

## Nibi's Water Song

written by Sunshine Tenasco  
illustrated by Chief Lady Bird

### About the Book

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**Format:** Hardcover, \$18.95  
32 pages, 9" x 9"

**ISBN:** 9781643794822

**Reading Level:** Grade 3

**Interest Level:** Grades PreK-5

**Guided Reading Level:** M

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Collaboration, Courage, Environment/Nature, Human Impact On Environment/Environmental Sustainability, Imagination, Leadership, Native American Interest, Neighbors, Optimism/Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence/Grit, Protest, Sharing & Giving, Water

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/nibi-s-water-song](http://leeandlow.com/books/nibi-s-water-song)

### SYNOPSIS

When Nibi, an Indigenous girl, turns the tap in her house, only mucky brown water comes out. That starts her on a search for clean water to drink. Though she must face polluted rivers, unfriendly neighbors, and her own temporary discouragement, Nibi's joyful energy becomes a catalyst for change and action as her community rallies around her to make clean drinking water available for all.

The hopeful tone and lively read-aloud quality of the text open the door to conversations and action with young children, while the distinctive, delightful artwork conveys the themes of vitality, resistance, and resilience. The word "Nibi" means "water" in the Anishinaabe language, and *Nibi's Water Song* is as refreshing and revitalizing as its protagonist's name.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

## BACKGROUND

### Author's Note from Sunshine Tenasco

"I'm from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, a reservation about eighty miles from Ottawa, Ontario, the capital city of Canada. Kitigan Zibi is right beside the French-speaking town of Maniwaki, Quebec. Everyone in Maniwaki has access to clean water, but forty percent of my community can't access this basic human right.

Kitigan Zibi is one of many First Nations communities dealing with this complex issue. The reasons the water is not potable are unique to each place, ranging from agricultural waste and industrial pollution to natural radiation and lack of infrastructure. The water in some communities is drinkable when boiled, but other communities require bottled water to be delivered to their homes.

I started a project called Her Braids to educate Canadians about the water conditions too many First Nations communities face. My original idea was to create tiny pendants with Anishinabe beadwork as conversation starters. The project grew, and now we deliver workshops where people learn how to make their own beaded pendants. We talk about systemic racism and how we can each do our part by raising awareness of this crisis. I am forever grateful to have *Nibi's Water Song* published so that we can all do this important work together."

### Illustrator's Note from Chief Lady Bird

Working on this project was an important undertaking for me to help educate young people about the ongoing injustices in Indigenous communities across Canada. As of January 2021, there are currently fifty-seven long-term water advisories in thirty-nine communities. One of these communities has had to boil its drinking water since 1995. This is unacceptable, but there are a lot of people fighting for clean water. As an artist, I feel it is important to create work that highlights the beauty and spirit of my community members, many of whom are working hard to advocate for access to clean water. Nibi is wearing a Her Braids pendant, and I use Woodland-style fish and florals to show the love and respect we have for the interconnectedness of all things. When we fight for clean water, we advocate for our health, as well as the health of the land and the animals too. There is a lot at stake and I hope that this book can help inspire change.

### Note about Native Nations & Resolving the Water Crisis

Native Nations throughout North America have been working to resolve the issues surrounding water and Native communities. Native Nations have distinct cultures, but the desire for clean water and initiatives that respect and preserve natural habitats (to which humans are a part) is something that most Native Nations share. The power of community and cooperation is instrumental in the continuous quest for clean drinking water (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44961490>).

### Note about First Nations Water Crisis in Canada

To learn more about the First Nations water crisis throughout Canada, you can consult the following articles and resources to find out how lack of access to clean drinking water directly impacts First Nations communities (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/02/canada-blind-eye-first-nation-water-crisis>) (<https://theconversation.com/water-crisis-in-first-nations-communities-runs-deeper-than-long-term-drinking-water-advisories-148977>).

