



Read *We Are Water Protectors*, written by Carole Lindstrom and illustrated by Michaela Goade. Purchase the book from the [Carlos Bookshop](#) or [listen](#) to to Matowacipi Horse, Emory (24C) and student intern at the Carlos, read the book in the special exhibition *Each/Other: Marie Watt and Cannupa Hanska Luger* next to three artworks created by Luger, titled *This Is Not A Snake*, *The One Who Checks*, and *The One Who Balances*. Look closely at the artwork and compare it to the illustrations in the book. How is the black snake sculpture similar to the snake in the book? How are they different? Create your own assemblage out of household objects!

This project is great for:



Learning about an art technique known as assemblage



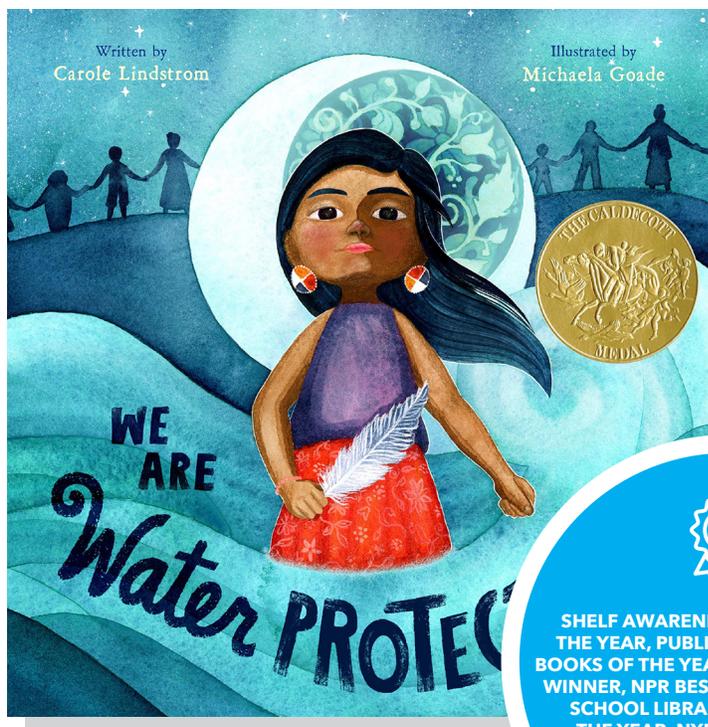
Creating art from a variety of household objects



Constructing sculptures



Creating art as environmental activism



We Are Water Protectors

Written by Carole Lindstrom
Illustrated by Michaela Goade

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Water is the first medicine. It affects and connects us all... When a black snake threatens to destroy the Earth and poison her people's water, one young water protector takes a stand to defend Earth's most sacred resource. Inspired by the many Indigenous-led movements across North America, *We Are Water Protectors* issues an urgent rallying cry to safeguard the Earth's water from harm and corruption—a bold and lyrical picture book written by Carole Lindstrom and vibrantly illustrated by Michaela Goade.



The One Who Checks, The One Who Balances. Cannupa Hanska Luger (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota, European), 2018. Ceramic, riot gear, afghan, wool surplus industrial felt, and beadwork by Kathy Elkwoman Whitman. Courtesy of the artist.

This Is Not A Snake. Cannupa Hanska Luger (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota, European), 2017. Ceramic, oil drums, ammunition cans, and found objects. Courtesy of the artist.

This large installation by artist Cannupa Hanska Luger (Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara, Lakota, European) consists of three sculptures displayed together. The largest sculpture, *This Is Not A Snake*, certainly looks like a snake! Look at the mouth. Does it remind you of anything? Luger formed the head of the snake from clay, forming its fangs to look like the nozzles of a gas pump. What is the snake's body made from? The tires, oil drums, and paint buckets are all waste products from the petro-chemical industry.

Why do you think Luger titled the work *This Is Not A Snake*? What do you think the snake represents? A Lakota prophecy foretells of a black snake that will destroy the land. Luger associates the prophecy with oil pipelines that carry fossil fuels, risking enormous environmental damage to land and water from leaks.

