

Grand River Water Walk Protocols

Please read this page carefully before participating.

The Grand River Water Walk will take place September 17 to 23, 2023 in leap-frog fashion. Cars will be used along the route to help support the walkers. Each day, the walk begins before 5:00 a.m. with an opening ceremony. Once the walking begins, a copper pail of water and "Little Boy" eagle feather staff are carried by a pair of core walkers for approximately 300-500 feet. Once they reach this distance, they pass the pail and staff to another pair of walkers (who are waiting by a car), then drive the waiting vehicle ahead and wait for their turn to carry the pail and staff again. In this fashion, the water and walkers flow continuously. At the end of each day, there is a "touchdown" ceremony.

Core walkers have committed to the duration of the walk. Their food and accommodations are provided so that they can focus their attention on the many days of the ceremony. The core walkers carry the pail and staff during the water walk. All others who join the event are welcome to take part in morning and afternoon ceremonies and to walk behind the core walkers throughout the day.

Respect the Water Walk's Indigenous protocols:

- Long skirts or pants and shirts with sleeves are worn during the water walk.
- Drugs and alcohol are not permitted.
- Each person carries Asemaa (tobacco) to offer to any flowing streams or rivers they cross.
- Asemaa is also laid down for any dead animals or birds.
- Women on their moon-time (menstruating) do not carry the water, as they are already in ceremony.
- Men carry the eagle feather staff, but if there are no males in attendance, women may carry the staff.
- Always respect the territory we are traveling through.
- Remember why you are here. This walk is about Nibi (the water).

Additional instructions for all participants:

- When you arrive for the day, please go directly to the Grandmother Van to offer your tobacco, smudge, and receive further instructions.
- First aid and drinking water are available in the Grandmother Van.
- Be cautious, safety always comes first.
- You should be prepared to walk behind the core walkers, and potentially drive or share vehicles.
- Please walk on the outside of the white line closest to the shoulder.
- If you bring children, keep them close to your side and away from the road.
- Please bring your own snacks, lunch, and drinking water in a reusable bottle.
- Arrive with a full tank of gas. Each walker is responsible for their own gas costs.
- Everyone is welcome to participate in community feasts.
- Carry what you learn from Nibi and the Grand River Water Walk to your community.

Grand River Water Walk Protocols (continued)

Additional instructions for core walkers:

- Please bring Aseema (tobacco). You are welcome to wear ceremonial regalia.
- Women on moon-time (menstruating) are powerful and must not carry the pail or the "Little Boy" Staff.
- Be ready and prepared when Nibi and the Staff come to you.
- Nibi is handed off first. Pass the Staff and Nibi in FRONT of the vehicle.
- When carrying Nibi, keep looking forward, don't stop walking, and don't turn your head to look behind. If something is dropped, the Staff Carrier can pick it up for you.
- Staff Carriers: You are the eyes and ears for the walkers and the water.
- Staff Carriers: Offer Sema (tobacco) when you walk by rivers or streams and when you walk by a dead animal/bird.

- Always start at the front of the line-up and keep your vehicle placed in rotation.
- Do not stop in the middle of the highway to talk — pull over if needed.
- Do not park in the middle of curves, bridges, or hills, even if it means a slightly longer walk.
- Turn the vehicle's hazard lights on while parked. Before moving, put on your seat belt, turn off the hazards, and use the turn signal.
- You are welcome to take breaks, but check to see that enough core walkers remain.
- If you must leave the rotation for longer than a bathroom break, use your own vehicle (not someone else's).
- Be respectful of other people's belongings and vehicles. Always smoke outside, not in the vehicles.
- If food/snacks are out, they are shareable. If you don't want others to eat something, please put it away.
- Keep track of your belongings and return any that you find.

Questions? Contact us at grandriverwaterwalk@gmail.com or at the Grandmother Van.

Gchi'miigwech for your beautiful work for Nibi!