### Dakota Access Pipeline from The People Shall Continue Afterword ([leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue](https://leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue))

To learn more about the crisis Native peoples are facing in the United States, learn more about the Dakota Access Pipeline. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline in early February 2017. The pipeline is designed to carry crude oil 1,172 miles from the Bakken shale oil field in northwest North Dakota all the way to central Illinois. Along this route, it crosses under Lake Oahe near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/23/us/dakota-access-pipeline-protestmap.html>). Protestors, led by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, have been working to fight the Dakota Access Pipeline since April 2016. The route under the Missouri River poses a threat to drinking water. According to the Associated Press, two leaks occurred in March 2017 in North Dakota, and another leak happened in early April in South Dakota (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/dakota-access-pipeline-operation-monthsresistance/>). Members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, whose reservation lies just downstream from the place where the pipeline crosses the Missouri River, vow to continue fighting. They fear that a pipeline leak could contaminate their drinking water and sacred lands. A lawsuit from the tribe is still pending in federal court (<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwoway/2017/06/01/531097758/crude-oil-begins-to-flowthrough-controversial-dakota-access-pipeline>).

### National Indian Education Association

The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) was formed by Native educators in 1969 to encourage a national discourse on Indigenous education. NIEA adheres to the organization's founding principles: to bring Native educators together to explore ways to improve schools and the education of Native children; to promote the maintenance and continued development of Native languages and cultures; and to develop and implement strategies for influencing local, state, and federal policy and policymakers. The National Indian Education Association also offers a Culture-Based Education Repository that houses culture-based education curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Educators can browse the Repository and submit lessons (<https://www.niea.org>).

### Teaching about Native Peoples in Past and Present

Teaching about Native peoples in the present is critical, and *Nibi's Water Song* presents a modern issue that Native peoples are grappling with today. "Lessons Learned in Teaching Native American History" (<https://www.edutopia.org/article/lessons-learned-teaching-native-american-history>) presents the necessity of teaching about Native peoples in the present as well as other resources about continuing to teach about contemporary Native issues. IllumiNative also has information, articles and resources dedicated towards amplifying the voices of contemporary Native peoples in your classroom (<https://illuminatives.org/nefa/>).

Teaching Tolerance has several resources dedicated to culturally responsive teaching with Native history in their "With and About" toolkit that provides resources to assist educators in designing and delivering more culturally responsive instruction to and about Native peoples (<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2017/toolkit-for-with-and-about>).

The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian's curriculum, Native Knowledge 360, has lesson plans and materials for educators that provides educators and students with new perspectives on Native American history and cultures (<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/about.cshml>).

The Native American Heritage Programs has a page dedicated to Culturally Responsive Curriculum (<https://lenapeprograms.info/teacher-parent-resources/culturally-responsive-curriculum/>) as well as other pages, such as "10 Things You Don't Know About Native Americans" to dispel stereotypes and misconceptions about modern Native people (<https://lenapeprograms.info/teacher-parent-resources/stereotypes-debunked/>).

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Ask students to think about where they get their water they drink throughout the day. Where do you get water at home? What about at school?
- Have you ever thought about where you get water from? Why or why not?
- What have you heard about the global water crisis? How do you think this affects people, especially people who do not have regular access to clean drinking water?
- Have you ever worked with a family member, friend, or large group to achieve a goal? What did you do?
- If applicable: What do you know about Native American history?

- If applicable: What tribal nation do you belong to? What does belonging to your tribal nation mean to you? Why?
- What tribal land or lands do students currently occupy? Why is this important to acknowledge and know about?
- Ask students why it's important to acknowledge traditions and cultures that are different from their own. Why is it essential to learn about different cultures in the United States and around the world even if you do not identify with that particular culture or tradition?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Nibi's Water Song*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read Sunshine Tenasco's author biographies:** Why do you think Sunshine Tenasco decided to write this book about Nibi and her search for clean water?
- **Read Chief Lady Bird's illustrator biography:** What did you learn about the illustrator that made you think differently about her artwork?
- Encourage students to stop and jot down notes in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.
- Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues does are given that help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what Nibi discovers about her drinking water
- how Nibi spreads awareness about the lack of clean drinking water
- how Nibi empowers people around her to initiate change to get clean drinking water
- what obstacles Nibi encounters along the way to get clean drinking water
- how the water crisis directly impacts Native people across the United States and Canada and their access to water

- why clean drinking water is critical to people's survival and existence

Encourage students to consider why the author and illustrator, Sunshine Tenasco and Chief Lady Bird, would want to share with young people this book about Nibi and her quest for clean drinking water for everyone.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

clucking, Kigonzo, teeny, shoed, gulp, swamps, sharing circle, rule-makers

### Academic

knocked

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story begin? What does Nibi need?
2. What happened when Nibi went to the sink to get water?
3. What did Nibi do after she tried to get water?
4. What was Nibi's neighbor's water like?
5. Where did Nibi go next? What did she discover?
6. After the river, where did Nibi go?

