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"Water Walks"

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."*

Genesis 1:1-2

Just as a baby is formed and sustained in the lifegiving waters of its mother's womb, so too our earth and all her creatures are born of and sustained by water. We may take for granted the fresh flow of clean water at the simple turn of a tap but must never forget water's importance to our very survival. Living on the shores of one of the world's largest freshwater lakes, we get a visual reminder every time we catch a glimpse of Lake Huron's sparkling turquoise surface. Water surrounds and sustains us, both inside and out! And having access to fresh clean drinking water is an essential human right.

Sadly, many First Nations communities lack such access, and our Great Lakes are becoming poisoned.

As June 21 is National Indigenous People's Day in Canada, it is an opportunity to raise our awareness about the culture and the struggles faced by First Nations people who share this land. So today I am writing a few words about the Indigenous view of the significance and sacredness, of water.

For thousands of years, Indigenous people of Canada have understood water as a sacred gift to be cherished and revered. They teach that water (*Nibi*) has spirit. Traditionally, women are the 'keepers of the water' and hold the primary responsibility to protect it.

A humble, yet extraordinary Anishinaabe Elder from Manitoulin Island, Josephine Mandamin, has dedicated many years of her life to this responsibility. Her first Water Walk began in 2003, with a trek around Lake Superior proclaiming the message that 'the water is sick and people need to really fight for that water, to speak for that water, to love that water.'

Each subsequent spring, she began anew with a different lake, until all five Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River were walked and honored. Josephine has now walked over 20,000 km around lakes and rivers, which she blesses as she passes. These walks are now known as the [Mother Earth Water Walks](#) or [NibiWalks](#) and still take place each year in various communities across Turtle Island (North America). People from all backgrounds who join in these walks recognize this act as far more than a walk celebrating local waterways. It is a potent ceremonial activity with the power to change one's relationship to water, and thereby to nature itself....and I would add, to the One whose Spirit hovered over the water at the dawn of Creation.

It is a great injustice, that these same indigenous people who so honour and respect water, are often deprived of fresh healthy water to drink in their own communities. This too, is something from which we must learn. Please enjoy the Algonquin Water Song video below – which sings and teaches about the sacredness of water... and may you too, come to bless and honour all water!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KC2FHciQ0sU>

**Be well, stay well,**

**Elise**

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*"Our relationship with God and each other strengthens us, and helps make the world a better place.  
We welcome and include **everyone** into congregational life."*