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## RESPECT THE WATER #2

**Grade Level: 6**

**Subjects: Science & Technology, Social Studies**

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### OBJECTIVE

Students will explore Aboriginal perspectives on respecting the environment; Aboriginal cultural teachings on women's responsibility for water; how individual and collective behaviour affects the environment; and the relationships between all living things.

### SPECIFIC CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Grade 6 Science & Technology: Understanding Life Systems (Biodiversity)

- » Analyze a local issue related to biodiversity; propose action that can be taken to preserve biodiversity
- » Describe interrelationships between species and their environment
- » Use a variety of forms to communicate with different audiences and for a variety of purposes

Grade 6 Social Studies: First Nations Peoples & European Explorers

- » Describe the attitude to the environment of various First Nations groups and show how it affected their practices in daily life
- » Identify the results of contact for both the Europeans and the First Nations peoples

### RESOURCES

- » Image of Josephine Mandamin
- » Text about Josephine Mandamin's walk around the Great Lakes
- » Online video about Josephine Mandamin's walk around the Great Lakes ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn5eEWWec30](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn5eEWWec30))
- » *A River Ran Wild*, by Lynne Cherry (Voyager Books)
- » "No Running Water," from *Canadian Dimension*, March/April 2011

### ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION STRATEGIES

- » Work Samples
  - » Observation
  - » Rubric
  - » Checklist
  - » Performance
  - » Audio/Video Presentation
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## ACTIVITY

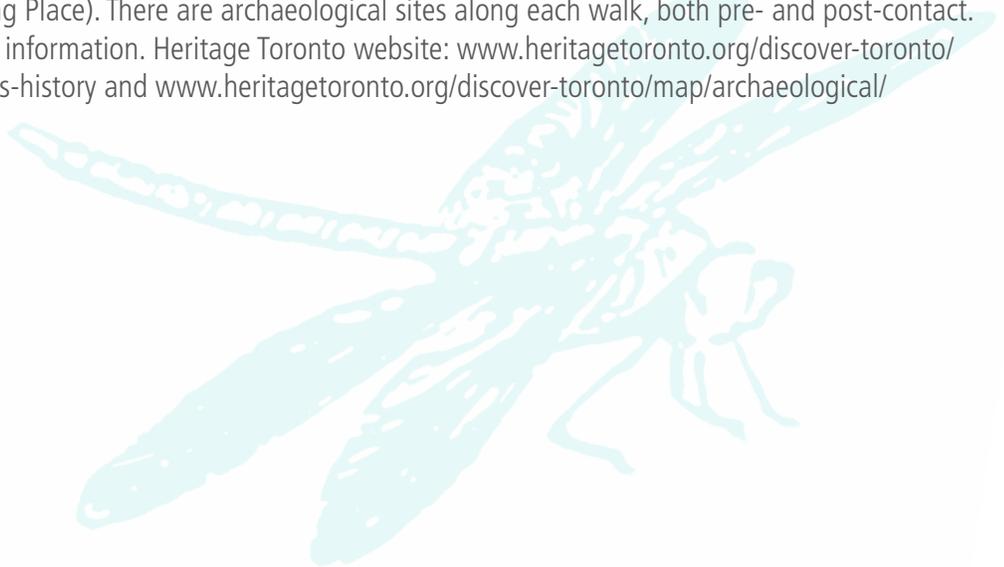
1. In small groups, have students look at the image of Josephine Mandamin and make predictions: What do you think this woman is doing? Why do you think she's doing it? Have students create a three-column chart for their predictions, using columns entitled "My Prediction" (column 1), "Clues From the Image" (column 2), and "Ideas From My Own Experience" (column 3).
2. Have students do a shared reading of the First Nations Environmental Network text. Now return to the image of Josephine Mandamin. Ask students if their predictions were correct, using evidence from the text that supports or disproves their predictions. If students predicted that Josephine was engaging in a protest – rather than a ceremony – ask them why they predicted that. How does media coverage of Aboriginal peoples frame public understanding of Aboriginal issues?
3. The moon takes 28 days to complete its cycle, and women complete a cycle every 28 days. Because the moon regulates the tides, and because children are born from a mother's water, Aboriginal peoples believe that women have a special responsibility to care for water. Have students view the online video in which Josephine Mandamin talks about the challenges of her walk, the problems with bottled water, the spirit and intelligence of water, and her hope for the future. After viewing, have students write a letter to Josephine and send it by e-mail to mandamin@shaw.ca. Students will edit and proofread their letters before sending. To get them started, provide students with the following prompts: How does Josephine's walk make you feel about this issue? About Aboriginal people? About her? What environmental issues exist in your community? Do you think individual citizens can make an impact on the decisions of government and industry?

