having 3 skyscraper or obelisks without a pyramid on top perhaps an abstraction made out of compressed steel wire that is rusted and oil has been removed to allow it to rust and I think I want three of those about 9 - 13 inches long sticking out at different angles, one straight, one mid lean and the other propped up and I toyed with the possibility of putting an oil slick on top of the water, small amount of oil and then tadpoles in the water and the idea would be to invoke the reaction of people like how can a person put tadpoles in water, a living thing in the water because the



water is polluted and then to realize that what I am doing is no different from what we are doing as a whole. This is a representation of reality. I like the idea of metal, very organic looking aesthetically pleasing forms sitting in the water and mimicking natural forms and not being these perfectly erect structures but still sort of evoke the manmade structure symbolic of industrialization and the structures man has erected and things we have canonized - as representation of our society. The absence of natural world as well. These things are juxtaposed in a natural environment not just to invoke skyscrapers or man made monuments of the past and the fact that they are skewed or falling over may be symbolic of nature's dominion over man's activities and nature's eventual reclamation of man and man's activities. I'm still developing it but I think that is the direction I want to go and I think I'll have the time to execute it. I might also want to work in taconite, I'm not sure what that will do to the water, although I wouldn't mind if the water clouded up but I wouldn't like it to be over a period of an hour or a few days, but if it was a few weeks that the water gradually became opaque, I'd like to work in some aspect of the artwork that changes in order to make the experience for the viewer to be more special, something dynamic or changing with it, but there are always issues with that.

SR - Couple ideas. I am really into collaborating so I hope that piece can work. I'd like to create a puppet performance or dance or something outside where there is a celebration. For the art piece I am thinking of a big mandala – a circular design and I have been tossing around a sculpture with hands out of clay and put holes in the middle of them and have a rod and have all these hands and drip water over the hands. It would be self-contained. I had a dream I was going to tap into. It was funny how this effected my dreams so much I am in a dream circle. I had one where there was a wall of water and the ocean was right in this room and it was crashing up against the glass wall and all of a sudden there was a seal or porpoise and it was crashing up against the glass and I said do you want to come in and all of a sudden the thing came right through the glass and I am holding it and it has its fins against my face and it's looking into my face and I am holding this thing and there is a syringe in the back of it and I said Doug you got come get this thing out of it. It was the beauty of it and it was asking me for help. I thought what about having a little sculpture or mandala of just cradling water like how do you hold water like an infant. And then I have another piece I am trying to figure out, I am going to have my students do something small, like a double size of a postage stamp and if you had to visually describe water what would it look like. I was really into those descriptive words like splash, drop, ripple, swirling, whatever it might be and just to see how diverse everybody's perception of water would be. You could do it there at the place, kids would love that if I had a table set up with all these little squares and have some facts about water there.

JL - Lady of the lake. Probably in 2 pieces, she is in my minds eye and I see her face and the water flowing like her hair and a separate piece is a collection of all the garbage and junk – like that e-mail I sent you, because I thought the woman

on the kayak in the middle of all those plastic bottles was an inspiration for my idea. There is a place in the ocean where the current brings all the plastic junk there and this person is on her kayak and as far as the eye can see is plastic bottles and junk. So that is the second part of the lady of the lake. Then I am thinking, there was a statement that I found because I have been dialoguing with friends about what I am doing here and I said you know it really makes a difference if you just purchase a stainless steel bottle and refill your bottle everywhere you go. So there was a statement in that same e-mail where it said something like if every person bought a stainless steel water bottle and just refilled it, how much money they would save and how many plastic bottles would not be produced and how much that would impact our environment. So the simple conscious act of one person buying a stainless steel water bottle the impact is enormous in what it will do for us. The plastic has to go. We need to recycle what we have used and stop using it.

JD - Sort of. I don't want to over think it but I am do water colors primarily however I don't think I want it in a traditional frame or matt. I don't know if I want to do some kind of backing to it and have it look like its flowing more, I don't know if I want to get lighter images or sketches underneath the water colors – so there might be images of fish or other things underneath. I don't want it to be just a watercolor, I want to bring more of a message to it about the beauty of water and the essential part of life that it is.

KA - I've been thinking about it all the time so I have about 20 different ideas. First idea is a whirlpool done in fiber. I'm picturing a whirlpool feeling because that is how the issue felt in the beginning, like if we don't stop we are flowing into a spiraling, into an inevitable end, which is the way a whirlpool feels. That Chief Seattle idea about the end of living and the beginning of survival kind of feeling. Then I was drawn by the idea of aquifers and I'm still toying with this idea, to represent that in felt because felt has a neat-layered look to it. It is so interesting to me when you layer the colors and all the textures and compress it and I do wet felting so I stomp on it and do things to get it to form into felt so when you cut away the felt after all layers have been compressed its has an interesting land form feel to it, and I was thinking of putting the image of aquifers in there and showing the image of empty aquifers or somehow mapping out where aquifers used to be. Also I helped to form the group against the coal-fired power plant that wants to come in to this area. We have been doing work looking at hydrology maps – the flows of water underground, where the water flows to and we have had a geologist working with us and putting these maps in front of us and they have been a really important tool in helping us determine and make our case. For example the company Excelsior Energy – wants to pollute this huge mine pit lake that is also a trout lake and they will put bleaching chemicals in and cooling for their machinery and they said well figure out something, we'll line it and if water levels will drop we'll be able to manage it and then someone passed this map and showed that all the water flows into the drinking water supply for the surrounding towns and they said it came from a different supply, but the maps

confirmed it came from the Canestio Lake. I love the idea of recreating maps and telling a story with maps. Because people can't see it they are very disconnected from an underground water source. I want to show that with a big felt piece of a landscape but then coming over the top of it that with embroidery that show the flows. So I have some map reading to do, which will be really fun.

KM – I'm toying with a lot of ideas but the one I really want to do and don't know how to do it yet is a large scale meandering river and it would be a really simple form, pale translucent blue on white paper, and I want to do a print making process where it embosses the paper, but technically I'm having some issues because I want to do it big and I never work big I always work very small, and for some reason it feels like it has to be big, and I don't know how to do it. I need to get proactive and start experimenting to see how it will work. Sometimes things I have in my mind don't result exactly as I see them in my mind and then I am frustrated and will move on to something else. So I have some other ideas too, my daughter has been working on stop motion – claymation or drawings – where you take a photo and then move it ever so slightly and photograph it again and put all the photos together to get motion and it's great what you can do. If I did something like that, like a drawing of a meandering river and a face comes into view from the side – it almost seems comical the way I am thinking of it, and the river keeps on going and the end comes into view and goes off the bottom of the page – so the whole thing runs through the pages and goes off the bottom and the expression on the persons face changes when its gone. The problem is I don't have a projection devise, a computer. Not being a tech person – I'm not sure. Wonder if someone in the group might be in to the tech part of it. I love the way ideas come to me because often its when I am in that in between sleep from either when I just wake up or right before I go to sleep but not awake anymore, just in between and something will pop into my head and it is so right on usually for what I have been thinking about and I haven't been trying to make that happen or haven't been working on an idea, its just left over material that's gather in my head and pops up in this perfect answer. The study group was fun for me in that way to because it takes over so much of my brain and then it gets put away quickly because I have to get on with the real life, but it resurfaces even if I am busy with other things it will pop in. It's a great thing.

