

Earth-Centered Traditions

Lesson 8: Water Protectors

12.12.2021

Objectives: Reflect on the sacredness of water, storytelling, and peace-and-justice work in Dakota and Ojibwe traditions.

Materials: Plastic bowls, pitcher with water, laptop/DVD of “Remembering: Singing Water.”

Time allotments: Suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 20 minute closing service (end class around 9:50/11:50 to begin chapel 9:55/11:55).

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins):

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ When you hear “water protectors” and “climate justice,” what images and words come to mind?
 - ▶ From our MST (Ministerial Search Team) session last week, what stood out to you as meaningful? Are there additional hopes and dreams you have for our new minister?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: Carrying Water (5 minutes max)

See how far youth can walk with a bowl of water on their head, without spilling!

- a) Give everyone a plastic bowl and fill 1/3 with water.
- b) Go out into the hallway and ask youth to make two single file lines.
- c) Say, “on your mark, get set, go!”
- d) See who can walk the farthest (if anyone gets to a wall, have them turn around).

3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: *“We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”*

Teacher reads: (from Sharon Day, award-winning poet, Minneapolis-based Ojibwe and LGBTQ+ artist and leader)

“Perhaps we are in that time of awakening now... we must bring many people along with the spirit of ‘za-geh’—a love that calls to each of us to stand up with the power of a storm. A love that nourishes and sustains life, like water.”

4. Film Viewing: “ReMembering: Singing Water” (20 minutes)

- Watch Video (23:40 minutes total, stop at 19:00/before credits begin)

Note: this is an edited-down version of an hour long film, hence some abrupt transitions.

5. Questions for Discussion (15 minutes)

- Ask a couple youth to share something they liked, learned, or felt challenged by.
- Why is water sacred for Dakota and Ojibwe people? Do you think water ought to be sacred for all people?

(Hint: Consider the lyrics, “... water is life for everything. We are the water... we are where all life begins;” human bodies are made up of 60% water (on average); villages and cities need water sources; some traditions believe water carries stories and knowledge, “history is present in the molecules of the moment.”)

- Thinking back to our graffiti wall, when you now hear the terms, “water protectors” and “climate justice,” are there different images/ words that come to mind? What did the featured storytellers say activism, or standing up together, requires from each of us?

(Hint: Healing, building authentic relationships, regularly connecting to land and water, remembering stories of “division, pain, tears as well as love and courage,” love/za-geh—“a love that calls to each of us to stand up with the power of a storm. A love that nourishes and sustains life, like water.”)

- Is climate activism separate from human right’s activism? What is the connection between the way we treat the earth and water and the way we treat other people, especially people who are different from us?
- Why do you think storytelling is so important in Dakota, Ojibwe, and other Indigenous traditions? Do you think “remembering” and activism go hand-in-hand? Why or why not?
- What do you think of activism being a central part of someone’s spiritual life? Is activism a part of your spiritual life?

6. Water Protectors (10 minutes)

- Extinguish the chalice and remove nametags (step #8).

- Quietly walk to the Center Room and look at the portraits hung in the hallways. Encourage youth to find Sharon Day's portrait. (Not enough time to read the biographies, but you can come back later.) Use soft voices to respect ongoing worship.
- Together, go up to chapel.

7. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together: *"May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts."*

8. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets