



## **FINAL REPORT: WATER GOVERNANCE LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN**



**"When we have these relationships,  
we will see great success,  
and you will not do this without us.  
It will not happen without us.  
We need to do this together!"**

**Chief Lorraine Cobiness  
Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special Thanks to our Partners and Friends

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and  
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et  
Changement climatique Canada





# *Anishinaabeg Nibi Onaakonigewinaanan*

## WATER RIGHTS FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES



# METHODOLOGY



This report is based on research, conducted by the Red River Basin Commission and the Southern Chiefs' Organization, through a series of meetings with Indigenous and government leaders. The first summit meeting, called the **"Spirit of Water"**, was held at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. In attendance were Indigenous leaders from throughout Manitoba, along with Federal, Provincial, State, and City leaders. Additional attendance came with representation from agriculture producers, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and Manitoba Capital Region leaders. The discussion was on the state of our water, Indigenous water governance and the need of change. It was the first time that leaders of all levels of government have gathered, listened to one another and shared in their thoughts on the important issue of water governance and water protection for all waters, including Lake Winnipeg and its Basin.

The outcome from the Spirit of Water was, the Indigenous leaders not only wanted engagement for themselves but for all First Nation leaders from the entire Lake Winnipeg Basin area. The gathering of leaders across the entire Lake Winnipeg Basin happened on September 16th to the 18th in 2019 in Winnipeg. This event was a conference called **"One Basin One Governance"**. This conference enabled First Nation leaders the platform to share and talk about the issues and their needs as it relates to water, their traditions and their beliefs and why they must have a place at the table when it comes to water governance in Canada.

The information for this report has come from listening and understanding the relationship that Indigenous leaders and Indigenous women have with the Creator, Mother Earth and our sacred water. It has also come through in the many stories told by Elders, the many papers written and the many papers read.



# Water Governance must include Indigenous People

Please note that this report was written from our partnership with First Nations and has been developed to give guidance and direction as we follow the pathway for a united water governance model. This report was written for those who will take the time to read it, including our elders and our youth, in hopes that they are able to understand and experience some of what those who attended the One Basin One Governance conference did. The first message heard, at the beginning of this conference, was that "we need to listen".

There have been numerous articles written on the importance of rights which include water governance rights for Indigenous Nations of Canada. Before we get in depth into this key issue, it is felt that it is important to understand the history of our country and how First Nations were just that, "they were here FIRST!"

The Nations were here long before European settlers came to this country; the First Nations existed with their own level of governance and laws which were gifted to them by the Creator. They were sovereign nations, each with governance on their own lands, waters and all that were in it, and it is something that was never relinquished. It was the period of time when European settlement came to this country when the First Nations rights of governance were stolen away with their lands and their way of life. A life that respected the land, the water and the creatures that lived in it.

cont...



The Treaties were never fulfilled and, though now our country tries to do so, there is much trust that has been eroded. The inherent rights of the First Nations people were threatened through sad periods of colonization, which was put into place to "take the Indian out of the Indian" as stated by many First Nations people. It is now, in this century, that Canadian law has recognized that these rights were stolen away and the Nations are working hard towards getting their rights, their lands and their culture back.

It was a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in 1973 which decided, for the first time, that the legal land rights of First Nations existed over that of the past Royal Proclamation of 1763. The case called "the Calder Case" reviewed the existence of Indigenous entitlement to land claims. It is considered the base for the first land claim in British Columbia that gave self-governance to an Indigenous community called the Nisga'a Nation.

At the time when Canada broke from British decent, the First Nations pushed and lobbied government to recognize Indigenous rights and Treaty rights. Their success established section 35 (1) of the Constitution Act in 1982. This section reads that "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed". This includes that of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

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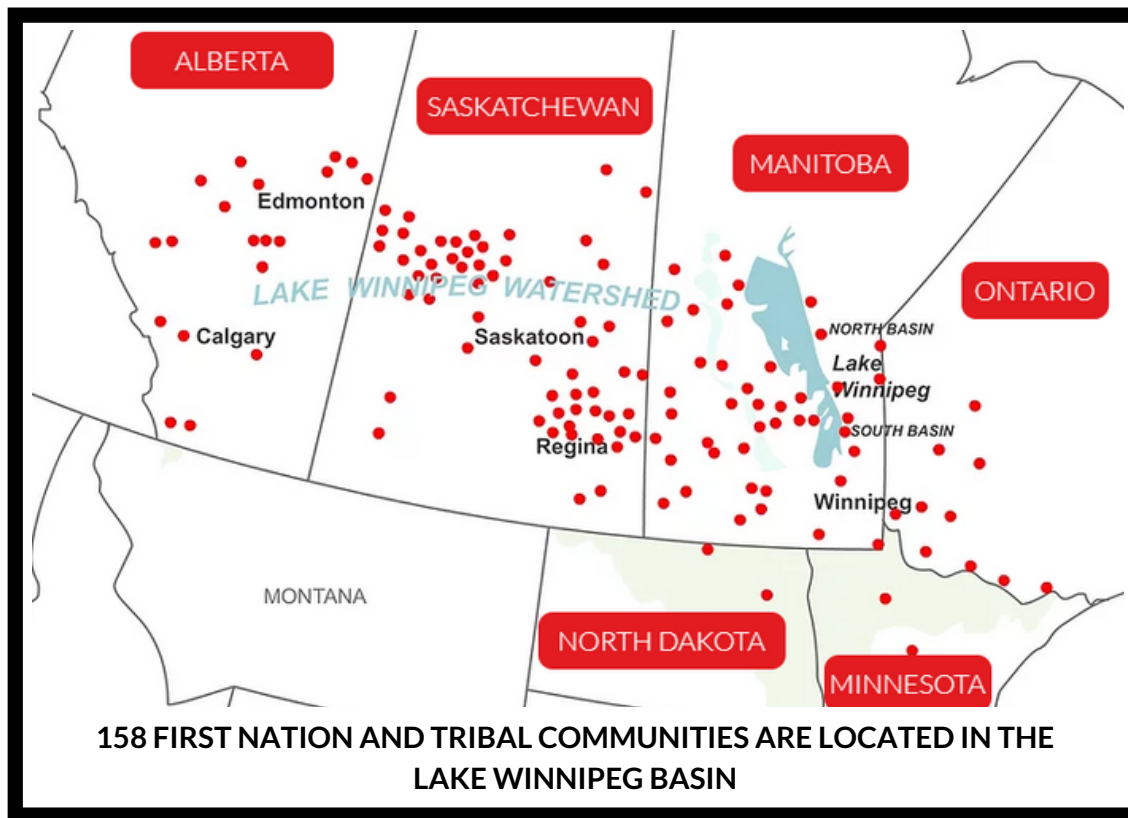
These rights are furthered by “the duty to consult” while Indigenous claims are unresolved, there is a requirement to consult, and if necessary, accommodate the interests of the Nations if it can be shown that an action could lessen the value of the land or resources that the Nation lay claim to.

Over the last many years, there have been numerous court cases and challenges on the rights of Indigenous peoples and their lands. The decisions from these challenges have upheld the rights of First Nation people, and the governance of any lands that were once theirs. Many treaties are locked in simple wording but strong in their meaning “As Long as the Sun Shines, the Rivers Flow and the Grass Grows” the treaty will stand as a binding agreement."

The Creator has given the responsibility to the Nations to watch over the lands, the waters, and its creatures, and to ensure its well-being for the next 7 generations. This is passed on to each generation, ensuring the well-being of our Mother Earth. It is the words “as long as the rivers flow” which give the Nations rights to water governance. This is something which is lacking in water governance now, where all rights and decisions sit with the Federal and Provincial governments and the bureaucratic system that lies within its governance model. It is time that the Nations sit at the table so their wisdom may be heard as it relates to caring for our waters. To be clear, water governance is not consultation.

There are 158 First Nations and Tribes in the Provinces and States where the Lake Winnipeg Basin presides. Their Treaty lands cover the majority of populated areas in the prairies.





## LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN FIRST NATION TREATY LANDS

The Lake Winnipeg Basin is made up of four Provinces and four States, with many smaller watersheds, all of which make the entire Lake Winnipeg Basin area nearly one million square kilometers. **The majority of Treaty lands lie within the Basin.**

On February 2nd, 2013, on World Wetlands Day, Lake Winnipeg was deemed the most "threatened Lake of the Year".

Lake Winnipeg is considered to be the most eutrophic large lake in the world caused by nutrient loaded waters with blue green algal blooms that can be toxic for most living things.

It is to this that the First Nations people are saying "enough" and are insisting to be at the table on decisions that reflect the use of their waters.

"We are not talking about Consultation, we are talking about water governance!" says Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "All Nations deserve to be part of this governance".