## EXTENSIONS

1. Have students read *A River Ran Wild*, by Lynne Cherry, a true story about the restoration of a polluted waterway. Split the story into manageable chunks and have students create drama or dance/movement pieces retelling the story in the book.  
**Prompts:** How does this story relate to the experience of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada? To experiences in your own ethno-cultural or geographic communities?
2. The Toronto Region Conservation Authority reports that the Humber River watershed is facing challenges including the management of stormwater, shrinking natural vegetation cover, loss of heritage resources, and barriers to fish migration. The group Friends of the Rouge Watershed has successfully addressed challenges to the Rouge River by providing perching posts for raptors, building snake hibernaculums, creating wildflower meadows for butterflies, and creating nesting boxes for birds. In small groups, have students research these issues online and create a three-minute video summarizing the issues and some possible solutions. Have them use the 5W format as a framework. They might also extend their thinking to include information about watershed issues in their own community(-ies). Have students organize a screening of their videos for the school.  
**Prompts:** How does habitat diversity show the relationships between all living things? How do these relationships relate to Aboriginal ideas about the interconnectedness of all living things? How have Western ideas on "progress" and "development" led to challenges for Ontario's waterways? How did the creation of the city of Toronto lead to these challenges?

**Background Information:** Find information on the Humber River watershed via the Toronto Region Conservation Authority website (<http://trca.on.ca/protect/watersheds/humber-river/index.dot>) and information on the Rouge River watershed at the Friends of the Rouge Watershed website ([www.frw.ca](http://www.frw.ca)). Find information on Aboriginal ideas about interconnectedness and the environment at [www.dragonflycanada.ca/resources](http://www.dragonflycanada.ca/resources).

3. Have students research water issues in First Nations communities in Canada. When they have completed their research, have them create a one-page newsletter summarizing the issue(s). The newsletter should contain text, illustrations, and at least one chart or graph. They can create the newsletter digitally or by using art materials. To get them started, have them visit the following sources:
  - a. Council of Canadians: [www.canadians.org/water/issues/First\\_Nations/index.html](http://www.canadians.org/water/issues/First_Nations/index.html) (information on water issues in First Nations communities, the threat of privatization, and the impact Aboriginal self-government might have on water quality)
  - b. Assembly of First Nations: [www.afn.ca/index.php/en/honoring-water](http://www.afn.ca/index.php/en/honoring-water) (information on the holistic relationship First Nations people traditionally had with water, water rights in First Nations communities, the impact of climate change on water quality and quantity, water management practices, Aboriginal and treaty rights to water, and drinking water and waste water treatment for on-reserve communities)
  - c. CBC Archives: [www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/11/17/pol-water-quality-reserves.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/11/17/pol-water-quality-reserves.html) (current issues with water in on-reserve communities)
  - d. Canadian Dimension article
4. The Humber and Rouge rivers were the western and eastern branches, respectively, of a portage route from present-day Lake Simcoe to present-day Toronto. Take your classroom on a walk along the Humber River watershed starting at Baby Point (west branch of the Toronto Carrying Place) or the Rouge River watershed starting at West Rouge (east branch of the Toronto Carrying Place). There are archaeological sites along each walk, both pre- and post-contact. Contact Heritage Toronto for more information. Heritage Toronto website: [www.heritagetoronto.org/discover-toronto/map/walk/baby-point-10-000-years-history](http://www.heritagetoronto.org/discover-toronto/map/walk/baby-point-10-000-years-history) and [www.heritagetoronto.org/discover-toronto/map/archaeological/ganatsekwyagon](http://www.heritagetoronto.org/discover-toronto/map/archaeological/ganatsekwyagon).



