



Enji-Tibew'eseng Nibi Nikwejiwong: Bi-wiidsemshinaang Bmosaadmaang Nibi Ziibins Nikwejiwong Bimi-jiwang

At the Water's Edge:
Water Walk for Junction Creek

Anishinaabemowin translations provided by Shirley Williams, Isadore Toulouse, Liz Osawamick, Mary Ann Corbiere, and Brian Peltier

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (March 22nd, 2021)

Enji-Tibew'eseng Nibi Nikwejiwong: "At the Water's Edge" Water Walk for Junction Creek, SUDBURY ON

"When you see someone walking with a pail of water, you wonder, 'where is she going with that water?'. So the message is, water is very precious, and I will go to any lengths to and direction to carry the water to the people."

"As women, we are carriers of the water. We carry life for the people."

Biidaasige-Ba/Josephine-Ba Mandamin Sep 25, 2014

From May 5th - May 9th, 2021, nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) Mide-Kwe Water Walker Tasha Beeds will conduct her first Ceremonial Water Walk in a Covid-safe manner for a recovering body of Water known as Nibi Nikwejiwong or Junction Creek. Tasha mentored under the most respected Anishinaabe Grandmother and late Water Walker, Biidaasige-Ba/Josephine-Ba Mandamin (the ba is a marker of one who is deceased). She also learnt from other Anishinaabe Elders and Knowledge Holders such as Charlie Nelson and Edna Manitowabi, the Chief Headman and Head Woman of Minweyweywigaan Midewiwin Lodge; Anishinaabe language teacher and Water Walker Dr. Shirley Williams and her niece Liz Osawamick; Anishinaabe Traditional Elders Wilfred and Marie Trudeau in addition to the Anishinaabe men who have supported the Water Walkers for many years, Waasekom, Abitose Gisis, and Andrew Mandamin. Nibi Nikwejiwong flows throughout the Anishinaabe urban territory of N'swakamok, (Sudbury, ON). Tasha heard the call of the polluted creek when she moved to Sudbury as a Professor in 2019. After consulting spiritually with the Water through a Fasting Ceremony, learning about the history of Junction Creek and discussing and meeting with local Elders, she made the decision to commit to enter into Ceremony for this, still significant, but often disrespected, waterway. As a core Water Walker for two of Josephine-Ba's Walks around the Great Lakes and for Dr. Shirley Ida Williams and Liz Osawamick's in the Kawartha Lakes region, Tasha has approximately 7000 km of footprints to protect and raise awareness for various water bodies in Turtle Island (North America). This Walk is a bit more challenging for her since a 2018 car accident left her with a permanent disability. Disabilities are rarely described through the lens of Indigenous knowledges and it is Tasha's intention be a role model and show how Indigenous thought recognizes what is termed in English as "disabilities" as a gift set.

On May 5th, following in Josephine-ba's footsteps, and accompanied by an Eagle Water Staff, Tasha and a predetermined group of core Walkers will go the headwaters and place Nibi Nikwejiwong (the Water from Junction Creek, which is also situated startlingly close to an active mine in Garson) inside a Copper Pail. Some of the core Walkers who have already stepped forward to join her include Dallas Abitong, an Anishinaabe-Kwe from Sagamok who mentored under and Walked with the late Josephine-Ba in addition to Annette Cristco another Anishinaabe Kwe from Sudbury; Laurentian students who will be Walking for the Water for the first time: Kahtéraks Quinney-Goodleaf, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) from Kahnawake and nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) from Onion Lake; Page Chartrand and Connor Lafortune Anishinaabe youth from Dokis; they will all be joined by three Nohkomisak (Grandmothers) from Wiikwemkoong: Martina Osawamick who was a student at Spanish Residential School, Linda Manitowabi whose mother and aunts were all taken and Shauna Pitawanakwat, cancer survivor. Under the umbrella of truth and reconciliation, non-Indigenous people are also Walking in Ceremony, including members of the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee Raymond Trudeau, Miranda Virtanen, Lili Paradi, Margaret Hoar, Paula Wortan, and Jorge Virchez. Other people will be able to join and/or support the Water Walkers depending on Provincial Covid Policies.

