



Images (clockwise from left): Sharon B. Megdal with Stockholm Junior Prize winner Moroti Adegboyega at the Royal Banquet; Indigenous group Sunday gathering at the Embassy of Canada to Sweden; Informal Women in Water Diplomacy Network meet-up.

Reflections: On a Meaningful Stockholm World Water Week

by Sharon B. Megdal
September 4, 2026

Stockholm World Water Week, organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), always offers meaningful opportunities to engage with people and groups from throughout the world. This year's program, titled **Water for People and Progress**, was no exception. I had the pleasure of taking part in an exceptional variety of engagement opportunities. In addition to participating in two conference sessions, I spoke at two less formal exhibit hall sessions and, for the first time, attended two key award ceremonies. I also had the honor of connecting again with World Water Week's Indigenous participants, and I participated in programming related to the December 2026 UN Water Conference.

My anchor participation was serving as moderator for the August 24 session, Trust and Collaboration as Preconditions for Water Stewardship. This session grew out of an **October 2025 workshop** on Collaborative Adaptive Management, through the support of **CSIRO AquaWatch**, the **International Association for Great Lakes Research**, and the **Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research**. To open the session, Inger Axiö Albinsson, President of the Stockholm Sámi Association, welcomed us to the lands of the Sámi. The session featured speakers from the US (Chairwoman Amelia Flores, Austin Stevenot, and Karletta Chief), Canada (Jerome Marty and Abraham Francis), and Australia (Phil Duncan, Sally Waller, and Janet Anstee). Rather than attempt to convey in my words the session's insights, I provide the beautiful composite illustration of the session prepared by Biologist and Science Illustrator **Audrey Robert**. Each of the four panels within the composite — Water is Life, Solutions, Institutional Roles and Responsibilities, and Trust and Relationships — can be accessed [here](#).

open access to academic publications is a must. I concluded by noting the importance of those in academia being responsive to inquiries and requests.

Stockholm World Water Week programming was closely connected to the **UN Water Conference**, which will be held in Abu Dhabi December 8–10, 2026. Many sessions focused on UN Water Conference engagement, especially through its interactive dialogues and on actions to advance meeting Sustainable Development Goal 6: *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*.

I spoke at SIWI's exhibition booth session on the **Routledge Handbook of Water Diplomacy**, which is available for free download and to which I contributed Chapter 43, Factors That Contribute to Successful Diplomatic Outcomes: Case Study of the Colorado River Basin Cross-Boundary Institution. Later in the week, I had the opportunity to draw upon my transboundary water work and experiences during a lively 30-minute panel discussion of Two Countries, One Shared Water Future, which was hosted at Mexico's exhibition booth.

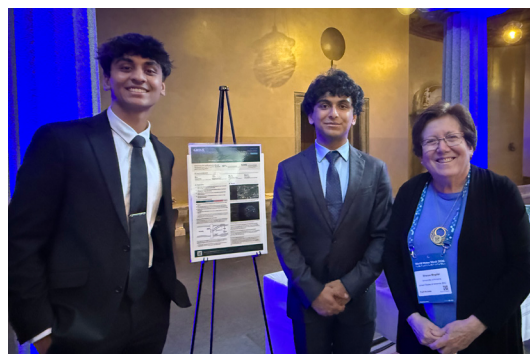
Although this was the sixth time I attended Stockholm World Water Week, I had never before attended the ceremonies for the two key awards. The August 25, 2026, ceremony celebrated the winner of the Junior Stockholm Water Prize and winning entrants from each participating country. The prize's patron, H.R.H. Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, presented the **Junior Stockholm Water Prize** to Moroti Adegboyega of Canada. At the poster session before the ceremony, students explained with clarity their impressive projects. There, I had the pleasure of meeting the winning team from the US, Aarush Jain and Soham Kela of North Carolina.

Another first for me was attending the August 26, 2026, Royal Banquet, at which His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf officially presented the **Stockholm Water Prize** to Professor Kaveh Madani, Director of UN University's Institute for Water, Environment and Health. The banquet was held in the stunning second-floor ceremonial hall at Stockholm City Hall. Professor Madani's name will be familiar to those who attended the **WRRC's June 10, 2026, water webinar** on global water bankruptcy. Professor Madani's work, along with his personal and professional journey, was featured throughout Stockholm World Water Week. I encourage people to look for session recordings on World Water Week's YouTube channel in late September.

My week was full of interactions, including with participants from the Indigenous community, who were graciously



A panel discussion at Mexico's exhibition booth.



With US Stockholm Junior Water Prize entrants Aarush Jain and Soham Kela



His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf awards Stockholm Water Prize to Kaveh Madani. Image: Sharon B. Megdal

hosted by Inger Axiö Albinsson. A **Message from Indigenous Delegates to World Water Week participants** concludes with the following words:

Early, full and effective participation by Indigenous Peoples in governance and decision-making for environmental management, cultural heritage protection, and climate change is essential to enabling a sustainable future. We need to be empowered in generating global climate change solutions that embed both Indigenous knowledge systems and science.

We have an opportunity to move forward together so that Indigenous Peoples are included in the processes required to develop the cultural science, policies and plans for these pressing global challenges that affect us all.

The **Women in Water Diplomacy Network** was well represented at the conference. A casual Sunday meet-up brought many existing and new members together, and the network's signature round clip was worn by several conference speakers and participants.



Throughout the week, four of us connected to the University of Arizona engaged actively with each other and the numerous groups and individuals who traveled to Stockholm from across the globe. Joining me were first-time attendees Professor and Indigenous Resilience Center Director Karletta Chief; Water, Society, and Policy Master's program graduate Nieves Vazquez; and University of Arizona Miss Native American and Environmental Science Major Laylalanai Gocobachi. Nieves and Laylalanai represented our region as members of the cohort of **World Water Week's Future Water Leaders**. Sometimes it takes traveling a far distance to meet and spend quality time with those close by!

Stockholm World Water Week certainly delivered rich, diverse, and meaningful experiences.



U of A Contingent (L to R): University of Arizona Miss Native American and Environmental Science Major Laylalanai Gocobachi, Sharon B. Megdal, Professor and Indigenous Resilience Center Director Karletta Chief, and Water, Society, and Policy Master's program graduate Nieves Vazquez