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## RESOURCE

**IMAGE: ELDER JOSEPHINE MANDAMIN**

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## RESOURCE

### ELDER JOSEPHINE MANDAMIN: WALK FOR THE WATER

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April 2009

Anishinabe elder Josephine Mandamin has walked 17,000 miles in a dedicated spiritual journey because she is concerned about environmental collapse. She is Fish Clan from Manitoulin Island in Georgian Bay, where fish and clear water used to be part of her lifestyle. Over the years she has seen the waters poisoned and the life in it disappear. In 2003, she was moved to pick up her copper pail and circle the Great Lakes in an effort to make the message clear that "the water is sick and people really need to fight for that water, speak for that water and love the water." Many others joined her, some from First Nations Environmental Network, as well as throughout the region.

In 2005, 60 scientists studying the Great Lakes predicted irreversible collapse of the ecosystem of the waters if positive change didn't happen soon. Every spring, Josephine and a group of followers have walked the periphery of this enormous body of water. This year they will be walking from the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean. There is so much poison in the St. Lawrence (which drains the Great Lakes) that one quarter of the beluga whales that live in it have cancer. At every tributary the walkers offer tobacco and prayers of thanks and healing to the water.

Many First Nations territories have been harmed by the pollution and destruction of the waters and land due to big industries and profit-making at the expense of all around us. The waters know no boundaries and affect us all; they are the lifeblood of both Mother Earth, humans, and all life. Through Josephine Mandamin's caring and prayers, this powerful energy is being carried around the world for all.

To support her, contact her at [mandamin@shaw.ca](mailto:mandamin@shaw.ca).

Retrieved from the First Nations Environmental Network  
[www.fnen.org/?q=node/28](http://www.fnen.org/?q=node/28)

# No *Running* Water

by HELEN FALLDING

**ISLAND LAKE, MANITOBA** – A deadly outbreak of H1N1 flu swept through a First Nation on this picturesque lake in northeastern Manitoba’s boreal forest during the first wave of the pandemic.

A year later, whooping cough broke out in the sister community across the lake, where two people in their 30s also died in quick succession last fall after catch-

ing seasonal flu. Kids in all three communities around the lake suffer from skin sores that won’t heal, many are colonized by antibiotic-resistant superbugs, and diarrhea is common, especially in the spring. Even compared to other remote First Nations with similarly overcrowded housing, the health situation in Island Lake seems extreme.

St. Theresa Point:  
Geordie Rae carries  
water in the hot sun  
to his family.  
Joe Bryksa/  
Winnipeg Free Press



Crimean War nurse Florence Nightingale could probably have figured out a solution in about five minutes: get these people running water.

Hard as it is to believe, about half the 10,000 people living along the shores of Island Lake and nearby Red Sucker Lake have no plumbing. Those who can't afford a vehicle haul water home from communal outdoor taps by hand or on sleds, and they either use indoor latrine buckets – sometimes dumped in the yard – or brave 30 below trips to the outhouse.

“You can freeze your ass in there,” Sam Harper, 69, said of his family’s outhouse as he carried plastic pails of water up a slippery bank from a hole in the frozen lake. “I find myself, once in a while, lying down on the snow because I’m so tired.” As an elder, Harper sometimes gets treated water delivered by the band – as long as the truck doesn’t break down or get stuck in the snow.

An investigation by the *Winnipeg Free Press* revealed that it’s common for Island Lake families with young children to struggle on less than the 50 litres of water per person a day recommended by the United Nations for basic needs. Some use less than the 15 litres aid agencies try to distribute during natural disasters. The average Winnipeg resident uses 180 litres of treated water a day.