This year, with Covid policies in place and dependent on the grading of the pandemic, the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee Yearly Trout Release will become a part of the Water Walk Ceremony as the Committee recognizes the need to reconcile with the Spirits of the Lands and Waters and with the Anishinaabeg Nations of the area. Anishinaabeg children identified from each of the Indigenous Nations connected to Nibi Nikwejiwong will release some of the Trout. The children will be given the opportunity to re-establish the connections that colonial practices, such as the taking of their Ancestral relatives to residential school, tried to sever. The children will also activate their role of helping to return the creek to its former health – they will see how their actions can help the Water and the Life carried inside the Creek to heal from the extractive industries of mining and logging and from human apathy. One of the most noticeable markers of that human apathy is the amount of plastic and garbage placed inside Nibi Nikwejiwong. If the children place Fish instead of garbage in the water, they will always remember the Life the Water carries. The Water Walk will finish on Mother's Day, at the "Water's edge" beside the largest residential school in Ontario. Here, a private closed Ceremony will be held to mourn the children whose lives were lost, to honour the mothers whose children were taken, and to celebrate the living, recognizing the power of Indigenous Nations today.

As the Water Walkers carry Nibi Nikwejiwong, the movement will recognize ancestral Anishinaabe uses of the creek as a water highway, the significance of the waterway for the Greater Sudbury area, and the inherent connection to the Great Lakes. The Water is a unifying force that brings people together because what happens to the Water happens to us all. The movement also generates the opportunity for active truth and reconciliation not just from non-Indigenous people to Indigenous people, but for all people to reconcile our negligence and improve our relationships with the Waters, Lands, and all of Creation. The ceremonial movement of the Water Walk is in honor of Nibi's (the Water's) gift of life for all of Creation. We move to remember how without Water, nothing would survive, including us. We move to remind others of the need to protect the Water for future generations. We move because Water is Life. Of note, Tasha has a second larger national Water Walk planned after the local one in Sudbury. In June 2021, she and another core group of Water Walkers will be walking 1900 kms. More information will be available soon for this Walk.

As we move and conduct gatherings, we will respect provincial safety guidelines for ensuring everyone's health during these turbulent times and we will adjust to new policies accordingly. There will be plenty of opportunity for public engagement remotely through various Zoom talks, youth call outs for logo designs and "fish art" in addition to a pre-Water Walk Individual Bubble Clean Up Effort! The Water Walk will also be documented virtually, over various social media platforms, and the public will be able to follow the Walk from the comfort of their own homes.

We are actively fundraising for the Water Walk to sponsor various youth centered activities and to support the core Walkers and Elders with accommodations, honorariums, nourishment, walking supplies and earth friendly PPE. If you'd like to support Nibi Nikwejiwong directly, we welcome in-kind sponsorship and/or donations. Anishinaabemowin Teg will be assisting in fundraising and can issue tax receipts if required. Be sure to join Enji-Tibew'eseng Nibi Nikwejiwong on our social media pages and visit <https://linktr.ee/nikwejiwong> for updates, education, links and how to get involved.

We would like to extend a miigwech to our Water Walk supporters: Indigenous Screen Office; Autumn Peltier, Chief Water Commissioner Anishinabek Nation; Junction Creek Stewardship Committee; Picking Algonquin Textiles; Swirling Wind Designs, Kent Monkman, Indigenize.ca & Minisnook Canoe Journey. Special acknowledgement to: Wahnapiatae First Nation, Atikameksheng First Nation, Sagamok First Nation, Serpent River First Nation, Dokis First Nation, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Garden River First Nations, Batchewana First Nations, the North Shore Tribal Council and the Robinson Huron Waawiindamaagewin.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Tasha Beeds, Lead Water Walker - 705-822-8361 or email nikwejiwong@gmail.com
Miranda Virtanen, Junction Creek Stewardship Executive Director - 705-988-8736 or email info@junctioncreek.com