# ALBERTA FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

## LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN

### TREATY LANDS: 6 (1876-78), 7, 8 AND 10

Alexander First Nation / Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation

Blood Tribe (Kainai Nation / Blood Tribe (Kainai Nation)

Enoch Cree Nation / Ermineskin Cree Nation

Frog Lake First Nation / Kehewin Cree Nation

Louis Bull Tribe / Montana First Nation

O'Chiese First Nation / Paul First Nation

Piikani Nation / Saddle Lake Cree Nation

Samson Cree Nation / Siksika Nation

Stoney Nakoda Nation / Sunchild First Nation

Tsuut'ina Nation / Whitefish Lake First Nation (Atikameg)



# SASKATCHEWAN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

## LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN

### TREATY LANDS: 2, 4, 5, 6 (1889), 6 (1876-78) AND 10

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation / Beardy's and Okemasis First Nation / Big River First Nation

Carry the Kettle First Nation / Cote First Nation / Cowessess First Nation / Cumberland House Cree Nation

Day Star First Nation / Fishing Lake First Nation / Flying Dust First Nation / George Gordon First Nation

Ministikwan Lake Cree Nation / James Smith Cree Nation / Kahkewistahaw First Nation

Kawacatoose First Nation / Keeseekoose First Nation / Kinistin Saulteaux Nation

Lean Man First Nation / Little Black Bear First Nation / Little Pine First Nation

Lucky Man Cree (First) Nation / Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation / Mistawasis First Nation

Montreal Lake Cree Nation / Moosomin First Nation / Mosquito, Grizzly Bear's Head

Muscowpetung First Nation / Muskeg Lake Cree Nation / Muskoday First Nation

Muskowekwan First Nation / Nekaneet First Nation / Ocean Man First Nation / Ochapowace First Nation

One Arrow First Nation / Okanese First Nation / Onion Lake Cree Nation / Pasqua First Nation

Peepeekisis Cree Nation / Pelican Lake First Nation / Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation

Pheasant Rump Nakota Nation / Piapot First Nation / Poundmaker Cree Nation / Red Earth First Nation Red

Pheasant First Nation / Sakimay First Nation / Saulteaux First Nation / Shoal Lake Cree Nation

Standing Buffalo Dakota Nation / Star Blanket Cree Nation / Sturgeon Lake First Nation

Sweetgrass First Nation / The Key First Nation / Thunderchild First Nation / Wahpeton Dakota Nation White

Bear First Nation / Whitecap Dakota First Nation / Witchehan Lake First Nation / Yellow Quill First Nation

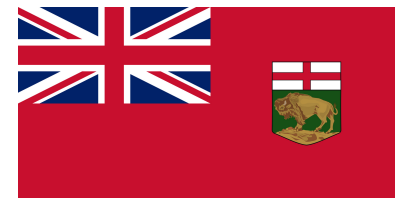




# MANITOBA FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

## LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN

### TREATY LANDS: 1, 2, 3, 4, AND 5 (1875)



Berens River First Nation / Birdtail Sioux Dakota Nation / Black River First Nation / Bloodvein First Nation

Brokenhead Ojibway Nation / Buffalo Point First Nation / Canupawakpa Dakota Nation / Chemawawin Cree Nation

Dakota Plains Wahpeton First Nation / Dakota Tipi First Nation / Dauphin River First Nation / Ebb and Flow First Nation

Fisher River Cree Nation / Gambler First Nation / Hollow Water First Nation / Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation

Kinonjeoshtegon First Nation / Lake Manitoba First Nation / Lake St. Martin First Nation / Little Grand Rapids First Nation

Little Saskatchewan First Nation / Long Plain First Nation / Misipawistik Cree Nation / Mosakahiken Cree Nation

O-Chi-Chak-Ko-Sipi First Nation / Opaskwayak Cree Nation / Pauingassi First Nation / Peguis First Nation

Pinaymootang First Nation / Pine Creek First Nation / Poplar River First Nation / Rolling River First Nation

Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation / Sagkeeng First Nation / Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation / Sapotaweyak Cree Nation

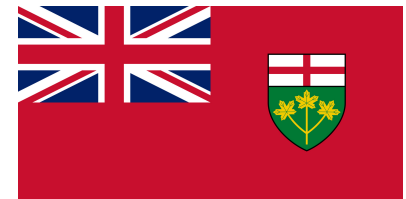
Sioux Valley Dakota Nation / Skownan First Nation / Swan Lake First Nation / Tootinaowaziibeeng First Nation

Waywayseecappo First Nation / Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation

# ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

## LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN

### TREATY LANDS: 3, 5 (1875) AND 9 (1929-30)



Anishinabe of Wauzhushk Onigum / Anishinaabeg of Naongashiing (Big Island First Nation)

Big Grassy River First Nation / Cat Lake First Nation / Couchiching First Nation

Eagle Lake First Nation / Grassy Narrows First Nation / Iskatewizaagegan No. 39 First Nation

Lac Des Mille Lacs First Nation / Lac La Croix First Nation / Lac Seul First Nation

Mitaanjigamiing First Nation (Formerly Stanjikoming) / Naicatchewenin First Nation

Naotkamegwanning First Nation / Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation

Northwest Angle No. 33 First Nation / Northwest Angle No. 37 First Nation

Ochiichagwe'babigo'ining First Nation / Ojibway Nation of Saugeen

Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation / Pikangikum First Nation

Poplar Hill First Nation / Rainy River First Nation / Seine River First Nation

Shoal Lake No. 40 First Nation / Slate Falls Nation / Wabaseemoong First Nation

Wabauskang First Nation / Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation / Washagamis Bay First Nation (Obashkaandagaang)



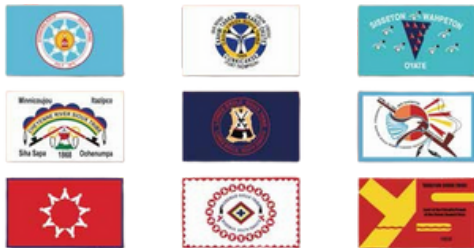
## NORTH DAKOTA



Ojibwe  
Hidatsa, Mandan, Arikara (Three Tribes)  
Dakota, and Nakota Sioux  
Lakota Sioux  
Assiniboine



## SOUTH DAKOTA



Dakota and Yankton Sioux  
Ponca  
Arikara  
Lakota Sioux  
Cheyenne



## MINNESOTA



Red Lake Nation / Grand Portage Band  
White Earth Nation / Fond du Lac Band  
Bois Forte Band / Mille Lacs Band  
Leech Lake Band / Upper Sioux  
Lower Sioux / Prairie Island  
Shakopee Midewakanton



# THE FIGHT FOR SELF GOVERNANCE

## UNITED NATIONS



"Resolution 45/164 of the United Nations General Assembly was adopted on 18 December 1990, proclaiming that 1993 would be the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, "with a view to strengthening international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by Indigenous communities in areas such **as human rights, the environment**, development, education and health".

Resolution 48/163 of the United Nations

"Welcoming the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in which the vital role of Indigenous people and their communities in the interrelationship between the natural environment and its sustainable development is recognized, including their holistic traditional scientific knowledge of their lands, natural resources and environment."

From Resolution 59/174 adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2004

2. Decides that the goal of the Second Decade shall be the further strengthening of international cooperation for the solution of problems faced by Indigenous people in such areas as culture, education, health, **human rights, the environment** and social and economic development, by means of action-oriented programmes and specific projects, increased technical assistance and relevant standard-setting activities;

5. Invites Governments to ensure that activities and objectives for the Second Decade are planned and implemented on the basis of full consultation and collaboration with Indigenous people;

*Meaning of Collaboration - "the action of working with someone to produce or create something."*

**The United Nations policies reflect the desires and the needs of the Indigenous Nations. The present process of colonial decision making must change to allow Indigenous processes that embeds Indigenous beliefs and relationships with water.**

# THE FIGHT FOR SELF GOVERNANCE IN CANADA

## GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S ACTIONS



Working with Canada's Indigenous governments, Canada has developed principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples. Canada has also endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). [243] That Declaration recognizes Indigenous peoples' right to determine and develop priorities for the development or use of their lands or territories and recognizes Indigenous peoples' right to maintain and strengthen their spiritual relationship with traditionally owned or occupied lands, territories, waters, coastal seas, and other resources, and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations.

