

Earth Teacher

U:U FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST
SOCIETY OF BURLINGTON

LAKE
CHAMPLAIN
WATERSHED



JOURNALING PROMPTS

- **Wisdom:** What wisdom (caution or inspiration) does this Earth Teacher have to share with me? What do I need to do to be receptive?
- **Resilience:** What does this Earth Teacher have to offer to help me deepen my personal resilience? My community's collective resilience?

QUOTES

“We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for our relationship to the world. We need to restore honor to the way we live, so that when we walk through the world we don’t have to avert our eyes with shame, so that we can hold our heads high and receive the respectful acknowledgment of the rest of earth’s beings.” ~ Robin Wall Kimmerer



“Water, of which there is only a finite amount in the world, is the ultimate connector. It joins us to our ancestors and to the generations ahead, as Mi’qMak anti-fracking activist Susanne Paddles, has asserted. It connects us to specific places, people and creatures we have not seen, life that is far away from us and life that came long before us. The work of protecting watershed is this not just for human beings; it is for all creation, and for the past and the future.” ~ Denise M Nadeau



"The lake, on a grand scale, is the unconscious of the great long-term history of this place. People come and go, people are almost irrelevant to the lake, but we all have some sort of relationship with it, even if it's not an overt one." ~ Daniel Lusk



“For most of the residents of either side, the lake divides it neatly into two very different kingdoms of the imagination. Champlain acts as the border between Vermont and New York, which is not like the border between, say, Connecticut and Massachusetts, or Kansas and Nebraska. This line is rarely crossed. Partly, that’s because most places you need to take a ferry, but much more because the ferry connects two different states of mind.

On one side, you stand in New England, and you can still feel the ocean at your back, and, maybe even olde England behind that. To a New Englander, Boston is the city – the radio mast a couple of peaks north from Mount Abe carries the Red Sox out across this valley on a summer eve. New England... – even here, 140 miles from saltwater, the lobster somehow still seems native. The towns tend towards neatness, gathering themselves around white churches – congregational churches, governing themselves,

without the aid of bishops, or the overly active intervention of the Holy Spirit. And Townhall, with their March right of town meeting – of good, crisp, self governance. It is a tidy place, New England. ~ Bill McKibben, Wandering Home



“I’ve written about watershed consciousness, the intelligence of basing your thinking on the landscape, starting out by making sure you know what watershed you’re in and how watersheds relate to each other. Which most people don’t do because they’re thinking-about-place is dominated by the highways. That’s all they know, really, is the roads. It changes things a lot when you clear the roads out of your mind and look at the watersheds. And watershed does not mean just one big river; it’s the main stem and all the tributaries all at once. ...

This is part of being an environmentalist and having a sense of the land. Watersheds generally tend to contain ecosystems and there’s no difficulty about understanding the landscape. Watersheds are not arbitrary; they have been shaped by the land itself, the play of the ridges and streams, whereas boundaries that are on the map, especially in North America are arbitrary lines drawn with a ruler, often by people who had no idea where they were. Which means they’re temporary; 500 years from now we won’t be using those boundaries at all.” ~ Gary Snyder, interviewed by Sean Elder



“The watershed, on the other hand, is likewise somewhat abstract, but attends to the contours of the terrain, and a watershed-informed human community would work with the flow of water rather than attempt to control it. Watersheds are scalable units, from the small creek running through a neighborhood to the vast network that creates the Mississippi River watershed. The multiple scales help us remember how we are connected to the lives of others, for instance, as Wendell Berry says, “do unto those downstream as you would those upstream do unto you.” ~ David Pritchett

POETRY

By Lake Champlain by Hilda Conkling

I was bare as a leaf
and I felt the wind on my shoulder.

