THE WATER WALKER

FILM SYNOPSIS

In 2019, 14-year-old Autumn was named the chief water commissioner by the Anishinabek Nation, a position previously held by her late Great Aunt Josephine Mandamin, an elder and founding member of the water protectors movement. THE WATER WALKER traces the roots, passion and perseverance of young Autumn and follows her story as she prepares to speak at the United Nations.

DIRECTED BY JAMES BURNS

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THE WATER WALKER

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USING THIS GUIDE

This educator guide is intended to provide context and background to the film THE WATER WALKER, offering a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing, and Post-Viewing activities that underscore educational benchmarks of Montana Core and National Core Content Standards, as well as Montana Office of Public Instruction’s Indian Education for All Essential Understandings. This guide aims to provide a framework for teachers to encourage active engagement before, during, and after viewing the film in an effort to engage in a deep dive into the content and craft of the filmmaking process and the stories they bring to life.

THE WATER WALKER

FILM SUBJECTS/INTERVIEWEES:
◊ Autumn Peltier, Lead, Activist
◊ Stephanie Peltier, Mother
◊ Aunt Josephine, Aunt, Activist
◊ Graham Greene, Narrator

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Big Sky Film Institute would like to pay our respects to the Anishinaabeg people of the Ottawa River Valley west across Northern Ontario and to the plains of Saskatchewan south to the Northeast corner of North Dakota, northern Minnesota and Michigan. We honor the path Indigenous peoples all over the world have shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come and hope this guide offers itself as an opportunity to better understand the stories of the land.
BY THE NUMBERS:
- In the 2016 census, Statistics Canada counted nearly 36,000 Canadians who consider Ojibwe-Potawatomi languages, part of the Anishinaabemowin language family, as their first language.
- As of 2016, nearly 46% of the nearly 750,000 people who identified as First Nations, lived on reserves governed by the Indian Act.
- Similar to Indian reservations in the U.S., First Nations reserves represent colonial governance, although they were set aside from traditional territories for spiritual and physical use. Consequently, they serve as areas of primary importance for raising awareness to a number of serious issues faced by Indigenous peoples, e.g., water pollution, natural resource depletion, poverty, culture loss, climate change, and intergenerational trauma.
- There are more than 630 First Nations/Indigenous Bands in Canada, speaking 50+ distinctive languages. Multiple Bands may occupy one reserve.
- When Autumn Peltier was 8, she learned her community had been on a boil-water advisory for the past 10 years. In 2015, when she was 11, the Canadian government had lifted 88 long-term drinking advisories, cleaning contaminated water on reserves; By 2020, 61 long-term drinking water advisories remained in effect, although efforts to remove them continue.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the great diversity of Indigenous groups across Canada and Montana through exploration of some of the key concepts of Montana's IEFA-Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians, primarily EU2, 3 and 4.
- Students will make connections between histories, traditional life-ways and place-based education of Montana Tribes and Anishinaabeg peoples.
- Students will identify past policies and contemporary issues surrounding water rights and water advocacy that impact Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States.
- Students will discuss multiple ways to communicate complex ideas and gain an understanding of culturally relevant symbolism.
- Students will identify the importance of telling this story within the context of a documentary film.

GUIDING QUESTIONS
- What are some similarities and differences between the Anishinaabeg and the American Indian tribes living in Montana?
- What are some of the ways people connect with their histories, traditions, and place?
- How do people communicate their values?
- What are some of the ways education might be more culturally congruent and holistic?
- How does documentary film spotlight stories and histories, and what is its role in underscoring diverse representation on the screen?
Given the complexity of the themes THE WATER WALKER explores, this film is most suitable for use with middle and high school-aged students (Grades 6-12). Teachers are encouraged to preview the content to best incorporate the film into their classroom teachings. The film’s content, themes, and message is most clearly connected to the following areas of National Core and Montana Core Content Standards:

**MONTANA COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

**Media Arts Standards for Grades 9-12**

**CREATING**

Anchor Standard #1:
Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Integrate ideas, develop artistic goals, and problem solve in media arts creation processes.

Anchor Standard #2:
Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. Apply criteria in developing and refining artistic ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes.