Jacob Flett’s mother Valene worried about how she

was going to follow a nurse’s instructions to bathe her child and wash his clothes regularly after the baby developed itchy sores. “I only have one pail,” she said. Meanwhile, Bernard Flett waited a decade after a doctor “prescribed” running water to help prevent diabetes-related infections before the band found enough money to install a water holding tank in his home. By the time he got plumbing, Flett’s toes had been amputated and he and one of his grandchildren were colonized by the MRSA superbug that spreads easily in homes without proper sanitation. “We try to keep the kids clean,” Flett said, as a child pulled out a small red plastic tub used for baths. His daughter sometimes puts a wooden yoke carved by her grandfather over her shoulders to lug heavy water buckets home.

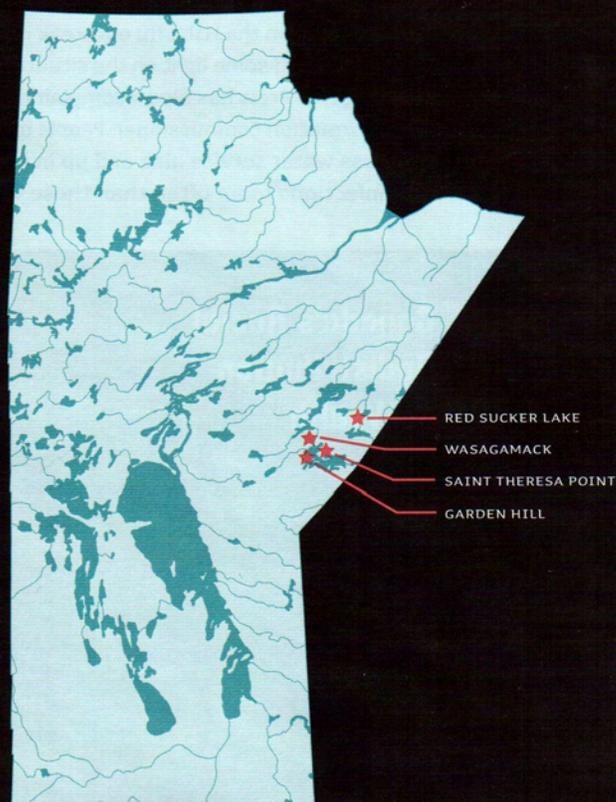
### Too long to wait

Few Canadians have heard about the situation in Island Lake, but when confronted with the reality, many leap to fictional conclusions. Surely the First Nations must have squandered government cash set aside for plumbing. And what about those overpaid chiefs we keep hearing about from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation? The Federation’s own numbers show the average Manitoba band council member earns about \$63,000. Water and sewer projects can cost \$10 million for larger First Nations like those in

**MANITOBA’S** Island Lake region consists of four First Nations: St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Wasagamack and Red Sucker Lake. They were once a single band, but split into separate First Nations in 1969. If they had remained together, their combined population would make them the fourth-largest First Nation in Canada, after the Six Nations of the Grand River, Mohawks of Akwesasne and Blood in Alberta. A video documentary about life in these communities is online at [www.winnipegfreepress.com/no-running-water](http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/no-running-water) and you can sign a petition at [www.manitobachiefs.com/water](http://www.manitobachiefs.com/water). The Mennonite Central Committee has launched a fundraising campaign to help out. More information is available at [manitoba.mcc.org/programs/aboriginalneighbours](http://manitoba.mcc.org/programs/aboriginalneighbours).

A few other Canadian First Nations struggle without running water, including Pikangikum in northwestern Ontario, Lubicon Lake in Alberta and Kitcisakik in Northern Québec. Kenora public health doctor Pete Sarsfield raised a stink about Pikangikum in 2006 and Amnesty International has campaigned on behalf of the Lubicon.

Meanwhile, 116 First Nations across Canada – almost one in five – have running water that is not drinkable because of contamination.



Island Lake, so no amount of salary scrimping by the chiefs would make a significant dent.

