

# RIVER TIME VORTEX EXTRAVAGANZA!



*A Watershed Time Travel Story*

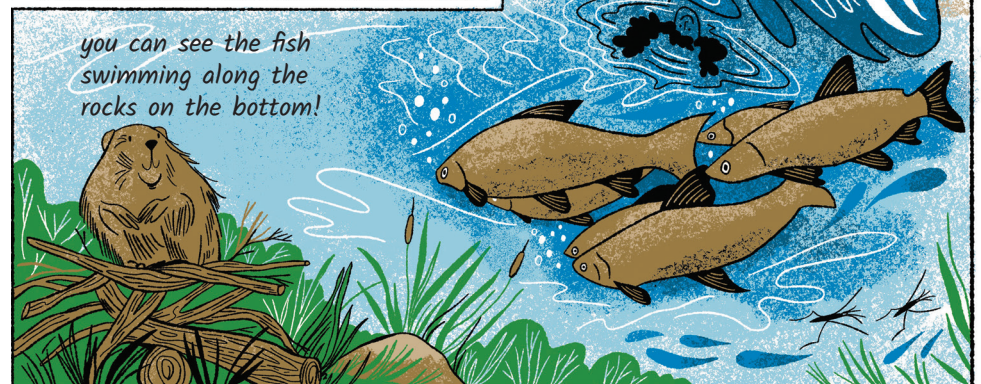
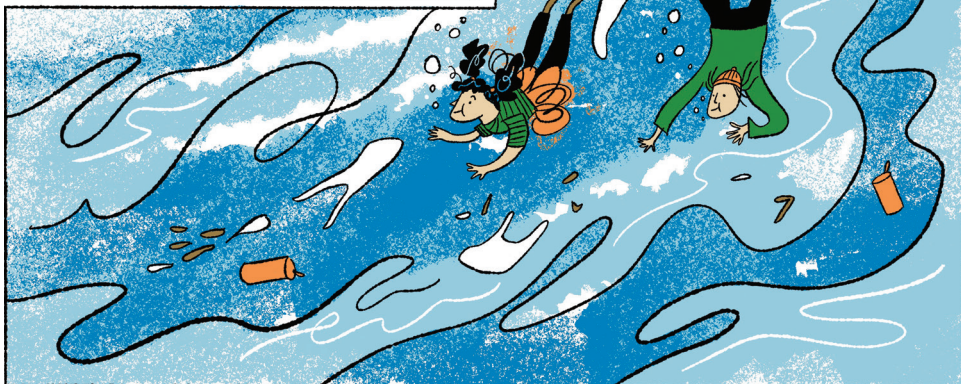
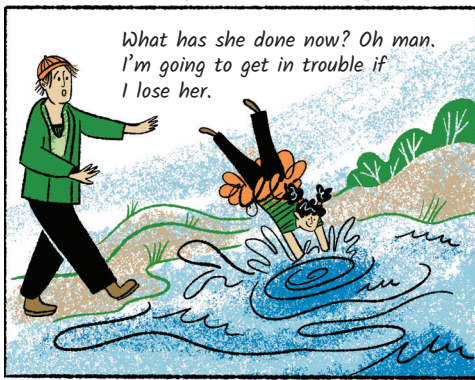
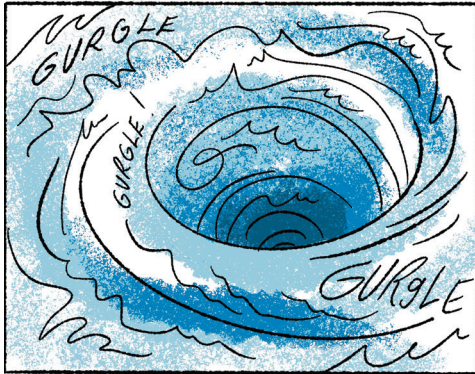
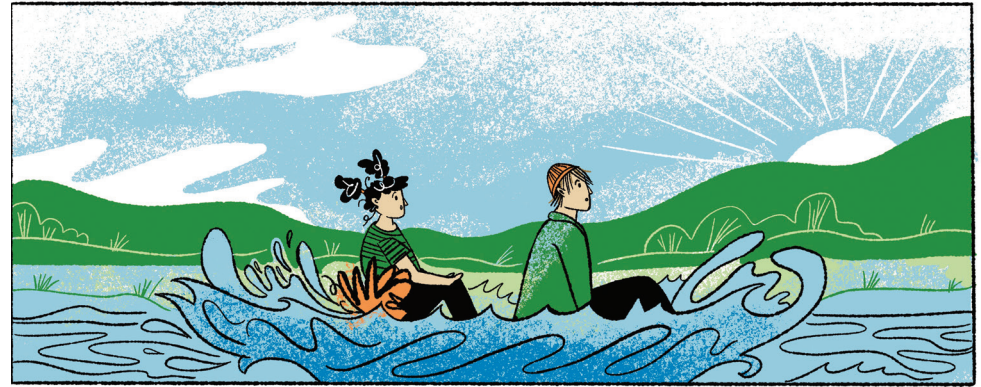
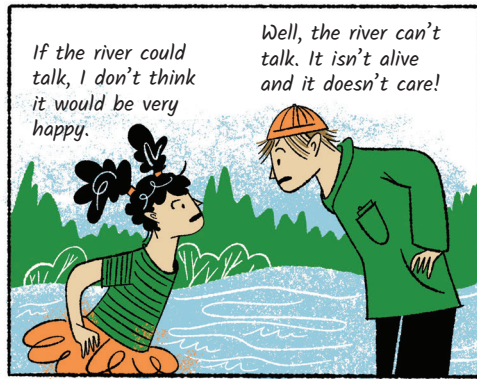
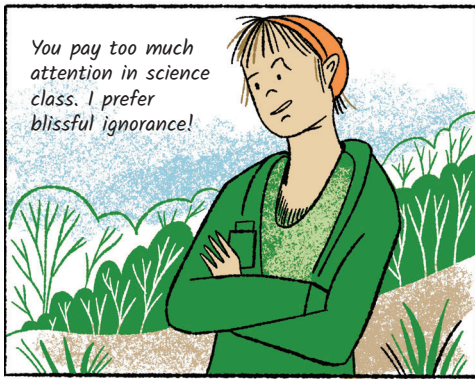
By The NSW Youth Water Council