**PRODUCING**

Anchor Standard #4:
Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation. Synthesize various art forms and themes into media artwork productions considering the reaction and interaction of the audience.

**RESPONDING**

Anchor Standard #7:
Perceive and analyze artistic work. Synthesize the qualities and relationships of the components in a variety of media artworks to create intention and persuasion.

**CONNECTING**

Anchor Standard #10:
Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. Demonstrate the use of media artworks to synthesize new meaning and knowledge that reflect and form cultural experiences.

Anchor Standard #11:
Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding, including traditional and contemporary artistic ideas and works by American Indians. Analyze how media artworks and ideas relate to various contexts, purposes, and values.

**Earth and Space Science for Grades 6-8**

Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per-capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth’s systems including indigenous populations.

**Visual Arts Standards for Grades 6-8**

**RESPONDING**

Anchor Standard #8:
Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic works. Collaborate to interpret artworks.

**CONNECTING**

Anchor Standard #11:
Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding, including traditional and contemporary artistic ideas and works by American Indians. Distinguish different ways that artworks represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity.

**Visual Arts Standards for Grades 9-12**

**CREATING**

Anchor Standard #1:
Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Develop plans for creating art and design works using various materials and methods from traditional and contemporary practices.

Anchor Standard #2:
Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. Create art or design projects in response to contemporary issues that demonstrate an awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative works.

**CONNECTING**

Anchor Standard #10:
Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. Incorporate knowledge of personal, social, cultural, and historical life to create artworks.

Anchor Standard #11:
Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding, including traditional and contemporary artistic ideas and works by American Indians. Compare uses of art in a variety of personal, societal, cultural, and historical contexts.

**Social Studies Content Standards for Grades 6-8:**

SS.G.6-8.2:
Identify the location of places and regions in the world and understand their physical, political, and cultural characteristics.

SS.G.6-8.4:
Explain how the environment and geographic features have affected people and how people have affected the environment throughout Montana, the United States, and the world.

SS.H.6-8.3:
Analyze how, since European contact, historical events and policies have mutually impacted American Indian and European societies.

SS.H.6-8.6:
Understand that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.
MONTANA COMMON CORE STANDARDS (CONT.)

Social Studies Content Standards for Grades 9-12
SS.C.9-12.2: Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of domestic and international relationships.
SS.C.9-12.10: Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
SS.G.9-12.4: Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them, including American Indians.
SS.H.9-12.7: Analyze how historical, cultural, social, political, ideological, and economic contexts shape people’s perspectives.

English Language Arts and Literacy Content Standards for Grades 8
Reading Standards for Literature, Key Ideas and Details
RL.8.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text; analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; and provide an objective summary of the text.

Range of Reading
RL.8.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of Grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

English Language Arts and Literacy Content Standards for Grades 9-12
For Informational Texts, Key Ideas and Details
RL.9-10.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text, including those by and about American Indians; analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; and provide an objective summary of the text.

Craft and Structure
RL.11-12.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text, including texts by and about Montana American Indians, in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
RL.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

THE WATER WALKER

NATIONAL CORE STANDARDS

Media Arts

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
Enduring Understanding: Interpretation and appreciation require consideration of the intent, form, and context of the media and artwork.
Essential Question(s): How do people relate to and interpret media artworks?

MA:Re8.1.6 (6th Grade)
Analyze the intent of a variety of media artworks, using given criteria.

MA:Re8.1.7 (7th Grade)
Analyze the intent and meaning of a variety of media artworks, using self-developed criteria.

MA:Re8.1.8 (8th Grade)
Analyze the intent and meanings of a variety of media artworks, focusing on intentions, forms, and various contexts.

MA:Re8.1.I (HS Proficient)
Analyze the intent, meanings, and reception of a variety of media artworks, focusing on personal and cultural contexts.

CONNECTING Anchor Standard #10:
Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding
Enduring Understanding: Media artworks and ideas are better understood and produced by relating them to their purposes, values, and various contexts.
Essential Question(s): How does media arts relate to its various contexts, purposes, and values? How does investigating these relationships inform and deepen the media artist’s understanding and work?

