

Ascending is a large mosaic, original art piece that depicts the journey of the spirit between this life and the afterlife. The art piece was designed and created by Wayne Ashley, a 41 year old Cree resident of the Alexander First Nation who donated the three meter mosaic to the Holy Cross Cemetery in Edmonton, Alberta to remember the lives of those buried in unmarked graves. Wayne has gone on to design and create a large mosaic table depicting Prophecy for Edmonton City Hall and is presently working on a mosaic to be dedicated to the courage and sacrifice of the 9/11 First Responders in New York City.



Ascending

Centuries old descriptive imagery is used to express the native belief of Ascension.

The meaning of the entire image is mortal life, eternal life and the ascension that links the two.

The muted colors of the individual mosaic pieces blend together to give form to images of the tree of life, of earth and heaven, and of the ascension from mortal life into healing and completion. The connecting lines between the mosaic pieces that are in all parts of the design, that lock all the pieces into place, represent the Creator. It is the Creator's presence in heaven and earth and in every spirit and being that makes all life possible and binds all the phases of life together.

The montage starts with the central figure of the tree of life, centered between dark and light, between good and evil. The trunk of the tree incorporates earth figures into the life passages it represents. In native culture images of the powerful bear and the wise eagle represent spirits of power and protection that guide humankind with wisdom and courage along life's journey.

Centered at the lowest point of the tree trunk is the turtle representing the beginning of life. Its two opposing shades, light and dark, symbolize the balance in life and the balance of humanity with nature. The turtle anchors the very strong image of the teepee that is the central focus of the trunk of the tree, representing home and family. The position of the teepee in the mosaic shows the direct progress from the beginning of life through life's lessons. Growth in life comes with the realization that the needs of the community outweigh the needs of the individual. The progress continues through the ascension to arrive at the place of knowledge, wisdom and completion in the afterlife.

Above the trunk of the tree, are the spreading branches which represent the afterlife. This branch image encompasses the symbol of the spirit of wisdom to whom all ascend. It is represented as an eternal circle that contains body, spirit, mind and heart. The spirit that is the completion of this circle is depicted by a bear claw, the symbol of healing. The lines throughout all the images converge in the circle. These lines represent the Creator who is all.

Beneath this pivotal, strong image of complete healing, is a two-toned hand reaching up towards the spirit, a symbolic representation of humankind's relentless search for knowledge of life, understanding of the spirit and the hunger for healing and completion of body, spirit, mind and heart.

Bridging the transition between mortal and everlasting life are two creations of the spirit who guide all people into the presence of the spirit in the afterlife. The figures are symbolic of transcendence and freedom. Their faces and hands are raised to the spirit and their form and coloring appear as light as air as they move along the ascending passage with their precious cargo.

This montage is dedicated to those who lie in unmarked places and who live in our memories and hearts forever.

Rest in Peace