Illustrated by Amanda Schutz













The fish flow freely through my waters. The plants along my shores provide shade and keep the ground solid around me. But there is so much more...



Do you see that other creek flowing into my river there? They are my family and part of my river system. Some of these creeks flow from high up in the mountains or along prairie fields before we join together.



The ponds in the area are also a part of this system. When things get dry, these wetlands help store water (and clean it, too).



So, you're the river?



I am. Your people call me the North Saskatchewan River. But I have many different names given to me by many different people.



I start my journey as a trickle of water from a frozen ice field in the high mountains. From there, I travel through mountains, forests, and grasslands, carving my way through valleys until I reach a vast bay that leads to the ocean.

But I'm not just any river; I'm part of a big family called a watershed. It's a network of smaller rivers, creeks, lakes, wetlands, forests, and even the water underground, all shaping me as I flow. When rain falls or snow melts, it joins us from the land. Eventually, every drop finds its way to me, making me stronger.

Here's the cool part: I'm not alone. I'm connected to everything around me. What happens in my watershed family affects how much water I have and how clean it is. So, taking care of my watershed means taking care of everything that lives here, including both of you.

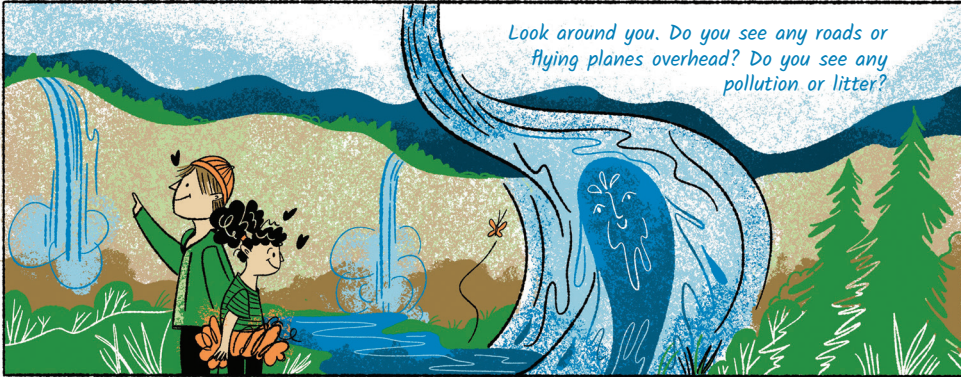




But this is the before, and you are from the now.



What do you mean, 'this is the before'?

