

from *beholden: a poem as long as the river*

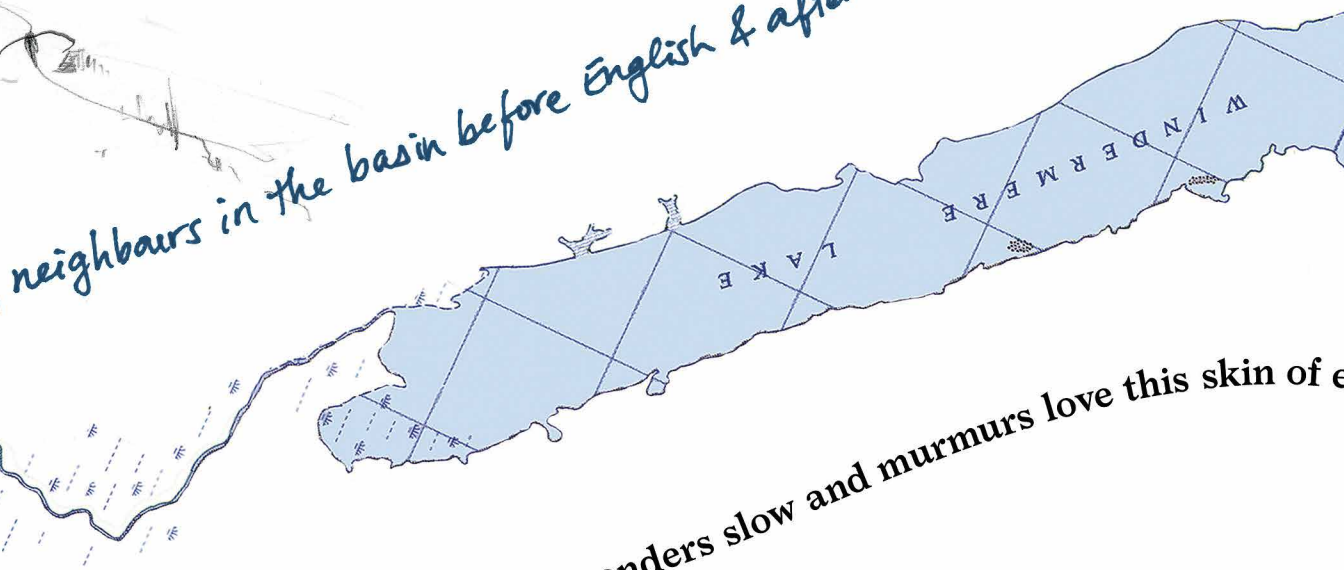
Fred Wah & Rita Wong



what exists through itself is called as is meaning "Going to the Water" hears the cadence
say the names: Ktunaxa, Sinixt, Secwepemc, Okanagan, Syilx,
Tarley Slough
79

