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## The Virtual Water Gallery: Changing Attitudes through Art

**Louise Arnal**<sup>1</sup>, Martyn P. Clark<sup>1</sup>, Stacey Dumanski<sup>2</sup>, Efthimia Kosmas<sup>3</sup>, John W. Pomeroy<sup>1</sup>, and Corinne Schuster-Wallace<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Hydrology, University of Saskatchewan, Canmore, AB, Canada

<sup>2</sup>Global Institute for Water Security, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

<sup>3</sup>Department of Geography and Planning, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, Canada

Water is life. Water-related challenges, such as droughts, floods, wildfires, water quality degradation, permafrost thaw and glacier melt, exacerbated by climate change, affect everyone. Yet, it is challenging to communicate science on difficult, highly volatile topics such as water and climate change. Conceptualizing water-related environmental and social issues in novel ways, with engagement between diverse audiences may lead to comprehensive solutions to these complex challenges. Art can be a catalyst in the co-creation of new knowledge for the benefit of society.

The Virtual Water Gallery (VWG) is a transdisciplinary science and art project of the Global Water Futures (GWF) program. Launched in 2020, the VWG aims to provide a collaborative space for dialogues between water experts, artists, and the wider public, to explore water challenges. As part of this project, 13 artists representing women's, men's and Indigenous voices across Canada were paired with teams of GWF scientists to co-explore specific water challenges in various Canadian ecoregions and communities. These collaborations led to the co-creation of artworks exhibited online on the VWG ([www.virtualwatergallery.ca](http://www.virtualwatergallery.ca)) in 2021.

The VWG recently came to life in 2022 with an in-person exhibition in Canmore, Alberta, Canada. Surveys were developed to capture changes in perspectives regarding climate change and water challenges through this art-science exhibit. Participants of the VWG (artists and scientists), visitors to the online gallery, and visitors to the in-person exhibition in Canmore were all invited to take part in those surveys. The preliminary results from the surveys suggest that participants experienced changes in behaviour regarding water-related climate change mitigation, and that the degree of change depends on factors such as age, income and lived experience (i.e., floods and droughts). The results help elucidate how art viewers engage with art based on science and how science messages can be more effectively communicated through art.