

“The human mind may not have evolved enough to be able to comprehend deep time, it may only be able to measure it.. at least, that’s what geologists wonder sometimes... they wonder to what extent humans truly sense the passage of millions of years, they wonder to what extent it is possible to absorb a set of facts and move with them in a sensory manner beyond the recording intellect and into the abyssal eons.”

(John Mcphee, Annals of the Former World, 1998)

“THERE’S THE BIG ROCK!!” proudly yells the two year old from the car driving west past the Okotoks Erratic.

Although she may only see the top inches of the rock for a split second from the car seat, she observes and reveres its presence. The two year old has known the rock longer than language. I wonder what she has sensed, witnessed, and learned from this prehistoric rock?

520 - 600 million years ago, sand and sediment from a sea floor was buried, compacted, and heated to form rock before it cracked and rose into the Rocky Mountains near present day Jasper, Alberta. During the last ice age, 10,000 - 30,000 years ago, the mountains produced a massive rockslide, scattering boulders atop a glacier that was gradually moving south. The glacier then carried the Okotoks (the Blackfoot word for *rocks*) 400 kilometers before depositing it in the foothills and retreating to the mountains.

Last year, walking around the edge of the Okotoks Erratic with the two year old, we began noticing the glass. Submerged in the soil, on the surface, and circling the big rock is decades and decades of broken glass. An aggregate of green, clear, brown, blue, and yellow glass shards from bottles emptied of their contents and smashed against the rock: pieces from skipping stone to pebble size and textures from razor sharp to dulled beach glass. After a rainfall or snowmelt the complexion of the soil continually shifts, pushing new glass to the surface, and welcoming previously visible pieces back to the underland. Each piece secretly holds its own signature theory of time. How is it that these transparent, static shards, confident as stars, point our interpretations through the *then* and beyond the *now*?

I began collecting the pieces to get them out of the two year old’s path. Gathering the shards and walking around the Okotoks, I understood that both the rock and the bottles are made from sand. The rock which began as prehistoric ocean sediment became a mountain range before travelling through glacial melt and Blackfoot creation story* to its current location in the foothills. The bottles, also once sand, travelled a great distance to this point of collision here in the foothills. Although the rock and the glass are motionless and soundless, I was struck by the soundscape of previous journeys, crashes, and connectedness. When I think about any of this too long, my imagination strains and suddenly distorts as if a wall of rock smashes my filament-thin conclusions back into nebulous glass specks and returns me back to the foothills of now.

I look at the two year old and the two year old points to the ground.

**Our Record in Stone* by Blair First Rider and Laura Golebiowski

<https://albertahistoricplaces.com/2020/06/17/our-record-in-stone-blackfoot-perspectives-of-okotoks/>

Works Checklist:

Sliding Stars

Session with printer paper, toner, tissue paper, c-prints, and packing tape.

No date.

Shores

Session with bottle glass, second hand picture frames (glass, paper, masonite), and nails.

No date.

Road cut

Session with bottle glass, coroplast sign letters, thread, packing tape, wood, paint, and hardware.

No date.

Sand box

Session with window screen, thread, found wood, tissue paper, water color, bleach, blanket and packing tape.

No date.

Sprinkle Crinkle Twinkle

Session with bottle glass, river rock, found drum, salad spinner, thread, packing tape. looped audio (9:15).

No date.

Broken glass used in all works in *Erratic Sessions* was collected from the perimeter of the Okotoks Erratic with Mona Bess Morel in 2024. Thank you to Indigenous Cultural Advisors Elder Blair First Rider and Laura Golebiowski for their time, experience, and knowledge sharing. Thanks also to Area Manager Chris Weber for his correspondence.

Audio from *Sprinkle Crinkle Twinkle* was recorded and mixed with Jay Bowcott from Rabbit Hole Recording in Diamond Valley, Alberta.

Glass from *Shores* and *Road cut* was fired and fused with Julia Reimer and Tyler Rock from FireBrand Glass Studio in Diamond Valley, Alberta.

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