



# WORLD WATER DAY

MARCH 22

## What is World Water Day?

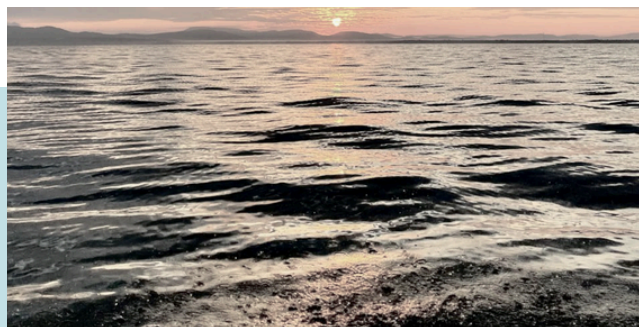
World Water Day, held on March 22 every year since 1993 is a United Nations (UN) observance that highlights the importance of fresh water. It raises awareness of the 2.1 billion people living without access to safe water and calls for collective action to address the global water crisis. It is also about recognizing that water is life—deserving of our care, protection and restoration.



### Did you know?

In 2008, First Nations in Ontario gathered in Garden River First Nation, guided by ceremony and ancestral responsibility, to speak for the waters and chart a path forward for their protection. Their shared vision and unity led the Chiefs in Assembly to adopt the Water Declaration by consensus, reaffirming the inherent responsibilities that First Nations hold in relationship with water.

Today, the UN warns that the world has moved beyond a water crisis and into a state of global water bankruptcy. This shift calls for honesty, protection of remaining water sources, and a renewed commitment to working together so future generations can access clean, living water. Strengthening our personal and collective relationships with water is one way we can begin. Each step counts.



## Why is Water Important?

Having clean water and sanitation means being able to avoid exposure to countless diseases. Every single year, millions of people lose their lives to diseases caused by inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. The benefits of having a source of clean water in a community are much wider. When women and girls no longer have to walk miles and miles to fetch water each day, they have more time to learn. Literacy rates will rise, and when schools build proper toilet facilities, girls spend more time in school and less time at home.

Canada possesses the world's third-largest freshwater reserves. Despite that, 618 First Nations Communities are not supplied with safe drinking water. Across Canada, 29 First Nations communities still lack reliable access to safe drinking water. These communities live under Drinking Water Advisories, meaning tap water cannot be consumed unless it is boiled to make it safe. Although some improvements have been made in recent years, there remain 31 long-term advisories affecting 29 reserves, with several of these advisories having persisted for more than 25 years. Ontario is the province with the most active advisories currently.

## Stories of Inspiring Women



**Josephine Mandamin** was an Anishinaabe Elder, water-rights advocate, and Anishinabek Nation Chief Water Commissioner from Wiikwemikoong Unceded Territory. Elder Josephine Mandamin, known as “Grandmother Water Walker” and Biidaasige-ba (“the one who comes with the light”), was a world-renowned water-rights activist. She walked around the Great Lakes from 2003 to 2017 to bring awareness to the problems of water pollution and environmental degradation on the Great Lakes and in Indigenous communities in Canada.

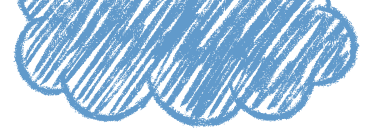


[Click here to watch Josephine's words on her experience walking around the Great Lakes](#)

Did you know Grandmother Josephine inspired many beautiful stories?

Click [here](#) to take a look at a book about her journey, written by Joanne Robertson.





“ We’re all born of water, we’re all connected with the water, we’re all related in that way. Even though we’re not related by blood, we’re related by water. So water is very precious for us ”



-Josephine Mandamin-ba

Strong and resilient young women like **Autumn Peltier** continue standing up for water rights, inspired by her late-great aunt Josephine-ba. At the age of eight, Autumn Peltier attended a ceremony at Serpent River First Nation in Ontario with her mother, that, in part, inspired her future work as a water protector. When Autumn learned her own community was affected by this crisis, she was led to continue her great-aunt Josephine Mandamin-ba’s legacy and in February 2019, Autumn Peltier was appointed Chief Water Commissioner by the Anishnabek Nation, the new “water walker” of her people.



[Click here to hear Autumn’s speech at the United Nations](#)



The following activities were developed and inspired by the Junior Water Walker initiative that was created in collaboration with Josephine Mandamin-ba, Joanne Robertson, and Peter Cameron to help kids follow Josephine-ba's example. Josephine wanted the kids to do what they could do based on their own strengths. The first pillar of the Junior Water Walkers is to establish or strengthen children's connection to water. Inspired by and in collaboration with the Junior Water Walkers, the ideas and resources below are offered to guide and assist you in developing those connections.