The Principles respecting this governance are as follows:

1. The Government of Canada recognizes that all relations with Indigenous peoples need to be based on the recognition and implementation of their right to self-determination, including the inherent right of self-government.
2. The Government of Canada recognizes that reconciliation is a fundamental purpose of section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
3. The Government of Canada recognizes that the honour of the Crown guides the conduct of the Crown in all of its dealings with Indigenous peoples.
4. The Government of Canada recognizes that Indigenous self-government is part of Canada's evolving system of cooperative federalism and distinct orders of government.
5. The Government of Canada recognizes that treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements between Indigenous peoples and the Crown have been and are intended to be acts of reconciliation based on mutual recognition and respect.
6. The Government of Canada recognizes that meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples aims to secure their free, prior, and informed consent when Canada proposes to take actions which impact them and their rights, including their lands, territories and resources.
7. The Government of Canada recognizes that respecting and implementing rights is essential and that any infringement of section 35 rights must by law meet a high threshold of justification which includes Indigenous perspectives and satisfies the Crown's fiduciary obligations.
8. The Government of Canada recognizes that reconciliation and self-government require a renewed fiscal relationship, developed in collaboration with Indigenous nations, that promotes a mutually supportive climate for economic partnership and resource development.
9. The Government of Canada recognizes that reconciliation is an ongoing process that occurs in the context of evolving Indigenous-Crown relationships.
10. The Government of Canada recognizes that a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of the First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.



# THE FIGHT FOR SELF GOVERNANCE IN CANADA

## GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S ACTIONS

If one reviews the 10 Principles developed by Canada for respecting the relationship with Indigenous peoples, then one must wonder why we are continuing to talk about Indigenous water governance. Remember that Treaty lands in the Lake Winnipeg Basin cover the majority of the Prairies and that most cities, towns and municipalities lie within those Treaty lands. The issue has never been about sharing the resources that the Creator had given to the world but the issues lie as to how it has been treated. Our Indigenous communities feel it is their bond, their responsibility to the Creator and to the next 7 generations to protect the sacred water. They believe in the sacredness of our water, the connection that water is the giver of all life, and the need of protecting and respecting our water from contamination and waste. They recognize that water is the giver of all life and without clean water all life will not exist.

Each of the 10 Principles, developed and followed by our Canadian government, talks about either self governance, reconciliation, and or the need to recognize that treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements exist. It is stated in the 10 Principles that if Canada is to have meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples it must aim to secure their free, prior, and informed consent when Canada proposes to take actions which impacts them and their rights, including their lands, territories and resources.

**It is stated that "the Government of Canada recognizes that a distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of the First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented".**

If this is the case then, Canada needs to be prepared to follow through with the words they put into the guiding principles and to understand the importance of water to Indigenous people. As the Indigenous leaders move toward water governance, they do so for all. There is no doubt that Indigenous people can teach us all about water ethics and the importance of water governance for all. people They need to have a place at the decision making table.



# PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS



## LAKE WINNIPEG BASIN



Government of Canada gave powers of water licencing to the Provinces in the earlier 1900's which changed the roles of federal and provincial governments as it relates to water governance in Canada.

The Canadian federal government's role in protection and management of sources of local water supplies is now very limited. The federal government has no direct role in regulating water usage of federal or aboriginal lands. This now sits with the Provincial governments which means water governance that includes Indigenous peoples at the table must be embraced at a Provincial level.

As too, the role of municipal governments in water resource management is limited - even though local decisions on land use planning sits on the municipal plate and they can have impacts on water resources. In the past, the provinces have provided limited policy direction and powers to municipalities on the protection of surface and groundwater sources. Though many Provincial governments are now working towards watershed management, where municipalities can engage at that level, along with Indigenous communities if they choose to sit on watershed boards.

Even with these newer changes, it is still a provincial / bureaucratic control that represents a colonial system of decision making.

**Province's should not assume that it has sole jurisdiction over water, nor that it is the sole decision maker to delegate management of the water, especially in First Nation traditional territories or Treaty lands. Water issues transcend jurisdictional boundaries and are not the responsibility of just one governing body and the inherent right of First Nations, to be part of the governance, could be challenged and won.**

**Having the Provincial government embrace a shared process would be in the best interest of all.**

# PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

The Province of Manitoba states the purpose of the Manitoba Water Rights Licensing scheme is to ensure the sustainable allocation of the province's water resources. The intent of water rights licensing is to protect the interests of licensees, existing domestic users, the general public and the environment with respect to the use or diversion of water. This decision is solely that of the government not of others. Indigenous Nations feel that their voice is not part of that decision making. **They feel consultation for the Nations is no more than that of a bureaucratic process of showing that they listened and engaged with the Nations. "There is no Indigenous governance or input as it relates to water in Manitoba." stated Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "It is up to the Province to make that change, and it is up to the Premier to see that it happens."**

If the objectives of the Manitoba Water Rights Licensing is to share fair and equitable allocation of water and it continues to look at "first in time, first of right", then the Nations must be considered as they were here first. Shared governance as it relates to the sacredness of water is important to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Not only because many Nations need clean dependable potable water, it is because the Creator educated the Nations on respecting the Spirit that guides them and for the consideration of future generations.





# MANITOBA WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

## The Manitoba Provincial Water Management Strategy as it relates to Indigenous Water Governance

At the time that the One Basin One Governance Conference was held in 2019, the Manitoba Water Management Strategy was in the development stages. With COVID-19 creating a delay in finalizing this report, the delay has allowed this management strategy to become part of some conversations that took place with First Nations in Manitoba. Several questions that were brought forward from our communications, which need to be answered regarding the Manitoba Water Management Strategy; Are First Nations and Métis people good with a Provincial made plan on their Treaty lands without being at the table? Is Consultation a good enough avenue to have their say in water governance? If government is truly committed with engaging the Nations, it is felt that a conversation with the Nations leaders should take place on how that governance should look when it comes to their sacred waters.

To date, there is no secure protection of Indigenous Peoples water rights in Canada. Indigenous water rights are not considered independently, but deemed to be part of the provinces and state policies or strategies. This includes all lands, even that of Treaty lands of the First Nations and Métis.

**Again the message has been made clear from the Nations, they feel consultation is not water governance.**

# OUR JOURNEY

It has always been the desire of the Red River Basin Commission to learn from the knowledge that exists within the First Nations, Métis and Tribal Council people. The working relationship that was formed with the Southern Chiefs' Organization is what truly allowed the beginning of our Journey.

*embarking on this journey with the  
Spirit of Water....*



# *The Spirit of Water*

On January 23rd, 2018 the Southern Chiefs' Organization and the RRBC hosted a **Manitoba** Indigenous Engagement called

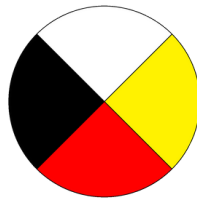
the "**Spirit of Water**".

**This event was the first of its kind**, a historic opportunity as First Nations work together with leaders from Municipal, City, Provincial and Federal levels of government in identifying challenges and seeking specific solutions for the health of our water.

It was based on the thinking that the health of Manitoba's water bodies is essential for the well-being of the province.

Indigenous peoples rely on the Spirit of Water for the continuation of their traditional and ceremonial practices. The SCO and the RRBC observed the importance of a shared perspective on water topics and created this opportunity for building relationships, and discussing tangible solutions around water management, the sacredness of water, and Indigenous peoples' health.

It was from this meeting that we received the direction of needing to hear from all Nations that live within the Lake Winnipeg Basin and of the desire to bring all of the Nations of the Lake Winnipeg Basin together.