MA:Cn11.1.6 (6th Grade)
Research and show how media artworks and ideas relate to personal life, and social, community, and cultural situations, such as personal identity, history, and entertainment.

MA:Cn11.1.7 (7th Grade)
Research and demonstrate how media artworks and ideas relate to various situations, purposes and values, such as community, vocation, and social media.

MA:Cn11.1.8 (8th Grade)
Demonstrate and explain how media artworks and ideas relate to various contexts, purposes, and values, such as democracy, environment, and connecting people and places.

MA:Cn11.1.I (HS Proficient)
Demonstrate and explain how media artworks and ideas relate to various contexts, purposes, and values, such as social trends, power, equality, and personal/cultural identity.
Essential Understanding 2
Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

Key Concepts:
- Autumn’s aunt, Josephine Mandamin, known as a “Grandmother Water Walker,” worked as the Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner, taking on the responsibility of a clean-water advocate to raise awareness to the issues and protect future generations.
- Josephine’s activism was inspired by her Ojibwe worldview and spiritual teachings, where water was traditionally viewed as a sacred, living being, which hears and can sense what people are feeling and saying. As a woman and elder, she was a giver of life and a keeper of water, believing it was her obligation to pass down her water knowledge.

OPI’S DEFINITION OF CULTURE
• A system of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are shared by a group of people. It includes customs, language, and material artifacts. These are transmitted from generation to generation, rarely with explicit instructions.
Essential Understanding 3:
The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

The story put forth in the film THE WATER WALKER is an excellent example of the overlooked history of how Aboriginal and Indigenous people have had a major impact upon what we know about the land and what it means to balance one’s cultural or personal education with that which is taught in the classroom.

Key Concepts:
- According to Anishinaabe elders and their oral history traditions, Anishinaabe has its meaning interpreted differently:
  - a spontaneous being
  - a being made out of nothing
  - the “second man,” which came from the Great Flood
  - the original man
  - good humans
  - “people who live upon the Earth in the right way”

- The word Anishinaabe is not a substitute for Ojibwe, but has deeper, cultural meaning and stems from creation stories, where some say it was the first uttered word, anishinaa.

- The Anishinaabe language is Anishinaabemowin, which is concentrated around the Great Lakes Region, and spans from Manitoba to Quebec.

- In 1764, the Anishinaabeg played a key role in the signing of the Treaty of Niagara, establishing a nation-to-nation relationship with Britain.

- The Residential school system banned the Anishinaabeg from speaking their language and practicing their cultural ceremonies, causing ongoing political, economic, and social impacts for them and several other First Nations across Canada.

- Similar to many other Indigenous groups, the Anishinaabeg have used a variety of methods to continue transmitting knowledge to teach young people their histories, incorporating diverse traditional knowledge systems.

Essential Understanding 4:
Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:

I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.

II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.

III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.

Key Concepts:
- Similar to North American Indian Tribes, the Anishinaabeg signed numerous Treaties, surrendering millions of acres of land in Canada and which led to the creation of reserves for them to reside on, including all pre-Confederation treaties in Southern Ontario, the 1850 Robinson Treaties, the Manitou Island Treaties, the Numbered Treaties (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9), and the 1923 Williams Treaties.

- Indigenous groups across Canada, including Anishinaabeg, have suffered under assimilation, colonization policies, and discriminatory practices, such as the residential school system and the 1876 Indian Act.

- The Indian Act replaced traditional structures of governance. Hereditary Chiefs were not recognized and women were forbidden to engage in the newly created “band-council” political structure. Several ceremonies, such as the potlatch, sun dance, pow-wows, jingle-dress dancing, and dancing outside of the reserve were outlawed.

- First Nations communities couldn’t file land claims against the government and their movement off of the reserves was restricted. Children were required to attend residential schools, many of which were far away from their homelands. Generations of children were stripped of their identities, cultures, and languages, and were subject to years of abuse in the residential schools, which created decades of generational grief and trauma.
TYING INTO ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS REGARDING MONTANA INDIANS

Essential Understanding 4 Continued

Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for tribes for their exclusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from tribes only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:

I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states

Key Concepts:

- Much of the water on First Nations reserves was contaminated, due to a number of different reasons, such as leaking pipelines and pollution. Signs of toxicity in the communities warned the people not to drink the water, without boiling it first, lest they get sick.

