

Upstream

Anna Metcalfe

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Upstream is an art project that builds connections and circulates stories among people who are linked to teach other through a common watershed. Experiences and memories about water are collected and shared through conversations over tea. Over time, these stories will help build common ground in communities where water can be a divisive issue.

These images depict several tea conversations that focused on the waters of the Willamette River in Portland, OR that took place in March of 2017 in the industrial area near the Saint John's Bridge in North Portland. In each tea conversation, participants are invited to join a small group and tea is served in handmade cups. Each cup is printed with a hand-written story by another participant from another conversation. The group reads the stories on the cups aloud as tea is served and enjoyed. Participants are then invited to share memories or reflections about their own watershed. In the form of a barter, each person is given the option to bring home the story cup they are using, in exchange for a written version of their own story. These stories are then scanned, screen-printed, and transferred onto more porcelain cups, that will be shared with another person at another tea conversation. Currently, *Upstream* is traveling along the Mississippi River and will be visiting Tallahassee FL in the fall of 2018. Over 200 story cups have been shared so far in the journey of this project.

This storytelling project has been generously funded by the following: The Minnesota State Arts Board, the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, C3 Initiative, and individuals passionate about water. It will continue to travel through watersheds across the United States. Your thoughts are valuable contributions to a national conversation about water. Please contact the artist, Anna Metcalfe, if you would like to bring *Upstream* to your watershed.









