



Water Walkers Nibi Emosaawdang

Josephine Mandamin

Josephine (Biidassige) Mandamin (1942-2019)- Odawa Anishinaabekwe of Wikwemikong First Nation on Manitoulin Island. Josephine was an influential advocate for water protection and a residential school survivor. During her lifetime, she served as the Anishinabek Chief Water Commissioner and played a significant role in the Mother Earth Water Walks, advocating and praying for the water.

"Water is alive. It needs to be respected. We must recognize her...as a living entity" -Josephine Mandamin



Mother Earth Water Walk

The first Annual Water Walk began on April 21, 2003 when Josephine, along with 8 other walkers started on their journey around Lake Superior. The Water Walkers come together in ceremony to walk around each of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River to sing and pray to the water, while raising awareness to the importance of taking care of water.



This walk for the water was prompted in 2000 when Grand Chief Bawdwayadu told the prophecy that water would cost as much as an ounce of gold by 2030 if we continued with our negligence. He then asked those at the Sundance Ceremony, "What are you going to do about it?". From this, MEWW emerged as a group of Anishinaabe women came together in 2003 to raise awareness about the sacredness of water.

Great Lakes Water Walk

In the walks for Water, women lead the ceremony and carry a copper pail that is filled with water from one place to the next. Often throughout these walks, men show their support of the women by carrying an eagle staff.

"If we discontinue our negligence, we can change things around. That's why I am really embodying the prophecy. You've heard of 'Walk The Talk,' this is why I walk" -Josephine Mandamin

Josephine walked more than 17,000 km advocating for water protection and participated in her final water walk in 2017, which took place over the course of 97 days.



Nibi Song



Scan this QR code to listen to "Nibi (Water) Song" written by Doreen Day, as inspired by her grandson, Mashkoonce. Doreen is an Ojibway Anishinaabekwe and Mother Earth Water Walker. Nibi Song is written in Anishinaabemowin and intended to be sung to the water, showing it thanks, love, and respect. Doreen and Mashkoonce have given permission for this to be sung by everyone.

Autumn Peltier

Autumn (Mskwaagiizo-Kwe) Peltier is a clean water activist and the current Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation. She carries on the work of her Great Aunt, Josephine Mandamin, protecting and advocating for the water.

"We are water- we come from water and when the water is sick- we are sick"
- Autumn Peltier





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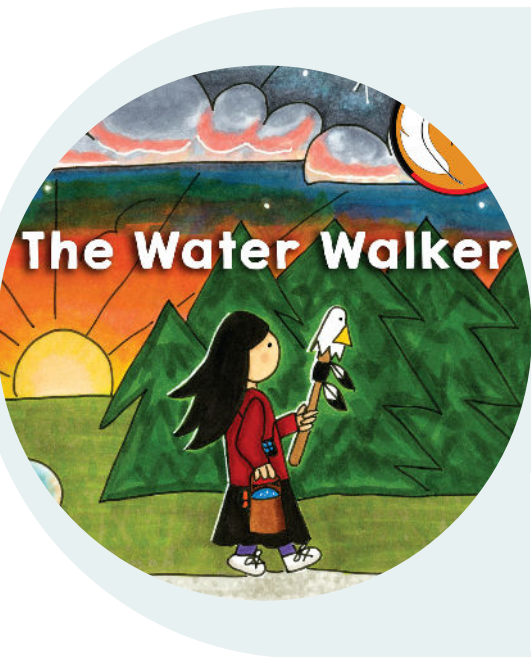


For Anishinaabe people, Water Walking is a way to thank the waters for all that they give and to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the water.

Today, many Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee people take part in this ceremony to honour water.

"The water is sick...people need to really fight for that water, to speak for that water, to love that water"

-Josephine Mandamin



Literature

The story of Nokomis Josephine Mandamin and the Mother Earth Water Walks has been created into a children's book, The Water Walker, written and illustrated by Joanne Robertson. This book is available in English and Anishinaabemowin.



Listen to the book:

<https://youtu.be/1p7hDhMtdCo>

Listen to the Haudenosaunee "Water Song" by the Akwesasne Women Singers. This group (Kontiwennenhá:wi) originated from the Akwesasne Mohawk territory and sing to give back to their community. This song focuses on the importance of water, as well as their goal for language survival.



<https://youtu.be/9MvNaFWcQf4>

Related Anishinaabemowin Words

Nibi - water

Nokomis - grandmother

Kwe - woman

Migizi - eagle

Anishinaabewi-gichigami - Lake Superior

Ininwewi-gichigami - Lake Michigan

Naadowewi-gichigami - Lake Huron

Waabishkiigoo-gichigami - Lake Erie

Niigaani-gichigami - Lake Ontario

Additional Learning Resources

To learn more about Mother Earth Water Walks, as well as current water news, visit: <http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com>

<https://youtu.be/slkFBxqGd4U>

This video tells the story of Nokomis Josephine Mandamin and features segments of Josephine talking at the Great Lakes Commons Gathering



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Mother Earth Water Walks began with a group of Anishinaabe women. In Anishinaabe teachings, as well as in many other Indigenous communities, women have a special connection to water.



Nga-zhichige Nibi onji - I will do it for the water



"The water of Mother Earth, she carries life to us, and as women we carry life through our bodies. We as women are life-givers, protectors of the water, and that's why we are very inclined to give Mother Earth the respect that she needs for the water"

-Josephine Mandamin

"In ceremony such as a Water Walk, only women carry the water, indicating that women are caretakers of water, and carry life within themselves (childbirth)"

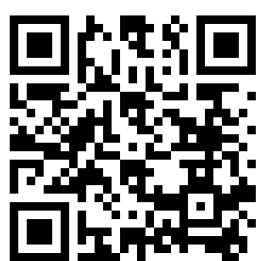
-Josephine Mandamin

In Anishinaabeg teachings, women were originally given the role of taking care of the water and men were given the role of taking care of the fire. With this, women have both a physical and spiritual connection to water.

Watch "WILL YOU WALK FOR WATER?" to listen to some of the Water Walkers and learn about the sacredness of water, as understood by traditional Anishinaabeg teachings. This video also discusses the importance of ensuring that Mother Earth has clean water and is treated with care and respect.



2015 Otonabee River Water Walk- Darlene Lamar-Tremblay, Georgina Horton Baptiste, Shirley Ida Williams, Nimkii Osawamick, Josephine Mandamin, George Campana, Tasha Beeds and Liz Osawamick.



"In harming the water, we damage ourselves"
- Tasha Beeds