



Hello! It's still winter here in Minnesota where the dragons have been having a wonderful time visiting lots of schools and inspiring over 2000 children in the past few months! I'm also branching out into teaching sumi art classes for kids and getting ready to write my Super Simple Sumi book. And...I'll be at the [Bloomington Writers Festival](#) on **March 19th at the Bloomington Art Center in Minnesota. Then it's back to the Pacific Northwest!**

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Northwest Beaches: Fish Under the Ice.

Have you ever wondered how fish in all those Minnesota lakes make it through the cold winters? Well the dragons have - it's their food source! It turns out that in the beginning of winter the fish get the oxygen they need from the mixing of air and water by waves on the surface of the lake. But as the lake freezes this source of oxygen is cut off and oxygen comes only from the photosynthesis of plants in the lake. As winter progresses the oxygen first disappears from the bottom of the lake because bacteria use it to decompose dead plants on the bottom. Then the fish move up towards the surface - great for all those ice fishermen with their



Yvonne Palka

Yvonne is the award-winning sumi-e artist who wrote and illustrated *Dragon Fire, Ocean Mist*. A retired college professor, grandmother, biologist and naturalist, she is passionate about introducing children and adults to the wonders of the natural world.

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little houses on the lake!

But...if there is lots of snow, like this winter, the snow covering the ice blocks the light and the plants stop photosynthesizing, die and begin decomposing, which uses up the oxygen in the water. No more oxygen for the fish! This can lead to big ["winterkils" of fish](#). In some lakes the Minnesota Dept of Natural Resources installs ["lake aeration systems"](#) to effectively oxygenate the water so the fish can survive. The dragons thank the DNR!

"Yvonne's presentations were just awesome! The kids were so enthused and she really kept their attention. If you had put a paintbrush in their hands they would have been painting for the rest of the day!"

Several third grade teachers at Woodland Elementary School, Maple Grove, MN

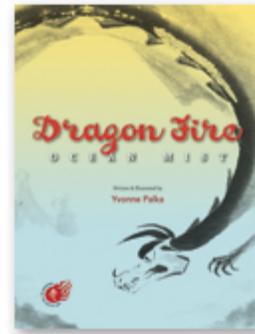
Dragons: Mishipeshu - The Great Water Lynx of Lake Superior.

I've wondered if there were Ojibwe legends about dragon like creatures in Lake Superior, and, sure enough, I found stories of [Mishipeshu, the great water lynx](#) that is said to guard copper deposits that exist on various islands and the Michigan shore of Lake Superior. Pictographs at several places show him quite clearly. He looks quite like a dragon with horns, scales and spikes along his back and has a cat like head and paws (see the photo).

Mishipeshu guards copper deposits, and like Asian dragons guarding water, he is not one to be trifled with. When people stole copper from him, disaster often ensued - ships were wrecked and people died of mysterious causes. The legends continue to this day and teach that there are harsh consequences for exploiting the earth in the wrong way. The stories promote respect and gratitude for the gifts of nature and stewardship of our natural resources. Just like the stories of Pacific Northwest dragons!

Asian Art: Hoppy New Year!

It's a little past Chinese New Year (Feb 3rd this year) which inaugurated the Year of the Rabbit. So a belated Hoppy New Year! And, of course, our Super Simple Sumi animal this time is a rabbit. Start by making a



Dragon Fire Ocean Mist

Written & Illustrated by
Yvonne Palka
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Happy ice fisherman in front of his ice fishing house



Pictograph of Mishipeshu, The Great Water Lynx, on rocks by Lake Superior



Super Simple Sumi Rabbit

gray blob for the back haunches and add some gray for the back and neck. Then add a thick curved line for the face and make two ears. Add a line for the front and back legs. When the gray has dried, take a small brush with black ink or a black marker and add the eye, nose and whiskers. May your bunny hop right off the page!



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