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The Water Walker

by Friar Ed Debono, OFM Conv.



I met Josephine Mandamin at a Justice and Peace conference at the Mary Ward Centre in Toronto. I sat in the front row. During her presentation she kept looking at me and I at her. I felt she was talking to me, as if I was the only one in the conference hall. I was attentive to her story and I was astounded at what she did and what she accomplished.

She was one of two [Anishinaabe](#) grandmothers who had walked around every single Great Lake, along the St. Lawrence River and many other water ways and lakes in traditional First Nations territory in Canada.

They started the water walk movement in 2003 to bring the importance of water to people's attention. They were concerned that the lakes and rivers of [Turtle Island \(Mother Earth\)](#) were being polluted.

For our Canadian First Nations people water is the life source of Mother Earth.

First Nations people believe the care of water is the responsibility of grandmothers and for them to encourage other women in praying for and protecting water. Josephine mentioned that after her first water walk around Lake Superior, it was natural to begin other walks in the spring because it symbolized re-growth and renewal of the earth.



Since 2003, the year of the first water walk, Josephine walked the shorelines of all the Great Lakes. Imagine walking around each of the great lakes. Including other shore lines she probably walked a total of about 25,000 kilometers. She completed her last water walk in the summer of 2017.

Josephine Mandamin water walked to bring to people's attention that water is an important life-line on Turtle Island. **Without water we would die along with all the animals and vegetation. Water is part of the birthing process. Water is not only essential for life but it is also regarded as a medicine.**

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Water is life giving. Water is essential. Clear water, drinkable water is that important. To say that, seems unnecessary, but it has to be stated because [we Canadians are polluting our life source.](#)

The Great Lakes are the largest body of fresh water in the world. We also have thousands of fresh water lakes and rivers across our great land. [We have a great resource in our country that others do not have.](#)

Josephine and [other grandmothers have left us with a legacy](#) of the importance of taking care of our water. Other First Nations women are carrying on their ancestral heritage and care for water.

The First Nations women, by their example, ask us, their fellow Canadians and inhabitants on Turtle Island, to be attentive and not to pollute our waters with waste, junk, garbage, plastic, metal, mercury and other destructive chemicals and objects which will kill the life source of Mother Earth.

[Josephine Mandamin died on February 22, 2017 at the age of 77.](#)

But her legacy continues. Autumn Peltier, Josephine's grandniece was inspired to continue her aunt's work by becoming a water protector and advocate. [Autumn Peltier addresses the UN.](#)



Well4Africa Update

Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water, So useful, humble, precious and pure. It is not our intention to pressure any local or regional fraternity to respond to this request for contributions to the Well4Africa project that OFS National is sponsoring. **National has raised \$13,000.** Please consider this humble request from the OFS National JPIC Team. Cheques can be sent to your Local fraternity, who will send it to your Region and in turn send the contributions to our National Treasurer, Sherrill Guimond. To refresh your memories, here is a link to the [Well4Africa media release.](#)

Further Reading:

- [a 9 Day Laudato Si Retreat?](#)
- [Catholic Church announces extensive guidelines and ambitious plan to implement Laudato Si'](#)
- [The Global Catholic Climate Movement – Just Transition Webinar](#)

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