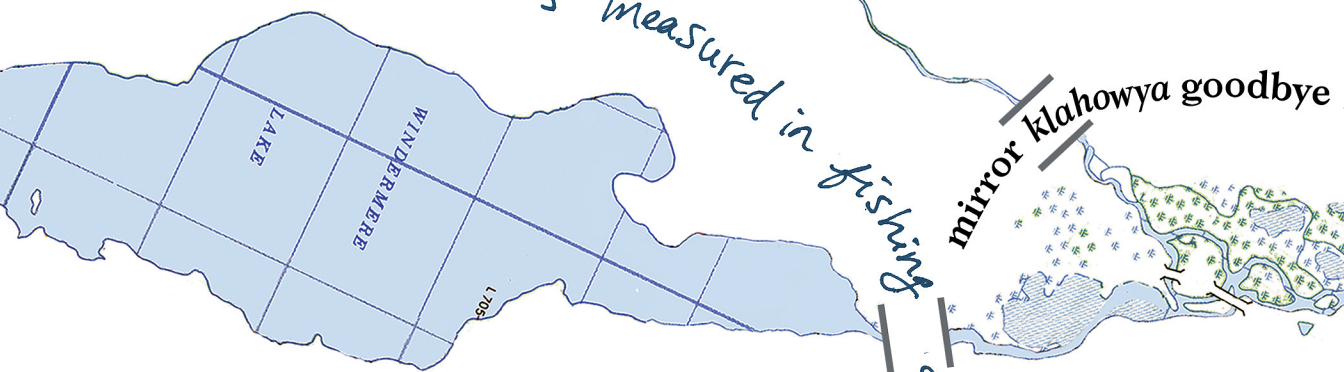


neighbours in the basin before English & after it through thousands of

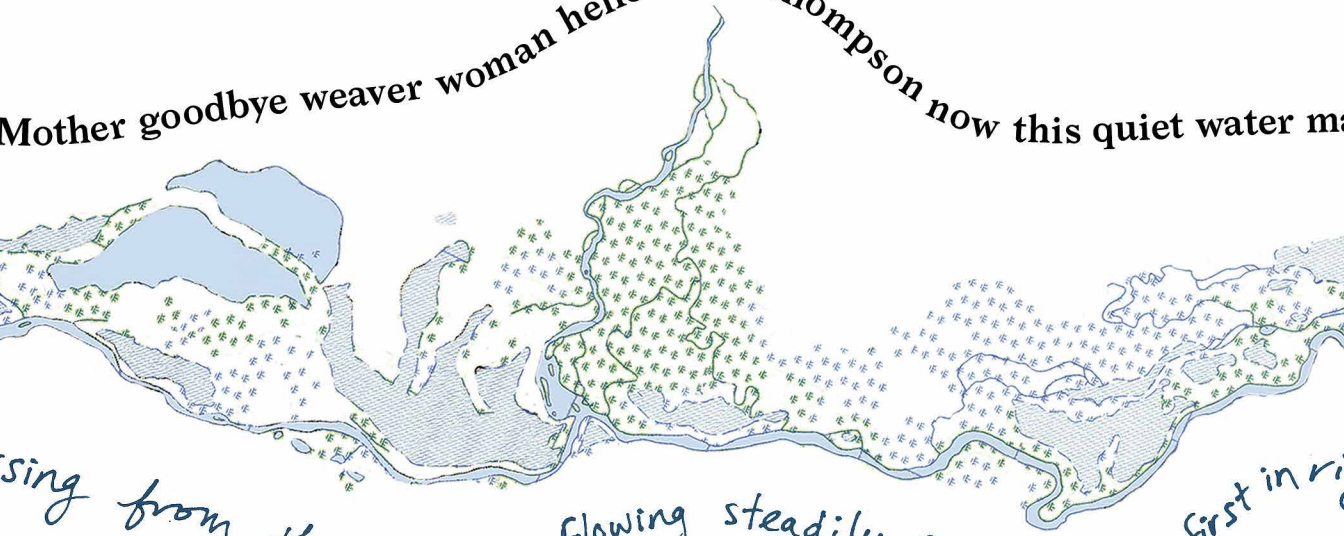


ce as a wet prelude to Pacifica meanders slow and murmurs love this skin of e

of thunderous water years measured in fishing
earth's contour hello Sister Tongue hello winding
mirror klahowya goodbye
gathering, families ri

