

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution
Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project
The Spirit of the Water, New York

Music: ♪ Go to the water ♪ ♪ Walk down slow ♪ ♪ Where the rock is splattered ♪ ♪ And the branches low ♪ ♪ Where the sea is rough ♪ ♪ And the sun burns hotter ♪ ♪ To know love ♪ ♪ Go to the water ♪

Speaker 1, Bethany Yarrow: [3:32] When I hear "the spirit of the water" I have been taught by my elders that everything has a spirit. That the rocks have a spirit, that the trees have a spirit, the wind has a spirit and the mud has a spirit. Rain, the and the lightning, and the water also has a spirit. And that all those spirits are alive and watching us, and waiting for us to call on them so that they can help us. The way that I've been taught is that the water is the mother of us all. That's the original spirit. The one they say that, you know, before you're born the water comes out first. And then your whole life you're following that water. And we're made of water. And so all of these things are alive. When you call on the spirit of the water that moves inside all of us, that we all follow. That it's something that animates us all. It is the first medicine of life.

Speaker 2, Kawaannahawi/Charlene White, Mohawk Nation, Turtle Clan: [1:49] My name is Kawannahawi, Kawannahawi [Inaudible] That's my Mohawk name, and I'm Turtle Clan. My English name is Charlene White. I'm from the Mohawk nation Haudenosaunee. When I hear it now, in the background it's powerful to me, it's strong because it's life. It carries life, it brings life. That's what I hear, that's what it represents to me too, that life force that it carries. I was actually thinking back that, I think it was actually a couple days ago, about experience I had with water and where I was then in my life and where I am now. Because there was a time when I was smaller that I almost drowned in the water, so I know how powerful the water is to me. So, still to this day, I acknowledge the water I respect the water, I talk to the water, I am grateful for the water. But, yeah at the same time I'm careful with the water because there's so much more that it can do that we don't know. That's why it's important to respect that water. It's life. It has energy, it flows. It's just like you and me, but in a different form than you're used to seeing as a human being. As a being that you can see, touch, hear, you know feel, talk to. It's the same thing it's in a different form that you're used to seeing. So respect it that way, you know, because it's real just like you and I. Just like you and I, just like the flesh and blood of us. It's real in that kinda way.

Speaker 3, Tom Cook, Mohawk Wolf Clan: [3:43] We are here at this place just up the hill from our ancient homeland. Our direct ancestors lived along this river for a thousand generations. To the Indian mind, the water is alive, sentient, responsive, and absolutely part of yourself.

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Speaker 4, Brenda LeForme, Onandago Nation, Beaver Clan: [4:20] It's every month, the moon can lift the ocean and she can lift the water that's in a woman. The first thing that comes when a baby comes is water. ♪ You walk through the garden ♪ ♪ In the early spring. ♪ ♪ Where the wild blossom was a growing thing. ♪ ♪ You press that flower ♪

Speaker 1, Bethany Yarrow: [4:46] And I think especially needed right now, in these times, where we're in a climate emergency and a planetary emergency, I think of the need to call on that spirit and to honor that spirit and to feed that spirit. So that really life can live. Because the more we honor that spirit, the more that spirit can actually help us and give to us, because we're made of water.

- If you just keep it what it is, simple to the point, it's life and there's respect for that life.
♪ Go to the water ♪ ♪ Walk down slow ♪ ♪ Where the rock is splattered ♪ ♪ And the
branches low ♪ ♪ Where the sea is rough ♪ ♪ And the sun burns hotter ♪ ♪ To know love,
♪ ♪ Go to the water ♪ it just isn't right ♪ the water ♪