That journey is called,

**"ONE BASIN ONE GOVERNANCE"**







WAS HELD SEPTEMBER 16 - 18, 2019

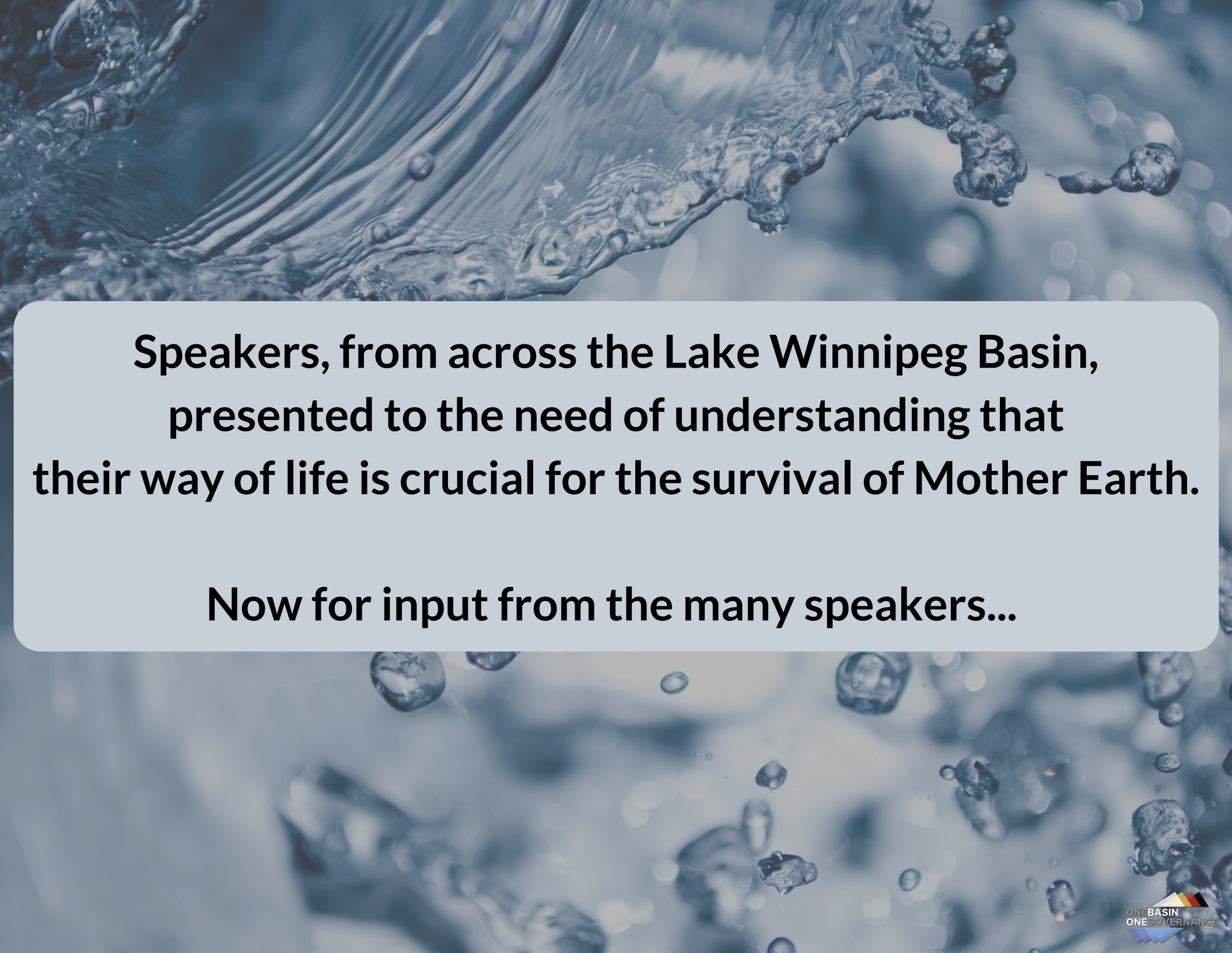


The **"One Basin One Governance"** Conference was held so that the voices from many of the First Nation, Métis and Tribal leaders, from across the Lake Winnipeg Basin, could be heard as to the need of Indigenous governance being at the decision making table as it relates to water governance.

**It is their way of life to protect the sacred waters given to us all from the Creator. It is this precious gift from the Creator that gives us life. The Indigenous communities, within the Lake Winnipeg Basin area, have unique perspectives and different experiences surrounding water quality and water management. It is this knowledge that must be part of the decision making process.**

One must remember that many Treaties and laws have been upheld and have strengthened the rights of the Indigenous people as it relates to self governance. The critical importance of partnering with First Nations and Tribal communities, to share perspectives and work on common goals as it relates to water governance, must be moved into the decision making process.

Listening to the many voices that came from the Conference gave guidance to what the Indigenous leaders want to see changed. Good water governance needs Indigenous values at the decision making table. It is not about control, it is about working together for water protection.



**Speakers, from across the Lake Winnipeg Basin,  
presented to the need of understanding that  
their way of life is crucial for the survival of Mother Earth.**

**Now for input from the many speakers...**





# GRAND CHIEF JERRY DANIELS

## SOUTHERN CHIEFS' ORGANIZATION

"We, Southern Chiefs' Organization, represent 34 First Nations, Treaties 1 to 5, and 4 Tribal councils." "We want to help in the conversation we are having around water, water management. How do we collaborate ourselves and bring many, many organizations and people together around an idea of creating a very comprehensive water strategy that encompasses, different countries, states, provinces and peoples. **"I have been a firm believer that if we spend enough time together, we can resolve anything and if we can see ourselves in one another, then we can see the importance of hearing one another and understanding the difficulties we all face as humans."**

"We will be the grandparents one day and will need to be able to answer the question as to what we have done. Water issues bind us together. Governments must allow the Nations to be part of the decision making when it comes to major water decisions, we as First Nations will not stand idle and watch our environment die!"





# TERRY DUGUID

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
MP WINNIPEG SOUTH

"I would like to acknowledge our Elders, thank them for their prayers and the guidance they give us. Thanks to the RRBC and Grand Chief Jerry Daniels SCO for bringing us together from across the basin, to the west of us, to the south of us and a warm welcome to our visitors from the United States.

I thank you also for bringing us together to focus on how we can all work together to protect and manage our water resources, our sacred and precious water that is essential for our economy and the health of our communities. I am so pleased that you are dealing with the issue of governance, collaborative governance, which I think is really essential for getting things done across the basin, none of us can resolve our water challenges alone. We are all in this together and there is a famous saying I really like, and it goes; 'None of us is as smart as all of us' and we all need to work together to protect, preserve and manage the water resources in our territory."

"Water is life and it can also reap destruction and misery. The stakes are very high for our communities, some of you may recall, not very long ago, 2011, 2014 we had two floods, two 'one in 300 year' weather events, costing the Manitoba economy 1 billion dollars each, thousands of people were forced from their homes, some of them like the Lake St Martin bands are only returning to their homes now."

"I will be very frank with you today as I believe we need to scale up these efforts, take them to the next level and really take water seriously in the basin, we need to do that in the context of the legal and political commitments of the United First Nations Declaration of Rights for the Indigenous Peoples.

**Not only do they need to be at the table, they need to be true partners in this endeavor and all levels of government need to work together but I do not think that has always been the case."**



# HON. EILEEN CLARKE

MINISTER OF INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN RELATIONS



"First Nations people have a sacred connection when it comes to water."

"It is more important than ever to have all people at the table when we speak about water governance. Particularly women, as they have a sacred connection when it comes to water, it sustains all human life. It is essential for the spiritual well-being of First Nation people. Life is dependent on water. Water does not know boundaries, it does not know race, religion or culture. It must emphasize adaptability, flexibility and draw upon unique world views of all partners."

**"Collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous peoples on water policy, governance and management, must arise from the repairing of relationships and the reconciling of past harms."**

"Water is one of the four main pillars that shapes Manitoba's Climate and Green Plan. Wetlands and well managed watersheds are critical to preserving habitat as well as wildlife."

# CHIEF LEE CROWCHILD

## TSUUT'INA NATION



**"Water does not know whether you are male or female , it just knows it is giving the gift of life."**

"You need to learn how to live in this modern world, our ancestors are saying we are here, we have not left you, use prayers to talk to us. All the principles we have given you, keep them close to your heart, help each other."

"There is the natural world, the human world and the spiritual world and all three are connected through a pathway. They are all interconnected, we need to educate ourselves why this natural world is important to us. They need to balance. First Nations people understand that, and we have paid the price for it not being balanced. We have made mistakes, we signed the Treaty which we should not have, then getting affected by the small pox through blankets and then residential schools."

"Our ancestors have given us the sun (that is them saying I am right here), the wind (saying I am giving that gift of life to you), the rain (saying I am crying with you). This is what our ancestors are saying, I am right here. We do not have that much time."

"Everyone along the river has to do their part! We want our voice to be heard!"



# CHIEF ARVOL LOOKING HORSE

## CHEYENNE RIVER RESERVATION

### KEEPER OF THE SACRED WHITE BUFFALO CALF PIPE



At 12 years old Chief Arvol Looking Horse was made a spirit keeper. He asked the spirit of the water to help us and guide us as we come together.

**"Today man has gone too far, people have lost their spirit.** In 1994 the first white buffalo calf was born in Jamesville, Wisconsin. We did our ceremonies and asked the people to help us to carry a message to the world. Mother Earth is sick and has a fever. So we went to Jamesville, where the first white buffalo calf was born and they said it was like a needle in a haystack. We are the keepers, and from today and going forward, we will start to see natural disasters around the world. From our ceremonies and our hearts, we ask in a humble way to listen to us in a good way. We carry a message from our ancestors from our ceremonies. There is going to be earth changes and climate changes, volcanoes erupting, earthquakes happening, we will see the winds will get stronger. We will see no honorable war as it is about greed, people will be speaking out of anger, hatred, jealousy, we will have false profits, false leaders, we will see a lot of changes. Today when we speak of water, we look at our efforts at standing rock, about Memekwesiw, the water of life."

"Mother Earth is a spirit. The first spirit that was born was the rock, the stone people. The second spirit was water of life. When the two came together, they brought the sacred energy. It is a way of life, it is the oral history from our ancestors, they are the knowledge keepers."

"It is the right of the women to speak about the waters, because they are the life givers such as Mother Earth is, so is our Sundance tree."

"As the keeper of the sacred pipe, I grew up knowing the red stone is sacred to our people, the blood of our people."

"People talk about the sacred path, to pray for the sacred water, we need to get back to our sacred ways. All Nations talk about the love and compassion and that is the way of the sacred life. When we are young we are told about the dreams and to listen to our dreams. When you pray to the water, the water gets clear, it becomes a medicine. So my relatives today, I wish you the best for this spirit water, for the future of our children, so that they too someday will understand how sacred this water Memekwesiw is."

