

## “Nibi Song” | We Are Water Protectors

I can sing “Nibi Song” and tell its story.

This song was written by Doreen Day at the request of her grandson, Mashkoonce. Doreen and Mashkoonce give written permission (via the website below) for everyone to share this song... sing it to the water every day. Verbal permission to use this song in Minnesota classrooms was obtained by Lyz Jaakola.

This is the story of the “Nibi (Water) Song,” as told by Beatrice Menase Kwe Jackson, Migizi Clan.

Doreen attended a conference about the water in which the internationally known speaker, Dr. Masaru Emoto said, the very least we should do every day, is to speak to the water:

*Water, we love you. We thank you. We respect you.*

So she did this. Every day on their drive to drop Mashkoonce (Little Elk) at school, they passed a body of water. And every day they said those words to the water as they drove by. They made games by saying it in different voices and then would say it as fast as they could.

Then one day Mashkoonce, said, “Nokomis, why can’t we say this in our language?” So, Doreen asked her daughter’s language teacher to write it in Ojibwemowin. Doreen had the words taped to the car visor as they learned the words.

One day Mashkoonce said, “Nokomis, why don’t we sing the words, don’t you think the water would like it to be sung?” So she thought about it and came up with the tune. They sang this song to the water every morning on their drive to school. It is sung like a lullaby and doesn’t use shakers or drums.

---

“Nibi Song” (pronounced Nee-bee)

[http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/?attachment\\_id=2244](http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com/?attachment_id=2244)

Click the link above to listen to “Nibi Song.” Follow the words. Join the singing. Move your hand to outline the shape of the melody. Where is ornamentation used in the melody?

### “Nibi Song”

**Ne-be Gee Zah-gay-e-goo**

**Gee Me-gwetch-wayn ne-me-goo**

**Gee Zah Wayn ne-me-goo**

#### Translation

Nibi = water

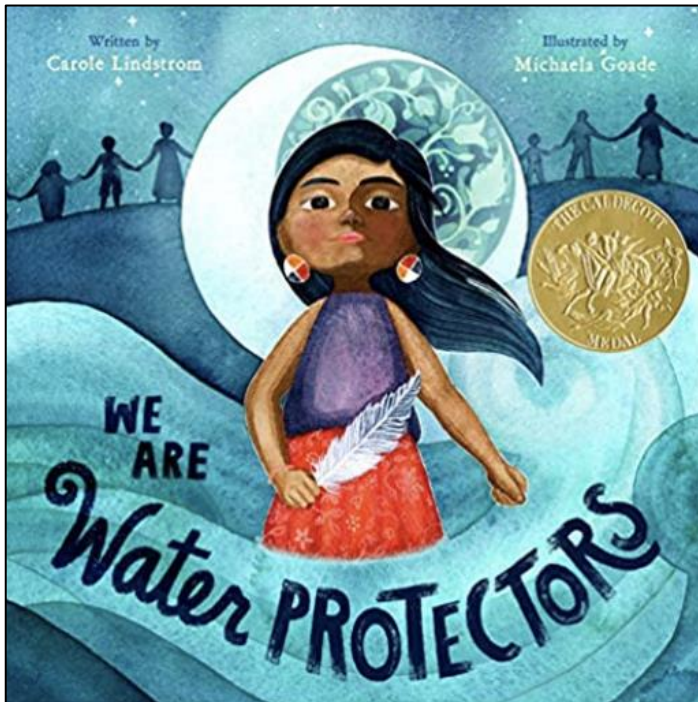
Gee = you

Zah-gay-e-goo = we (inclusive) love you

Me-gwetch-wayn ne-me-goo = we (inclusive) thank you

Zah Wayn ne-me-goo = we (inclusive) respect you

I can tell about the respect the Anishinaabe people have for water.



After students have learned “**Nibi Song**,” read ***We Are Water Protectors***, written by Carole Lindstrom (enrolled with the Turtle Mountain band of Ojibwe—North Dakota) and illustrated by Michaela Goade (enrolled with Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes—Alaska).

"This book was created as I became increasingly aware of the many tribal nations that are fighting oil pipelines from crossing their tribal lands and waterways. ...Water affects and connects us all. We must fight to protect it."  
– Carole Lindstrom

The creators of this book present one perspective on oil pipelines; there are multiple perspectives. This book is winner of the 2021 Caldecott Medal.

**Think – Pair – Share or Small Groups.** Pose these—or other—questions to students for discussion.

1. How is the message in the story similar to the meaning of “Nibi Song”?
2. Why do you suppose water is so important to the Anishinaabe people?
3. Three times in the story we read:  
*We stand  
With our songs  
And our drums.  
We are still here.*
4. Read the book again. Find two pages where it would add meaning to sing “Nibi Song” instead of saying the words of the author.
5. Draw a picture to illustrate “Nibi Song.”

What do you think that means?  
Why do you suppose it appears three times?

**Final thought?** Singing songs is one way to honor something we respect.