9. What next steps or actions do you wish to take individually or as a group?

KP – It would be great to stay in touch with the group. It seems that everybody was inspired by the process, so I thought that was really good. I haven't really reached out to the community of artists here, I kind of just sit in that little room and make my work, and so I am excited to know other artists in the area. I am always applying for grants, so different projects like this helps staying motivated in that sense. I'd like to apply for grants for this type of work.

RT - My intention is to continue meeting with the artists and they seem to be quite open about that. That will require some outreach on my part and I am up for that. I want to keep communication flowing and I think it is important how I chose my

language and I will continue to use water terms. The nature of a lot of inspiration is very fluid and it fits in well with the work that I have been doing with the medicine wheel and four directions and having just done a workshop on the self-direction according to the Inca medicine wheel and that has everything to do with water. I am recognizing on a deeper level, a spiritual level, that so much of what we are doing is cleaning out the old, shedding it like a snake sheds its skin, and we are opening up the space to invite new inspiring supportive things to come in. So it is all fitting really nicely.

LN - I have a bunch of things that I have been thinking about that have crystallized for me. I have been doing this work in isolation related to springs and I am feeling stronger and stronger about its importance. Thinking like about a “friends of springs” or some kind of group that will take this on more consciously. I am also thinking that I want to do a public art project at Nopeming spring - its Midway Township and I see it as if they are hiding that it is there and they are afraid that people will wreck it. My experience of doing public art is that people don’t wreck it – like the Clayton-Jackson-McGee Memorial. I want to do a mosaic so people stop because it is so awesome, and some signage, and to take this to a whole new level of respect and honoring that water. That building was built to get the water to Nopeming – all the people in the sanitarium used that water. So it’s a clean white concert block building that begs for graffiti and garbage. So I want to see that be something that tourists will stop and see this place that celebrates water, and to find some way to fund that. I want to work to identify more of the springs like the one in Gary-New Duluth to understand what’s going on with the springs in the area. That doesn’t mean they are any more important than other water sources. They are not marked, no information and all have signs that warn people not to use because it is contaminated water, and I was told by the health department that they put those signs up because they don’t want to test them. But it doesn’t mean that the water is bad. Then continuing the ceremonies like the song I gave you – that is going on and women all over are doing it and I want to keep that going and expand that. Enough for now. I continue to put out that the Lake will be clean and safe and healthful – that the drums will not impact the Lake – this is safe, we are safe – I believe that positive affirmations put out a vibration which makes a lot more possible, if we put out the fear elements we are adding to it.

JJ - anything else?

I don’t want it to stop. I feel like the dialogue or some evolving way that there is a connection and discussion about what we have experienced in the past 6 months or 3 months, what are you doing with it now, what are the changes, I think we should be documenting every good thing that is happening. I want a book of successes and what went right. Wow we went to Gary-New Duluth and it was clean. A year ago we took out 8 bags of garbage. The jade beads were still in the water from last year. If we don’t keep track of our successes and how do we

encourage each other for the successes. Cheerleader crowds! Reunion, expand the group so anyone can come in and continue this.

When you describe the water garden I see the pain in your heart there is something blocking that whole deal. I see it when you talk about it I see how that something has to, a dam that has to be moved. If I can help – I feel it so deeply when you speak. When you want to deal with that I'll help. There is something stuck and we have to open that up. It has to get past the painful part. Keep encouraging it without it being painful. Thanks for all you have done and thank for holding that for all of us. You have been the point person breaking the ice and that's not an easy place to be. There are bigger groups and it can be fun, it doesn't have to be like it was.

One more thing – really important – I think that what's really important that came out of this group and a continuing thing that is building for me is people being connected to place, to this river or that stream or lake where they feel relationship and are in relationship, that without that relational being when they just turn on water from the tap and they don't have relationship to any water body or water source that gets that vibrational thing going – its hugely important. For me the place is Madeline Island and the Apostle Islands and Lake Superior to go to get renewed again and then come back. Having people commit to places saying I'm going to take care of Nopeming spring from now till whenever. Finding those places which you can really feel a connection to whether it's a tree or land or water that in our society is going to be more and more key especially in places that are urban that people still have opportunities to do that.

LM - Individually to be aware of my use of water at home and have water saving devises. I have never been a big bottled water buyer and this has changed my whole perception of that. I have a water container and I can use that just as well. As a group I'd like to keep dialoguing with people who are interested. The chapter about Stockton – my co-workers brother lives in Stockton and had no idea so I copied the chapter to give to his brother. One thing I have noticed is if you bring up water issues and water privatization and it is a huge subject and there is no middle ground, people feel either one way or another and people are very impassioned about it and this is something that could be huge, lots of people have a lot to say about it. So keep up the dialogue and keep myself aware and if people talk about it I could loan them the book.

JJ - Anything else to add?

I was glad to be a part of this it was a real special experience for me. I like meeting people and it was a fun way to meet people and hear what they had to say. Because of the subject matter and people's passions, people were more open to each other. I was very happy and honored to be a part of it, it was fun.

MP - I want to continue with my own water conservation efforts at home on a local level and I want to develop some kind of piece because this stuff keeps coming up. There is another conference that will use water as a theme in the fall

so if I create something maybe they will invite me back. I would like to get involved in some heavy-duty political activism but I don't know what that would be and what my resources are as far as time. I have to find a job. Disheartening to think that your work can't be your passion.

JJ - Any thing else?

Thanks for doing this. It's really neat to meet people and there is hardly ever a venue to do that. I have been here 9 years. My daughter wanted to join a church so for a while I had a church community but I can't buy into Christianity anymore so it ended after she finished her work with the church I finished mine too, but that was the only community experience I have had since coming to Duluth so it made me think a lot about that, you know that experience was limited and isolating in a way, this was much more city-wide.

AK - I think it would be good to retain the group identity; we could do little shows on an on call basis. Like the Bad River tribe in Wisconsin has a warrior society and they defend the reservation ecosystem that's their battle and they are really cool guys so if shit happens they band together and do something. And that could be good to have a water warrior society, it would be fun, or even do an annual show. Energy can dwindle for something like that, because of the Internet it's easy to do a call and say lets do this in response to something. So that would be interesting and fun.

JJ - Anything else?

