



Josephine Mandamin



Indigenous Peoples and Water Rights

Elementary Lesson Plan

Objective Students will explore Indigenous perspectives on respecting water; how individual and collective behaviour affects the environment; and the relationship between all living things.

Title **Sacred Water**

Subject Indigenous Peoples and the Right to Water

Grade level Elementary (Alberta Grade 5)

Time duration 2 class periods

Materials

- Image of Josephine Mandamin (included with this lesson)
- Fact Sheet about Josephine Mandamin's walk around the Great Lakes (included with this lesson)
- Online video about Josephine Mandamin's walk around the Great Lakes(www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn5eEWWFc30)
- Saddle Lake and Yellow Quill Student Handout (included with this lesson)
- [Indigenous Right to Water Video](#)

Learning Activities **Preparation**

- In small groups, have students look at the image of Josephine Mandamin and make predictions: What do you think this woman is doing? Why do you think she's doing it? Have students create a three-column chart for their predictions, using columns entitled "My Prediction" (column 1), "Clues from the Image" (column 2), and "Ideas from My Own Experience" (column 3).
- Have students do a shared reading of the Josephine Mandamin Fact Sheet. Ask students to then return to the image of Josephine Mandamin. Discuss with students if their predictions were correct, using evidence from the text that supports or disproves their predictions. If students predicted that Josephine was engaging in a protest – rather than a ceremony – ask them why they predicted that. How does media coverage of Indigenous peoples frame public understanding of Indigenous issues?

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- The moon takes 28 days to complete its cycle, and women complete a cycle every 28 days. Because the moon regulates the tides, and because children are born from a mother's water, Indigenous peoples believe that women have a special responsibility to care for water. Have students view the online video in which Josephine Mandamin talks about the challenges of her walk, the problems with bottled water, the spirit and intelligence of water, and her hope for the future.

Learning Activities

Activity: *Safe Water to Drink*

1. Discuss with your students the following questions:
 - Why is it important to have safe drinking water?
 - What happens if you do not have safe drinking water?
 - How is safe drinking water ensured within your community?
 - What would you do if you did have safe drinking water?
 - Are there different standards regarding safe drinking water?
 2. Following the discussion, ask students, individually or in small groups, to read through the Saddle Lake and Yellow Quill student handout. After they have read the handout, ask students in a large group or in their small groups to share something interesting or new that they learned from the handout.
 3. Show students the [Indigenous Right to Water Video](#)
 4. As a large class, ask students to reflect on what they learned from watching the video. Teachers may opt to stop the video several times throughout to discuss what they've seen or may decide to show the video more than once.
 5. In pairs, students make a 2-columned chart – one column is titled "Nature" and the other titled "Resources." Each pair should complete their chart by discussing why it is important for Canadians to protect the natural environment and water and why it might be important for Canada to make use of its natural resources. If needed, offer students time to research resources present in Northern Alberta, paying particular attention to oil sands developments.
 6. As a large class, complete a similar chart on the board with students supplying the answers from their pair work.
 7. Continuing to work with their partners, ask students to discuss how they would feel if their beautiful community had been taken over by industry and they were now facing health issues as are Indigenous
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	<p>communities such as Saddle Lake.</p> <p>8. Individually, students write a journal entry from the perspective of an Indigenous Elder, such as Josephine Mandamin, who settled Saddle Lake 50 years earlier, comparing life then and now.</p>
<p><i>Assessment</i></p>	<p>Groups can be assessed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work skills • Involvement in class • Journal entry
<p><i>Activities for Extension and/or Integration</i></p>	<p>Have students read <i>A River Ran Wild</i>, by Lynne Cherry, a true story about the restoration of a polluted waterway. Split the story into manageable chunks and have students create drama or dance/movement pieces retelling the story in the book.</p> <p>Prompts: <i>How does this story relate to the experience of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in Canada?</i></p> <p><i>To experiences in your own ethno-cultural or geographic communities?</i></p>
<p><i>Subject and Level Learning Outcomes (Alberta)</i></p>	<p>This classroom activity will help students understand concepts introduced in Alberta’s grade 5 social studies curriculum, <i>Canada: Shaping an Identity</i>. Grade 5 examines the foundations of Canada through its physical geography, the ways of life and heritage of its diverse peoples. Grade 5 presents events and issues that have impacted citizenship and identity in the Canadian context over time.</p>
<p><i>Resources</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Council of Canadians:</i> www.canadians.org/water/issues/First_Nations/index.html (information on water issues in First Nations communities, the threat of privatization, and the impact Aboriginal self-government might have on water quality) • <i>Assembly of First Nations:</i> www.afn.ca/index.php/en/honoring-water (information on the holistic relationship First Nations people traditionally had with water, water rights in First Nations communities, the impact of climate change on water quality and quantity, water management practices, Aboriginal and treaty rights to water, and drinking water and waste water treatment for on-reserve communities) • <i>CBC Archives:</i> www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2011/11/17/pol-water-quality-reserves.html (current issues with water in on-reserve communities) • http://www.safewater.org/PDFS/OWS/owsgr5unit.pdf