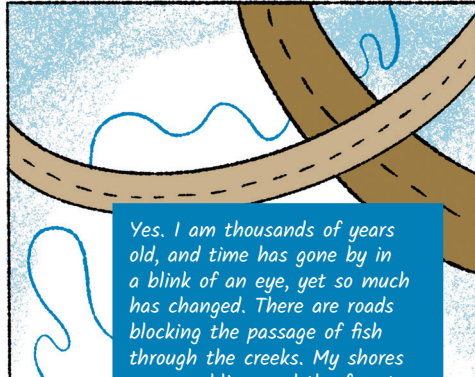


Look around you. Do you see any roads or flying planes overhead? Do you see any pollution or litter?

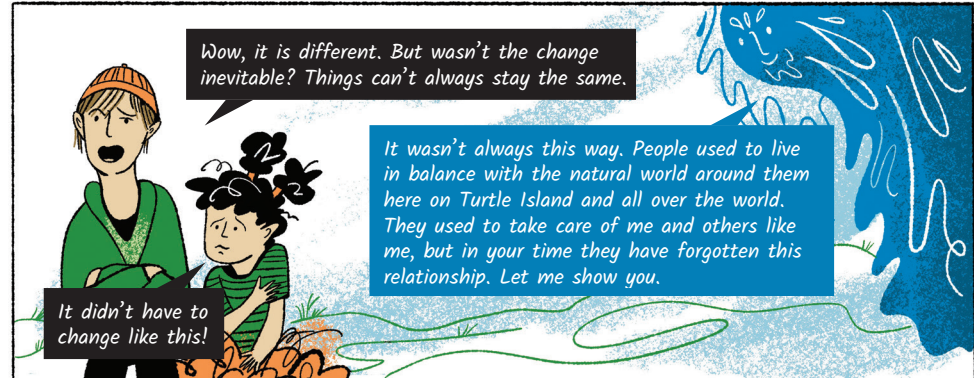
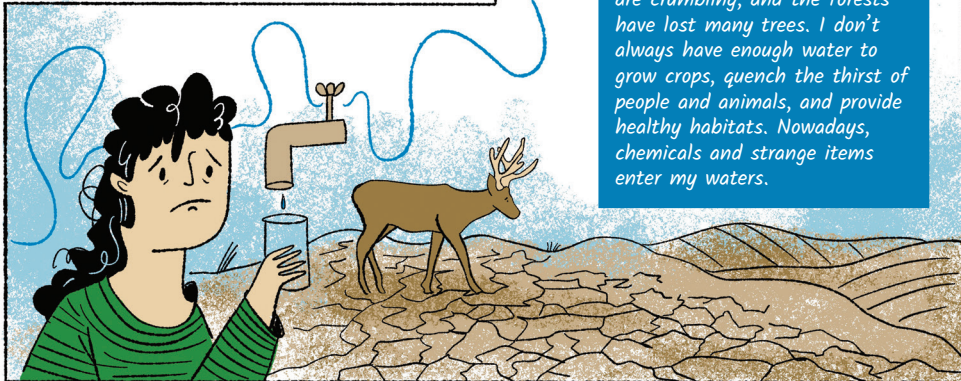


What did you do to everyone? Where are our parents?

We're in the past now, aren't we?



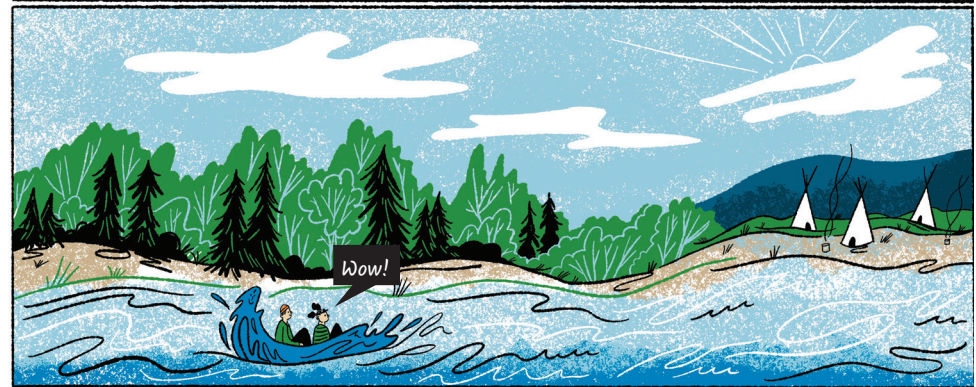
Yes. I am thousands of years old, and time has gone by in a blink of an eye, yet so much has changed. There are roads blocking the passage of fish through the creeks. My shores are crumbling, and the forests have lost many trees. I don't always have enough water to grow crops, quench the thirst of people and animals, and provide healthy habitats. Nowadays, chemicals and strange items enter my waters.