For me it was a kind of opening up or opening out process so what was interesting about it was to some degree it was sort of a solvent for language, language is often related to the analytical and this was a process that was not about that kind of use of language so for me it created certain areas of silence that were kind of nice. Not that there isn't meaning in those places but that the meaning is perhaps best not transmitted by language. So talking about it is in a way talking about how it isn't transmittable by talking which is weird but that's how it felt. That action and making art and passing it to our bodies is a next step. That was intriguing to me because the last few years I have made my living solely by writing and fixing other people's writing and that is totally a language driven practice and this was a way to think about making meaning and making stuff that language is to the side of, so that was nice. An artists talking circle is almost a contradiction of terms, but it was a good idea. It did allow for artists' own eccentric uses of language, which aren't usually tolerated. So that was good. Artist's use of language is usually considered wrong and this was an allowing of those wrong uses to make something that was very right. You've started your own asylum!

PH - As far as the water issue personally I am a generalist and as far as political issues and my own life I have a lot of trouble focusing on any one issue, I wouldn't describe myself as a zealous activist I have strong opinions and views

but not that I do any thing about them. That's not to say that I want that to always be the case, in the future I certainly would with water issue, water is something I always worked with in my heart, not always but I have worked with it in my heart because of its aesthetic qualities and its inherent interest and importance to the human condition as well as all life on this planet so I think this will definitely have a profound effect on my art and I can see myself continuing to make art based on these social concepts of society clashing with its water resources and how that is typical of man's activities and how it ties into industrialization. I can definitely see myself working with similar themes in future art work and as far as my personal political and social views I definitely have marched water up the ladder to a priority, it changed the color of the lens which I view and ties in holistically with many other pet issues of mine.

SR – I'd like to hook up with LN and the collaborative group next Monday and I have a feeling some of us will continue to do water ritual in different places. For me the missing link was, I was hoping that this was going to be attached with a bigger project or to volunteer out on the water doing something. I had a friend who does secchi disc water clarity readings and I always wanted to get back into doing something like that but I don't know what organizations to trust.

JL - I have to create my piece and I have offered to assist RT in hanging the show and what ever she needs me to do I will be her helped. I am not thinking any further ahead then that.

JD - Meeting with the collaborative group, what ever that turns out to be. I would assume LN will do more water ceremonies and create opportunities for that. I'd like to pursue more of the spiritual piece of water. If the group continues I'd like to do that. I might want to get involved with some of the water groups. I want to figure out something at work because they use bottled water.

KA - Individually I need to work on my art and do some collecting of information. I feel like the book was a great start but I need to keep looking. The book was a jumping off place and now its time to do more specific research. In terms of group – I'd like to stay connected with a lot of the group members and I am not sure how to do that, e-mail will be nice, but some of them I d like to get to know more and collaborate in the future. There are a couple people I really connected with and I would like to have some back and forth and discussion with them. If someone was stuck I would totally be there to help them through that. Knowing myself – it probably will be a one on one dialogue, but I would love to know more about the process of what's happening for people. I think that will naturally happen with the people you feel a connection with. KM and I both were saying on the last night we don't want to go. It's the beauty of being on a list – there is a group of people that you know would be really interested and so if someone else has a show they hear about we will probably get to see each other again.

KM - I need to get going on some of the technical issue of what I want to do and figuring them out. Because I have to piece it in to short amounts of time that I have during the day it may take awhile so I have to get moving on that. I am going to let go of connections to the artists, because I am in Grand Rapids, and bring my work when it's due and look forward to seeing everybody there. I feel like my group work is over as a whole group. Perhaps I'll have individual connections with members of the group but I don't feel I have a lot of personal ties to the group as a whole. I have a lot of work to do and its good to have this conversation.

JJ - Anything else?

I hope you are not having any doubts about yourself as a leader because you are naturally a person who does it very well and you seem very comfortable doing it and I really want to compliment you on how the sessions went. You were wonderful and were able to step in when you needed to but leave a lot of room for people to do what they wanted to do.

Focus Group – May 11, 2009

I asked the group to reflect on the meaning of the study circles and the usefulness of the process as a tool for social change. Based on their experiences, I wanted to know how well the process worked to stimulate energy for action and social change.

LN – One of the things it did for me was to connect me to other people who had similar interests and I wouldn't have necessarily met or realized that was an interest they had. I didn't know two-thirds of the people here and I found out that they have an interest in this too which makes me network, and I hope that I'll network with them in the future. The networking possibility was a benefit to me and that affects change because I felt like now I can comfortably talk to those people.

JJ – in one-on-one's there are themes of artists being introverts and working in isolation a lot and when I ask for descriptive words about the study circle process people say the group was warm and I felt supported and so what I am seeing is a picture of this being a way for artists to get out of isolation and working alone even though many artists don't express themselves verbally, they express themselves through their art, not necessarily with words.

JD – What's more significant for me, not that I am politically active now, but when you combine political activists with visuals and art it enhances the whole process. Often words get to be dull and dry and after a while you hear all these words, and we process that in our brain, so I like the idea of taking the political and making it into art. It moves people in a different way. Usually when in



activist things its all facts and numbers and a lot of angst comes with it because we have to change everything and isn't that awful, it gets to be pretty negative. So it's nice to do this. I am an occasional artists as I describe myself but I need to connect with other artists to keep developing that part of myself too, nothing is better then art and politics together. Of course it can have some humor in it too.

LM – Just getting people together is important, you don't realize how much other people are concerned with water and there is a lot of discussion about it. People that aren't even in this group that I have been telling about the group, everyone has an opinion about it and starts talking about it. It's a huge, huge topic. I turned on the radio in the car and they were talking about it. It was good to be in this group and hear 16 people talking about the same things with different viewpoints. I know as a listener and contributing and being a reader and reading a lot and being an artists and a writer I was inspired and it was really empowering to be around other artists talking about the give and take of the issue at hand and how we may address this artistically and politically to get our message across.

SR – I felt like my voice was heard. I think I join a lot of groups or I am asked to join groups or somehow I end up in groups and they put it out there that they want your input so you are there in a creative environment and then everything is discarded. Or you think you are going in there to be empowered and to have you opinion heard, when in the end they really have it all figured out what they are going to do. This felt like a group that was pretty honest and sincere and had depth and where you felt like you were heard and respected and there would be some action and you would have input into it, and that being the artwork of course as a motivator around water, I think the theme of the topic is what brought us all together, so putting out a call for a study group on a specific topic you're going to get a specific type of people. I like the idea of having a talking stick or stone or something that adds a sense of ritual or sense of creating, like the ground rules – I though that was really important. In fact I used that for a meeting they were calling (at work) I said I'll come if you set ground rules because I don't want to come in to a bitch session and everybody stepping on each others toes, so I borrowed some of those things and that was a really nice way to set up a meeting. It feels like everybody listened to them and that was really empowering for me.

LM – Otherwise it could get out of hand quickly so when you have the rock or the tape recorder it was like I am speaking and I thought my voice was heard. And I thought everybody had good, different input and I thought wow I never thought about it in that way.

