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Reena Petrich:

My name is Reena Petrich and I live in Southwestern Minnesota, and I am 15 years old.

When we were adopted, well, my mom's not Native and neither is my dad, but me and my brother and sister are and we got adopted all three together. And one of the things that she decided in adopting us, our adoption was really hard because they're trying to go adopt in a non-Native family. And the tribes they wanted us to be put in a native family household, but mom and dad fought for us and they said that they would do everything that they could to help us and raise us in a Native environment. So mom connected her work with us being Native, and she met Ms. Sharon, a native elder and through her water work. And then she learned that she did all these water walks and water ceremonies and felt that it was important for us to do that.

And Ms. Sharon is Ojibwe too, and she's like a grandmother to us now. And so, my mom met Ms. Sharon through her work and she wanted to help us grow in our community and learn our history and roots. And she thought since she worked in water work and being an Ojibwe, and Ojibwe woman it was important for me to learn that, and she didn't pressure me or anything into doing it. But after the first couple of water walks, I fell in love with it. It makes me happy, and I just find myself at peace there.

I can get really bad anxiety and then when I'm with the water, it just calms me down. And I feel connected, I don't really know any of my biological family since our adoption. I just feel a connection, and I don't know it feels like someone was talking to me through the water and tells me what to do or what I'm doing right and stuff, and gives me advice. And it's like, just so calming. And then you meet so many wonderful people on the water walks.

The first water walk we met five people and we've been friends with them ever since. And they go on almost every single water walk, too. So it's so nice to see them again on the other water walks. And so I have like my own water walking family.