

All Nations Grand River Water Walk 2018



HOW SCHOOLS CAN GET INVOLVED

www.grandriverwaterwalk2018.com
grandriverwaterwalk@gmail.com

WHAT IS A WATER WALK?

Water Walks are based on Anishinaabe ceremonial water teachings. We walk to honour all Nibi (water), to speak and to pray to her spirit; to offer petitions so there will be healthy rivers, lakes and oceans for future generations and our ancestors. A traditional Anishnaabe water walk involves carrying water from the source of the river, in a copper pail that continues moving, to the end of the river. The full duration of the time the water is in motion, when we are walking, is sacred ceremony. We move like water, continuously each day, until we reach our destination. We carry asemaa/tobacco with us to offer to any flowing streams or rivers we cross. When we walk, this is a time for prayers or songs for the water. We do this for our water to become pure and clean and to continuously flow. We follow the Protocols to show our respect for our Grandmothers, our Mother Earth, and ourselves.

ABOUT THE GRAND RIVER WATER WALK

Mary Anne Caibaiosai, who lives in Kitchener, was inspired to organise the All Nations Grand River Water Walk after participating in the “For the Earth and Water Walk 2017” led by Josephine Mandamin, the founder of the original Water Walks along the coast of the Great Lakes. Mary Anne is organizing this walk in memory of her sister Violet Caibaisai, and for this walk she is welcoming people from all nations to join her in ceremony, citing Josephine’s phrase, “It is time for all two-leggeds to walk for the water”. Mary Anne is planning to undertake the walk as an annual event for the next four years.

The 2018 walk will begin near Dundalk, ON, at the headwaters of the river on Saturday September 15th, and travel south along the west bank of the river to Lake Erie, and return north along the east bank, finishing on September 29th. The walkers will start at 4am each day and finish around mid-afternoon. A GPS spot on the pail will enable the public to see where the walkers are – this information can be accessed on the walk website (www.grandriverwaterwalk2018.com) or Facebook page.

CAN STUDENTS JOIN THE WALK?

The walk is sacred and ceremonial and anyone who participates in the walk must respect this and follow the protocol for quiet prayer and song while walking. While this would be very difficult for younger students up to grade 8, there is a possibility for older students from high school (e.g. taking the Indigenous Studies course) to join in for a section of the water walk provided there are no more than 6 students, they are accompanied by a teacher, and everyone has been briefed on the walk protocol and is able to abide by it.

If you have a small group of students who can follow these guidelines, please contact us on grandriverwaterwalk@gmail.com to let us know where and when you would like to join the walk. The protocol you will need to review and share with the students can be found below.

HOW ELSE CAN SCHOOLS GET INVOLVED?

The walkers will be passing through many different communities, and along the way they will need to eat, drink and find shelter. Schools can help support the walk by:

- Organising a fundraiser to help cover some of the costs faced by the walkers, such as for food, lodging etc.
- Organising a meal for the walkers on the day that they pass through your community.
- Letting other people know that the walk is happening and how they can help

IDEAS FOR LESSONS AND PROJECTS

There are many activities that students of all ages can undertake to explore the meaning of water walks and also to support protection of our water ways, including the Grand River Watershed. Here are a few ideas:

- 1) **Do some research about water walks:** when did they start and why? Gather photos from the internet and map them out...How many water walks are going on this year? What kinds of water issues are they trying to address? Which indigenous groups are leading them? Are non-indigenous people always involved as well? What is the advantage of indigenous and non-indigenous groups joining together for water walks? Are there any disadvantages? Create a display to show what you learned about water walks to others in the school, or make a presentation during assembly.
- 2) **Visit the Grand River or one of her many tributaries:** Take your students on a field trip to visit the river and see, smell and hear the sights and sounds of the river community. Take note of human activity around the river and classify it as helpful or harmful or neutral. While you are there do a clean up if you find any litter around. If you are in town and near a small creek which has been turned into a drainage canal, you can visit that also and investigate some of the sources of pollution (roads and nearby industries) that put pressure on the creek. You may also see some wildlife using this urban creek.
- 3) **Test the water:** Older students can try their hand at water testing to determine water quality of a local creek or the grand river. You can also investigate what animals are living there to determine water quality. Some resources for doing river studies are available [online](#).
- 4) **Make some art!** There are many examples of water inspired art online – after visiting the river you can invite students to make their own piece showing respect for the water – using visual art, drama, poetry, creative writing, song, dance etc.
- 5) **Invite a guest speaker** to come and speak to your class or school assembly, or meet you at the river! If you would like to invite the All Nations Grand River Water Walk leader Mary Anne Caibaosai, you can contact us by email: grandriverwaterwalk@gmail.com. Please note that she has a busy schedule and will try her best to come. She is based in Kitchener. She is not available for talks during the period of the water walk (2018: September 15-29th).
- 6) **Write a song or prayer for the water and share it in assembly or in a school performance.**
- 7) **Promote water conservation:** Do a project in your school to find out if people are using water wisely and encourage them to practice water conservation in every day life.

GRAND RIVER WATER WALK PROTOCOL

for walkers

Aanii Boozhoo! Welcome

We are grateful, appreciate and respect your help and want to keep everyone safe. This list of understandings is written with that intent

First and foremost as soon as you join us, you are in Ceremony. Please see Grandmother Van before you join to smudge and for any other questions that might not be answered here.

- The walk proceeds in leap frog fashion. This means you hand over the pail and staff to walkers ahead of you, drive their vehicle to front of the line-up and wait your turn to carry water and staff again. Be prepared to drive and share vehicles.
- Be cautious, safety first
- Always start at front of the line-up and keep your vehicle place in rotation
- Put hazard lights on while parked – turn off when moving, use turn signals and seat belts
- Do not stop in middle of highway to talk; pull over in front of vehicle if you need to stop
- Do not park in middle of curves, bridges or hills, even if it means a slightly longer walk
- If you must leave rotation for longer than bathroom break, use your own vehicle. Do not take someone else's vehicle.
- You are welcome to take breaks but be conscious that enough Walkers remain
- Walk on the outside of white line closest to the shoulder
- If you bring children - keep them close to your side and not close to the road and please supervise them
- Be respectful of people's belongings and vehicle; do not smoke in others' vehicles
- If food/snacks are out, they are shareable; if you don't want others to eat, put it away
- Keep track of belongings and return any found ones
- You are responsible for your own lodging/gas/food outside of community feasts (Unless you are a core walker)
- First aid and water is available in Grandmother Van. No plastic water bottles please.
- Be ready and prepared when Nibi and Staff come to you
- Pass Staff and Nibi in FRONT of the vehicle; Nibi is handed off first
- 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 eyes and ears for Women, the Water and Spot; look out for them
- Staff Carriers; offer Sema (Tobacco) when you walk by rivers or streams and when you walk by a dead animal/bird
- Women on moon time are powerful and their presence may interrupt this ceremony -we respectfully ask that you rejoin when finished
- Remember why you are here. This Walk is about the Water...prayer, song and/or Nibi consciousness while you are walking with her
- Carry what you learn from Nibi and the Little Boy Staff into your community after you leave.
- Nga zhichige Nibi Onji (Nigaw zhi chi gay Nibay on gee). I will do it for the water.

Gchi'miigwech for your beautiful work for Nibi