ISSUE ELEVEN: SUMMER 2018
OPEN RIVERS:
RETHINKING WATER, PLACE & COMMUNITY

PARADOXES OF WATER
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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Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community is produced by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing and the University of Minnesota Institute for Advanced Study.

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ISSN 2471-190X
## 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 *Open Rivers* .............................................................. 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
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.
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 Numpa 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.
Wičáŋȟpi Iyótaŋ Win on the Minnesota River

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

See *Wičáŋȟpi Iyótaŋ Win 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.

Recommended Citation


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.