BEFORE WE BEGIN... A NOTE TO TEACHERS

It is important that all students feel safe and respected when studying the themes of THE WATER WALKER. The strategies below can help students and teachers support positive learning while studying the film:

- Use inviting and inclusive language when discussing themes and ideas from the film. This includes respectful reflection on race and privilege, highlighting that contribution to the conversation is an option for students, not a requirement.
- Encourage students to be active listeners, meaning they are creating space for others to share their experiences and perspectives and providing encouraging response.
- Underscore that the film they are about to watch is a documentary, meaning this film follows real people and lived experiences. Be respectful of personal differences and keep an open mind.
- Remind students to challenge ideas rather than people, with language such as, “I don’t see it that way...”, or “Your comments bring up questions for me...”
- Take ownership of comments and don’t put blame on others. Reframing input as one’s own (“I think...”), avoiding accusational language such as “You should...”
- Give plenty of time for students to think and reflect on discussion topics. You’re digging into some big topics!
- Preface conversation with the Land Acknowledgement on Page 2, engaging in respectful language around personal and cultural needs of students, staff or visitors that identify as Indigenous.
PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) FILM CLIP - Exploring the Difference Between Subject VS Theme

- BEFORE YOU BEGIN...What IS the difference between Subject and Theme?
  - SUBJECT: The topic/local point of the film.
  - THEME: A recurring idea that illuminates an aspect of the human condition. The theme is the most basic lifeblood of a film, it tells you what the film is about. This differs from the subject, which is the topic of the film. A theme gives a story/subject focus and depth and brings out universals from the subject of a complex/simple film subject. A good theme should have multiple layers: personal level, political level, or spiritual level

- Questions to ask students:
  - What is the general subject of this film?
    - Ex: In THE WATER WALKER the subject is the story of a young woman, Autumn Peltier, who is preparing to speak at the United Nations as the chief water commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation.
  - What are the universal ideas behind the film? Break into groups and brainstorm a few possible themes!
    - Ex: In THE WATER WALKER the overarching story follows one young Indigenous woman’s fight for clean water. The underlying themes might be basic human rights, the sacrifices of being a public figure, and the power of young people in accomplishing extraordinary change.

- WATCH this clip from THE WATER WALKER at 00:01:57 - 00:3:06 and have students identify one film theme and ideas addressed in it.
  - Who is being interviewed?
    - Ex: Autumn Peltier
  - What is the conflict/issue presented? In a larger group have students discuss the effectiveness of the trailer as a hook to the story the film presents.
  - What does the title, THE WATER WALKER, seem to suggest just by viewing the clip?

- DISCUSS film themes and character qualities introduced in the clip. How effective was the clip in hooking you and your students?

THE WATER WALKER

EXPLORING CONNECTIONS: ANCESTRAL WISDOM & YOUTH VOICES

YOUTH VOICES

AUTUMN PELTIER:
• “One day I will be an ancestor and I want my descendants to know I used my voice so they can have a future”
(00:10:03-00:10:07)

ELDER VOICES

THE NARRATOR
• “Our children are unable to see obstacles in their path, for they are always looking up to us, but never at their feet. When we encounter an obstacle in their way it is our responsibility to remove it. We are the protectors of our children and when we fail, the children must learn to protect themselves” (00:06:03-00:06:33)
• “To our mother whose waters broke on that first day and made song possible. We sing now for you, to you, with you. Drumming to your heartbeat with nothing left to give but our bones and flesh as an offering. So that we too can drink in life as our journey continues...”
(00:11:40-00:12:15)

ASSIGNMENT
Share the above quotes with students. Taken collectively, have students write a short summary describing how the quotes express culture, identity, spiritual beliefs & traditions, a particular way of living, a sense of belonging to a particular time and place, or a distinctive set of values.
• How do you think these different perspectives serve to interpret the people’s history or current events?
• Do you think the perspectives reflected above may have changed over time? Why and how so?
• What are the interactions or connections between these perspectives?
WATCH THE FILM!