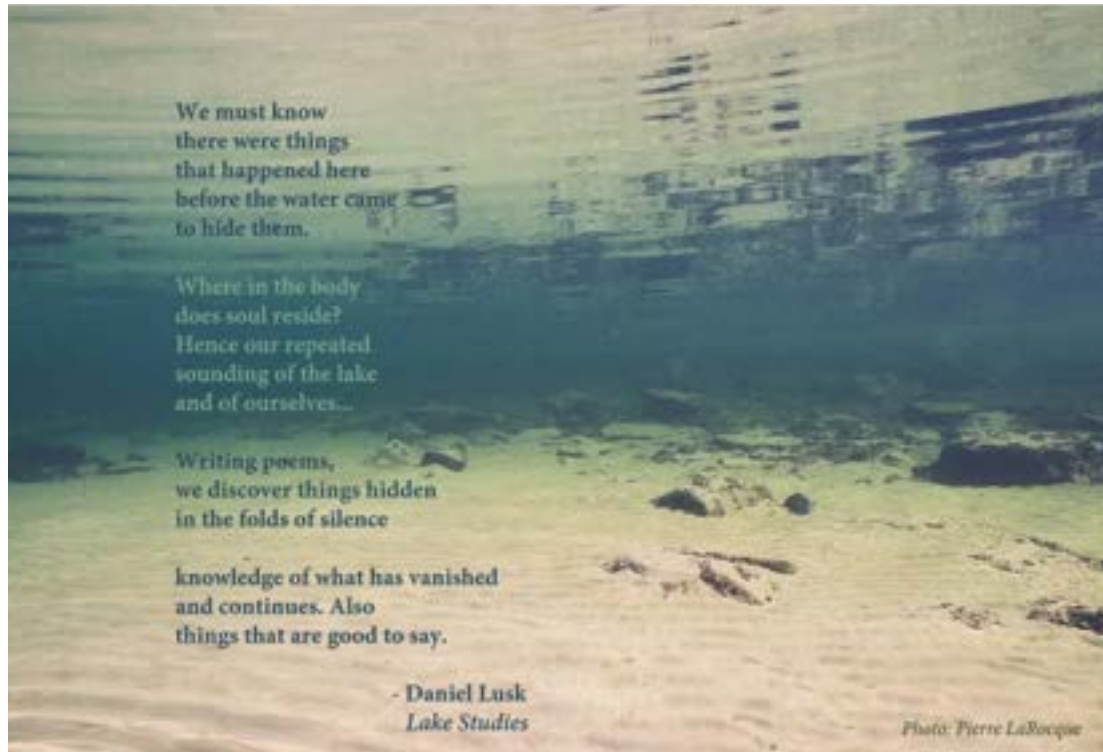
The trees laughed
When I picked up the sun in my fingers.
The wind was chasing the waves,
tangling their white curls.
"Willow trees," I said,
"O willows,
look at your lake!
Stop laughing at a little girl
Who runs past your feet in the sand!"



**Double View of the Adirondacks as Reflected Over Lake Champlain from
Waterfront Park** by Major Jackson

The mountains are at their theater again,
each ridge practicing an oration of scale and crest,
and the sails, performing glides across the lake, complain
for being out-shadowed despite their gracious
bows. Thirteen years in this state, what hasn't occurred?
A cyclone in my spirit led to divorce, four books
gave darkness an echo of control, my slurred
hand finding steadiness by the prop of a page,
and God, my children whom I scarred! Pray they forgive.
My crimes felt mountainous, yet perspective
came with distance, and like those peaks, once keening
beneath biting ice, then felt resurrection in a vestige
of water, unfrozen, cascading and adding to the lake's
depth, such have I come to gauge my own screaming.
The masts tip so far they appear to capsize, keeling
over where every father is a boat on water. The wakes
carry the memory of battles, and the Adirondacks
hold their measure. I am a tributary of something greater.





Declaration of Intent by Rita Wong

let the colonial borders be seen for the pretensions that they are
i hereby honour what the flow of water teaches us
the beauty of enough, the path of peace to be savoured
before the extremes of drought and flood overwhelm the careless
water is a sacred bond, embedded in our plump, moist cells
in our breaths that transpire to return to the clouds that gave us life
through rain
in the rivers & aquifers that we & our neighbours drink
in the oceans that our foremothers came from
a watershed teaches not only humbleness but climate fluency
the languages we need to interpret the sea's rising voice
water connects us to salmon & cedar, whales & workers
its currents bearing the plastic from our fridges & closets
a gyre of karma recirculates, burgeoning body burden
i hereby invoke fluid wisdom to guide us through the toxic muck
i will apprentice myself to creeks & tributaries, groundwater & glaciers
listen for the salty pulse within, the blood that recognizes marine ancestry
in its chemical composition & intuitive pull
i will learn through immersion, flotation & transformation
as water expands & contracts, i will fit myself to its ever-changing
dimensions

molecular & spectacular, water will return what we give it, be that
arrogance & poison, reverence & light, ambivalence & respect
let our societies be revived as watersheds

because i am part of the problem i can also become part of the solution
although i am part of the problem i can also become part of the solution
where i am part of the problem i need to be part of the solution
while i am part of the problem i can also be part of the solution
one part silt one part clear running water one part blood love sweat
not *tar* but *tears*, *e* inserts a listening, witnessing, quickening eye
broken but rebinding, token but reminding, vocal buck unwinding
the machine's gears rust in rain, moss & lichen slowly creep life back
the rate of reclamation is humble while the rate of destruction blasts fast
because we are part of the problem we can also become part of the
solution

MUSIC

“[The River](#)” by Coco Alcorn

“[Take Me to the River](#)” sung by Al Green

MEDITATION

The wind she blow on Lak' Champlain

By'm'by she blow some more.

