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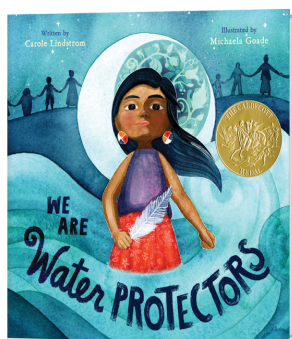
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A Project Inspired by *We Are Water Protectors*

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by Carole Lindstrom and Michaela Goede
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We Are Water Protectors is a picture book inspired by all indigenous people in the USA fighting for clean water. Written and illustrated by Native American authors, the book was awarded the Caldecott Medal in 2021 and was a #1 recommendation in the *New York Times*. The author, Carole Lindstrom, is a proud member of the Turtle Mountain Band of the Ojibwe Nation. After the dramatic events in 2016, where the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe fought to protect their Sacred Land against the Dakota Access Pipeline, Lindstrom was initially inspired to write a novel for young readers and she collaborated with the illustrator and artist Michaela Goede to create this wonderful children's book.

Most books inspired by Native Americans and their stories are based on myths and folklore, which makes the students think that Indigenous people are from the past. This book is very different because it talks about a real problem of real people that is a very important part of today. At the same time, the actual story is connected with a traditional Ojibwe prophecy called the "Seven Fires" that foretells the story of a black snake that will come to destroy the earth if humans do not treat it with kindness and care. The book tells the story of an Ojibwe girl as they fight the "black snake", an oil pipeline that threatens their way of life. The final message is clear, there are many indigenous-led movements across the Americas that rally to protect and safeguard Sacred Land and water from pollution and corruption.

Why is it so important to use books that portray real issues written by Native American authors? Changing the narrative about indigenous cultures in the classroom and making the real people visible is an essential task in education today. As a teacher, I found it was easy to find original sources for information for the students to connect with the topic of the book. This is clearly not an invented story, but a real issue that many indigenous Americans are talking about. The students really enjoy watching YouTube videos where they can listen to real interviews with chiefs, with young leaders and even children.

The illustrations of the book are fantastic, they make the readers immediately connect with the main character, the story, the clean water issue and Native American rights. The students had a strong response to the image of the pipeline, the black snake, they immediately started chanting "Fight the snake! Fight the snake!". As a teacher, I also appreciated having a glossary of terms and a pronunciation guide as well as a note by both authors telling the reader what the topic means to them. The book ends with a pledge, a perfect idea to inspire the students to be stewards of the world.

How did I use the book in the context of Orff-Schulwerk lessons? The book inspired us to discuss the topic of stewardship and water protection during Earth Week. Students had the opportunity to reflect on the importance of respecting the natural world and the environment in Native American communities. We responded to the ideas in the book through singing, playing, dancing, composing, and writing poetry. Some of the texts in the book were used to create songs and chants that then turned into hand drum pieces. We created *soundscapes* to represent the sound of rivers and lakes. We learned an Algonquin lullaby that became the anthem of the whole project. The students really enjoyed composing short episodes about animals, plants, trees and even a *rondo* representing planet earth.

Here are some words of the inspired 3rd graders:

“Water corruption is a problem that many indigenous people have to deal with, and not only in the USA”.

“Imagine growing in a land full of oil in your water... If you drink it, you might get sick”.

“An oil company decided to build a pipe line across Native American Sacred territory. That was unfair because they made the water unfit to drink. They had the courage to stop the pipe line, many Nations gathered to help”.

“They had to fight the black snake so many more generations can enjoy having clean water”.



Sofía López-Ibor studied flute, recorder and music education at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Madrid, Spain and is a graduate of the Orff Institute in Salzburg, department of the Mozarteum (Austria). She is past-president of Orff España, co-directs their summer course and teaches seminars and courses throughout the world. She is the co-author of *¡Quien canta su mal espanta!* and author of the groundbreaking *Blue is the Sea: Music, Movement and Visual Arts in the Orff Schulwerk*. With over 40 years of experience teaching children of all ages, Sofia teaches Levels in the USA and completed her 26th year at The San Francisco School. She has received the Herbst Foundation award and the Medallion of Honor from the Orff Forum in recognition of her work in training teachers throughout the world.