After engaging with some of the themes explored in the pre-viewing activities, your class should now be ready to watch the film. If you’ve registered through Big Sky Film Institute’s NFI Film Club you should have a provided link!

VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) POEM ACTIVITY

- Discuss the importance of water and culture
- Talk about the POETRY featured and narrated throughout the film
- Share these examples of the film’s featured poem’s titles: “SHE LOVED THE WATER SO MUCH; WATER HAS NO FLAG; WATER WALKERS, DEFENDERS OF WATER”
- Read aloud the following poem, “Canada I Can Cite for You, 150,” (PAGE 14) or play the YouTube video at the following link, in class: http://christibelcourt.com/canada-i-can-cite-for-you-150/.

ASSIGNMENT

- Students will write a poem based on the film THE WATER WALKER and the above discussion, or based on the term WATER WARRIOR. Students will give their poems a title, and have another student share their poem by reading it aloud to the class.

CANADA, I CAN CITE FOR YOU, 150

Canada, I can cite for you
150 lists of the dead
150 languages no longer spoken
150 rivers poisoned
150 indigenous children taken into care last month
150 indigenous communities without water
150 grieving in a hotel in Winnipeg, still
150 times a million lies
told to our faces
to steal our lands.

Canada, I can cite for you
150 forms of resistance
150 battles to the death
150 water warriors walking
150 naming ceremonies
150 ways we shake the ground with dance and so
150 tattooed expressions of sovereignty
150 times 2 million days faces were painted
with earth of this land.

Canada, I can cite for you
150 summers coming of resurgence
150 thousand babies birthed in ceremonies
150 thousand status cards burned
150 thousand youth marching for water
150 thousand children with braids and feathers in their hair
150 thousand indigenous words being spoken without English
150 summers coming of Mother Earth calling out to our hearts
150 summers coming where you too, will finally come to understand the power and
spirit of these lands and waters
as our ancestors have known and have been trying to tell you for 500 years.
CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION AROUND THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER & CULTURE...

• Talk about the original artwork featured throughout the film by Christi Belcourt and list some of the elements included in it (animals, birds, plants, beads, water, etc.)

• Share these examples of the film’s featured artwork titles: “A QUIET MOMENT; OFFERINGS FOR WATER; REVOLUTION OF LOVE; WISDOM OF THE UNIVERSE”

• Show students a few examples of the ONAMAN COLLECTIVE water protection symbols and banner designs below (or search for others here):

EXTENSION ACTIVITY - ENGAGE IN ACTIVISM!

STUDENTS...
1) DECIDE together on a similar important issue.
2) Choose an issue that you would like to defend and collectively speak-out about.
3) DESIGN a banner, either draw, paint, or silkscreen on white material (old sheets cut to size work well!)
4) WATCH this short video (https://youtu.be/JXsTvorMoGc) on banner assembly.

TEACHERS...
1) SPEND ONE CLASS session to conduct research of the issues, collecting current and relevant headlines or online articles.
2) Have students STAGE A WALK to raise awareness to the issue related to their banner.

ASSIGNMENT

Students will design a black and white Banner Symbol based on the film THE WATER WALKER and the discussion from PG 20, including cultural symbols and relevant graphic depictions of elements pertaining to issues surrounding clean water. Students should give their artworks a title and decide to add one or two colors to their symbols before sharing them with the class.

• What do we mean when we say ‘Water Warrior?’ vs ‘Water Walker’? Is there a difference?

• Have students defend their designs and define the difference, depending on which term they chose to use.

• How can art be used to create awareness or social change, or honor someone, or speak to injustice?

• Does symbolism reflect the location of a place, or characteristics of a culture?
POST-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

1) EXPLORING INTERGENERATIONAL STORYTELLING

1) SHARE the following story excerpt with students. Keep in mind that there is an art to storytelling! Throughout Native and First Nations histories, experiential ways of learning were accompanied by oral traditions that reinforced values, teachings, and beliefs of those living in their communities.