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- http://dragonflycanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/drgfly_water2LP.pdf

APRIL 2009: WALK FOR THE WATER

Elder Josephine Mandamin

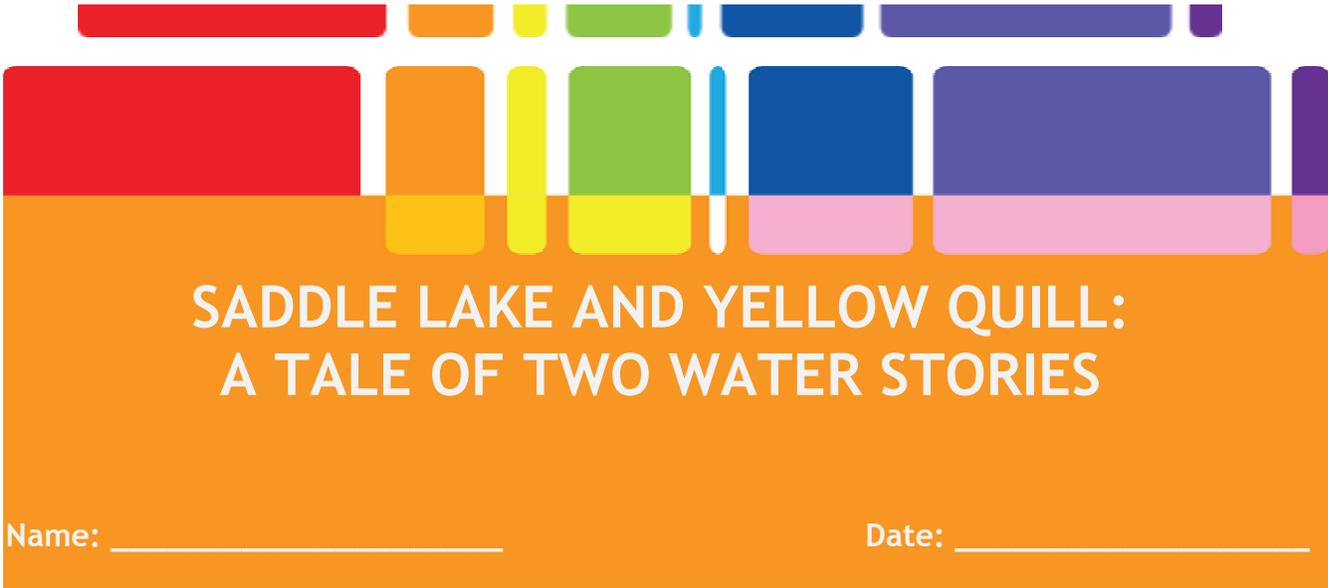
Anishinabe elder Josephine Mandamin has walked 17,000 miles in a dedicated spiritual journey because she is concerned about environmental collapse. She is Fish Clan from Manitoulin Island in Georgian Bay, where fish and clear water used to be part of her lifestyle. Over the years she has seen the waters poisoned and the life in it disappear. In 2003, she was moved to pick up her copper pail and circle the Great Lakes in an effort to make the message clear that “the water is sick and people really need to fight for that water, speak for that water and love the water.” Many others joined her, some from First Nations Environmental Network, as well as throughout the region.

In 2005, 60 scientists studying the Great Lakes predicted irreversible collapse of the ecosystem of the waters if positive change didn't happen soon. Every spring, Josephine and a group of followers have walked the periphery of this enormous body of water. This year they will be walking from the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean. There is so much poison in the St. Lawrence (which drains the Great Lakes) that one quarter of the beluga whales that live in it have cancer. At every tributary the walkers offer tobacco and prayers of thanks and healing to the water.

