

Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

Introduction

Preparation:

A move toward action

As you prepare to lead out this curriculum, know that the primary intent of this curriculum is to lead participants into real and tangible action for a local body of water—to be its protector, to begin to know the local body of water as an agent, an actor, as kin.

Discernment and work

So put before the participants discernment questions that prepare them for that action. As there are six sessions, thinking that each session will be at least a week apart, participants will have at least six weeks to work on those questions throughout your time together. Bring that to their attention every week.

In publicizing the educational experience, make sure everyone is aware that work will be involved and think about asking people to be a part of a covenant to do the work as a way of mutuality and reciprocity.

Outside time

At least three of the sessions are planned for outside near a local body of water. Take into account local weather as to how viable locations work. Remind people to dress appropriately and take healthy precautions for outdoor time.

Potential baptism

One of the sessions (Session 5) offers a potential baptism experience. If you are a layperson and your clergy and congregation do not object to this experience, also make sure that clergy are not offended or disagree with this experience being led by a layperson. If clergy, I recommend bringing it up before the governing Church Council/Board as a way to heighten awareness of the event.

Alternative dialog and discussion is provided for those who do not believe the experience is faithful to their faith tradition.

For Session 5, seek out a restaurant following the experience where the whole group may share informal reflect on the experience and what it meant to them and how they knew water as an actor in this sacrament.

Discussion Questions: an introductory meeting

Before you even begin, hold an introductory meeting to distribute these questions among participants to be answered by them at your last session together (Session 6). Use these questions then as a springboard for action.

-  How is this body of water regularly cared for?
-  What are the natural forms of care provided by other parts of its ecosystems?
-  What individuals or organizations watch over, care for, and advocate for this body of water?
 - What regular recommended actions do these organizations put forward?
 - What recommended actions are they asking for presently?
 - How might a faith community join with this body of water in bringing about health and life to its wider community?
-  What are this body of water's safeguards or buffers?
-  What ecosystems are a part of this body of water? (swamps, forests, aquifers, creeks, etc.)
-  What Native people are a part of this ecosystem? Or what Native people once were a part of this ecosystem? (<https://native-land.ca/>) How did Native people interact with this body of water?
-  Indigenous peoples have referenced waters, streams, and rivers as the circulatory system for Mother Earth (earth's body). How might that wisdom be applied to your body of water
-  What are the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem?
 - For example, how much plastic is regularly dumped into this water's ecosystem? (Estimated that 10,000 metric tons of plastic is put into the Great Lakes every year: <https://theconversation.com/tons-of-plastic-trash-enter-the-great-lakes-every-year-where-does-it-go-100423>)
 - What agricultural run-off is a part of this water ecosystem?
 - How is waste treatment handled around this water ecosystem?
 - Who is responsible for whatever toxicity or pollution enters this water ecosystem? (Resources like the Environmental Defense Fund's Chemical

Exposure Action Map might be used:

[https://chemicalactionmap.edf.org/?_gl=1%2A19p638f%2A_gcl_au%2AMTY4MjQ4MDg4MC4xNzA4OTA4NTk0%2A_ga%2AMTA2MjM0MjQ3OS4xNzA4OTA4NTk3%2A_ga_2B3856Y9QW%2AMTcwOTA3NDQ5MC4yLjEuMTcwOTA3NDYxNC42MC4wLjA. \)](https://chemicalactionmap.edf.org/?_gl=1%2A19p638f%2A_gcl_au%2AMTY4MjQ4MDg4MC4xNzA4OTA4NTk0%2A_ga%2AMTA2MjM0MjQ3OS4xNzA4OTA4NTk3%2A_ga_2B3856Y9QW%2AMTcwOTA3NDQ5MC4yLjEuMTcwOTA3NDYxNC42MC4wLjA.)

-  How do the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem affect other parts of the ecosystem around it?
 - Plant and tree life?
 - Animals?
 - Humans?
-  What are the recent struggles or crises which have affected this body of water?
-  Four international climate scientists have developed great discernment, barometers, and critical questions for developing healthier water systems. Read the article here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00886-z> How might you use their wisdom for bringing critical questions to your body of water?
-  As you pray over and with this body of water, what do you hear this body of water saying in concert with you?

Theme Song for the Educational Experience

Some groups enjoy music as part of their experience and it makes their time together richer and fuller. For other groups, music can put a strain on group dynamics due to embarrassment or just not a comfort with song or singing. Use your best judgment with this beautiful song that could be used to begin or end every session.

I list it in the final session. The lyrics and tune are here:

<https://www.echoesofpeace.org/water-is-life> a beautiful rendition by the songwriter done in consultation with leaders from Standing Rock. The version could be played to encourage singers among your participants.

LYRICS

Water Is Life - Mni Wičoni

All my relations, come
Every nation, come
All my relations under the sun
We are one

We are praying, come
We are praying, come
We are the song and we are the drum
We are one

We are the river, come
We are the river, come
We are the boat, the paddle, the shore
We are one

Chorus:

Mni wičoni, sing (Mitakuye Oyasin...)
Mni wičoni, sing
Mni wičoni, "water is life"
for everything

We are the water, sing
We are the water, sing
We are the water
We are where all life begins

We are the ancient ones
We are the ancient ones
In your breath and bones we sing on
We are one

We are the meadow, come

We are the meadow, come
We are the lark that sings
the new day has begun

We are the new day, run, run, run
We are the new day, run, run, run
We are the old and we are the young
We are one

Chorus

We are the earth and sky
We are the thunder cries
We are the fire,
We are the light in your eyes

We are standing strong
Like a rock, like a stone
On this sacred ground we belong
We are home

Chorus

All my relations, come
Every nation, come
All my relations under the sun
We are one

—words & music by Sara Thomsen