# BOB SANDFORD

## WATER SECURITY CHAIR

### UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY FOR WATER ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH



"I bring to you the very best wishes of the United Nations. **All people have the right to be different. I am grateful to be introduced by Indigenous people to the parallel wisdom of traditional knowledge. It seems to me, like science, the commandments of traditional knowledge can be reduced to two things - to tell the truth and to stand up for all humanity and the planet for now and for generations into the future.** Good science and traditional wisdom involve not just the sharing of knowledge about the world, they are candles we light when we want see and be warmed by the truth. I wish to offer that there probably has never been a time in history when making what science is telling us about global climate understandable to all, while listening carefully to and heeding traditional knowledge, especially with the respect of the sacredness of waters, it has never been more important".

"Why is it we can never get Indigenous Governments, First Nation, or Metis to the table? It is because of governance structure that has made it difficult if not impossible to do so. I realized how deeply and how unproductively, not just in the terms Indigenous governments but to show that our entire country was mired in an outdated and dysfunctional colonial government structure and mentality. This is not just holding Indigenous governments back; it is holding us all back. I was certainly not the first person to make this discovery, as I had worked with the former NWT Environmental Minister Mike Miltenberger and Water Rights lawyer Merrell-Ann Phare on a ground breaking Indigenous rights based water strategy for the North West Territories. In my view that strategy proved that a different and better future is possible for all."

"You can not address the problems we face in restoring the health of Lake Winnipeg without restructuring the water governance in Manitoba and we must have the full participation of Indigenous people. We are running out of chances to get it right, as Chief Looking Horse said; 'We are at a crossroads, we are running out of time'. To create and have hope we must work together, all of us. As Chief Crowchild said this morning; 'It is not about who is right, but what is right'. To avoid apocalyptic outcomes, the world needs to incorporate Indigenous values, to incorporate traditional wisdom as well as science into our collective thinking and particularly we must embrace the 7 generations sensibilities with respect to inter-generational responsibilities."

# DR. COLIN WHITFIELD

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY  
GLOBAL WATER FUTURES - UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN



"I am here to speak on Water Security in the Canadian Prairies. I am here to speak about the science that is going on in the prairies in general."

"Is our prairie water always secure? The answer to that is no! The reality of climate change is here and it is affecting the prairies."

"We have lost a lot of storage capacity!"

Dr. Whitfield presented on changes we have seen in the watershed, and in the landscape, that have been able to confirm the loss of retention and loss of wetlands. It is from these changes that water no longer sits in wetlands, nor recharges our aquifers or seeps into our grounds.

"We need to think about the governance of this. If we work together to retain and restore this depressional storage, it will have tremendous benefit to the system and to allow us to move away on the path we are now on, which is contributing to increased nutrient export, which contributes to water quality issues down stream."

"It is important to see that success comes when people work together. We saw that in the Alberta drought of 2001, 2002 where Alberta took measures that had a meaningful impact. Since then, they met their master agreement requirements. The reason that happened was because there was a crisis. **It seems perhaps almost like a novel concept, where we are talking about One Basin One Governance but here we are talking about how we can manage these water resources in a way that we can do it together and have meaningful results. That means we need to get on the same page and forget about those jurisdictional boundaries.**"

"Having the Indigenous leaders on this is important!"

# MARIO SWAMPY

## SAMSON CREE NATION

### COUNCIL MEMBER



"Water affects every single aspect of our lives. We often surround ourselves with people like ourselves. Is there a willingness to learn from each other? What can I learn from the people at the table? Everyone has something to contribute."

"My friend Danica Littlechild told me she was concerned as to what we have done to water. She said she feels we may be too late. 'Look into the mirror', politicians need to look at themselves in a mirror and say what are we doing wrong? Instead of fixing the problem, we often want to pass it along."

"All things are related to water, hunting, fishing. We must consider the future generations. I do not want to be the generation that hands the problem forward, we can do better!"

"First in time, first in right. The more people, the less rights, this water basin is allocated by over 200% but the province wanted to move the First Nations to be the most junior licence holders. First Nations have been there from the beginning of time, the Creator put them there!"

**"If we really want Canada to be respectful to the treaties that they were built upon and respected upon, those dynamics have to change but that is not a very comfortable conversation to have, but we need to start having them because that is the only way we are going to improve things for our future generations."**

"I want to be responsible, I want to share in this responsibility with you because this is too important of a topic to ignore!"





# ROSEY RADMANOVICH

## FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL SERVICES ADVISORY GROUP INC.

TSAG was formed in 1998 when the Chiefs of Alberta set their mandate at the Chief Summit V.

"TSAG is made up from the three Treaty areas 6, 7, and 8. One of the areas TSAG is working in is water protection for the First Nation Communities it represents. They help establish a source water protection guide and template for the communities who are seeking the support. The plan is made up through community engagement, it is community based and community driven to address all the things the communities want to do to protect water.

**15 First Nations communities within the three treaties have developed plans, and now there are more First Nation plans than municipal plans."**

"A compelling story is about Big Stone Cree Nation: In northern Alberta, they share their water source, they invited their neighboring community Wabasca-Desmarais to the table. They found their shared concerns and found ways to address them. From that they came together and made one plan for the whole area. They have been working with the mighty peace water Alliance in how to engage with the First Nations who are now part of that group as well."

She wanted to tell these stories as it shows the value of starting these conversations and fostering relationship building. This is an avenue for First Nations to set the terms as they work towards water protection in their region.

This is a small scale example on how shared governance can work with First Nations.

# DR. GORDON GOLDSBOROUGH

AQUATIC ECOLOGIST, UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA



"I have been involved in the development of the Delta Marsh. The premise of the Netley Marsh Restoration Project is that the Netley-Libau Marsh is rather severely degraded. **The degradation of the Netley-Libau Marsh is part of the story of Lake Winnipeg, and it is part of the story for the Red River because they are all interconnected.** The Red River is the single largest contributor of phosphorus in Lake Winnipeg. We measured that. Likewise we know that the phosphorus that ends up in Lake Winnipeg turns into algae, we know that as well. We also know from research, that has been done all around the world, that wetlands, healthy wetlands, are one of the solutions to the problem as they are a very effective filter, they can take phosphorus out of water, so they can reduce the impact of algae. The idea of the project is therefore to help to restore Lake Winnipeg but essentially helping to restore the Netley-Libau Marsh".

"I would like to explain the impacts to the marsh. The dramatic loss of vegetation, which is the biggest part of the story of what we would like to recover.

The marsh is no longer a Hemi Marsh (half water, half vegetation), it is a shallow muddy hole."

**"This is not a project of one person, it has a lot of amazing partners. I would like to give a special shout out to Peguis First Nations who have been very supportive of this project, as have been the Southern Chiefs' Organization, and the South Basin Mayors and Reeves. All of them have contributed materially to this project."**

"I have to say in closing, it has been one of the most profoundly enjoyable experiences of my scientific career, to be working with so many committed people from so many organizations that are all focused on the health of Lake Winnipeg and the Netley Marsh."

# DR. RICHARD GROSSHANS

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



"This conference is about mingling, networking and learning, and I came to learn. This is an amazing event. It is different to the regular scientific conference and workshops that a lot of us attend. These are more important because of the discussions that happen around the tables and after and during the break, that is where all the stuff happens. The learning and the presentations we had were amazing, and I am really humbled to be part of this discussion."

"So I work for IISD, the International Institute of Sustainable Development, we also run the Experimental Lake Area which is in North Western Ontario and I acknowledge the work we do in Manitoba is on Treaty 1 Territory and the work we do with ELA is on Treaty 3 Territory, so we acknowledge this and it is a big part of what we strive to do."

"Most of my career has focused on water. I was one of those kids who grew up on the lake, running around getting dirty, living in the bush, so I grew that connection to nature, and it is part of who I am and it is part of what I have done and the career that I have built which is around water and natural systems. It is ironic sometimes that when we talk about these scientific terms about remediation and all these things, and it all comes down to Mother Earth, it all comes down to nature. The earth has the solution, we just need to listen."

"It is all about solutions, we can study things to death, we can monitor, study and learn, but it is about the doing, the solution. We need to focus on the solutions and not always trying to tell the people that there is all these problems out there. We know there is problems, let's figure out what to do about it."

**"Wetlands are an extremely important part of our landscape, they are the kidneys, the filters, the sponges. So it boggles my mind why we think these things are useless, why humanity has decided that we do not need them anymore, that is why we lost over 70% of our wetlands across our landscape, it does not make any sense. We are destroying the things that are protecting us, that is what we are talking about, Indigenous people know this, they have always known this. So why do we continue, why does humanity think we need to get rid of these things to build progress?"**



# TINA KEEPER

## NORWAY HOUSE CREE NATION

Prayers and teachings... "One of the traditions in my family has been that and it has been within our culture, and it is something that we talk about.

