

**ANNEMARIE LAYMAN**

**OUR PRECIOUS EARTH—RIGHT WHALES**

*Acrylic print/pastel \$225.00 16 x 13 inches*



It is a tragedy that whales have been found too often entangled in fishing lines and nets at our coasts. Several humpback were rescued this year at Canada's west coast. In the Pacific Northwest and the Salish Sea there are only 75 killer whales still left alive. On both coasts and in the St. Lawrence Estuary, the Bay of Fundy and New Brunswick, whales encounter dredging, commercial fishing, recreational boating and construction. They are exposed to contaminants including PCBs, DDT mercury and lead.

The North Atlantic right whales have a slower pace when they travel and therefore were easy prey to hunters in the past. Although much of this has changed, it is human activity which is their biggest threat. Now in 2020 only 411 right whales are known to exist out of 14,000 in the past. Of these species 30 are found in Canadian waters. More than 70% of these whales are scarred from fishing gear. Right whales are vast distance migrates travelling through heavy commercial fishing and shipping routes.

The World Wildlife Federation for Canada has worked with lobster fishers to adopt practices that limit entanglement such as using less rope and having lines set lower and tighter. Recently scientists have been collecting whale poop to access the mammals stress levels, health and reproductive hormones. Nutrients released in the fecal matter are known to increase phytoplankton growth in order to maintain a

healthy marine ecosystem. Collecting fecal matter has been done with the help of sniffer dogs, especially a Rottweiler named Fargo. Fargo belongs to "at-sea dog" teams that have been especially trained to find feces of right whales. Apparently Fargo is an expert in his field.

Canadians have been known for the celebration of their wildlife. We must therefore cherish, honour and protect our wildlife for the future of our children and grandchildren.

Bibliography: WWF Whales.