MA – My issue, my creativity, my self expression really started in the mid-80's with my connection with the City Forest and seeing how the forest was being developed and that beautiful place that had become a healing place for me was being developed and in a sense lost and I felt like I couldn't do anything about it. There was a situation that had happened that really opened me up and created a lot of anger and I wrote something that made the front page of the paper and there

was such a powerful outcry to that occurrence that at the same time some land was going to be rezoned to become residential, the public sentiment was there because in this case there was a bear killed in its den and it was so powerful that I had to go home and write, I wrote 600 words just to express my sentiment and feelings and I gave it to the paper and they put it on the front page. So again the public outcry, the public sentiment that arose from that brought enough people to the city council meeting that happened a few weeks after that to the point that the rezoning plan was taken off the table. And at that point I knew that I had to have a fire under my ass to get going and connect with my feelings and keep my feelings alive in order to really create, otherwise I, like other people, will go into dormancy and do nothing. So somehow to keep that fire alive which gave me a life and a focus and it helped me to respect myself because I was honoring what was important to me and I was beginning to see the impact that I had. So that was the first time that that had happened and since then with photography and the guiding that I do and I teach canoeing strokes as an art form because there is really something about it. And to teach as a guide, which is more than just go here, but to guide to understand and see the sacredness of what exists out there (exists in life) and we can't let all those other voices and other personalities get in the way of feeling that the reverence for life which is water which is woods which is wind and everything in nature. So for me to listen and to use the mediums that I have been gifted with – the camera, my own voice, the ability to express myself – has become really powerful and its hard for me to compete with politics, politics has its own agenda it's not a smart thing and its not a good thing.

JJ – Let me ask a question, because what I keep coming back to is how you get people to change and what I heard you say MA is that this issue going on in the forest personally affected you, your spirit and heart, and the next step for you was to write and through writing and being published on the front page you were then doing activism. Part of my question to you; is the study circle process a good way to kind of light that fire that MA is talking about, to bring about change, I am curious to what your thoughts are. In my lens as I see the world we need change – behavior and attitude change and understanding about the earth. So how do we do that?

MA – Well we don't just sit around a table and talk about it. I think we go out there and experience it, we touch it, we touch the earth - there is a book called *I touch the Earth and the Earth Touches Me*. We need to go out there and experience it to get outside of our human inventions and do more than just talk about it. The great artists when they are moved they do their best work, which is why we are drama kings and queens. What can be done to light that fire, I don't think that fire has yet to be lit with this group.

LM – We were all sitting around and listening to each other and you could tell at the end of the evening you could tell that people were very animated and talking to one another and may not have originally approached that person but you find that you have a common interest and its human nature that if you have common

interest with a person you begin a dialogue or a group discussion. If there is a way for us to individually go back into our lives and into our art work to maintain that energy and I am not sure how to do that, if you think about the group and start to work and keep your mind focused of what we discussed that evening. That can be hard when you are separated from the group and where you get your energy and how do I translated that to working alone that's where I think – at least myself that's where I stand, how do I keep that energy with me and keep on with the work and to write something that would be part of making people think or change and keep that passion going?

LN – I think it is a multifaceted approach – and no one thing by itself and certainly experiencing the environment is key, but for group dynamics I have had questions something like you have had with elder women from the Cities taking about the environment, land and water, and there is a dynamic that happens in a circle that is very powerful. The tables are in the way and I really think this is an inhibitor rather than a helper of energy being passing from people to people. I have seen, and believe that, focused circle talk with key questions brings an intensity of energy that nothing else does in the same way. That process is extremely powerful and there are things that heighten it and things that diminish it. So looking at different ways to increase the impact. We did a series of three circles with women that had never met each other – had nothing in common and talking about the earth and the land and what could we do (it was at a women's conference and the themes was when the grandmothers speak the earth will heal) and they chose a question – how do you relate to the environment and each had their own personal stories. Next round was what are you doing to enhance that effectiveness and relationship. The last one was what can you do in the future – the commitment for future was huge and witnessed by everyone else. Each person said I will do this and in that one round brought it to such a peak that I believe those women are still doing what they said they would do. It was change and action heightened by the circle, a circle does some thing dynamically with energy. I believe that the process is very useful.

MA – I can agree but I have been inspired and empowered when I am in nature and that works best for me and I haven't experienced something like this but I certainly understand how something like that would work.

SR - But as far as mobilizing energy and action I think when you build that energy there it's a vibration and it's part of your being and you have this energy that you need to talk to people or you need to keep going in action or if you spoke something that you're going to do and all these people have witnessed it and you know they are going to support you beyond the circle, that feeling of that circle going on and carrying you with it. So when you are in those moment of solitude and wondering how to carrying it, know that we are there behind you supporting you – the energy is now mobilized because of coming together in a circle and all of our commitment to this.

LN – Our experience so far in our circle with this group did not get to that point for a couple of reasons and part of it was the size, they say eight people is about it, you can have multiple circles but not 18 or 20 because there are so many people to be heard by the time the momentum gets around. Having structures in the middle does not help. I am sure this group could still get to another level.

MA– I can even see the sharing that is going on here, the commitment and passion is better. There's a real commitment on the part of everyone. This is good that we have this opportunity to talk, the question I have is what can we do, what do we do now in order to keep the fire going. I need to be major involved, not just little things here and there, but I want to be involved in a lot of things. This has been a wonderful opportunity and it's exciting because I talk about how it re-opened that passion and I work better when I am impassioned. I'm a dramatic tenor of a singer its all about life is beiger than life and its really powerful and living life at that intensity burning a flame of passion which is a powerful thing.

JD – I've been in a number of groups and the one that did the most for me was when I did witnessing at a boat landing (native fishing treaty rights) probably 20 or more people that formed a solid core, and it was not just talking but doing. There was something so powerful doing that and I haven't seen anything quite that powerful. I'm not so sure that were not going to go off and do our own thing. There are so many water groups out there right now. It would be nice to get past so many little splinter things and get a core of something going but I can't identify the action.

LN – I think the process was extremely effective even though brought together open ended but at some point you have to ask the question of what action. Can be as minimal as I will give thanks when I - personal and simple.

JD – LN had a water ceremony this winter that I participated in, so it's interesting how it keeps continuing – like here you are again. So this may be a stepping-stone, I don't feel like this is done, even the art show may evolve into something else.

LN –It'd be nice to have a private session for this group at the art show to reflect on the outcomes. Then you'd have responses to the actions.

JJ – We will do that before the show goes down, we can meet there in the exhibit room.

LN – Do you think circles work? Then you call it study circles; there are a lot of names for it.

SR – that's your key phrase?

JJ – I prefer to call it a dialogue circle but academically it seems to be referred to as a study circle. I have not participated in many so I can't answer that.

SR – can a study circle be a one-time thing?