You'll never drown on Lak' Champlain . . .

So long as you stay on shore.

—(to be spoken with a laconic and wry French-Canadian accent)



excerpt from Thich Nhat Hanh's "Love Letters to the Earth"

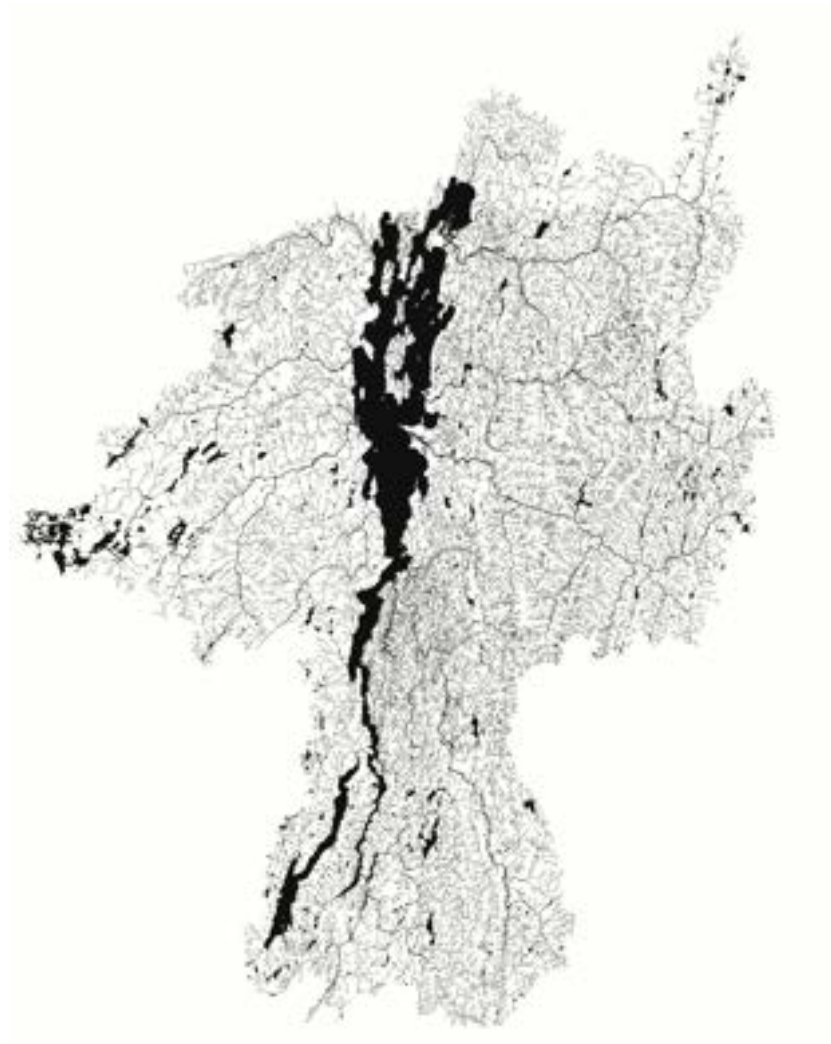
"Your children include the clear lake, the green pine, the pink cloud, the snow-capped mountain top, the fragrant forest, the white crane, the golden deer, the extraordinary caterpillar, and every brilliant mathematician, skilled artisan, and gifted architect. You are the greatest mathematician, the most accomplished artisan, and the most talented architect of all. The simple branch of cherry blossoms, the shell of a snail, and the wing of a bat all bear witness to this amazing truth. My deep wish is to live in such a way that I am awake to each of your wonders and nourished by your beauty. I cherish your precious creativity and I smile at this gift of life..."



MISCELLANEOUS

Documentary, "[No Other Lake](#)"

IMAGES FOR CONTEMPLATION



Map by Matt Parilla/Rumblemaps

Art by Ioyan Mani (Maxine Noel)