7. What did the lady in the big shiny house give Nibi? What did Nibi do after that?
8. After Nibi tried knocking on the doors of the big, shiny houses, what did she do?
9. How did Nibi want to tell people she needed water?
10. Where did Nibi continue to look for water? What did she find?
11. How did Nibi's family and friends help her look for water?
12. What was Nibi's song?
13. What was the sharing circle? What did Nibi and her friends do in the sharing circle?
14. What did Nibi and her friends decide to do to get clean water?
15. How did the rule-makers improve the water?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. After reading *Nibi's Water Song*, have students reflect on the Author and Illustrator's Notes from Sunshine Tenasco and Chief Lady Bird. What did they learn from reading the Author and Illustrator's Notes? How do the author and illustrator's message impact what they thought about the book?
2. Compare this book to other books you have read about Native peoples. How is this book different? Why do you think it's different?
3. How did Nibi demonstrate perseverance and persistence throughout the story? What were some of the things that she did whenever she encountered an obstacle? How can Nibi inspire you in your own life?
4. Why do you think Nibi found clean drinking water in the big, shiny houses? How does this demonstrate resources in our society as a whole?
5. How did Nibi use her family and friends to help her find clean drinking water? When did she recognize that she couldn't find clean drinking water by herself? What do you think this story teaches you about the importance of working together in order to achieve an important goal?
6. Why is the sharing circle a critical part of the story? What do Nibi, her family and friends decide to do in the sharing circle? Why do you think sharing circles are important?
7. How did Nibi and her family and friends get the rule-makers to realize that they needed clean drinking water? Why do you think Nibi needed to go to the rule-makers in order to make change in her community?
8. Do you think *Nibi's Water Song* was based off of a true story? Why or why not? Have you heard about the water crisis before, either in your community or throughout the world?
9. What do you think *Nibi's Water Song* teaches readers about the importance of one person inspiring others and making a difference? How can Nibi inspire you to initiate change in your community? What are some things that you want to do to impact your community or

neighborhood?

10. What did you learn about the necessity of clean drinking water after reading *Nibi's Water Song*? Did this book make you think differently about your access to clean drinking water? If you have always had access to clean drinking water, what did this book make you realize about how you've obtained clean drinking water? If you haven't always had access to clean drinking water, what did you relate to in this book, and did you connect with Nibi's quest to get clean drinking water?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about Nibi's quest for clean drinking water. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think Sunshine Tenasco's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations the authors had for writing this book from both past and present perspectives. What do you think they wanted to share with readers? How would this book be different if it was told only in the past?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and your own life? What scenes do you relate to and how did they make you think of your own experiences?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books or poems while reading *Nibi's Water Song*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. What does clean drinking water mean to you after reading? After reading *Nibi's Water Song*, what students reflect on their ease, or challenges, in obtaining clean drinking water and what they can do to ensure that everyone in their community has access to clean drinking water.

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:

- Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how Nibi's quest inspired them and why.
  5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students, and several words are printed in bold. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How does *Nibi's Water Song* demonstrate the positive impact of listening and learning from each other? What are the different ways that she and her family and friends communicate and show respect for one another? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class. Alternatively, students can create a word cloud and see what qualities come up the most and are the largest (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>). How can you implement these ideals into your own classroom?
2. What are the ways that Nibi demonstrates perseverance and resiliency throughout the story? Create a chart of the different times that Nibi encountered an obstacle and what she did to overcome it. Afterwards, students can reflect on how Nibi can inspire them in their own lives and how to not feel defeated when trying to solve a problem.
3. How does Nibi channel her sadness about the lack of clean drinking water to initiate change? How does she use her frustration in trying to find clean drinking water to inspire her friends and fellow neighbors to finally get access to clean drinking water?
4. Which illustration in *Nibi's Water Song* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?
5. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Nibi's Water Song*.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Conduct a study with Lee & Low titles featuring water, including *I Know the River Loves Me/Yo sé qué el río me ama* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-know-the-river-loves-me-yo-se-que-el-río-me-ama>) and *Water Rolls, Water Rises/El agua rueda, el agua sube* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/water-rolls-water-rises-el-agua-rueda-el-agua-sube>).** Ask the following guiding questions: how is water a critical piece in the story? What does water represent in the story? How is water crucial to the storyline and narrative? If applicable, how do the characters feel about water, and what does it mean to them? Students can write about their findings in an essay, and how the beauty and power of water is reflected in the texts.
- **Read *Nibi's Water Song* along with *We Are Water Protectors* (<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250203557>).** Students can create a graphic organizer comparing the two titles. Ask the following guiding questions to inspire critical thinking: how is water critical in both stories? What do the main characters need to do to get clean drinking water? How do the main characters demonstrate persistence throughout the story? How do the main characters exemplify problem solving, and how do they use others to help them with their problem? What do the solutions in both *Nibi's Water Song* and *We Are Water Protectors* look like, and what does the future hold for clean drinking water in their Native and First Nations communities? Students can reflect on what it was like to read both of these titles and what they connected with and learned about. The National Education Association also has a reading guide for *We Are Water Protectors* for more ideas about how to use this book in the classroom (<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/find-your-book/we-are-water>).
- **Consult the “Selective Bibliography and Guide for ‘I’ is not for Indian: Portrayal of Native Americans in Books for Young People” to read more about recommended titles, titles to avoid, and additional guidelines in choosing culturally responsive Native texts for students** (<http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/ailabib.htm>). Read books that meet these criteria in the following categories:
  - Find books that feature Native people in the present. Lee & Low titles include *This Land is My Land* ([leeandlow.com/books/this-land-is-my-land](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/this-land-is-my-land)) by George Littlechild, *Kiki's Journey* ([leeandlow.com/books/kiki-s-journey](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/kiki-s-journey)) by Kristy Orona-Ramirez, and *When the Shadbrush*

*Blooms* by Carla Messinger with Susan Katz ([leeandlow.com/when-the-shadbush-blooms](https://leeandlow.com/when-the-shadbush-blooms))

- Find books that present Native people accurately such as *Buffalo Song* ([leeandlow.com/books/buffalo-song](https://leeandlow.com/books/buffalo-song)), *Crazy Horse's Vision* ([leeandlow.com/books/crazy-horse-s-vision](https://leeandlow.com/books/crazy-horse-s-vision)) by Joseph Bruchac, and *Indian No More* ([leeandlow.com/books/indian-no-more](https://leeandlow.com/books/indian-no-more)) by Charlene Willing McManis with Traci Sorrell
- Find biographies of Native people, such as *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story* by S.D. Nelson ([leeandlow.com/books/quiet-hero](https://leeandlow.com/books/quiet-hero)) and *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* ([leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path](https://leeandlow.com/books/jim-thorpe-s-bright-path)) by Joseph Bruchac
- The Native American Heritage Programs website also has a list of recommended reading for children through adults (<https://lenaprograms.info/book-list/>)
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Sunshine Tenasco.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did she come up with her idea to write *Nibi's Water Song*? Why did she want to write a book about a Nibi's quest to get clean drinking water for herself and her community? Consider reaching out to Sunshine Tenasco for a virtual author visit (<https://www.herbraids.com/pages/about-us>).