Many First Nations territories have been harmed by the pollution and destruction of the waters and land due to big industries and profit-making at the expense of all around us. The waters know no boundaries and affect us all; they are the lifeblood of both Mother Earth, humans, and all life. Through Josephine Mandamin's caring and prayers, this powerful energy is being carried around the world for all.



Retrieved from the First Nations Environmental Network www.fnen.org/?a=node/28



SADDLE LAKE AND YELLOW QUILL: A TALE OF TWO WATER STORIES

Name: _____

Date: _____

The concept of safe drinking water is simple, it is a basic human need to be able to drink the water, yet with many contaminants now present within the water systems, water may not be safe to drink.

In Canada there are no national regulations regarding water's safety, rather there are just a series of provincial guidelines. The United Nations has declared that safe drinking water is a basic human right, yet Canada voted against this policy. Canada is one of many countries that do not have national regulations governing drinking water. In 2004 Canada was the only country to vote "no", declaring that water is "NOT" a basic human right. Canada voted against all other countries on this issue at the United Nations. Instead, in Canada, Indigenous communities are caught in a grey area. They are regulated by federal standards and regulations yet they are located within provinces that have jurisdiction over the environment, and subsequently the water. Since there is *dual jurisdiction* it becomes difficult to ensure safe drinking water. There are no clear statistics regarding the condition of water in Indigenous communities and while there are guidelines regarding water treatment, these are not enforced by government departments.

In 1998, an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) from the Saskatoon Tribal Council began investigating the large number of serious health issues in the community of Yellow Quill First Nation, and she was concerned it was attributed to the water. The EHO learned that Yellow Quill got its water from pumping water into a reservoir from a stream that only ran for a few days every spring. The EHO also learned that in that same stream, a town upstream dumped its sewage lagoon into the water each spring when the Yellow Quill reservoir was filling. Water quality on this First Nation was so bad that the residents were under "*boil water advisory*" from 1995 until 2004.

Yellow Quill had to wait nine years before their boil water advisory was stopped. This is the reality in many First Nations! It is this dual jurisdiction





and the lack of response by government officials that may be causing irrevocable damage to the community and its members. In 1999, the EHO repeatedly requested Dr. Hans Peterson, Volunteer Executive Director of the Safe Drinking Water Foundation (SDWF), to become involved with Yellow Quill. In 2002 he moved to Yellow Quill and lived on the reserve for almost two years. He was instrumental in the development of a new completely biological water treatment system on ground water. It was an innovative approach to water treatment.

The Yellow Quill First Nation biological and membrane water treatment plant is the first of its kind in Canada. The bio-membrane process has a number of advantages including the fact that no chemicals are used in the biological process, which takes advantage of naturally occurring microorganisms to remove contaminants. A minimum amount of chemicals are required for the membrane process. Yellow Quill's water quality is probably better than water quality anywhere else in Canada, and maybe in all of North America.

Presently, Dr. Hans Peterson is working with Saddle Lake First Nation in Alberta. In Saddle Lake's treated water SDWF have detected viable protozoan parasites, and had they been able to carry out testing for difficult to kill bacteria and viruses, they are certain that those too would have been found. For example, one chlorine-resistant bacterium, Campylobacter, is present in many treated rural water sources. Campylobacter is the organism that, according to Health Canada, is responsible for most paralysis cases in Canada. Campylobacter is present in many rural drinking water supplies, but it is never tested for in Indigenous communities. Viruses are linked to many common diseases including heart attacks yet water is not tested for viruses. At Saddle Lake there are high levels of dissolved organic carbon, which reacts with the chlorine instead of killing the bugs.

The SDWF analyzed samples from Saddle Lake drinking water and advised Saddle Lake Chief and Council to call a Boil Water Advisory in 2004, against the wishes of Health Canada. It wasn't long before Health Canada realized SDWF scientists were correct and the boil water advisory has now been in effect for over one year. Dr. Peterson is now helping Saddle Lake to develop a biological water treatment plant on their surface water. Soon, other Indigenous and rural communities will be able to benefit from these "pioneer communities" and provide safe drinking water to their citizens - which should be a right enjoyed by all people of Canada.