Look at the two figures, called *The One Who Checks* and *The One Who Balances*. What do you think they are doing? They are the warrior twins, monster-slayers from Mandan stories Luger heard as a child. Look closely at the regalia they wear. What is it made from? Luger mixes new and traditional materials in what he calls “futuristic Indigenous regalia.”



Talk Together

- **What is the black snake that is destroying the land?**
- **Can you find a snake in the book that looks like Luger's sculpture?**
- **How does the young girl in the book fight against the black snake?**
- **In the book, Nokomis says, “water is sacred.” What does that mean?**
- **How often do you use water every day? How is water important to you and your daily life?**
- **Where does the water that you use every day come from?**

Make it!



CREATE YOUR OWN ASSEMBLAGE

To build confidence and a sense of ownership in their art, it's important that children have autonomy. Lead by example by making your own assemblage with your child and let them do as much as they can on their own. The instructions below are guidelines. Children should make their artwork the way they want it to be.

What you need:

A variety of everyday household objects

such as:

- Recyclable materials like plastic bottles, shopping bags, cans, cardboard, paper, string, yarn, scrap fabric, etc.
- Natural materials like wood, sticks, leaves, rocks, pinecones, etc.
- Household objects like toys, pillows, blankets, books, buttons, etc.

Optional:

- Adhesive (hot glue or tape)

What to do:

Luger's sculpture *This Is Not A Snake* is an assemblage created out of objects he found in the world around him. Follow the directions below to create your own assemblage out of things found in and around your home or school!

- In this artwork, Luger uses waste that industries and individuals discard. The warrior twins teach us to be stewards of nature who work to protect the land. **What are other ways you can help the environment?** Let this idea be the inspiration for your own assemblage!
- Intentionally select objects around your home for your artwork. Consider how the object's use, texture, shape, color, and size relates to your idea. If the object doesn't belong to you, remember to ask for permission before you use it in your art piece!
- Designate a space for your work and begin assembling your selected objects. Are you going to assemble your artwork indoors or outdoors?
- Carefully place and arrange everything together. How does the overall form of your assemblage relate to your original idea?
- Take photos and share them on social media with family and friends.
- Unless you decide to make your assemblage into a permanent sculpture by using adhesive (such as glue or tape) to stick everything together, clean up your assemblage and return the objects back to where you found them.



Assemblage

[Uh-SEM-blidj]

A three-dimensional artwork created out of objects that are not traditionally considered artmaking materials

Learn new words



← Indigenous [In-DID-juh-niss]

Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place. It is a word that can be used to describe plants and animals that have always grown or lived in a specific environment. When used to describe people, Indigenous means that those people were the first to live in a specific place. Indigenous people today may have connections with several different tribes or communities, and some have European ancestry as well. Cannupa Hanska Luger is a member of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold Reservation in central North Dakota, which includes the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation. He also has Lakota and European ancestors.

Water Protector →

A person who takes action to keep the Earth's water safe from harm. Many Indigenous communities believe it is their responsibility to protect nature from human destruction and to be stewards for those that cannot speak for themselves (the plants, animals, minerals, land, and water).



← Regalia [Ruh-GALE-yuh]

Special clothes, accessories, and artifacts worn during traditional Indigenous ceremonies, gatherings, and celebrations.

Oral Tradition →

When people use their voice to share stories, beliefs, ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others. Oral tradition is ancient, and was the primary means of passing on knowledge to the next generation before books and videos were commonplace. Many Indigenous cultures impart their knowledge this way, and it remains important today.



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**Wedding Vessel with
Avanyu (Rain Serpent)
Motif.**

Margaret Tafoya.
New Mexico, North America,
K'aoivu (Santa Clara Pueblo).
Late 20th Century.
Ceramic.
2016.10.1



[Click here
to learn more.](#)

While the Lakota prophecy and Luger's sculpture depict snakes as a metaphor for harm, they can also be seen as divine creatures who help and heal. Created by Indigenous artist Margaret Tafoya (1904–2001, Tewa, Corn Blossom), this ceramic wedding vessel depicts the serpent **Avanyu**, a bringer of rain whose image is also found on ancient American rock carvings called **petroglyphs**. For the Tewa tribe, whose homelands are in the hot, arid southwest desert, rain brings life, allowing plants to grow and animals to thrive.

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