Bgoji-Nishnaabenhsag-Littlepeople
(Whitefish River Elder Arthur McGregor)

• “Those little beings have been around this earth for a long time, and there are more of them, all over this country. But you can’t see them, sometimes, but they are around though. I don’t know where they are. They never hurt anybody. And that’s how the Native people learned how to make maple syrup. Maple syrup was being made here, in Canada, long before the Europeans came here. A long time before, Bgojinishnaabenhsag had, what most people describe as ‘telepathy.’ While we were sleeping, Bgojinishnaabenhsag told us how to make maple syrup. So, when we were told how to make it, we tried it and it worked. It’s still being made today, but it was those little wild men that told us how to do it. Bgojinishnaabenhsag, they are around yet.”

• Story excerpt: https://grasac.arhs.c.u.utoronto.ca/?p=136g

ASSIGNMENT

• Students will construct a story similar to the ways THE WATER WALKER tells the story of Autumn Peltier, by imparting culturally relevant lessons and addressing current events/issues, individuals and their community are engaged in. Students will base their stories on three speakers, each one with a slightly different perspective and experience, as if one person is an ancestor, one person is an elder (or middle-aged adult, e.g. a grandmother or a mother), and the third “character” in the story is a younger person, the student. The story should explain the relationship between the three speakers and include other cultural elements to support their ideas and methods of sharing information that perpetuates the culture.

• What does the story tell you about the relationship between the speakers?

• Does the story reflect a particular time in history; the past? contemporary?

• How do stories discuss societal or cultural change?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON ANISHINAABE/OJIBWE HISTORY AND TRADITION

According to various sources, Anishinaabe/Ojibwe oral history tells of small groups of their ancestors’ centuries-long migration westward from all along the North Atlantic Coast, some 1500 years ago. Following the Great Lakes, many families settled on the western shores of Lake Superior first, a place they called ‘Gichigami,’ for “great water” (Harper, 2018). Eventually occupying all of the area around Gichigami, they continued to settle around Lake Huron and Lake Ontario in the early 1700’s.

Anishinaabe’s migration was due to a prophecy, telling them to go “where food grows on water.” Referencing wild rice, the prophecy led them to make their way to present-day Minnesota. With many Anishinaabe still living today in the expansive Great Lakes region, they have also settled in several states and other parts of the country, including North Dakota, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada.

An Anishinaabe worldview is symbolized as circular and emphasizes the holistic nature of their life-ways and ways of understanding. Children are at the center of the circle, then families, community and Anishinaabe Nation. Value systems are based in love and centered on relationships and responsibility to those relationships – among all living things. They are not compartmentalized or institutionalized; they are lived and expressed throughout ways of living in the world and being connected to all living things on the earth. Individual and collective rights and responsibilities foster the relationships. The starting point for understanding is rooted in Anishinaabe Creation stories, which have been passed down through the generations. All relationships are valued, as are the stories from history passed down through oral traditions.

Indigenous communities used several ways to transmit knowledge and teach their children how to live in the world. Youth learned by doing. They were also told stories orally, a key component in knowledge transmission that has been passed down for generations. Some of the stories were historical in nature, and some reflected teachings that had been imparted through dreams and/or special ceremonies. Reflection, singing, dancing, observation, experimentation, sharing what was learned, and spending extended amounts of time with elders or adults other than the child’s parents were also ways knowledge was handed down (Simpson, 2000). Children were educated in a holistic way that encompassed all areas of a person’s life, and spoke to different dimensions of learning, such as the physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual (Métis, 1998, p. 60).
Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe People:

A system of principles that stem from the heritage and culture of the Anishinaabe people, derived from the seven migrations stops of the Anishinaabe, as well as the seven fires (or prophecies) of the Anishinaabe. There were seven prophets who instructed the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring. Each of these prophecies was called a Fire and each Fire referred to a particular era of time that would come in the future. (Benton-Banai, 89)

The values as expressed in the Seven Teachings of the Anishinaabe People:

1) To cherish knowledge is to know **Wisdom**
2) To know **Love** is to know peace
3) To honor Creation is to have **Respect**
4) **Bravery** is to face the foe with integrity
5) **Honesty** in facing a situation is to be honorable
6) **Humility** is to know yourself as a sacred part of the Creation
7) **Truth** is to know all of these things

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**CURRENT HEADLINES**

- **Perspectives on Water Resources Among Anishinabe and Non-Native Residents of the Great Lakes Region**
  - “Climate change and human population growth could reduce household water availability in the historically water-rich Great Lakes region. It is critical to understand human-water relationships in advance of policy actions that could result from reduced water supplies.”