## ACTIVITIES

### **Find your closest natural water source**

If you are unsure, use Google Maps to help you locate your closest natural water source (pond, creek, river, lake, ocean), it may be closer than you think! With your teacher, parent, or guardian, walk to your closest accessible water source. Please ensure to abide by all water safety protocols.

Take some time to be absolutely still and quiet. Use your five senses. Feel the water; what do you notice? How would you describe the water? Walk around the water, take time to get to know and appreciate it. What questions do you have? Will you plan to visit this place again?

### **Explore other water sources**

Using Google Maps, find natural water sources to explore. If you can, get out there! If not, get to know them on Google Maps. You'd be amazed at what you can find! Contact your local Conservation authority. Conservation areas are great places to start connecting with water!

### **The Shape of It!**

Whether you're connecting with a water source in nature or using the power of technology to take you to water (i.e., Google Maps), take some time to use your observation skills and sketch out what you see or sketch a memory you had with that body of water. What does the shape of your water source look like? For example, many people think the outline of Lake Superior looks like a wolf's head! Look at different bodies of water using Google Earth, maps, atlases, photos, and books. Can you find other bodies of water that resemble something? Use your imagination!

### **Water Stories**

Connect with a relative or family friend, such as a parent, grandparent, uncle or aunt or neighbour. Ask how they feel connected to water. Is there a special body of water they used to visit? What was its name? Who did they visit with? What do they remember? What made it special? If possible, visit that body of water with your relative or family friend. If it's not possible to visit in person, you can ask your relatives or family friends if they have a photo or two to share. Visit the water source, virtually, using Google Earth.

### **Gifts to the Water**

Go to a water body that is near to you, in location or in your heart. Think about your intentions or words for the water. You can show gratitude, express intentions for the waters to be healthier, and make commitments to care for the water. Give a gift to the water. This can be picking up plastic and litter around the water's edge. You can thank the water for what it gives to you. It can also look like giving bird seeds, tobacco, a song, or a prayer. This could also be offering gratitude by communicating to the spirit of the water.

### **Biinagami - Act**

Our friends at Binaagami have put together some great activities for connecting with water. Check out their interactive [Great Lakes map](#) or share your story as part of their [Watermark Project](#). They have many great examples of ways to [take action](#) and care for water.

# Resources

CLICK AND TAKE A LOOK!

## WORLD WATER DAY ACTIVITY SHEET

A printable and ready-to-go activity mat designed to engage students in learning about World Water Day through a variety of fun activities.

## UN WORLD WATER DAY 2026 ACTIVATION KIT

A ready kit with creative activities, discussion ideas, and key facts to help schools and communities celebrate World Water Day 2026 and explore the connection between water and gender equality.

## CHANGE MAKERS - A VOICE FOR THE RIVER, ABRAHAM FRANCIS

A case study and lesson plan for grades 7–12 that tells the story of Abraham Francis, a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) advocate from Akwesasne, and guides students through discussions on the rights of rivers and a writing activity where they reflect on their connection to a local ecosystem and call for its protection.

## JUNIOR WATER WALKERS

A website with activities and resources that help young people build a personal connection to water through exploring local water sources, listening to Indigenous teachings, and walking in the footsteps of Josephine Mandamin Ba.

## NIBI EMOSAAWDANG / THE WATER WALKER

A dual-language picture book in Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe) and English that tells the true story of Nokomis (Grandmother) Josephine Mandamin and her walks around the Great Lakes to raise awareness about protecting Nibi (water) for future generations. By Joanne Robertson

## BAAWAATING STORY

Created by Batchewana First Nation, this interactive story map shares the history of Baawaating ("place of the rapids") and the strong connection between the Anishinaabe people and the St. Marys River in what is now known as Sault Ste. Marie.

## NIBI CURRICULUM

A downloadable curriculum with lesson plans, discussion prompts, and hands-on activities rooted in Anishinaabe teachings to help learners of all ages build a deeper relationship with water (Nibi).

## NIBI-DECLARATION

A declaration that recognizes Nibi (water) as a living spirit, outlines the sacred relationship between Anishinaabe people and water, and calls on everyone to protect it for future generations.

## WATER DECLARATION OF THE FIRST NATIONS IN ONTARIO

A document that gathers Ontario's First Nations perspectives about their inherent rights, Nibi's health and alternatives for moving forward in accordance to our connections and responsibilities to water and the land.

## WHY LAKES AND RIVERS SHOULD HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS HUMANS

A TED Talk by Kelsey Leonard, a Shinnecock water scientist and legal scholar, who explains why granting lakes and rivers legal personhood is an important step toward protecting water and changing how we value it.

# Where we took our facts from:

One Drop. (2023). What is World Water Day and what does it stand for?

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This activity sheet is prepared by the Anji Inaashkawun Team.  
To connect and learn more, please visit our website:  
[freshwaterwise.com/anji-inaashkawun](https://freshwaterwise.com/anji-inaashkawun)

Or scan the QR Code