Wow, it is different. But wasn't the change inevitable? Things can't always stay the same.

It wasn't always this way. People used to live in balance with the natural world around them here on Turtle Island and all over the world. They used to take care of me and others like me, but in your time they have forgotten this relationship. Let me show you.

It didn't have to change like this!



Wow!



You may be able to learn from this community. They may answer your questions and tell you about their way of life. But here, give them this birchbark canoe first. You should always offer a gift to thank them for their knowledge.



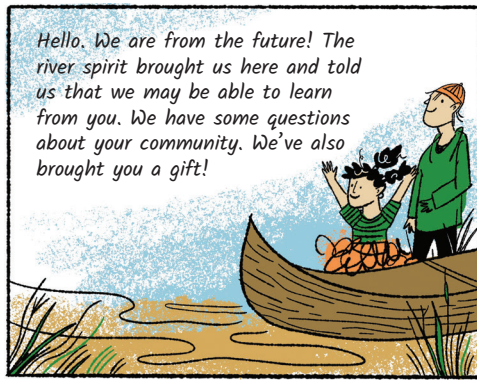
Remember to be respectful and listen to their words. Never interrupt what they have to say.







Welcome, strangers. What brings you here?



Hello. We are from the future! The river spirit brought us here and told us that we may be able to learn from you. We have some questions about your community. We've also brought you a gift!



Wherever you are from, it's clear that you are not from here. What would you like to know?



We've seen so much since we've been here. There are so many fish swimming, and the water is so clean. How can people from our time live more harmoniously with the river like you do? How can we make people care?

There is no simple answer to your questions. But perhaps it is in the way your people view water. Water is sacred. It is alive and the essence of life itself. We are born from water and nourished by it. Water is what connects us to the world around us. Just as we take from the river, we give something back in return to ensure there is enough for future generations. Our community follows this river, just as we follow the buffalo and respect all that it gives. Without water, we have nothing. Perhaps your people would like to hear this message.



Wow. I never thought of it that way. I wish we could change things and protect the water.



You still can.



The river is strong and resilient. Nature is powerful and it will give you much more if you give it something in return.

Respect the water, respect the land, respect the air, and most importantly, don't lose sight of what truly matters.



Thank you for your advice.

We still have a lot to learn.



Now do you understand? Let us go forwards again to your time.





Guess no one ever told magic portals about soft landings.

Wow it does look different...



Now what? I want to do it again! Can we go back?



You have a place here, and there's important work to be done.

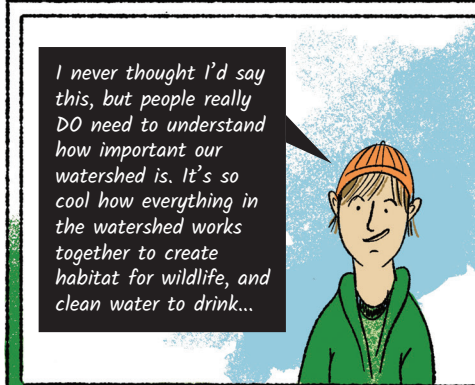
Everyone and everything using my water should use it respectfully, so in turn I can provide everyone with clean, beautiful water to drink, live, and play in. We must maintain balance, and I'd like you to share my message.



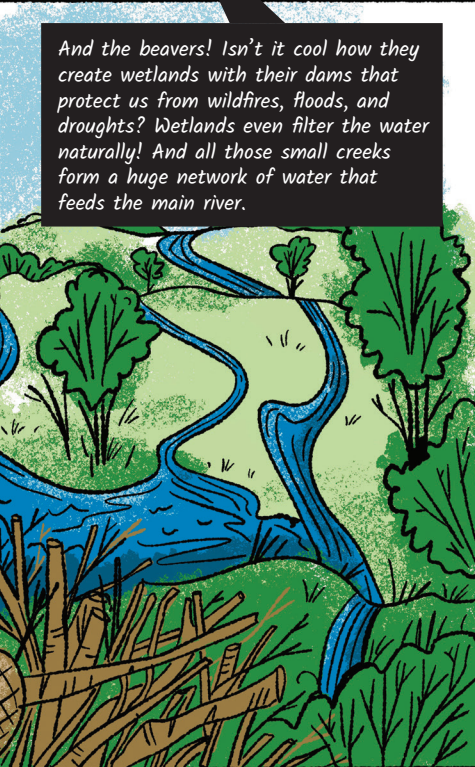
But what can we do? How can we help? This is a lot to take on.