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Conduct a "Social Change" project in your classroom.** After reading *Nibi's Water Song*, have students pick a cause they believe in (i.e. water justice, climate change, Black Lives Matter). Have students brainstorm a list of different causes that they would want to fight for. Then, have students pick their top three choices and arrange groups according to interest. In the groups, have students research the topic and come up with a way to enact change, whether it's a letter, a flyer, a petition, etc. Learning for Justice also has resources and plans on conducting social change units (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/learning-plan/social-change-unit-0>). *The New York Times* also has "The Power to Change the World: A Teaching Unit on Student Activism in History and Today" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/learning/lesson-plans/the-power-to-change-the-world-a-teaching-unit-on-student-activism-in-history-and-today.html>). Ask students to reflect on why they chose that particular cause and what it means to them. How do they want to make a future impact in the world?
- **Create protest signs with students inspired by *Nibi's Water Song*.** What posters would students create to join Nibi's group of friends and neighbors in declaring their need for clean water? First, students can brainstorm in small groups about what makes a protest sign powerful. What kind of images should they use? What language is best to communicate their message? Students can generate ideas first, and then translate them into their posters. Students can display their *Nibi's Water Song* protest signs in the classroom. Afterwards, they can write an essay reflecting on why protest signs are important in demonstrating their beliefs and getting a message across. ADL Education has a resource, "The Purpose and Power of Protest" for more information about the history and influence of protest as well as protest

signs (<https://www.kcet.org/the-history-and-art-of-protest-posters>).

- **Have students read the Author's Note from Sunshine Tenasco about the water crisis in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, and then conduct a research study on it.** Sunshine Tenasco writes, "Kitigan Zibi is right beside the French-speaking town of Maniwaki, Quebec. Everyone in Maniwaki has access to clean water, but forty percent of my community can't access this basic human right." Students can conduct additional research online to learn more about the water crisis, and how it directly impacts Native communities, not only in Kitigan Zibi, but in the United States (<https://www.vice.com/en/article/ywnx5w/stories-from-the-indigenous-water-crisis>).
- **After conducting a study on the water crisis in Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, have students research the water crisis affecting Native communities as a whole.** First, students can learn more about the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg community today (<https://kitiganzibi.ca/community/cultural-centre/>). Afterwards, Students can refer to resources online to learn more about the water crisis impacting Native communities throughout Canada and the United States (<https://www.kunc.org/environment/2021-04-29/the-pandemic-exposed-the-severe-water-insecurity-faced-by-southwestern-tribes>) (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/28/indigenous-americans-drinking-water-navajo-nation>) (<https://www.npr.org/2019/11/18/779821510/many-native-americans-cant-get-clean-water-report-finds>). Students can answer the following guiding questions: What tribes does this water crisis impact? How does lack of clean drinking water affect the immediate community?
- **Discuss how the water crisis impacting Native and First Nations communities is a direct result of systemic racism and how Native and First Nations people have been oppressed since colonialism.** Students can consult articles online to learn more about how racism and intentional lack of resources to Native and First Nations communities directly impacts their access and availability to have clean drinking water ([https://www.thestar.com/opinion/letters\\_to\\_the\\_editors/2020/10/31/lack-of-water-boils-down-to-systemic-racism-and-must-stop.html](https://www.thestar.com/opinion/letters_to_the_editors/2020/10/31/lack-of-water-boils-down-to-systemic-racism-and-must-stop.html)). Students can also connect the water crisis to the situation in Flint, Michigan in the United States ([https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/VFlintCrisisRep-F-Edited3-13-17\\_554317\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/VFlintCrisisRep-F-Edited3-13-17_554317_7.pdf)). How do these crises relate? How is systemic racism evident in both instances of water crises?
- **Have students work in groups to examine the geographical regions of the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg** (<https://kitiganzibi.ca/>) (<https://americanindian.si.edu/collections-search/archives/components/sova-nmai-ac-001-038-ref554>). What are the characteristics of the lands, both in the past and present? What tribes live on these lands? How is the water crisis affecting the people living here today? Have students prepare a handout or presentation for the rest of the class.
- **Research and investigate tribal nations in your school's area.** Students can conduct research through books or other materials on tribal nations in their local area. Ask them if the nations are from their area originally, or if they were relocated there. Were there any nations that were forced to leave? If so, where did they go and are they still living there today? If any of these nations were moved and relocated, why do they think that happened? Students can look for information on current tribal government information today.