I am going to tell you a story. One of the things that happened in a lot of our communities and families, is that residential schools have had very, very nuanced impacts in our lives. We have had these discussions at our ceremony grounds, like about when prayers are happening. One of the teachings that I received, as I was at a ceremony, we were doing a sweat, we were doing teaching circles, we had a feasting area, it was all outside at sacred grounds and there was a group of people that had to leave early and we had not blessed the food yet and I recall this teaching from my family and I shared it with the Elders, one was Chief Arvol Looking Horse and the women who were there, Paula and these other women and I said 'Those people need to leave and the others do not want to give them the food because we have not blessed the food' and they said 'You know it is the sharing of the food, that is the prayer, it is a living prayer'. So, the words of our prayer can come after. So, it is in the giving and the sharing and the taking care of one another, that is the living prayer. That was a great teaching for me."

**"So it is a great honor to be working together. I remember these teachings, it is the sharing with each other, that we are living the prayer. It is our communication with the spirit, but the spirit knows, so as long as we are taking care of one another, we are remembering to say our blessings, we are all good and I would like to thank you once again for having patience with me and Steve, Thank you, Miigwetch!"**



# ANTHONY BLAIR DREAVAR JOHNSTON

MISTAWASIS NĒHIYAWAK



"I am happy to return to Treaty 1 territory. It is good that we continue to share stories, food and find ways to work together in the future. Mistawasis means "big child", Big Child is the Chief who signed Treaty 6 on our behalf in 1876. He went by other names, like Iron Buffalo."

Showing a map, Anthony showed where the plain buffalo ranged. Numbers ranged from 10 to 20 million up to 70 million. "So like water, the buffalo was our life as well, it provided everything for us. It provided food, tools, clothing, the hide provided shelter and we considered it our brother. As other speakers spoke earlier, everything has a spirit. The buffalo spirit, brother buffalo was most important for the people of the great plains and that includes where we are today. So back in the time of our ancestors, we worked together to share in the resource, the buffalo. Today in the 21st century, a few years ago, we joined what is called the Buffalo Treaty, which is a nation to nation treaty and an international treaty that originated between Alberta and northern US States to find a way to revive buffalo consciousness and create space where the buffalo can be as free as possible once again and it is a way to acknowledge that despite the buffalo almost becoming extinct generations ago, over a hundred years ago, the buffalo is still here with us, part of our DNA. So we are looking for ways to physically have the buffalo beside us again, so once again we can define ourselves a people, as Nations in the 21st century. We need the past to deal with what confronts us today in order to prepare us for a good, shared future."

"Our first stage of joining the Buffalo Treaty, we held ceremony and we signed it because it is the 21st century, we signed a document but it is always preceded by ceremony and it took place in 2017 in Prince Albert National Park. We invited other Saskatchewan Treaty 6 First Nations to come and learn about the Buffalo Treaty and to consider to join the treaty with us. Mistawasis was the first Treaty 6 Nation in Saskatchewan to join the treaty."

"2013 we had a project to Honor the Water but from 2010 to 2013 each day was a crisis. Then we realized we needed help. Mistawasis gathered RMs, Provincial and Federal governments together to talk about their shared concerns on high water. In 2014 they developed with their friends a project called "Honor the Water". Since 2018 we have continued to honor the water through other projects and other initiatives, to deal with ways to adapt to climate change."

**"We continue to honor the water through good partnerships."**



# KATHERINE FINN

GENERAL MANAGER

NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER BASIN COUNCIL

"The One Basin One Governance has been really powerful and the first day was really moving. There were many strong messages, that came forward, focused on solutions. One that I received as a teaching before and it was really confirmed yesterday, is that women will be the ones who save the water and that they can speak to the water."

**"We all have a way in how we think, and everyone feels their thinking is right. One Basin One Governance is right, it silences your own voice to take time to listen to how other people think. When you quiet yourself and open yourself to listen to what other people have to say, but you may not directly align with it, but just consider it, It goes a long way."**

"I was moved by the long term vision of their (Mistawasis) thinking, those who think ahead one year will plant a seed, those who think ahead 10 years will plant a tree. I was thinking about what the 7 generations would be thinking, what would they plant. I was thinking we really need to plant these seeds into our children, the ideas, these solutions."

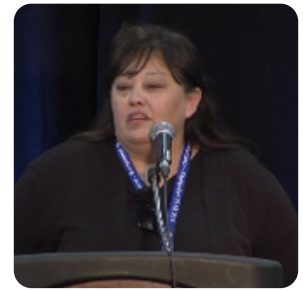
"What are our solutions? Listening with open ears, use a bit less water, less food, less gas, plant a tree, carry a women's voice, break the phone from the child's hand and put dirt on their hands, and chase ideas not money. If you chase the idea, the money will come."

Saskatchewan has Treaty 2, Treaty 4, Treaty 5, Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8 and Treaty 10 within their boundaries.



# CHRISTA MONETTE

TMBCI WATER COMMISSIONER  
TURTLE MOUNTAIN BAND OF CHIPPEWA



"I am Christa Monette, I am from the Turtle Mountain Band of the Chippawa Indians, I am on the Turtle Mountain Water Commission, and I am also on the Assiniboine River Basin Initiative . I am the tribal representative from the State of North Dakota. We all came from the Wisconsin area and came this way. Half of our tribe is on the Canadian side of the border, and we are on the southern side, where we are very close to the border, but we are originally Pembina descendants, so if it was not for Pembina ancestors, we would not have our land. They entered into the 1825 Prairie Dechane Treaty that gave us our senior water rights. What you have been hearing over the last day is that the women are the keepers of the water but what I have not been hearing is that the men are the keepers of the fire, so we work together."

"We are the only tribe in the Assiniboine River Basin. The basin goes right in the middle of our reserve, and it is only 6 miles by 12 miles, our reservation, but the basin splits right down the middle, some of the water flows through the Souris River and some goes to Devils Lake and the top portion flows through the Pembina Basin."

"Turtle Mountain straddles the border between North Dakota and Southern Manitoba, which rises 600 to 800' above the plain. 25,000 years ago, ice sheets flowed southward over the Turtle Mountain as the climate warmed. What it did, it created a pocket full of ponds, we call them Kettle Lakes in the states. We are a Level 4 eco region which 4 is least common. One percent of North Dakota is forest, we are .9 of the one percent and our eco system is very similar to the boreal forest, we have plants, and animals and flora and species that you can only find in Turtle Mountain."

"Turtle Mountain Band of Chippawa became the first Tribe in United States to ban hydraulic fracturing on November 22nd, 2011. It was done by unanimous vote and it was created by a tribal resolution that was created by grassroot tribal members, including myself. I am not an expert in water and I do not claim to be, but I am standing up here because people are willing to listen to me and I am grateful. So I hope you take that away today, we all need clean water. The BIA was going to lease off 45,000 acres of our tribal land and when we passed the hydraulic fracturing ban, the Bureau of Indian Affairs said ok and withdrew all the leases from the gas companies. I do not want you to think you do not have the power to stop things like this. You have water rights, even though they tell you it is junior, and I said I was not going to get radical, but we can go back to our treaties and say 'hey', we can challenge the government; we are sovereign people, and we were here first. "

**"Do we need to work together, yes we do, and we can all share this water, but we need everybody to take care of it!"**

# DR. ELDER DAVE COURCHENE

TURTLE LODGE - SAGKEENG FIRST NATION  
NIITAMABIT/NII GAANI AKI ININI  
JANUARY 30, 1950 - DECEMBER 8, 2021



**"We are all Treaty people."**

We first wish to recognize the gift of teachings many of us have been given by Dr. Elder Dave Courchene.

**Dr. Elder Dave Courchene shared; "It is said in the lodges of our people that we have reached a tipping point. Earth changes are already in effect and serious changes must take place if we are to create a sustainable world. There is nothing more important at this time than the need to address climate change. Today much of our planning should be on preparing for these changes. Lay down a foundation to become better stewards of the land."**

"Loving and taking care of the land ensures our survival as a species, make choices to be kind and to be able to be giving. It is important that we leave a legacy, for all our children, that ensures there can be a future and this will require a change of heart, a heart that acts with kindness and respect."

**"As Indigenous peoples, we are all part of the big solution to climate change, adding our contribution to the various shared approaches, that can lead to a well defined vision. The issue of climate change gives us an opportunity for Indigenous people to take their place in our homeland and offer leadership that is grounded in values and teachings, that connect us to the spirit and land."**



# ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS



THE ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS IS AN ASSEMBLY OF CANADIAN FIRST NATIONS REPRESENTED BY THEIR CHIEFS.  
ESTABLISHED IN 1982 AND MODELLED ON THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

"We, the First Nations, were placed on this land by the Creator to live in harmony with nature and humankind. The Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, languages and laws and cultures that teach us to respect, nurture and care for Mother Earth. Water is the lifeblood of the Earth and we as First Nations recognize water as a sacred gift that connects all life."

