

This song is inspired by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and all the tribes, nations, native and non-native people coming together to protect the land and water threatened by the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The song came to me on my return from Standing Rock. That morning before leaving, a meadowlark was singing right outside my tent. “Be a lark from the meadow. Be a lark from *this* meadow,” I heard it sing. We, too, can be larks from the meadow. We, too, can sing in the new day. —ST

The chorus contains two phrases in Lakota:  
 Mni wičoni (mini we-cho-nee) —“Water is life.”  
 Mitakuye Oyasin (mee-dah-koo-yeh o-yah-seen) —“All My Relations”

My gratitude to Jeremy Davis, of Lakota and Anishinaabe heritage, who suggested adding and helped me incorporate into the song the phrase “Mitakuye Oyasin.”

*“The phrase Mitakuye Oyasin has a bigger meaning than just our blood relatives. Yes, it’s true; we are all one human race. But the word Mitakuye means relations and Oyasin means more than family, more than a Nation, more than all of humankind, everything that has a spirit. The Earth herself, Maka Unci, is our relation, and so is the sky, Grandfather Sky, and so is the Buffalo and so are each of the two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, those that swim, those that fly, the root nation and the crawling beings who share the world with us. Mitakuye Oyasin refers to the interconnectedness of all beings and all things. We are all interconnected. We are all One.”*  
 —Chief Arvol Looking Horse, from his book *White Buffalo Teachings* (Dreamkeepers Press, 2001)

# Water Is Life ~ Mni Wičoni

A song for Standing Rock

Written & arranged by  
 Sara Thomsen

**System 1:**

Chords: C, F, G

Soprano: [Rest]

Alto: All my re-la-tions, come Ev-'ry na-tion, come All my re-la-tions un-der the

Tenor: [Rest]

**System 2:**

Chords: F, G, C, F

Soprano: [Rest]

Alto: sun We are one. We are pray-ing, come We are pray-ing, come

Tenor: [Rest] We are pray-ing, come We are pray-ing, come

13

S G F G C

We are the riv - er, come

A We are the song and we are the drum. We are one. We are the riv - er, come

T We are the song and we are the drum. We are one. We are the riv - er, come

19

S F G F G C

We are the riv - er, come We are the boat, the pad - dle, the shore, We are one.

A We are the riv - er, come We are the boat, the pad - dle, the shore, We are one.

T We are the riv - er, come We are the boat, the pad - dle, the shore, We are one.

25 **Chorus**

S F

M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing

A M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing

T M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing

B M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing M - ni wi - čo - ni, sing

25

Optional harmonies

Mi - ta - ku - ye O - ya - sin. — Mi - ta - ku - ye O - ya -

Pronunciation of the two phrases in Lakota:

Mni wičoni (mini we-cho-nee) —“Water is life.”

Mitakuye Oyasín (mee-dah-koo-yeh o-yah-seen) —“All My Relations”

29

S G F G C  
 M - ni wi-čo-ni, "wa - ter is life" for ev-'ry-thing. We are the wa-ter, sing

A  
 M - ni wi-čo-ni, "wa - ter is life" for ev-'ry-thing. We are the wa-ter, sing

T  
 M - ni wi-čo-ni, "wa - ter is life" for ev-'ry-thing. We are the wa-ter, sing

B  
 M - ni wi-čo-ni, "wa - ter is life" for ev-'ry-thing. We are the wa-ter, sing

29  
 - sin. — Mi-ta-ku-ye, Mi-ta-ku-ye Mi-ta-ku-ye O-ya - sin. — Mi-ta-ku-ye O-ya -

35

S F G F G C  
 We are the wa-ter, sing We are the wa-ter, We are where all life be - gins.

A  
 We are the wa-ter, sing We are the wa-ter, We are where all life be - gins.

T  
 We are the wa-ter, sing We are the wa-ter, We are where all life be - gins.

B  
 We are the wa-ter, sing We are the wa-ter, We are where all life be - gins.

35  
 - sin. — Mi-ta-ku-ye O-ya - sin. — Mi-ta-ku-ye, Mi-ta-ku-ye Mi-ta-ku-ye O-ya -

*"We are the river, and the river is us. We have no choice but to stand up."*

— LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, Founder of Sacred Stone Camp

Verse 2

41 C F G

S

A

T

B

We are the an-cient ones We are the an-cient ones In your breath and bones we sing

41

sin. —

47 F G C F

S

A

T

B

on, We are one. We are the mead-ow, come We are the mead-ow, come

We are the mead-ow, come We are the mead-ow, come

53

G F G C

S We are the new day, run, run, run!

A We are the lark that sings the new day has be - gun. We are the new day, run, run, run!

T We are the lark that sings the new day has be - gun. We are the new day, run, run, run!

B We are the new day, run, run, run!

59

F G F G C To Chorus

S We are the new day, run, run, run! We are the old and we are the young, We are one.

A We are the new day, run, run, run! We are the old and we are the young, We are one.

T We are the new day, run, run, run! We are the old and we are the young, We are one.

B We are the new day, run, run, run! We are the old and we are the young, We are one.

Verse 3

65

C F G

S We are the earth and sky! We are the thun-der cries! We are the fi - re, We are \_\_\_ the

A We are the earth and sky! We are the thun-der cries! We are the fi - re, We are \_\_\_ the

T We are the earth and sky! We are the thun-der cries! We are the fi - re, We are \_\_\_ the

B We are the earth and sky! We are the thun-der cries! We are the fi - re, We are \_\_\_ the

71 F C F

S light in \_\_\_ your eyes. We are stand - ing strong! Like a rock, like a stone!

A light in \_\_\_ your eyes. We are stand - ing strong! Like a rock, like a stone!

T light in \_\_\_ your eyes. We are stand - ing strong! Like a rock, like a stone!

B light in \_\_\_ your eyes. We are stand - ing strong! Like a rock, like a stone!

77 G F G C To Chorus

S On this sac - red ground we \_\_\_ be - long, we \_\_\_ are home.

A On this sac - red ground we \_\_\_ be - long, we \_\_\_ are home All my re - la - tions, come.

T On this sac - red ground we \_\_\_ be - long, we \_\_\_ are home

B On this sac - red ground we \_\_\_ be - long, we \_\_\_ are home

83 F G F G C

S Ev - 'ry na - tion, come. All my re - la - tions un - der the sun, We are one.

A Ev - 'ry na - tion, come. All my re - la - tions un - der the sun, We are one.

T Ev - 'ry na - tion, come. All my re - la - tions un - der the sun, We are one.

B Ev - 'ry na - tion, come. All my re - la - tions un - der the sun, We are one.