- **CSKT Council Ratifies $1.9 Billion Water Compact**
  - “…funding is in exchange for the tribes relinquishing a majority of their water rights claims…[and] the compact also transfers the National Bison Range over to the tribes for ongoing management.”

- **We Voted, and the Waters of the Blackfeet Were Secured**
  - “In a historic vote on April 20, 2017, Blackfeet Tribal members voted in favor of the Blackfeet Water Compact and Settlement Act – ending our decades-long fight for our water…[and establishing] the Tribe’s jurisdiction over our water.”

- **It’s Cultural Genocide: inside the Fight to Stop a Pipeline on Tribal Lands**
  - “The Line 3 route traverses land that Native American pipeline opponents say is protected by US treaties with Ojibwe nations…It’s really hard to be in a situation in which we’re looking at this beautiful place and thinking about the fact that our governor has chosen to support or at least tacitly allow a tar sands project, one of the biggest tar sands infrastructure projects in North America,” Houska said. “It’s a perpetuation of cultural genocide.”

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**ASSIGNMENT**

1) Share the following **CURRENT HEADLINES** (PG 25) with students
2) ASSIGN GROUPS—Have each group print out a copy of one of the articles (or research similar issues and copy the information).
3) Have each group RESEARCH the issues outlined in the articles and share their findings with the class.
4) SELECT 2+ of the bullet points in the ACTIVITY box, as they pertain to the article content.

**ACTIVITY**

- Look at a MAP of the locations - geographic regions discussed in the article
- What kinds of physical, political or cultural characteristics do they have?
- How do you think the geographic features or environment of this place affects/influences the people that live there, their VALUES, and those of the surrounding communities?
- Were these areas “defined” and/or impacted by people, agreements, laws, treaties, or constitutions?
- Do the people / communities in these locations have special connections / relationships / interactions with that place?
- How is the language in these articles different from the narrative and dialogue in THE WATER WALKER? [Review the quotes provided from the documentary]
As students watch the film have them take notes in the attached Double/Entry Chart provided to have students remember specific moments in the film. After watching, ask students what they wrote down:

- What moments stood out to them?
- Was there anything in the film that changed what you knew or what you thought you knew?
- Many documentaries are also narrative, meaning they tell stories! How do we articulate certain histories through a good story?
  - (Bring this back to the film. From which perspective is the film’s story told? Do they narrate? How much time are watching versus listening? Make a list!)

SUPPORTING AN EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION:
To most effectively track learning throughout viewing and discussion, have students reflect on what they know about the issues being presented in the films. With their Double Entry viewing chart they will have written down observations and inquiries. The following is a short list of keys terms and vocabulary to help students articulate their analysis:

KEY TERMS (to sound like a professional):

EXPOSITION: the information that grounds you in a story (Who, What, Where When, and Why). Exposition gives us the tools to follow the story as it unfolds.
- Questions to ask students:
  - What information is given away?
  - What still don’t we know?
  - Who are we hearing from/who is interviewed (who is not?)?
- Examples of Expository Information:
  - Shot of a place/location and its landmarks
  - Headlines/printed materials
  - Voice over
  - People getting upset over something

ARC: the ways the events of the story transform the subject/character. Story arcs can be hard to find in documentary film, there is not always an obvious beginning, middle, and an end (as in life!)
- Questions to ask students:
  1. What does the protagonist/subject learn about themselves as they pursue a goal?
  2. How has the film challenged your assumption about the film’s subject? Did you have preconceived notions of who the characters were/where they came from? Did this film change your opinion on this subject matter?