JJ - It usually occurs over 4 -6 sessions to allow you to get more in depth, but why not do a one-session study circle, anything is possible.

LN – What I have seen from my experience – the facilitator and the questions can get it to go quickly or never get there, you just go around and around and never bring it to an intensity or focus.

MA – The gatekeeper.

LN– Is very key in saying this is the discussion and that can still rotate but having a question in a series which gets more and more intense in the way they are asked.

SR – Isn't that directing what you want?

LN – Not so much directing but getting more depth.

SR - Phrasing the questions so that it is open ended enough so it can take its own directions.

MA - And so that it doesn't digress or regress.

LN - Or stay, just stay, there is a certain level that you can churn at and you want it to go one-step deeper.

SR – It's like learning all this. I can talk to some people and I think they're going to hear me speak about I am in this water awareness group but if they don't respond back with questions, then they are not interested. How much depth? I don't meet very many people with a lot of depth – it's hard to find people who want to bring depth or focus. The depth brings change.

LM - I think at the gallery opening for all of us who can be there – just sharing what people are saying as they are looking at the artwork and how it affects them. Also like a little book that people can write comments in.

JJ – I thought about interview people who were viewing the art I don't know that I'll do that yet or not, but I may hang out there for a day and observe and watch and talk to people. I will have comment books spread out in the room.

LM – I know personally I am paying attention to water issues more than I have before, maybe I used to for awhile and fell away from it, anything coming up in the news is piquing my attention and I am listening to it and paying attention to the nonprofits doing work and what they are doing and reading the water consciousness book which I thought was really good. So having the tools from that and the discussions to move ahead with whatever action I decide to take in

terms of taking care of our water supply what I can do on a personal level, write a congress person or make a phone call or however far I want to take it, but I know for myself that's how this group has worked on me, listening more and paying attention.

LN – Even the process of sitting in circle and talking is an action and those stories when people went around told personal stories, that was one of the most moving things – each time it was like a blessing and a wave of appreciation – that in itself is huge, we minimize what that is but its huge.

LM – If you want to think about it, its their temple water, whether from their faucet or their back yard and how important it is to them and its that way for everybody its like “ I want clean water, I want good drinking water, I want water to last forever.” I can conserve I know I can. Those were amazing stories and I think it really opened people up and allowed them to be able to keep talking.

MA – We are talking about creating space for people to reflect on the significance of water and the significance of their actions on water and the repercussions and the accountability we all have for our mother our water our selves. You mentioned before about wanting to talk about it to people [SR] and people don't support the conversation. I think some people just don't know what to say and you have already said what you needed to say. I love going down to the fitness center because you go in to the sauna you never know who's going to be there and what you are going to talk about. I gained a lot of strength of conviction being a part of here knowing what some of the issues are, not just I think there is a problem with this, but my arguments about the importance of water preservation and a lot of our actions and accountability has increased to the point where I have strength of conviction and that has made a difference. And I respect myself so much more as a result of that and people respect me as a result too and that is pretty cool! There's been a lack of that lately (laughter). The value of conviction can go nowhere at all because there is a lot of denial and arguments against it – bullshit – this is real because I feel it and believe it and then you respect yourself and beliefs. When we have an opportunity to create that space in here, and this has been a sacred space, then the ripples go out, which gives me a great idea for a picture.

LN – Just being heard and being seen in a circle is a conversation in change, your experience of a topic in sacred space is an important one. It confirms who you are, what you are, where you are, what people are about. I feel so encouraged about the little things I do with springs now, I want to do it all the time because you get that encouragement just being part of a circle.

JJ – being part of a group that shares that passion was big for me because its community building and affirming those passions.

JD – But I think it's also what has happened because there is a bond with this group that will outlast the group itself, we will have that connection which we all need. Even though I go to all types of group things and meetings, its good to have a more solid group and it's a different level of talking, a different level of thought processes. It's more truth knowing than just intellectual.

MA – Will there be another meeting because I think what happened here and how we opened up is good and we would be a good core nucleus at the next meeting?

LN – Next Monday is a meeting for anyone who wants to work collaboratively – 6 PM. At Chester Creek Cafe. Whoever wants to collaborate on a work?

Appendix G  
Artist Statements and Exhibited Work



**KA*****Canestio***

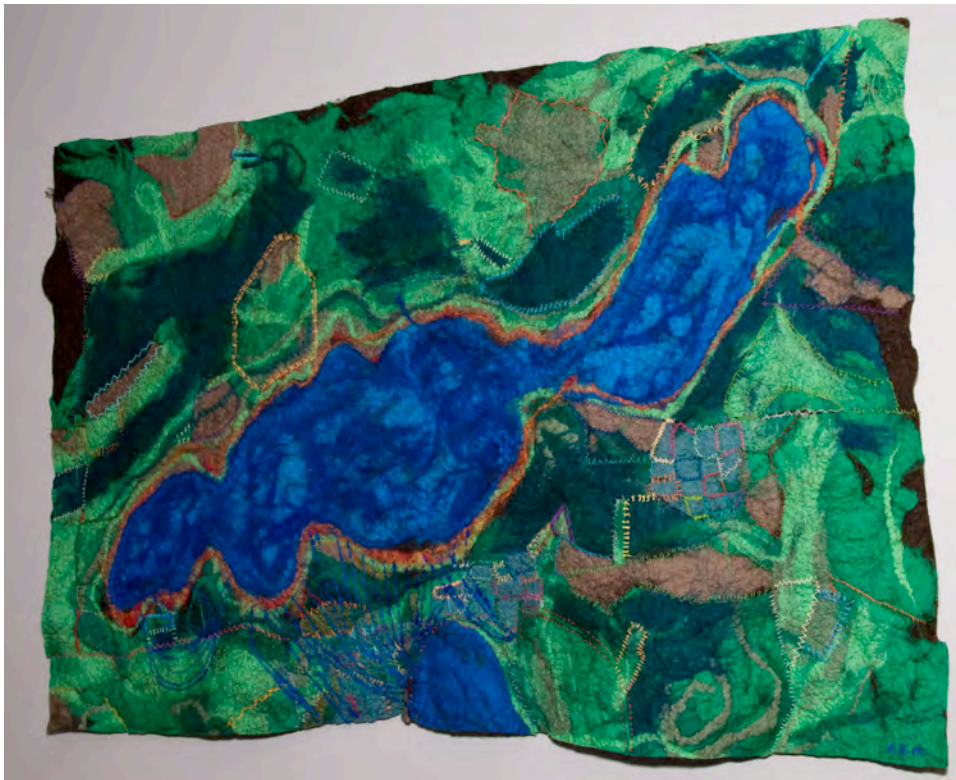
Felted Wool, Hand-spun Mohair, Cotton Embroidery Floss

33" x 49"

I began working with wool after inheriting a spinning wheel from my grandmother in 1997. It had belonged to my Grandpa Nelson's family and made the trip to America from Norway when his grandparents came to this country. Spinning led to felting and eventually, the two came together in my work. I am interested in following the thread of intuition which leads to the development of a piece.

