

Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Lets'lo:tse!tun *Toxicological Encroachment of Civilization on First Nations Land, 1992*

At the heart of our presentation lies the monumental painting by Yuxweluptun titled “Toxicological Encroachment of Civilization on First Nations Land, 1992.” This remarkable artwork was exhibited only once at the National Gallery of Canada as part of the *Land, Spirit, Power* exhibition, which featured a collection of contemporary artists, including James Luna and Faye Heavyshield, offering their responses and contribution to the then nascent discussions on cultural identity from the perspective of First Nations. This four-panel painting vividly portrays an indigenous landscape suffering from environmental devastation. The artwork delves into crucial themes of land rights, environmental destruction, and Indigenous sovereignty, making it an essential and impactful work. As art institutions and private collections begin their task of filling gaps in their narratives with regard to indigenous voices, it is crucial to present this early work.

In “Toxicological Encroachment of Civilization on First Nations Land”, Yuxweluptun paints a mesmerizing yet destabilizing scene of a devastated, dying world. At the focal point of the image, Mother Earth lies subdued, dismembered, and eroded by the effects of acid rain. The once vibrant Ovoid-filled mountaintops, forming animated masks that breathed life and colour into the landscape, are now melting away, almost decaying in the background. This evocative portrayal presents a powerful visual representation of the consequences of toxicological intrusions in a once-spirit-filled world, now tainted and polluted.

At the painting’s entrance, pale pink welcoming figures stand guard, clutching barrels brimming with toxic pollutants and poisonous chemicals. While scientists donning hazmat suits concentrated their efforts on addressing specific environmental concerns like the 1989s ban on ozone-depleting substances, they inadvertently overlooked numerous other pressing issues that demanded attention. These solemn figures symbolize the intricate link between pollution and power, highlighting how their negligent and unsettling actions have contributed to our present-day toxic environment. The fractured sky serves as a poignant reminder of the melting ice, an unmistakable symbol of climate change.