The simple truth is that the federal government – responsible for water and sewer services on reserves – has never gotten around to funding plumbing for half the homes in Island Lake. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has a tentative plan to extend water and sewer services to more – but not all – Island Lake homes between about 2013 and 2017. That’s a long time to wait for people like Mary Jane Harper, who nearly died from flu that spread rapidly in homes without enough water for hand-washing, or elder Moyer Taylor, who can no longer walk to an outhouse. “My dad, he’s sitting in a wheelchair and he . . . just has a pail to go to the toilet,” said his frustrated son Chris Taylor.

### **Clear links between clean water and health, so why is nothing happening?**

The link between running water and health was demonstrated most clearly by Dr. Thomas Hennessy in a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in 2008. He found Alaskans 65 and older were twice as likely to be hospitalized for pneumonia or influenza in areas where a lower proportion of homes have tap water and flush toilets. Infants in under-served villages had a five times higher rate of hospitalization for lower-respiratory-tract infections and respiratory syncytial virus, and were 11 times more likely to be hospitalized for pneumonia compared to the overall US population.

Health Canada refuses to release an epidemiological report on the H1N1 flu outbreak in Island Lake that might shed some light on the situation there. The *Winnipeg Free Press* has filed a complaint with the federal information commissioner. People living in areas with less water service also end up in hospital with skin infections more often than those with an ade-

quate water supply, according to the Alaska study.

Meanwhile, a University of Manitoba master’s student in community health sciences went door-to-door in Island Lake in 2006 and 2007 collecting stool samples from 142 people with acute diarrhea. The study found people who did not have running water, drank lake water or did not have access to an outhouse were more likely to have diarrhea-causing germs.

The Canadian Pediatric Society says lack of quality running water is one of the reasons methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* is spreading on First Nations. It often causes nasty skin boils that are hard to treat, and can be fatal if it moves deeper into the body. A four-year-old Nunavut boy was killed by MRSA in 2007. Health researchers have been debating for decades whether there’s any point collecting more data that proves what Florence Nightingale knew 150 years ago – poor hygiene means poor health.

Frontline health workers in Island Lake are furious about the amount of time they are forced to spend helping people bathe and tending wounds that patients can’t keep clean at home. “We would like to spend more time on education, heart disease, diabetes prevention, maternal-child issues. But we can’t because we’ve got to take care of what needs attention right now,” said a medical professional. Many would like to give politicians a piece of their mind, but are afraid of losing their jobs if they speak out.

### **Build the road, bring the water**

Manitoba Grand Chief Ron Evans is pushing the Canadian government to help build a \$1.4-billion all-weather road into Island Lake and neighbouring communities, now accessible only by air or by ice road for a month each winter. A permanent road would make it much cheaper to haul in plumbing supplies, but could take a decade to complete, even if the federal

## **Canada’s Racial Redistribution of Wealth**

**IT IS NOT** liberal benevolence – more government handouts – that will help these communities out of the poverty trap they are caught in. Rather, we must end the continuing racial reconfiguration and redistribution of wealth that puts them in such an untenable position. Northern indigenous peoples’ wealth, in the form of time, communities and land are all being taken from them or restructured so that wealth in the form of minerals,

timber or energy can be produced. This is the racial reconfiguration of wealth. These new forms of wealth are then redistributed to non-indigenous peoples in southern centres, which is where the profits go. This is the racial redistribution of wealth.

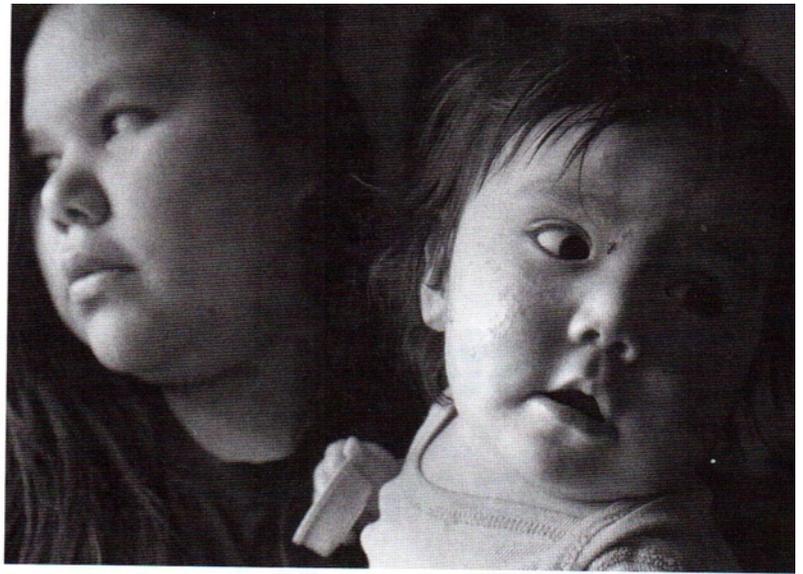
Why do northern cities like Thompson and Flin Flon have paved roads and modern public facilities while so many reserves do not? Because revenues from the industries in those towns go