"My piece, *Canestio*, is modeled after a hydrology map showing the underground flows from the Canestio mine pit trout lake into the nearby town water systems of Coleraine, Bovey, and Taconite. The water from the Canestio is in demand from a private corporation, Excelsior Energy. This business hopes to harvest that water to cool its machinery and use it for processing its product of coal-based power. This controversial project would be adding bleaching agents into the lake and concentrating the existing elements to the point of eventual contamination of the water and the inevitable decline of the trout. The corporation had no formal plan for protecting the water systems that use the Canestio as a watershed. The hydrology map powerfully shows the unseen: the water connection between the Canestio and the surrounding communities as well as the potential danger this corporation poses to the health of those communities."

Photo: MA



**MA**

***Canoe on the Pokegama***

Photograph  
27" x 22", framed

***Red Sky at Night***

Photograph  
26" x 20"

"My artistic statement and mantra...to be swayed always by beauty in thought, feeling, and action!"

Photo: MA



**RB*****Essential Flow***

Glass Sculpture

78" x 24"

RB's glass sculpture uses the process of melting old window glass into hand-carved ceramic molds. This process imparts a bas-relief image into the glass and the surface of the glass is hand-colored with cloisonné enamels and textured with hand-cut, heat-sculpted elements. The undulating surface texture creates a lens-like effect that gives movement to the sculpted image. His glasswork is characterized by its highly sculpted and richly detailed surfaces. RB has been working with glass for over 25 years. He specializes in fused glass sculpture. Using recycled glass allows his vision to serve as a link between art and the environment.

Photo: MA



**JD**

***Lester River Up Close***

Photograph

18" x 23 1/2", framed

***Lester River***

Watercolor

20" x 24" framed

**JD** started painting with watercolor after taking a course from Chee in 1990. Since then she has studied with local artists, Joyce Gow, Elizabeth Kuth, Alberta Moreno, Mary Beth Downs, Wendy Rouse and others. She has expanded and now also does pastels, acrylics, oil and recently photography has become a passion.

JD is very grateful for all of the talented artists who are willing to be our teachers. She also has a passion for water; it has always been very healing for Jean, both physically and spiritually. Jean lives on the Lester River and feels most at peace when canoeing or kayaking. Her art often reflects her love for the water.

"Water is sacred to me; it has always been a source of healing, physically and spiritually for me. Art also feeds my soul. My love for both has sustained me in difficult times and I need to remind myself how important both are to me and to give myself more time to do art and spend time on the water."

Photo: MA



**PH*****Blighting***

Lake Superior, Stone, Driftwood,  
Iron Range Taconite, Steel  
48" x 36"

PH is a Duluth Minnesota native. He received his Bachelor's degree in studio art from St. Olaf College in 2007. His work explores the increasingly strained relationships between human society and the natural world. Working predominantly in the medium of site-specific installations has provided a broad platform for PH to explore issues of social and environmental justice. The acquisition and origins of the materials in PH's work, as well as the connotations one has with the materials, play a pivotal role in their intended meaning. PH mines inspiration from a passion for the outdoors and his belief in the vital role the natural world plays in fostering positive qualities in individuals.

"Civilization's shortening attention span is mismatched with the pace of environmental problems." Stewart Brand

"Scrape the earth, scrape it bare  
Use it, return it spent  
Denial of our direct effects on  
EVERY environment is ruinous  
The Industry of wind and waves  
grinding rock to sand,  
dissolving wood Machines  
crush rock forming pellets of  
Iron, fuel for spires that blight  
the sky To preserve wild  
process how does one contain  
the flood of Man's progress?  
Stare into native waters and  
imagine your role in the  
healing..."

Photo: MA



**JH*****Water Chakra***

Pastel and Colored Pencil

30" x 24", framed

Prior to her retirement in 2008, JH worked for three different owners of the Westmoreland Flint agency. She also ran her own agency in the Twin Cities, one of the first women in the area to do so. JH's nomination for the American Advertising Federation's Silver Medal Award went on to discuss her passion for both advertising and traditional arts, listing painting, illustration and graphic design among her talents. Also credited was her seemingly indefatigable spirit and positive attitude, stating that, "JH sees thousands of possible solutions for each creative challenge," and when she faces a challenge, her favorite approach is to "push love its way."

"As a friend of mine described the color of the world's giant waters on a worldwide cruise, I was reminded of the healing powers of the spiritual chakras. My water is bathed in the collective power of these chakras. We are energy... and we are light."



Photo: MA

## Collaborative Piece

### *Trinkets from Asia*

JJ, poem

MA, photographer

22" x 17" framed

**JJ** loves the natural world and has worked to help people increase their understanding of water. The facts about Ash trees used in the poem came from an article written by Mary Hoff titled *Big Trouble for Ash Trees* in the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer Magazine, May-June 2009 issue published by the MN Department of Natural Resources.

Photo: MA



**AK**

*Walk on Water*

Photograph, mounted on aluminum

96" x 48"

Photo taken mid-Superior, fog, no land in sight.

AK is a sculptor and writer in Duluth, and her life depends on the water and woods.

Photo: JJ





**JL**

***Lake Superior Under Siege***, diptych

Watercolor, Mixed Media

18" x 28", each panel

JL is a self-taught artist who grew up in the Duluth area and traveled around the Continental United States for 15 years. She returned to the area in 1992 where she has continued to hone her painting skills and recently decided to go for a B.F.A. in Painting with a minor in Psychology at the University of Wisconsin, Superior. She currently lives in the Lincoln Park area of Duluth with her two dogs, where she enjoys all forms of nature on a daily basis.

“To me, the *Lady of the Lake* represents the spirit of Lake Superior and my painting is an attempt to bring to life what she looks like, and my belief that this is a life force all its own. Having grown up next to this lake, and spending many hours near her and playing in the water during the summer, I have had the opportunity to witness the changes that have come about due to our lack of respect and concern for water. It is my sincere hope that people will “rethink” their relationship to water and recognize that everything we do can make a difference to improve water quality or destroy it; the choice is ours.”