PLOT + CHARACTER:
- CHARACTER-DRIVEN: film where the action of the film emerges from wants and needs of the characters
- Questions to ask students:
  1. Who is this film about? Is it about a person or an event?
- PLOT-DRIVEN: characters are secondary to the events that make up the plot
- Questions to ask students:
  1. Who is this film about? Is it about a person or an event?
Double Entry Viewing Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTICE</th>
<th>WONDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write down details, or quotes from the film that stand out to you. Who’s being interviewed? Are there animations? Is this happening now or is it recounting something in the past?</td>
<td>What does this make you think? Write down observations, questions, or comments you might have related to what you wrote down in the NOTICE column.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE WATER WALKER

Narrator (Graham Greene)

- “She loved the water so much and the water loved her back, whispering in her dreams. Water has no flag; Water knows no race. The earth’s belly grew until her waters broke…and all of creation took its first breath.” (00:00:19-00:00:51)

- “The spirit of water exists in every rain drop, in every stream and puddle, in the veins of trees and in every tear, we shed for joy and grief—Water Walkers, defenders of water. We do it for the next generations for the babies of all species.” (00:03:31-00:04:03)

- “Our children are unable to see obstacles in their path, for they are always looking up to us, but never at their feet. When we encounter an obstacle in their way it is our responsibility to remove it. We are the protectors of our children and when we fail, the children must learn to protect themselves” (00:06:03-00:06:33)

- “As she stood in cold and ice and heat and rain, around each bend in the lake she thanked the water. Around each puddle and stream she asked the water for help. Soon the people started to join in and the water started to become clean” (00:08:24-00:08:46)

- “To our mother whose waters broke on that first day and made song possible. We sing now for you, to you, with you. Drumming to your heartbeat with nothing left to give but our bones and flesh as an offering. So that we too can drink in life as our journey continues….” (00:11:40-00:12:15)

Autumn Peltier

- “The water is the lifeblood of mother earth and without that lifeblood none of us would be here. Nothing would be here. (00:02:00-00:02:10)

- “People living in third world conditions in a rich country where things like that shouldn’t be happening” (00:04:35-00:04:41)

- “There’s a lot of youth becoming activists. We’re realizing what kind of future the adults today are giving us for tomorrow” (00:04:43-00:04:57)

- “Us kids, we’re having to stand up as leaders. We’re advocating for our future” (00:08:54-00:09:07)

- “One day I will be an ancestor and I want my descendants to know I used my voice so they can have a future” (00:10:03-00:10:07)

- “No child should grow up not knowing what clean water is or never knowing what running water is. Now is the time to warrior up and take a stand for our planet. Let’s do this for our great-grandchildren.” (00:10:45-00:11:06)

- “I do wish my auntie Josephine could see what I’m doing right now. She’s always taught me to keep on going and never give up. No matter what people say about your work or what you’re doing—you know what you want. Pray for the water because the water doesn’t have a voice, you’re speaking up for it” (00:11:21-00:11:47)
THE WATER WALKER Quotes

Stephanie Peltier

- “Where I come from, when the creator molded us pieces of us fell down. When those pieces hit the earth, they started to grow up as medicine. When the water’s contaminated the medicines contaminated. Certain medicines don’t grow any more. Certain animals don’t migrate in certain territories. When they’re eating contaminated vegetation and water—they’re getting sick and we’re eating the animals. We’re starting to get sick and so that’s how we’re all connected” (00:02:11-00:03:03)

- “I’m going to smudge this dress—we’re going to cleanse it. So when you’re out wearing this dress speaking at the United Nations you’ll speak from the heart and connect with the ancestors” (00:03:07-00:03:25)

- “I’m excited about Friday, it’s the Youth March. I’m excited to see how many youth and young people are going to be there.” (00:04:58-00:05:06)

- “Knowing the lineage that she comes from—there was a lot of fighters, there was a lot of warriors...she comes from a line of chiefs. It doesn’t surprise me that she is who she is.” (00:06:53-00:07:12)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

• Background on the Anishinaabe: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/anishinaabe
• Background on Autumn Peltier: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/autumn-peltier
• Background on Anishinaabe Elder and Water Rights Advocate, Josephine Henrietta Mandamin: https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/josephine-mandamin
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References:

Additional References


SPECIAL SPOTLIGHT


We Are Water Protectors won the 2021 Caldecott Medal and was the #1 book on the New York Times Bestseller list. Inspired by many Indigenous-led movements across North America, the book urges reader to consider our multifarious relationship with Earth’s waterways. A poetic and illustrative picture book for all ages.

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