government agrees to help the Manitoba government fund it. In the meantime, St. Theresa Point Chief David McDougall has started work on an emergency plan to protect the health of his people until multi-million-dollar piping can be installed. He estimates that 364 outhouses need to be built on concrete pads in his community alone, and 314 water containers installed that hold at least the 350 litres per family per day needed to meet United Nations minimum health standards. Trucks would need to be bought and drivers hired to suck out sewage from the outhouses and deliver clean water. McDougall said some homes likely don't have driveways usable by delivery trucks, so road access work would also be required.

None of that can be done within existing budgets, the chief said. Island Lake's four First Nations receive about \$105 million a year between them in federal government funding, but most is allocated to specific things like operating schools and health centres and can't just be diverted to water projects.

Governments spend less than half as much per capita on First Nations residents as they do on other Canadians, according to a 2004 report by the Assembly of First Nations. The Manitoba regional director general for Indian Affairs, Anna Fontaine, is by all accounts a sincere advocate for First Nations in her region, but she's competing with other regions for Minister John Duncan's attention. He's in turn competing with other departments that are a higher priority for the Harper Conservatives.

The Canadian government has spent a whopping \$3.5 billion between 1995 and 2008 on improving previously neglected water and sewer systems on First Nations. Hundreds of millions more have been committed since. But communities with limited plumbing have been mysteriously left off the government's high-risk priority list. It focuses on fixing treatment



plants and ignores whether water from those plants is actually distributed to homes!

A national survey just wrapping up on First Nation water and sewer infrastructure is in danger of repeating that glaring omission. An early draft of a report on one of the Island Lake communities overlooked the fact that most homes don't have flush toilets.

Meanwhile, a proposed law to regulate drinking water on First Nations – for the first time ever – puts the cart before the horse. Bill S-11, now before the Senate, would make First Nations liable for not meeting drinking water quality standards, without allocating the money to bring their infrastructure up to snuff!

When details of this situation were first published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, many of its readers questioned why people living in Island Lake don't just pack up and move to the city, where even those living on social assistance have running water. "The racism that my children and I endure is not worth it and we can hardly wait to go back," responded an Island Lake mother studying in Winnipeg. ❖

Mother Larissa Harper and child Lyra, who has an undiagnosed skin rash. In homes with no running water, skin conditions are common because it's difficult to keep children clean.

Joe Bryksa/  
Winnipeg Free Press

to federal, provincial and municipal governments. No revenues flow directly to the indigenous communities whose lands are one of the bases of these developments. So most reserves are on gravel roads with poor infrastructures, based on small pitances begrudgingly doled out by miserly federal governments. Yet the resources in those towns will, sooner or later, come to an end. And most of the people will leave, going to the next boom town,

where the jobs are. Meanwhile, in the nearby reserves, people will continue wanting to stay where their great grandparents laid roots, where their community attachments and attachments to the land remain strong and intergenerational. But all the infrastructure funding goes to the temporary resource towns, and very little of it to the long-term indigenous communities. The world is turned upside down.

So, when you see stories of

indigenous rural poverty remember that more hand outs is not the solution. Respect for treaty and Aboriginal rights would mean those communities get decision making power over what developments take place on their traditional territories. Out of this could come direct revenue streams that would fund infrastructure and social development. The problem isn't poverty. It's theft.

—Peter Kulchyski