Photo: JJ



**SM**

***Erosion, Moon Watches Earth Move***

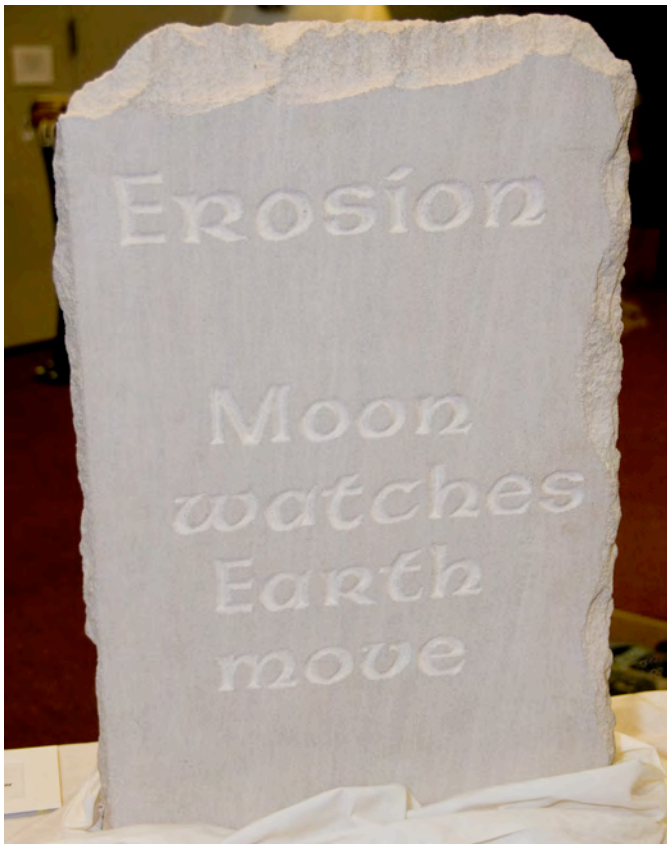
Limestone

24" x 16"

SM received his first art instruction through Cranbrook Art Institute as a child. He studied blacksmithing, bronze casting and directed studies with Dale Wedig at Northern Michigan University. He later studied stone masonry and stone carving with Mark Wickstrom and M. Stokes Redabaugh at the International Masonry Institute, Fort Ritchie, MD through the Bricklayers and Allied Craftsperson Union, Local 1 & 6. Currently he is an artist unaffiliated with any institution.

“I am an artist expressing myself in the medium of stone, drawing inspiration from antiquity. Synthesizing natural and Celtic influences, I explore the methods of preserving an ancient form while staying relevant in contemporary times. I feel drawn to the abstract and symbolic elements that transcend experience.

Photos: MA



**KM**

*Untitled*

Chiseled Wood, stained with Natural Pigments

34" x 13"

KM is an artist from Grand Rapids, MN. Recently, she had a one-person exhibition of small black and white ink drawings at the MacRostie Art Center. This work is a visual interpretation of her environment and temperament as she saw it at that time. Over the years she has worked in a wide variety of media. She is also a professional canoe racer and often trains on the Mississippi River near her home.

“Paddling a canoe on the Mississippi has brought me many joys. I have used poplar wood from the area and looked at a map to carve the twists and turns of this section of the river near Grand Rapids, MN. The colors are natural pigments that are rubbed and sanded into the surface. Red is a metaphor for the dangers that humans potentially bring to this living ecosystem. May the water stay clean and the shores undeveloped for years to come!”

Photo: MA



LM, Three poems:

***Temple Water***

***Walk for Water***

***Watershed***

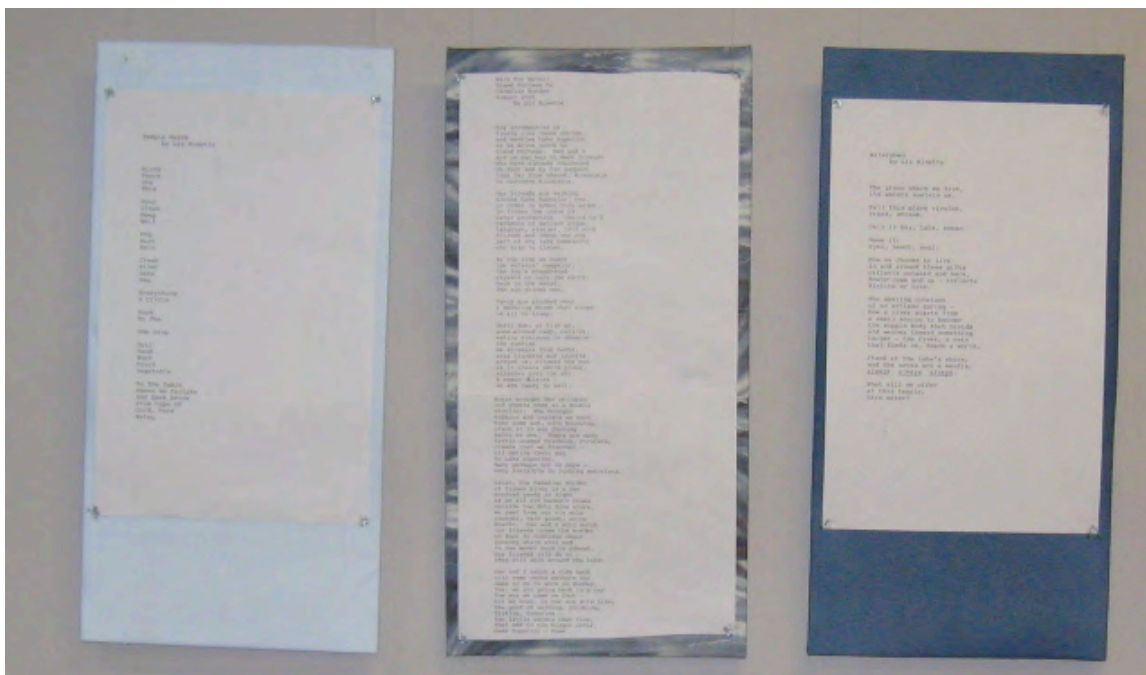
“I am so happy to be a part of the Lake Superior basin community which includes not only humans but the plants, animals and other living organisms who in synchronicity depend on this water and its tributaries for physical nourishment as well as beauty. I am grateful too for the water from my well that I drink from and cook with and the fact that there are artesian wells near my home.

“I wanted to participate in this study group and subsequent art show in order to learn and explore more about water issues. Some publication credits include *Main Channel Voices*, Winona, MN; *Third Wednesday*, Ypsilanti, MI; *What Light*, mnartists.org among others.

“In addition to writing, I work at a community access television station in Duluth, Minnesota where I can see Lake Superior and St. Louis Bay from the office windows; I try to make walking by the lake a priority a few times a week.

“The three writing pieces I have included in this show, "Temple Water," "Walk for Water," and "Watershed," are progression pieces about my personal feelings when I think of water and its impact on our lives. In writing these I realized there is so much to say about the issues surrounding water and living beings use of it and how water and its health affects everyone's life.

“As I was writing these pieces I felt we are all, whether we were in the study group, in the show, or viewing the art work, we are all a part of the discussion of water and it is a topic one cannot be ambivalent about - water, clean, healthy water for everyone is everyone's discussion. We all benefit by studying it, reflecting on it however we choose - keeping the dialogue, about protecting our water resources and honoring them, open.