### Arts, Media & Music

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Encourage students to listen to Corbin Harney's "Water Song."** Corbin Harney is an elder and spiritual leader of the Newe (Western Shoshone) people. ([https://www.pbs.org/circleofstories/storytellers/corbin\\_harney.html](https://www.pbs.org/circleofstories/storytellers/corbin_harney.html)) (<https://soundcloud.com/poets-org/corbin-harney-water-song>). What message does Corbin convey about water? What does water mean to Corbin? How does he use his language to describe the beauty and power of water? Afterwards, have students create their own poem about the importance of water, and what it means to them.
- **Have students examine the collections, galleries, and exhibitions at Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) Museum of Contemporary Native Arts.** The IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts is the country's only museum for exhibiting, collecting, and interpreting the most progressive work of contemporary Native artists (<https://iaia.edu/iaia-museum-of-contemporary-native-arts/museum-about/>). Have students look at different pieces of art featured on the website (or on a field trip if financially and geographically possible) and research an artist of their choosing.
- **Have students come up with questions for an interview with the book's illustrator, Chief Lady Bird.** What is the process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did she choose to create the illustrations and why? How does her work showcase the themes of the book? Consider reaching out to Chief Lady Bird, or visiting her work online at @chiefladybird.
- **Have students research Native writers and illustrators today.** If available, have students consult the librarian for help with researching and/or acquiring these books. Consider having the class generate a list of questions about the author or illustrator's work that they can send to the author or illustrator to encourage collaborative dialogue. Additionally, have students read Dr. Debbie Reese's blog posts about Native authors and illustrators. (<https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2014/05/why-i-advocate-for-books-by-native.html>)

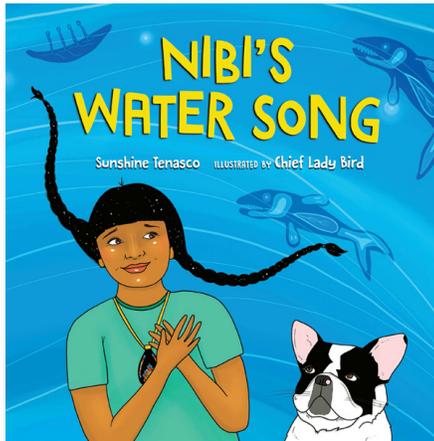
### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students bring home *Nibi's Water Song* and share the book with other family members.** Ask students to start a discussion about what their families learned from and connected with in the text.
- **Nibi brings her family and friends in to help her have access to clean drinking water.** If possible, ask students to discuss what kind of change they want to bring to their communities and world at home. What kind of difference would they like to make? What are some steps they can take to better improve their neighborhood and immediate community? Students can brainstorm with family members and share their ideas with the class.



## Ordering Information

### General Order Information:

[leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](https://leeandlow.com/contact/ordering)

### Secure Online Ordering:

[leeandlow.com/books/nibi-s-water-song](https://leeandlow.com/books/nibi-s-water-song)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

### By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,  
New York, NY 10016

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Sunshine Tenasco** is Anishinaabe from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, Quebec, Canada (<https://kitiganzibi.ca>). She is a mom of four kids and a clean water activist. A portion of the profits from her handmade beadwork pendants go to a foundation that strives for a better environment for all. She also conducts workshops where she teaches beadwork and talks about the realities Indigenous people face in Canada, particularly around water access. *Nibi's Water Song* is her first book. Visit her website at [herbraids.com](https://herbraids.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Chief Lady Bird** is a Chippewa and Potawatomi artist from Rama First Nation (<https://www.ramafirstnation.ca>) and Moose Deer Point First Nation (<https://www.mdPFN.com>). The first artist to create an emoji for Twitter for Indigenous Peoples Day/Indigenous History Month, she uses digital illustration, mixed-media work, street art/murals, and community-based workshops to center contemporary truths and envision Indigenous Futurisms. You can find her online as [@chiefladybird](https://twitter.com/chiefladybird).

## REVIEWS

"Water activist Tenasco (Anishinabe) effectively uses Nibi's dilemma to illustrate a larger point... Lively, colorful illustrations from Chief Lady Bird (Chippewa and Potawatomi) add to the energy of the story, incorporating stylized fish and flower motifs into the clean-lined illustrations of the brown-skinned, pigtailed girl. One gutsy girl leads the way." —*Kirkus*

"The compelling narrative with its accompanying illustrations explains the fight for clean water in simple and relatable terms, making this a great first purchase." —*School Library Journal*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

**LEE & LOW BOOKS** is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](https://leeandlow.com).