"All First Nations place a high importance on water, and practice sacred ceremonies to ensure waters are respected and that these water ceremonies are passed on to future generations. We continue to honour our spiritual ancestors and the spirits of the water through our traditional ways and ceremonies.

We have the right to maintain and strengthen our spiritual relationship with our traditionally occupied lands, waters and coastal seas. We continue to exercise these rights to fulfill our responsibilities and obligations given to us by the Creator."

**"Our inherent water rights must be recognized, protected and upheld and First Nations must be fully and actively engaged in any legislative or regulatory development pertaining to our waters."**

"The right of First Nations to manage our own water resources, to develop and enforce laws is affirmed by Section 35, Canada Constitution 1982 and must be recognized by Canada. We affirm that nothing in this Declaration shall be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal or treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada, affirmed or recognized in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, or given effect through any self-government agreement."

"First Nations seek the recognition of our inherent jurisdictional authorities over water and require resources to build capacity to advocate for our water rights and to protect the health of the water that Mother Earth bestows."

"The Creator placed us on this earth, each on our own sacred lands, to care for the earth, environment and humankind. We stand united to follow and implement our knowledge, laws and self-determination to preserve and protect life's most sacred gift – water. We call on the Canadian Government, Provinces and Territorial Governments and People of Canada to recognize, support and affirm all First Nation water declarations put forth and appeal for greater cooperation to protect our water through this National Water Declaration."



# WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

The message has been clearly given during this conference, workshop and feedback process. There needs to be changes at the governance table. This is not a third world country and no person should have to live to these standards of not knowing if it is safe to drink the water.

It is felt that the Federal government must continue to keep its word and finish removing the health orders for all First Nation Communities. It is important that we recognize the many hardships our First Nation communities have or have had when it comes to clean potable drinking water for their communities. At the time of the release of this report, there were still 37 long term water boil advisories in 29 First Nation communities in Canada. For those community leaders, that is their priority, clean safe drinking water for their people. Once that is established, the priority is to protect their waters and to have a say in the governance of those waters when in the Treaty lands.

This is their inherent right given to them by the Creator.

As the conference focused on water governance, workshops were held to communicate the desire of First Nations as it related to water governance. The following four questions were circulated through four groups of conference participants. Each group was able to answer each question and give comments.

**One message was quite clear from all, "you need to listen".**

**The questions were as follows:**

**What does "One Governance" mean and how do we get there?**

**How can we learn from each other as we begin the path of "One Governance"?**

**How can we make science and traditional knowledge work together?**

**How do we educate our youth and children to follow the path of "One Governance"?**

# WHAT DOES "ONE GOVERNANCE" MEAN AND HOW DO WE GET THERE?

- Make First Nations keepers of our environment
- Recognize the treaties as recognized by the United Nations
- Move beyond words
- Make a commitment to a united water governance
- Too many excuses, lay out a clear plan, action-oriented, time frame
- Making a commitment to united water governance
- Honor the Treaty
- Recognition of the Treaty
- Not us versus them. We need to work together.
- Leave the world a better place for our children
- Putting us together in the same room
- Working together for common goals
- Respecting one another
- Reconciliation
- Respect of Indigenous knowledge
- We have all the resources on Treaty lands
- Do not be afraid
- Get together, work together, decide together
- Do not be afraid of failure
- Acknowledge failure
- Learn from failure and keep trying to succeed
- Share responsibility
- Get together, work together
- Dispense egos
- Get rid of the red tape
- Need accountability for our environment
- Collaborative leadership initiatives
- Joint opportunities
- Continuity at government (Manitoba / Nations)
- Take sacred teachings to understand us
- Work together
- Respect one another
- Listen with open ears
- Establish trust
- We never gave up water rights
- Create a holistic approach to watershed management
- Courage to stand up and say we must do this
- It means United Governance
- Give Mother Nature constitutional recognition
- Acknowledge water has a spirit
- Be part of an Honouring Water Ceremony
- Educate Government staff and make them take courses of Indigenous values



# HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AS WE BEGIN THE PATH OF "ONE GOVERNANCE"?



- Listen
- Create an opportunity for learning/decision making
- Consult with Elders and People of the land
- Understand Indigenous water significance, history and uses
- Come together as spiritual people of the land
- Understand the natural spiritual connection
- Create co-governance at upper level decision making
- Co-governance, collaborative management from and with the people on the land
- Traditional Knowledge should be foundational
- Get out on the land, have Provincial Staff take Traditional Knowledge Courses
- Support for sharing knowledge
- Create invitation for learning
- Educate by walking together
- Spiritual leader in every watershed
- Start review meetings with Indigenous ceremony
- Build a network of committees on the ground
- Land Based Education
- Make this conference annual like AFN and bring groups together
- Elder to Elder connections
- Understand each other, leave our hats at the door
- Learn consensus
- Hear what you do not like hearing
- Fostering and building connections
- Be open to different styles of learning, experience new ways
- Industry should be invited to hear the concerns
- Slow down and look at our own assumptions
- Leave neo-colonial views aside
- Acknowledge the current paradigm is broken
- Focus on interests not positions
- Put a value on the environment, on healthy water, on the impacts
- We need to change our "disposable" mindset from present society
- Science is not going to fix this, we need to help and listen to nature
- Listen to the Creator, not the profiteers
- Water laws should be guided under women's guidance
- Men need to respect the women ruling on water governance
- Revisit and reconstruct current power structures
- Revisit enforcement structures, Western rule versus Indigenous
- Western law must acknowledge and support Indigenous Rules
- Having patience and understanding limitations of language
- Start governance with equality
- Find human common ground
- Remove stigmas that silence some from participating
- Goal for one world rather than two
- Respect and be aware of Indigenous water rights



# HOW CAN WE MAKE SCIENCE AND TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE WORK TOGETHER?

- Balance them
- Trust both
- Finding the right people who are willing to change
- Language is different, but the same message
- Traditional Knowledge first, we cannot take face value, have to confirm
- Mutual validation of information and knowledge
- Learn by doing together
- Observational data needs to be on par with scientific experimental data
- World is changing, need politicians to bring down to grassroots level
- Recognize Elders are the knowledge keepers
- How can we respectfully share Traditional Knowledge
- By teaching both sides on both values and knowledge
- Learn spiritual and teachings to align on an agreed direction.

"Science is saying we are in trouble, Traditional Knowledge is saying we are in trouble, both are saying we need to change. We must agree to what the change is, based on the needs of the environment and the Creator, not on the needs of profit."



# HOW DO WE EDUCATE OUR YOUTH AND CHILDREN?



- Change the curriculum at schools to reflect land based education, concepts of conservation and protection
- Take the kids out into nature, teach them sacredness of water as a life giver
- Provide nature-based experiences that might contribute to an understanding of Indigenous beliefs that respect the land
- Educational courses on Indigenous beliefs, the Creator, Mother Nature, spirits, the importance of 7 generations
- Indigenous led curriculum development, add Treaty teachings to curriculums about how we share the land
- Introduce river watch and water education to their curriculum
- Teach the kids where the water goes, what happens after you flush it and how that water effects Lake Winnipeg and other water bodies
- Have the curriculum set to educate Traditional Knowledge
- Educate kids about where their water comes from and why it has to be protected
- Educate kids about where their foods come from and how nature provides it
- Create space for youth at water protection working groups
- Establish land based camps that teach land based skills and knowledge
- Normalize being outside
- Supply proper tools for teachers to teach this education
- Have Indigenous people, Elders explain the teachings
- Creating mapping that has names of historical places of history and traditional harvesting
- Help kids to be environmental speakers, have them champion causes
- Offer summer courses, on ceremony teachings, ecosystem protection and cultural practices
- Educate the importance of water keepers / carriers to youth
- Create a live action video game highlighting the ecosystem issues and the need to save the environment
- We are responsible to lead by example
- Support kids when they show interest and be a role model for getting their hands into dirt

**"We leave our world to the children, allow our children to help us make better decisions for their future"**

# CONCLUSION

## INDIGENOUS WATER GOVERNANCE

As a past colonialist society, we must recognize that much of the population of our country sit on Treaty lands and therefore consideration to Indigenous rights and beliefs should be acknowledged. Indigenous knowledge is a key component in respecting and protecting our environment. There is much for everyone to learn when it comes to the culture, practices and values of the environment through the teaching of the Indigenous beliefs. The acknowledgement must come in a way that is deferential to the Nations, to their culture and their lands. We are not talking about the Duty to Consult, the message that has come from the leaders and their communities through this conference was made clear - First Nations, Métis and Inuit want to be part of a decision making process regarding water governance and they are willing to fight for their rights to do so. Water is recognized as a sacred building block given to us by the Creator and it has a spirit, so the governance of our waters must be done together.