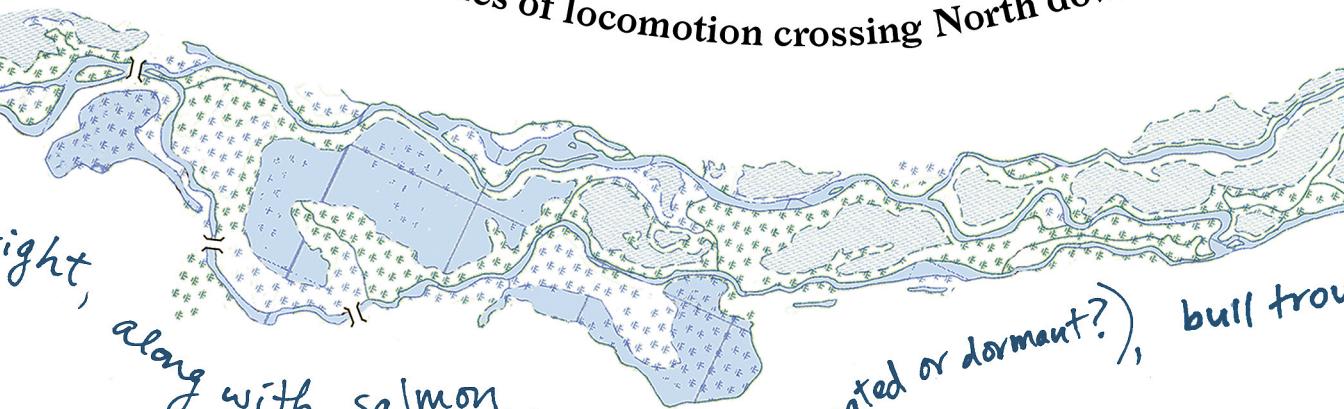


Mother goodbye weaver woman hello David Thompson now this quiet water m



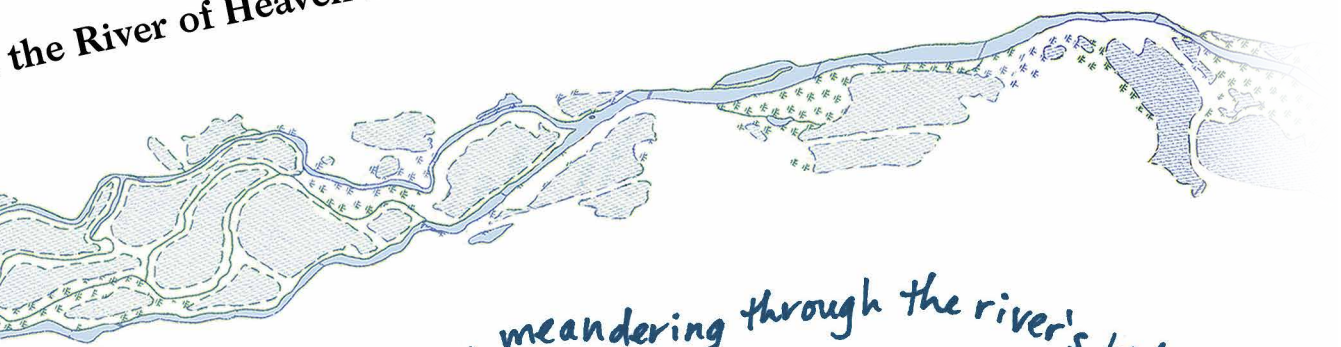
sing from the rivers flowing steadily first in time, first in r

aps diesel along the marshes of locomotion crossing North down the map of



ight, along with salmon, now blocked (extirpated or dormant?), bull trou

the River of Heaven Steamboat Mountain are you worried about a future



at, kokanee, pikeminnow, meandering through the river's kidneys, w

from *beholden*: a poem as long as the river

Fred Wah & Rita Wong

The Columbia River has been a central fact of the ecosystem of western North America/Turtle Island, a material and spiritual sustenance for Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest for thousands of years, and recently its water has been violently and systematically manipulated to feed one of the largest hydropower projects in the world.

The function of *beholden* has been to explore a field of conversation not only between two poets but, more precisely, between poetry and the River. The River has been gracious in gifting us words, thoughts, and astonishments that have validated the conditions of openness and attention in making art. This is where our words come from. We ask about the different meanings of the River. We ask about the trauma and historical devastation of the River, and how we can respond to it. We listen for the language of the River's body and the peoples' names for its parts. Finally, our poems seek to reciprocate. How can making poetry's words give back to this awesome presence of water?