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# The Virtual Water Gallery: a collaborative science and art project

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Water is life and so water-related challenges, such as droughts, floods and water quality degradation, affect everyone. Conceptualizing water-related environmental and social problems in novel ways, with engagement between the public and science researchers, may lead to new and more comprehensive solutions to complex problems. A society that makes decisions informed by science and science that approaches problems in a transdisciplinary manner are key elements in finding creative and holistic solutions to the water-related challenges we all face. We believe that art can help co-establish new social norms to help us grasp and tackle water-related challenges in a more holistic manner.

The Virtual Water Gallery* is a science and art pilot project funded by Global Water Futures (GWF). GWF is a University of Saskatchewan-led research program that is funded in part by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund. Its overarching goal is to deliver risk management solutions, informed by leading-edge water science, to manage water futures in Canada and other cold regions where global warming is changing landscapes, ecosystems and the water environment. Launched in Summer 2020, the Virtual Water Gallery aims to provide a safe, inclusive and collaborative space for fully open discussions between scientists, artists, and a wider public, to explore past, present and future water challenges.

As part of this pilot project, 13 artists were paired with teams of GWF scientists to co-explore specific water challenges in various Canadian ecoregions and river basins, including the Arctic, the mountains, boreal forests, prairies, farmlands, lakes, rivers, and communities. These collaborations are leading to the co-creation of science and art pieces which will be exhibited online on a Virtual Water Gallery. By making this online exhibition accessible to a global audience, we hope that the co-created art pieces will open creative and informative discussions about urgent water challenges to a wider audience via the gallery space.

*More information about the Virtual Water Gallery on the GWF webpage: https://gwf.usask.ca/outreach/virtual-water-gallery.php