



# Water Stories:

Photo tips, compelling visuals, and  
storytelling techniques

Presentation by Lianna Nixon



## About We Are Water

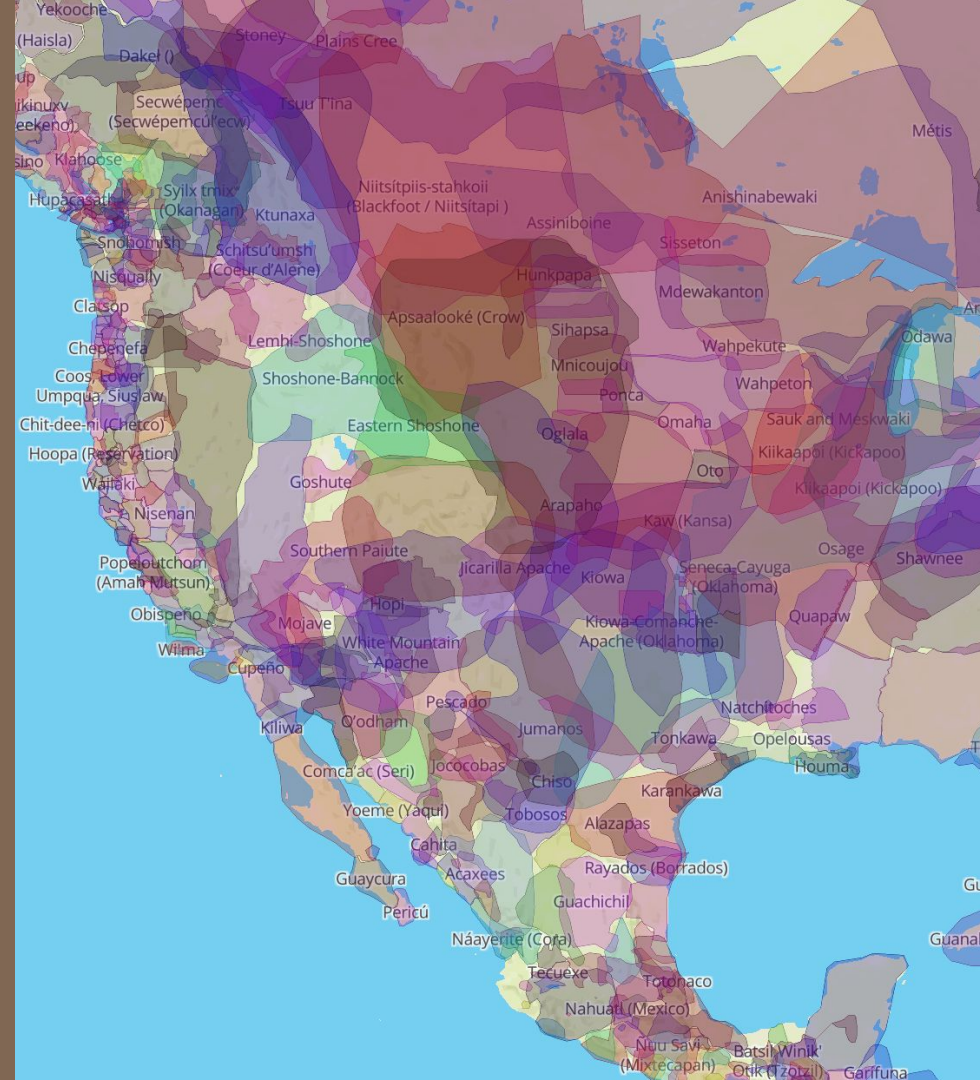
Sharing stories and inspiring conversations about what water means to communities across the Four Corners Region of the Southwestern U.S.

Join the online community, listen to community stories, explore our learning resources, and visit our traveling exhibit!

Learn More: <https://wearewater.colorado.edu>

# Land Acknowledgement

We honor and acknowledge that the University of Colorado's campuses are on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute, Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, Lakota, Pueblo and Shoshone Nations. Further, we acknowledge the **48 contemporary tribal nations** historically tied to the lands that comprise what is now called Colorado.





