

TEACHABLE BOOKS

Student Well-Being: Human Dignity and Water Insecurity

By Jessica Eguia

GRADE LEVEL: Primary (K-3)

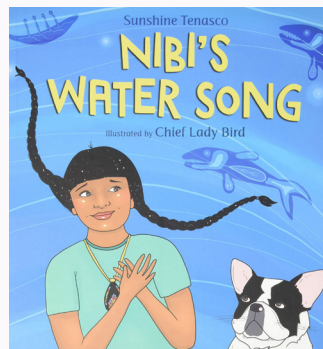
THEME: Student Well-Being

SUB-THEMES: Equity

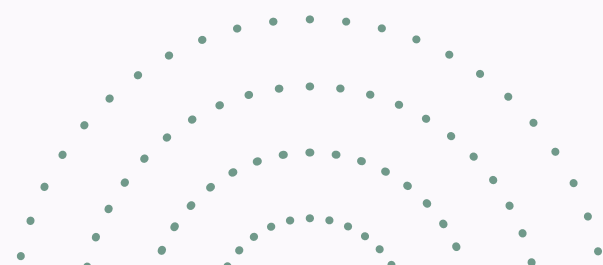
LEARNING FOCUS

Can you go to your sink and get a clean glass of water? Is it every person's basic human right to have access to water? For most people living in Canada access to water is a part of their daily reality, but for many Indigenous communities this is not true. The lack of access to safe water can have devastating effects on the dignity and health of a community. This inequity needs to change. How might you raise awareness about water inequities in Indigenous communities in Canada and be a part of the solution?

FEATURED BOOK



Nibi's Water Song by Sunshine Tenasco, illustrated by Chief Lady Bird (Scholastic Canada, 2019)



LEARNING EXPERIENCE

MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Share with students that access to water is a basic human right. All humans have the right to a clean and safe water source.

Ask students how they use water in their daily lives. Write down student responses. Possible answers can range from washing hands, cooking with water, drinking, watering plants, playing with water, etc. If you wish to extend their personal connection to water, students can draw/label a picture of their most significant water use or they can be invited to log their water use over the next 24 hours. It is important that students understand their personal connection, access and use of water.

While students understand that access to clean water is an essential part of their daily lives, it is important they also understand that a large portion of the global population does not have access to water, even in many Indigenous communities right here in Canada.

READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Before Reading:

Begin by asking students questions about the cover of the book. Students can generate their own questions and the teacher can ask a few, or the teacher can ask some of the following questions: What do you notice about the cover? What do you wonder? Who do you think is on the cover? What are they doing? Where and when is this story taking place?

Share with students that Sunshine Tenasco, the author of the book, is a clean water activist. Activists raise awareness about issues that are important to them. Sunshine Tenasco is raising awareness about the need for clean water in Indigenous communities. As you read, ask students to think about the following questions: What is this story about? What surprised you? What did you learn? What do you want to learn more about?

After Reading:

Revisit the questions you asked students to think about while you read the story: What is this story about? What surprised you? What did you learn? What do you want to learn more about? Did this story change you? How? You may wish to write down their answers or have a classroom discussion about their ideas and wonderings.

Share with students that Sunshine Tenasco wrote this book to raise awareness about the need for clean water in Indigenous communities. At the end of the book she shares with readers that they can be a part of the solution, they can raise awareness just like Nibi. Ask the students: What can you do? What will you do?





MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

When asking students to demonstrate their understanding, you can provide them with the following choices:

Inquiry Project: Students can generate questions about the water crisis that is present in First Nations communities. In order to find out more, teachers can help students locate age-appropriate resources for their research. Students can read, organize their findings and communicate their understanding in a format of their choice (speech, poem, poster board, etc.). The goal is to further educate others on the water crisis happening in Indigenous communities in Canada and to raise awareness and action. Who in their community will they share their findings with: school, family, community organizations? How will they be a part of the solution when it comes to addressing water inequities in Indigenous communities?

Reader's Theatre: Ask students to choose a significant part or page in the book that teaches others about the water crisis in Indigenous communities. Independently, with a partner or in a small group, the student(s) can perform an artistic response or prepare a reader's theatre for that section of the book. The student(s) can explain why their representation is important and worth sharing with others. With parental permission, students can amplify their message via a digital sharing platform or share their artistic response as part of a community performance to raise awareness.

Water Savers: Remind students that everyone needs water to live and they all have a role and responsibility in caring for this resource. What is something they can do to protect water (turn off faucet while brushing teeth, etc.)? Students can generate ideas for healthy and sustainable water use. What action will they commit to for positive change? Students can represent their action with a poster, drawing or writing, etc.

Fundraising and Activism: With teacher assistance, students can research organizations that are working towards addressing the water crisis in Indigenous communities. The author and publisher have listed [Her Braids](#) and the [Blue Dot movement](#) as organizations they support. Students can learn more about each organization by reading about them or interviewing members of the organization. Students can choose an organization and fundraise money to support its cause. Students can brainstorm how they will meaningfully fundraise and raise awareness about making clean drinking water in First Nations communities a reality. After students have contributed towards the organization, they can reflect on how their action promotes change.

REFLECT AND CONNECT

Give students the opportunity to reflect on the following questions:

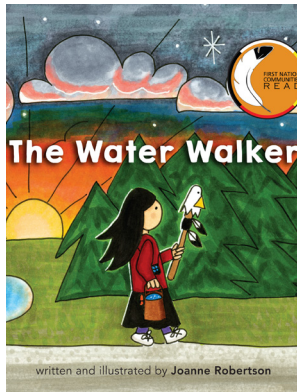
- What did you learn from *Nibi's Water Song*?
- Why is water a basic human right? Why should all humans have access to water?
- What did you learn about taking action or raising awareness for change?



If wanting to go deeper, connect with your local organizations, such as municipal water representatives, First Nations communities or community non-profit organizations to learn more about people’s real-life connections to water conservation and advocacy.

ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS AND BOOK LISTS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME

The following texts can complement the guiding questions and learning experiences:



The Water Walker by Joanne Robertson (Second Story Press, 2017)



Hope Springs by Eric Walters, illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes (Tundra Books, 2014)

Further texts that support the themes of [social justice and diversity](#) can also be found via the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

ADAPTATIONS FOR THIS LESSON

These learning experiences can be adapted for online learning by completing the read-aloud via a virtual online meeting space with students. The independent learning experiences can also be carried out with materials found at home and sent to the teacher. Students can share learning via an online sharing platform so they can view each other’s work and learn from each other throughout the process.

MORE RESOURCES

- [Nibi’s Water Song: New children’s book promotes access to clean drinking water](#) (CBC) – This article includes an interview with the author.
- [Her Braids](#) – Explore this site to learn more about how Sunshine Tenasco’s organization is committed to raising awareness and helping to make clean drinking water in First Nations communities a reality.
- [Blue Dot Movement](#) – Discover how this organization is working to support clean water in all communities. Scholastic Canada, the publisher of Nibi’s Water Song, made a donation to this organization in support of the author’s call to action.
- [Canadian Resources to Support Inquiry Learning - 2021](#)

