

Mosaïcultures

Mary Collet

In September, my sister Patricia and I had the good fortune to be visiting Quebec City while it was hosting Mosaïcultures. This vast, magnificent display of plant-covered sculptures is based on the theme: *Once Upon a Time . . . Earth*—“a hymn to the beauty of life on this planet.”

Mosaïcultures has been staged in other areas of Ontario and usually takes two to three years to prepare. The exhibit in Quebec City was completed in just one and a half years, rushed by the Provincial Governor who said that Canadians, having suffered through the pandemic, needed something for their souls. It opened in March 2022 and closed at the end of October.

The life-size sculptures are grouped into 20 tableaux. Each tableau and many individual sculptures are accompanied by legends that describe threats to species and the environment caused by global warming and unsustainable practices. Many legends include Native myths pertinent to the animals being depicted

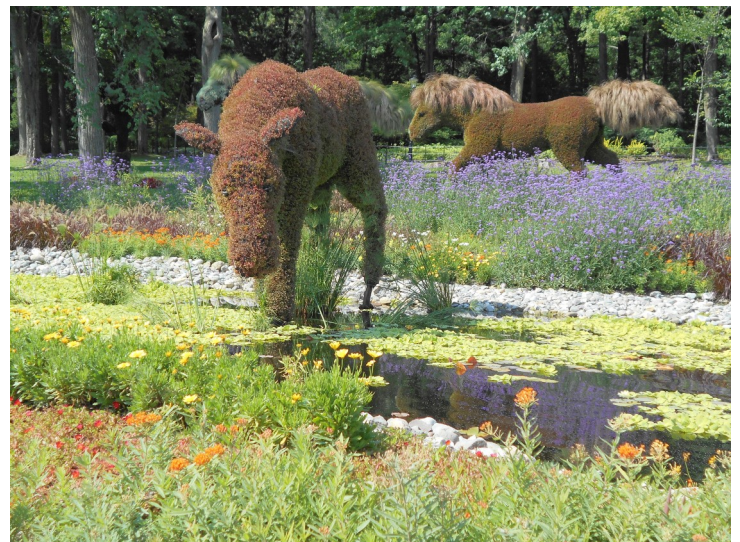


Mother Earth

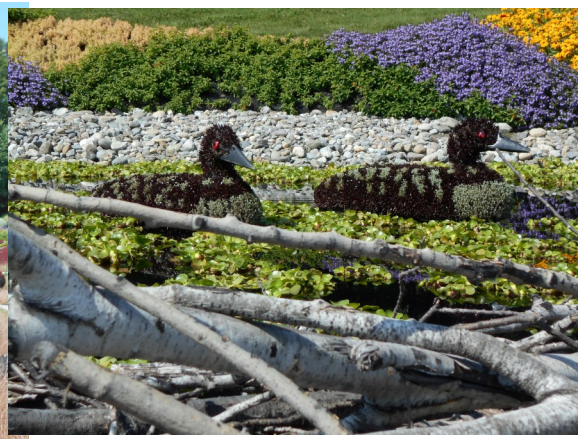
MOTHER EARTH, or THE WENDAT MYTH OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The Wendat myth of the creation of the world tells us that in the beginning, the Wendat lived in the Sky World. One day, a Wendat woman named Yâa'tayenhtsihk fell ill. The Wendat tried to cure her by extracting medicine from the roots of a fruit tree. Unfortunately, this created a hole and the tree and Yâa'tayenhtsihk fell through it. She was deposited by geese on the back of Great Turtle, who was part of the Water World. Several aquatic animals tried to search for the earth from the roots of the tree at the bottom of the water, but only Grandmother Toad succeeded. This earth was then spread across the back of Great Turtle, forming the island known today as America.

In this fresco, a nuance has been added. All the continents have been included on the back of Great Turtle in order to represent the world today. This fresco takes on its full meaning in the common thread of the exhibition *Once Upon a Time...the Earth*.



The wire-based sculptures are covered by 20 varieties of *Alternanthera* (joyweed) and succulents, especially sedum. Plants are watered through an intricate, hidden irrigation system. A sizeable team of workers keeps the sculptures trimmed and the areas weed-free.



Mosaïcultures is an imaginative, breathtaking tribute to the natural world.

The Sparrow Hawk, or *Yāndehsonhk* in Huron-Wendat, is a dormant clan in the Wendake community. According to Wendat stories, this clan appeared following the arrival of an orphan Wendat girl who no longer remembered her clan. Having been kidnapped by a huge sparrow hawk who took her to its nest beyond the clouds, she managed to save herself thanks to one of the young sparrow hawks who brought her back to solid ground. Once landed, the orphan stripped off her feathers and ran away. When she became a mother, she gave the collected feathers to her children who were called Sparrow Hawk. They thus became the ancestors of this clan.

Hawks (*Accipiter* 'sp.) are easily recognizable by their very particular flight. After a few wing beats, they fly silently in search of their prey. Unfortunately, a significant reduction in the number of individuals has been observed in recent years, due to the clearing of woodlands, which are their breeding habitats, and poisoning by insecticides. Their prey, insectivores for the most part, accumulate these chemical substances found in contaminated insects which then impacts the hawks.