Hmmm... we could write a comic!



I never thought I'd say this, but people really DO need to understand how important our watershed is. It's so cool how everything in the watershed works together to create habitat for wildlife, and clean water to drink...



And the beavers! Isn't it cool how they create wetlands with their dams that protect us from wildfires, floods, and droughts? Wetlands even filter the water naturally! And all those small creeks form a huge network of water that feeds the main river.



There's so much more to it than I thought. If only people could see what we saw!



...what?

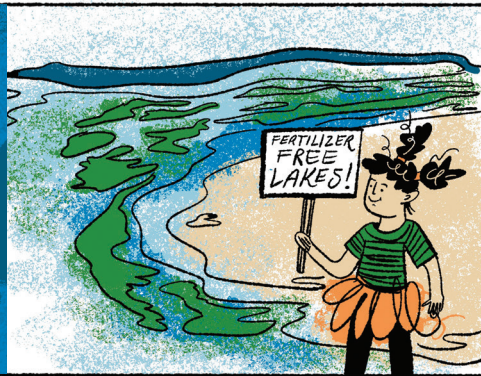
Oh, nothing, I just hate to say I told you so...





The siblings created a comic book about their friend the River and its watershed family. Then they got busy with all types of stewardship activities....

The siblings are spreading the word about responsible lake living. Limiting excess fertilizer use in our watershed can prevent harmful blue-green algae blooms.



The siblings plant an 'eco-buffer' along the riparian area of the river. This ribbon of green filters pollutants, provides habitat for wildlife and prevents erosion.

Spring cleanup in the watershed! The siblings brought out their friends to pick up litter left behind.



### *About the Authors:*

The 2024 Youth Water Council features a group of 9 passionate and driven high school students collaborating towards improved environmental health in the North Saskatchewan River watershed. With the help of NSWA, the Youth Water Council put their heads together to choose a project that spoke to them. The 'River Time Vortex Extravaganza!' story is the product of months of learning, discovery, deliberation, and project planning. The council hopes this comic will help readers feel a greater connection to the watershed and all it does for us.

- Apoorva Bhadane**, Edmonton, Grade 11
- Eadlin Lalonde**, Smoky Lake, Grade 12
- Humza Khan**, Edmonton, Grade 11
- Jemimah Ashaolu**, Edmonton, Grade 10
- Josie Camilleri**, Parkland County, Grade 11
- Judah Walker**, Fort Saskatchewan, Grade 12
- Kayleigh Staigh**, Sherwood Park, Grade 12
- Roy Li**, Edmonton, Grade 12
- Tanya Chaudhary**, Edmonton, Grade 10

**NSWA Staff:** Kaila Belovich, Jillian Peterson, Rosey Radmanovich, and Scott Millar

The North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA) is a not-for-profit society and one of eleven Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in Alberta. The NSWA works to improve the health and sustainability of the North Saskatchewan River watershed today and into the future by supporting collaboration, facilitation, and knowledge sharing of adaptive watershed management. The NSWA's Youth Water Council has allowed youth to participate in and share their voices about environmental issues.

### *About the Illustrator:*

Amanda Schutz is an illustrator, a graphic designer, and an unstoppable force in gardening. She has been the owner and Creative Director for Curio Studio, a specialty design boutique based in Edmonton for over 20 years. She is the founder of the online advocacy group "Canadian Women in Design", and in 2023 she was recognized as a Fellow of Design Professionals of Canada. This is her first attempt at personifying water, and she feels it went pretty well. Visit Amanda's portfolio online at [amandaschutz.com](http://amandaschutz.com)



*Two siblings camping near the North Saskatchewan River are taken on a journey back in time to discover the importance of watershed health and respecting our rivers. Join them as they make new friends and gain a new perspective on the waters that give them life in this River Time Vortex Extravaganza!*



**YOUTH  
WATER  
COUNCIL**



**NSWA**  
NORTH SASKATCHEWAN  
WATERSHED ALLIANCE



*Take a look at some of the stewardship opportunities the council has chosen to feature!  
[nswa.ab.ca/initiatives/youth-water-council/2024](https://nswa.ab.ca/initiatives/youth-water-council/2024)*

*thank you to our funders*



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