All levels of government have made some movement towards the removal of colonization of Indigenous peoples, and allowing them the opportunity for self governance beyond that of their reserves. Their desire goes further by the wish to recognize these rights into the Treaty lands, however as the majority of the control of water lies within the governance of the Provinces, further movements from our Provincial governments and the underlying bureaucratic system must happen. Words are not enough, it is action that is needed.

Lets us quickly review the different levels of governance and the actions they have taken.

The **United Nations** has recognized Indigenous rights through a number of resolutions. Resolution 48/163 is the "International Decade of the Worlds Indigenous People". It states: "Welcoming the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, **in which the vital role of Indigenous people and their communities in the interrelationship between the natural environment and its sustainable development is recognized, including their holistic traditional scientific knowledge of their lands, natural resources and environment**". The United Nations has lead in the acknowledgement of First Nations rights and the needs of such. The United Nations "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" was adopted by the General Assembly on Thursday, 13 September 2007. "Today the Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the Indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples."

The actions from the United Nations recognizes Indigenous rights and the need of Indigenous presence in governance and other decision making bodies.



# CONCLUSION

## INDIGENOUS WATER GOVERNANCE

The **Federal Government** has the power to make legal decisions and judgments for our Canadian waters in certain areas such as fisheries, navigation and boundary waters. It has chosen to share responsibilities with the provinces in other areas such as potable water, agriculture and water health.

The Federal government also gives conservation and protection governance over federal lands, federal parks, federal facilities and First Nation reserves, as well as Nunavut and the Northwest Territorial agreements with them.

The Government of Canada has created institutions to focus on specific water issues that have implications for more than one province or territory and also have now embarked on a journey of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. This is an imperative journey needed to address a long history of colonialism and the defacement it has left. The goal is to renew the "nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit-Crown relationships with Indigenous peoples".

The Government of Canada is working in partnership with Indigenous peoples to unshackle the federally imposed systems of the past colonists and administration systems in favour of Indigenous control and transference. Canada is working with the Indigenous peoples to support them in their efforts to rebuild and reestablish their nations, advance self-determination and, for First Nations, facilitate the transition away from the Act and toward self-governance. Nation to Nation negotiations are one way to work together in partnership toward this goal and advance Indigenous self government which is a fundamental Indigenous right and principle of international law, as set out in the United Nations "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples".

The Federal government has made pronounced efforts to correct the problems of the past. Though there is much more work to be done on the issue of self governance or shared governance, which is covered under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, the Federal government has shown that this is work that they are prepared to move further on, though that movement is deemed by the Nations to be very slow at times. The issue of water governance and the protection of this sacred Spirit is a key factor to work towards Nation to Nation as both deem it as a priority issue.

**As such the Federal government could be the leader in bringing cohesiveness to this water governance by bringing all levels of governance together, as was done with the Spirit of Water and with the One Basin One Governance.**



# CONCLUSION

## INDIGENOUS WATER GOVERNANCE

In the world of **Indigenous, Municipal** and **Watershed** relations as it relates to water, there is a desire to work closer together.

In many provinces the ability to allow local watersheds to have Indigenous members has opened the doors for better collaboration efforts. Watershed Organizations have signed Memos of Understanding with the First Nations within their watersheds. The concerns and needs for betterment that Nations have within the watershed are brought into the decision making body where Indigenous representation sits and assists in the Integrated Watershed Management Plan within their region. This is seen as a good step in creating a co-governance of water within the watershed, however, as the watershed plan is approved by the Provincial government, there is still the exclusion of First Nations from the decision-making process of Nation to Nation. The reminder that must be given is that the majority of the Provincial population sits on Treaty lands, hence the need of shared governance and shared environmental protection strategies.

Throughout Canada many First Nations and whole Treaty areas are moving forward with their own water governance. These governance models are coming forward in various forms. They can be Declarations, Land Codes, Water Security Agreements and they focus on reserve lands, Treaty lands, First Nation to local community agreements. Many Nations have confirmed that they understand the importance of creating communication and decision making avenues between Indigenous culture and beliefs and aligning it with western knowledge. Unfortunately it is felt that it is not the case as it relates to Provincial Governments, as most Nations feel it is the bureaucratic governance that lies within Provincial Governments that are reluctant to do the same.

"In Canada, the responsibility for water management is shared by the Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, and in some instances, by the territories and by Aboriginal governments under self-government agreements. This shared responsibility necessitates close cooperation and collaboration among all levels of government, Aboriginal peoples, and the public." It is stated that it is the Province who is the primary jurisdiction over most areas of water management and protection.

Knowing this governance model, it is felt by the Nations that the Provinces need to be working harder towards a model of **"collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous peoples on water policy, governance and management which must arise from the repairing of relationships and the reconciling of past harms"**, (Minister Eileen Clarke, Province of Manitoba)

As it is now understood, the need of further change lies at the feet of the **Provincial Governments**. Though there is more work to be done, clearly many efforts have been moved forward with the idea of shared governance including water governance by the United Nations, the Federal Government, local municipalities and watershed governments.

The message from the many Nations were directed to Provincial efforts regarding shared water governance. The messages were made clear at the "Spirit of Water" summit and the "One Basin One Governance" conference held in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 2018 and 2019, along with the many meetings and conversations that took place towards the One Basin One Governance model. Given that the Provinces have the jurisdiction over most areas of water management and protection, it is imperative that they embrace the change needed to move forward with a shared governance model.

It is felt that there is a desire of many Provincial elected officials to make such change towards a shared role for water governance. Those politicians recognize that First Nations are seen as the connection to the land, and play a role as keepers for our environment. They recognize that the undertaking of transforming water governance, by blending Indigenous methodologies, can be achieved. If this is so, what are the choices before us all?

**One only needs to search Indigenous Water Governance in Canada to find an endless list of legal challenges coming to Provincial Governments across Canada.** In British Columbia, there were challenges from First Nations who feel they have not been adequately consulted in, nor involved in the decision making process. Provincial decisions about water management and protection for Treaty lands are made at the provincial level without meaningful First Nations input. It is from this, where lies the potential through legal challenges, that Indigenous Treaty land rights to water governance could take priority over all others. This being the case, the Provinces should avoid these legal challenges and seek a cooperative working relationship with Indigenous peoples within the Treaty areas, otherwise allowing these challenges to occur will further separate Nation to Nation.

The conference has clearly shown that the non-Indigenous and Indigenous people want the same thing as it relates to water protection and management. It shows non-Indigenous people are wanting to listen and to understand the teachings of the First Nations people. So we ask again, where is the road block? The message heard is that though there is a desire of elected officials to share in water governance, it is felt that the bureaucratic system has interfered with the process of engagement with First Nations for the purpose of protecting their empires within their cabinets. Now this may not be the case in every Province but elected officials must find a way to overcome this hurdle. Is there much work involved in the process? Yes, there is, but the building of trusted relationships will be far easier than ones that are forced through a court process.

**We must learn from our past, colonialization must be left to die by the goodness of honouring water together!**

# FINAL REMARKS

We must take this moment as a great opportunity for elected officials at all levels of government to lead. Level party politics must be put aside and the collaboration and partnerships with Indigenous peoples on water policy, governance and management, must arise from an open mind. We are all talking the same thing, we all want to see a governance model that includes the Nations and protects our waters.

Remember we are not talking consultation, we are talking about creating a level field of water governance where the decisions coming from the process are accepted and moved forward, including by the provincial staff. The colonial style of governance must be a way of the past.

The concept of consultation with the Nations must stop and we must accept that the new decisions being brought forward, are decisions that have been made with all governance knowledge, including Indigenous.

Within the Lake Winnipeg Basin, the Province of Manitoba, under the leadership of Premier Heather Stefanson, has an opportunity to lead the way in breaking down the walls of colonialism. Her door opened with Premier Brian Pallister being challenged by the then Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Eileen Clarke, who then resigned, due to the handling of the Indigenous Communities within Manitoba. This action garnered much respect worldwide, with all Nations applauding her actions. It is unfortunate that this led to change within the parties leadership, however, as stated it has given Premier Stefanson a great opportunity to show her leadership and start the process of true reconciliation and shared water governance.

**Let us remember, our Nations only want to protect our waters, their desire is the same as ours, we should not be afraid, we should embrace this moment and show the other provinces that Manitoba has the leadership to get it right.**

**Let us as Manitobans lead the way, together!**



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The background of the image is a dynamic splash of blue water with numerous droplets and bubbles. Centered over this splash is a logo consisting of two rows of overlapping triangles. The top row has four triangles pointing upwards in shades of light grey, yellow, orange, and red. The bottom row has three triangles pointing downwards in shades of blue and purple. The text "ONE BASIN" and "ONE GOVERNANCE" is superimposed on the triangles.

**ONE BASIN**  
**ONE GOVERNANCE**