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COMMITMENT

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from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Introduction to Issue 26 | Commitment
By Laurie Moberg, Editor 4

Features (Peer Review)

Rivers of Lake Superior’s North Shore: Historical Methodology and Ojibwe Dialects
By Erik Martin Redix 7

On The Physicality of Hope
By Joanne Richardson 27

Rights of Nature and the St. Louis River Estuary
By Emily Levang 46

Geographies

Libraries Burning
By Phyllis Mauch Messenger 64

In Review

Stories to the Surface: Revealing the Impacts of Hydroelectric Development in Manitoba
By Caroline Fidan Tyler Doenmez 85

Perspectives

Reflections on *UPRIVER: A Watershed Film*
By Chris O’Brien 98

Primary Sources

Ghost Streams and Redlining
By Jacob Napieralski 102

Teaching and Practice

Centering Water: Practices of Commitment
By Boyce Upholt, Katie Hart Potapoff, Michael Anderson, Britt Gangeness, Angie Hong, Coosa Riverkeeper,
Greg Seitz, and Andy Erickson 107

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE 26 | COMMITMENT

By Laurie Moberg, Editor

This spring, we've put this issue together while university campuses across the country and beyond have been in uproar. Setting up encampments on their own college campuses, students joined a movement demanding an end to the violence and deaths of civilians in Palestine. The students demonstrated the value and power of commitment even as the protests became contentious and complicated.

Commitment, especially in the face of adversity, can be a formidable task. Why should we make plans, emotionally attach, or invest in efforts that will be strenuous and possibly disappointing? The answer emerges in the articles in this issue: because commitment is how we effect change. From centering Indigenous knowledges to restor(y)ing ecological and social places to mobilizing hope, the articles here illustrate what



Detail of image of tall rocks at the mouth of the Baptism River from which the river gets its Ojibwe name. Image courtesy of M. Baxley, Bear Witness Media.

author Scott Russell Sanders (1998, 80) calls a “commitment...compounded of stubbornness, affection, and wonder.” Collectively, these authors show us the power of this kind of commitment—a determination rooted in emotional investment and conviction—to effect change and shape our shared futures.

Two of the articles in this issue demonstrate a commitment to Indigenous voices and stories. In his article tracing the Indigenous place-names for rivers along the North Shore of Lake Superior, Erik Martin Redix explains that his work counters the intentional erasure of Indigenous knowledge. The outcomes of this work, including signage across northern Minnesota, are also investments for the next generation of Ojibwe youth. Caroline Fidan Tyler Doenmez offers a review of *In Our Backyard: Keeyask and the Legacy of Hydroelectric Development* edited by Aimée Craft and Jill Blakely. Doenmez argues that the anthology is both a record of Indigenous dissent and a way of documenting responsibility to Indigenous knowledges and relationships with place.

Some articles share a commitment to reconfiguring our stories as a way of confronting challenges and injustices. Emily Levang entreats us to see the potential pitfalls of the dominant narratives for protecting the St. Louis River estuary; she proposes the rights of nature approach as an intervention that might reconfigure our relationships with the estuary and the more-than-human more broadly. In her article on Arctic archaeological sites, republished from 2019, Phyllis Mauch Messenger asks us to see the stories that might be lost due to climate change. She argues that as sites across the Arctic are threatened by thawing permafrost, so are the data and stories held in these places. She details the commitment of scholars to gather as much data as possible before climate change destroys the sites completely.

We preface Messenger’s article with a series of additional resources that explore both the threat to Arctic landscapes and ongoing recovery efforts. Based on his research on flooding in the Detroit area, Jacob Napieralski argues that historical practices of redlining and the erasure of streams and wetlands have colluded to put particular communities at greatest risk. Napieralski is committed to addressing these injustices and inequalities by telling stories of floods and flood mitigation that acknowledge ghost streams and discriminatory social practices.

Our final set of articles focuses on a commitment to hope examined through ongoing efforts to effect change. Joanne Richardson draws together several tools, initiatives, and people that work to improve our water futures at local, national, and global scales. In a rich and engaging StoryMap, a first of its kind for *Open Rivers*, Richardson demonstrates how these examples are motivated by hope and can spur us to action. In his reflections on a screening of *UPRIVER*, Chris O’Brien highlights the effects of the innovative conservation strategies that are transforming Oregon’s Willamette River system. O’Brien encourages us to consider how this commitment to reinvigorating a river system might be transferable to other places. In our Teaching & Practice column, several contributors offer hope by sharing ways they demonstrate a commitment to water, provoking readers to consider how we might make our own practice of commitment.

Sharing their stories and their dedication, the articles in this issue demonstrate commitments to people and places and the possibilities of a different, better future. More importantly, by sharing their commitments, the authors in this issue also invite readers to join them in creating this future together. This is not simple work. The articles here speak both to challenges and hope, to the labors of commitment and the inspiring power

of their outcomes, to confronting the formidable and to empowering others. Yet making commitments—to a cause, a place, people, or the future—is a way of demonstrating what matters to us, of living with integrity, and of effecting the changes

we want to see in the world. These articles compel us to consider: what future do you want to create and what commitments will you make in order to build that reality?

References

Sanders, Scott Russell. 1998. *Hunting For Hope: A Father's Journey*. Boston: Beacon Press.

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About the Author

Laurie Moberg is the editor for *Open Rivers: Rethinking Water, Place & Community*, a digital journal of public scholarship published at the University of Minnesota (UMN) by the Institute for Advanced Study and UMN Libraries Publishing. She earned her Ph.D. in anthropology from UMN in 2018. Her doctoral research investigates recurrent episodes of flooding on rivers in Thailand and queries how the ecological, social, and cosmological entanglements between people and the material world are reimagined and reconfigured in the aftermath of disasters. In her current work, she approaches public scholarship as a critical strategy for expanding whose stories are heard, for shaping our public conversations, and for forming solutions for our shared ecological challenges.