

Local artist included in Ducks Unlimited legacy project

[Frank Peebles](#) / Prince George Citizen

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Western artist Lesley White feels like she can soar, after Ducks Unlimited Canada gave her a surprising and unsolicited compliment.

It's a compliment that's taking White's work all across the nation, waving her painting reputation like a flag.

The massive conservation group routinely uses artists to illustrate their purpose - protecting environmental values from coast to coast - and to raise funds for their projects. Since 2006, White's paintings have been accepted into Ducks Unlimited's national print portfolio five times. Those achievements followed an application and curatorial process, but she wasn't even aware of what was in store for her this year.

As part of Canada's 150th anniversary celebrations, Ducks Unlimited created a special art initiative. They selected four images, only four, from their past portfolios to comprise their Canada 150 Legacy Collection. One of those paintings is entitled Remuda and depicts horses in the dust running along a fence. It is one of White's works.

"I'm the only Canadian and the only woman in the collection," White said. "The other three are American. And they are some of the best wildlife artists in North America. They are Daniel Smith, Terry Isaac and Jay Kemp. I actually have a hard time saying my own name in the same sentence with them."

Five hundred prints will be made and framed of each painting in the Legacy Collection. They will be sold across Canada through a sealed bid process.

"I had no inkling this was going on," she said. "They just contacted me and said they were interested in Remuda, just asking permission to include it in a small reproduction series. Later I found out what they were up to. It was such an honour."

Earning this distinction follows a dusty trail back through time and across the mountains and prairies to a farm at Oak Lake, Manitoba. White grew up somewhat in Winnipeg but somewhat on that farm. Perhaps it was the experience of both city life and country living that imbedded western imagery so deeply in her mind, but that is what took over once she became an artist years later.

She didn't take painting up until her 30s. She said it was when the required personal discipline took root. Seven years ago, a new house was built incorporating her dream studio and painting is now her profession.

"Up to about 15 years ago I was painting everything: abstracts, florals, whatever came to mind," White said. "But I started to notice the western subject matter coming out more and more. I started gravitating to that. I eventually realized I should get really good at one thing instead of being mediocre at several things. Western work was what came to me."

She also opted to focus on oils. Prince George is heavily populated with watercolour artists, pastel painters, digital creators, and other mediums. White is not alone in the oils genre but it's a small group.

"Oils suit my style because the colours are so rich," she said. "No other medium does that and I like the slow drying time. You can glaze with it, blend it, it's really malleable. When you get into the commercial market it is really highly regarded but that's not why I use it. For me, it serves my art."

Her works are popular at rodeos and western conventions. She's been featured at the Calgary Stampede juried auction, won Best In Show and People's Choice awards at the annual B.C. Cowboy Heritage Festival in Kamloops, and Honorable Mention for Artistic Excellence at the Salon International event in Texas.

She often paints from photographs she takes on subject matter trips, but a favourite activity, too, is painting "plein air" where the artist picks an outdoor spot to sit and paint a

scene from. She has a week-long master class in this style coming up soon at the Flying U Ranch.

Her work was recently featured at an exhibit in the Prince George Public Library and she will have works this year in the juried Ponoka Stampede live auction. Her work will also be displayed soon in the SpeedDee Printers art window.

"It's busy. I'm just trying to squeeze in easel time," she said.

Her time may be limited, but for Remuda the profile will soon be national because of Ducks Unlimited.