

A satellite photograph of the Mississippi River delta region. The river is a prominent dark blue-green line winding through a vast, arid, tan-colored landscape. The river's path is highly irregular and meandering, especially in the lower half of the image. The top of the image shows the river's mouth where it meets a larger body of water, likely the Gulf of Mexico, with a dark blue hue. The surrounding land is mostly flat and devoid of significant vegetation, with some lighter-colored patches that could be salt flats or sand dunes.

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# PARADOXES OF WATER

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from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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The cover image is of The Nile River, July 19 2004. To the right of the Nile is the Red Sea, with the finger of the Gulf of Suez on the left, and the Gulf of Aqaba on the right. In the upper right corner of the image are Israel and Palestine, left, and Jordan, right. Below Jordan is the northwestern corner of Saudi Arabia. Jacques Descloitres, MODIS Rapid Response Team, NASA/GSFC.

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# CONTENTS

## Introductions

Introduction to Issue Eleven By Patrick Nunnally, Editor .....	5
Guest Editor's Introduction to Issue Eleven: The Paradoxes of Peace and Water By Joseph B. Underhill .....	7

## Feature

Learning from the Dakota: Water and Place By Mona Smith .....	14
--	----

## Forum

New Orleans Was Once Above Sea Level By Richard Campanella .....	19
Water as a Source of Regional Cooperation in the Middle East: The Work of EcoPeace Middle East in Jordan, Israel, and Palestine By Giulia Giordano .....	24
Water, Conflict, and Peace By Peter Gleick .....	33
Meandering and Riversphere: The Potential of Paradox By Irene J. Klaver .....	45
The Sources of the Nile and Paradoxes of Religious Waters By Terje Oestigaard .....	66

## Feature

Writing the River By Leslie Thomas .....	86
---	----

## Primary Sources

Paradoxes of Water: A Reading List By The Editors of <i>Open Rivers</i> .....	110
--	-----

## Perspectives

An Endangered River: The Mississippi River Gorge By Olivia Dorothy .....	119
---	-----

**Teaching and Practice**

Paradise Lost: The Struggle to Preserve the Pongola River and its Inhabitants  
By Shira Lanyi ..... 126

**Geographies**

Water Unifies Us All  
By Kristi Achor Pursell ..... 142

**In Review**

A Tour of the Mississippi River Visitor Center  
By Joanne Richardson ..... 149

FEATURE

# LEARNING FROM THE DAKOTA: WATER AND PLACE

By Mona Smith

These videos and audios are from [Bdote Memory Map](#). The deep mapping project created by Allies: media/art is a partnership project with the Minnesota Humanities Center. The website was created several years ago to help citizens of the area now called Minnesota know where they are, and to learn **from** the Dakota that this place and the river is not a resource, but rather a relative.

The memory map is a multi-media collection of information and expressions from Dakota points of view, provided by generous people who agreed to be recorded. From a planetarium program director, a retired professor, to spiritual leaders, to leaders in education, to young Ojibwe and Dakota people, each person offers a gift from cultures who have the longest relationships to this place.



*Beach and beaver tree at Bdote. Photographer Lorie Shaull (CC BY-SA 2.0).*

# Jim Rock and We Are Water MN

Minnesota is the homeland of Dakota people. Jim Rock offers insights on Dakota people and the star knowledge that connects people, place, and the universe.

*Listen to [Jim Rock and We Are Water MN here.](#)*

# Chris MatoNunpa on Mnisota Makoce

Much of the land now known as “Minnesota,” particularly the area around the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, is “Mni Sota Makoce,” the homeland of the Dakota people. Chris Mato Nunpa describes the term and translations of it.

*See [Chris MatoNunpa on Mnisota Makoce here.](#)*



# Minnehaha Falls

“We honor water, it is sacred to us...the water is powerful.”

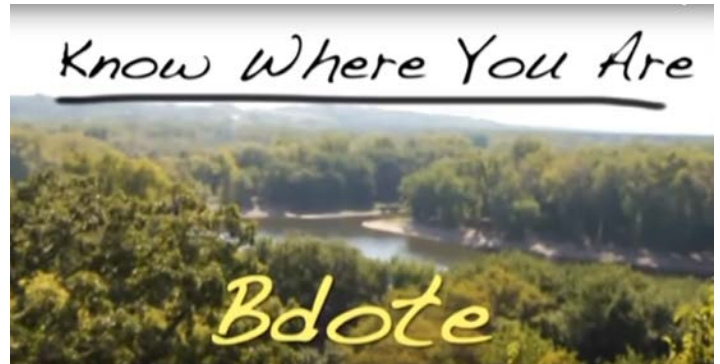
Chris Leith (1935-2011), spiritual leader of the Dakota from Prairie Island Community, speaks of water as the most powerful medicine.

*See [Minnehaha Falls here.](#)*



## Know Where You Are – Bdote

In this 17-minute video, Ramona Kitto Stately and Ethan Neerdaels guide viewers on a tour of several Dakota sites in the Twin Cities. In the Dakota language, “bdote” is a word for the confluence of two bodies of water. To Dakota people, the most important bdote is the joining of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers—a place of genesis for the Dakota people. This tour is hosted by the [Minnesota Humanities Center](#).



See [Know Where You Are – Bdote](#) here.

## Healing Place

“That’s where it starts, to know how you are connected, or disconnected, from this place.” On the relationship between healing and place, from the [Healing Place Collaborative](#).

See [Healing Place](#) here.



## Wakan Tipi, Ojibwe Youth is Moved

“The trip there made it seem like I was riding home.”

See [Wakan Tipi, Ojibwe Youth is Moved](#) here.



# Wičáŋhpi Iyótaŋ Wiŋ on the Minnesota River

“The (Minnesota River) valley stretches east to west, so it’s always lit up with sunlight.”

See [\*Wičáŋhpi Iyótaŋ Wiŋ on the Minnesota River\*](#) here.



## We Are Home

“In an urban area, what it means to be a Dakota person...this belongs to us too...we are home.”

See [\*We Are Home\*](#) here.





# Ramona Stately on Wita Tanka/Pike Island

Educator Ramona Stately recounts an elder's words that the earth knows our footprints.

*See [Ramona Stately on Wita Tanka/Pike Island here](#).*



# Alameda Rocha on the Mississippi River

Words and reflections from Alameda Rocha, at a multimedia art exhibition celebrating the Mississippi River and the continued presence of Dakota people in the modern Twin Cities metropolitan area.

*[Listen to Alameda Rocha on the Mississippi River here](#).*

*All media with permission from the Minnesota Humanities Center and Mona M. Smith of Allies: media/art.*

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## About the Author

Mona Smith is a Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota multimedia artist, educator, owner of Allies:media/art, and artist lead for the Healing Place Collaborative. She is creator of the Bdote Memory Map (in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center), Cloudy Waters: Dakota Reflections on the River (exhibited at the Minnesota History Center and elsewhere), and other multimedia installations.