# Agenda

- Introduction
- Icebreaker
- Building Your Story
- Engagement Techniques
- Photo Tips
- Responsible Storytelling Practices

NOTE: Refer to the Link Bank for the Padlet and other resources



# Based on “Making Presentations that Stick”

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ8XvIFamIY>

Google Doc Handout:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YHfH-jx2ij0GzIuB1CTIzjrqHVkv1sxr/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102815730815671620669&rtpof=true&sd=true>

## Visual Representation



Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park community members and work with Tsé Bii'  
Learn More: [www.tsebii.com](http://www.tsebii.com)



# Lianna Nixon

- Conservation Photographer and Filmmaker
- CIRES E&O Team Member
- Work focuses on the intersections between people and planet through artscience and counter-narrative frameworks

# Why do we need Storytelling?



Create more  
impact

Inspire, Educate,  
Motivate, Change

Transfer  
knowledge

Oldest form of  
communication,  
synthesizing/retelling  
knowledge

Stories Engage  
Us

Tackle complex, abstract  
notions, approach openly

Community  
Work

Sharing, expanding,  
and maintaining



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# Icebreaker

Please refer to the Padlet Link

Answer the Question:

Think about a nonfiction story (article, TV show, podcast, etc.) What was it about the piece that made it memorable, impactful, relevant to you?

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# Building A Story

Exposition

Inciting Incident

Actions

Climax

Conclusion/Final  
Outcomes

*how do you set the scene  
for your audience and  
draw them in?*

*the beginning of your  
story's movement,  
launching the main  
premise of your story.*

*the meat of your story,  
where most of the action  
occurs.*

*Actions are resolved:  
findings, important  
messages or key stories*

*This is where you tie up  
loose ends, return to  
themes, call-to-actions, or  
any takeaways*



# Capturing Water

Here are ways to think about capturing water:

- Where is exposed, where it is hidden
- Where it has changed, more of it, less of it
- Physical aspects, characteristics, different states
- Stakeholders, not just people, its impact → water has a face





# Camera Techniques

- Exposure, lighting
- Timer- add yourself in it
- Perspective, high above the ground, close to the ground, normal height
- Perspective, using wide angles, versus zoom
- Portrait Mode
- Rule of thirds

## Quick DSLR Tips:

- Aperture Priority: F8 is great, ideal ISO 200-400, speed ranges on your subject

## Audio/Video

- Capturing conversations around water
- Timelapses
- Make sure your audio is clean





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# Responsible Storytelling

Foundation to all powerful stories, built  
on respect and trust

Sustainable storytelling methods that  
involves active participation of  
necessary stakeholders

Understand your biases, who/what is  
being centered,

Nurtures and maintains dynamic and  
adaptive partnerships

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# Water Holds Memory

Example of science  
storytelling narrative



# Water Holds Memory

Co-production of knowledge with  
Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park  
Elders and community stakeholders

Counter-narrative

Intersects hydrology and climate sciences  
with oral storytelling

Intersectional Environmentalism

# WATER HOLDS MEMORY

A woman with short grey hair, wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, stands in the center of the frame next to a large, cylindrical blue water tank. The tank is situated on a patch of reddish-brown earth with sparse green and brown vegetation. In the background, there are rolling hills of the same color. The overall scene is arid and rural.

TŌ EI IINĀ ATĒ  
WATER IS LIFE





# Final Thoughts

What is something  
you will be taking  
with you from this  
talk?



# Story Challenge

- Based on what we discussed complete some of the following challenges from the Story Challenge PDF
- Email us about your progress, completed, and any additional questions or concerns regarding the talk
- Explore the “Making Presentations That Stick” video tutorial and Storytelling handout:  
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ8XvIFamIY>  
Google Doc Handout:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YHfH-jx2iJ0GzIuB1CTIzjrQHVkv1sxr/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102815730815671620669&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Let's practice storytelling!

## Story Challenge



1. Capture Water, based on the talk, take 3 photos of water in a different way based on different characteristics or settings.



2. Think about YOUR water story, write out a particular memory or moment regarding water using our Storybuilding method including an introduction, action, and conclusion



3. Learn a new engagement technique that can help you communicate water with your community



4. Explore 1 new camera technique you learned regarding light, perspective, rule of thirds, and timing.



5. Talk with someone about what responsible storytelling is and how to use it in your water story or community work.



Completed a challenge? Share your progress with us at: [WeAreWater@colorado.edu](mailto:WeAreWater@colorado.edu)



A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape at sunset. The sky is filled with dark, dramatic clouds, with a bright orange and yellow glow from the setting sun visible on the right side. In the foreground, there are several prominent, flat-topped rock formations (buttes) made of layered sandstone. The ground is a mix of brown and tan soil with sparse, low-lying desert vegetation. A semi-transparent, light-colored rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the word "Questions?" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The box is framed by several horizontal light blue bars above and below it.

**Questions?**



# Connect with Us

## We Are Water

<https://wearewater.colorado.edu>

## CIRES Education & Outreach

<https://cires.colorado.edu/outreach>

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# Engagement Techniques

Photos

Video

Analogies

Jamboards

Turn and Talk

Personal Stories

Universal  
Themes

Civic or Societal  
Meaning

Trivia

Hands-on  
Activity

Infographics