LN

*Hold the Vision*

Gourd Bowl

10" diameter

LN, B.F.A. University of Illinois, M.A. University of Hawaii, Documentary Filmmaker, Emmy Award winning director, worked with Ahnishinaabeg/Ojibwe on numerous films, most recently: *Mikwendaagoziwag - They are Remembered on the Sandy Lake Tragedy*. Painter, gourd maker, birch bark weaver, installation creator, and water worker. LN creates in Cloquet, MN and Washburn, WI.

“The Ahnishinaabeg say that women are the “Keepers of the Water.” This is my commitment - to be of service to water. My art is the physical expression of my spiritual journey. I believe this is a vibrational universe, where the law of attraction is operative. Therefore, my art in this show involves an intentional focus spoken through positive words of love and appreciation to water. I hold the vision of clean, pure, abundant water joyfully and confidently. My art requests participation and invites others to intentionally express words of appreciation to water and to hold their vision of pure abundant water for our future. Thank you for being and thank you for honoring water with your attention.”

Photo: JJ



**MP**

***Gaia***

Papier-mâché

48" x 36"

MP, M.A., is a multi-media artist and facilitator, residing with her family since 2000 on Spirit Mountain. She has been creating and teaching across various genres and venues of studio and theatre art for over 25 years. She is a candidate for a Doctor of Ministry degree in Wisdom Studies, and studied intensively with Matthew Fox, Joanna Macy and Andrew Harvey.

MP has recently focused on the folk art nature of giant puppets - entities that call for inventive reuse of discarded materials, as well as a community process to build and perform. Many sets of hands have helped embody her very largest creations and she assists others in brainstorming their ideas to visual fruition. In parades and other ceremonies, MP volunteers the possibility of stepping into the role of a famous ancestor peacemaker or a personified energy for social justice. Her series features: Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and more abstract archetypes of the "Green Man" and "Black Madonna."

*Gaia* is the face of her latest creation, which illustrates the interconnectedness of our blue planet, Earth. Water is integral to all life here.

Photo: JJ



**KP**

*Untitled*

Giclee on Canvas

24" x 42"

KP photographs landscapes combining historic and contemporary processes to create her own sense of ethereal space. KP's work has been exhibited nationally and was recently included on NBC's *Today Show*.

KP was raised on a farm near Redwood Falls, MN. She received her BA from Montana State University and received her MFA in photography from San Francisco Art Institute in May 2007.

Photo: JJ



**SR**

***One Moon - All Waters***

Permanent Marker, Watercolor Media

18" x 12"

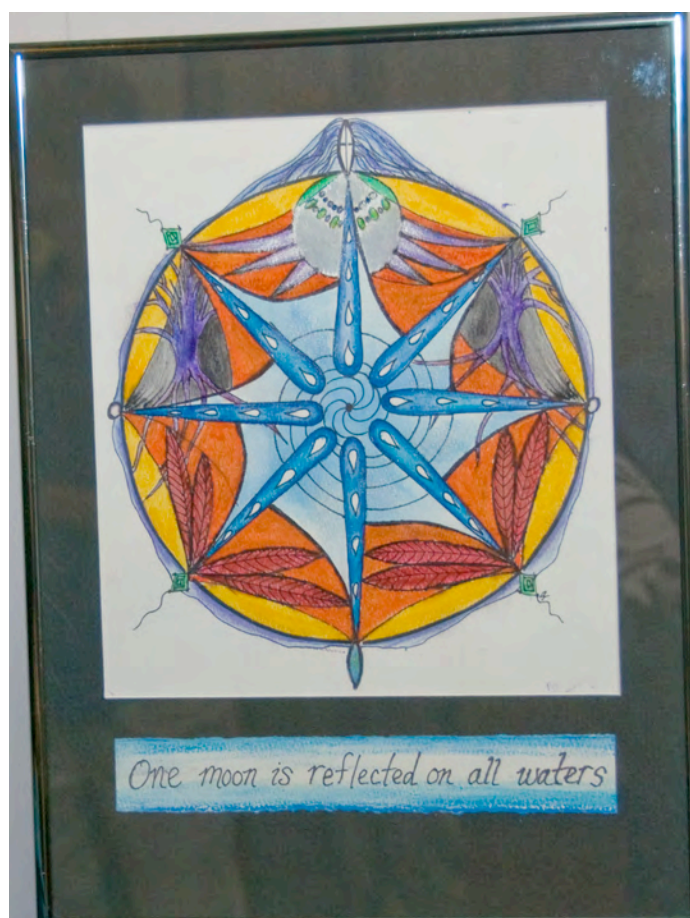
SR, B.F.A. UMD, 1989; Masters equivalency, various University courses, workshops, continuing education classes. Art educator, ISD 709 1991- present.

SR is a multi-media artist who works in clay, sculpture, drawing, painting, printmaking, collaborative art, dance, earth art, ceremonial art, dreamwork, and anything creative her intuition leads her to.

“Art is a part of my everyday life, just as water is; both flow with the life force and fill me spiritually. I feel blessed to live near Lake Superior, surrounded by water in many forms and artists of many kinds. I am grateful for this chance to collaborate with two other women to create an artwork, *Water Blessing*, that celebrates the sacredness of art and water and asks for action. Merging art and water awareness through the study circles has opened a sense of urgency for me to be an active steward for the Earth’s waters. Part of my activism is my role as an educator. As I teach art, I want kids to think about their relationship with the natural world. Through the creative process students discover their strengths and gifts as well as the importance of their words, images, and actions. They are a part of the bigger picture and have a direct impact on everything around them.

“The mandala art form has found its way into my life and I share *One Moon - All Waters* with you as a prayer for all water. Thank you.”

Photo: MA



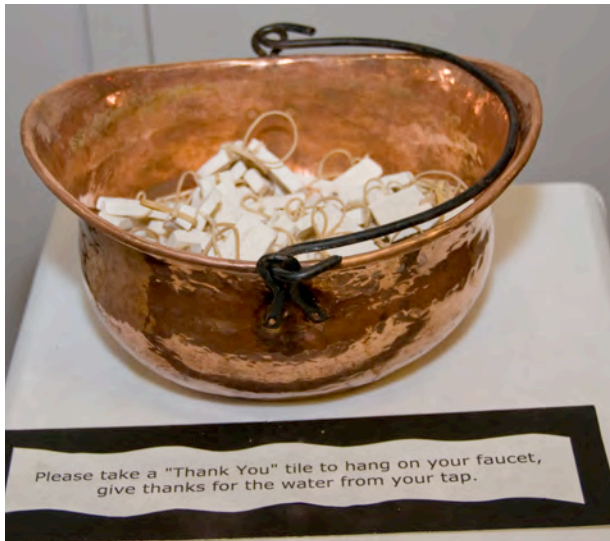


***Water Blessing***

Collaboration: JD,  
LN, and SR

Sculpture, Lake Superior  
Water, Driftwood  
58" x 45"

Photos: MA



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