



**#WaterIsSacred - Supporting Grassroots Indigenous Water Defence
A Rites of Passage for Our Bodies & the Water**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE August 8, 2015 - The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) expresses our support for the [Grassroots Indigenous Water Defence](#) and all those who care for the water, land, four legged, and our bodies, communities and future generations.

We're honored to join the Water Walk to provide body care and medicines to the walkers, grandmothers and Elders. We know that protecting and taking care of our, and each other's bodies during these actions is just as important to land defense, so we learn ceremony and how to do this care-taking for generations to come. The land trauma that many people hold in their bodies (reproductive cancers, mental health issues, self harm) are an opportunity to help heal during land defense and resurge knowledge about medicines in our territories.

Water is the first environment our babies are born into, and is also in the first food they receive as breast milk. It is these vital connections between what goes on with the water, land, and air directly affects our bodies that we must continue to intersect and take action on, as a reproductive justice response to environmental violence happening around us.

"Water is important in rites of passage, particularly the rites of passage of birth. This water walk is an extension of rites of passage, because most people here are parents and have their children here. A large part of rites of passage and transitioning is making sure that young people have roles and responsibilities. The Water Walk is a rites of passage because you are modelling for young people what it is like to defend the land and that's a part of the life stage."- **Alexa Lesperance, Naothkamegwanning First Nation, Youth Facilitator (NYSHN)**
Hear the whole conversation [here](#).

"The Anishinaabe Water Walk in our home territory is to bring awareness to people of the threats to this very precious life giving source. The walk is meant to call attention to what is threatening the water—mercury in the English-Wabigoon River near Grassy Narrows, new mining near Wabaskang, the proposed Goliath Gold Mine near Wabigoon, and TransCanada's Energy East pipeline which is going through the process of consultations to push the oil through

these lands. These are the kind of serious water issues people need to look at in Kenora and Treaty 3 if they want to keep the water pristine for future generations—we need to be good ancestors. ”- **Judy Da Silva, Water Walk Organizer, Grassroots Indigenous Water Defence, Grassy Narrows mother and grandmother.**

“It is very important that we as Anishinaabek youth stand up and start acting and fighting for the water,” says **Edmond Jack, one of the Water Walkers and a founding member of the Grassy Narrows Youth Organization.**

“All people across Turtle Island, from all walks of life need to realize that our water is at risk from industry like this pipeline,” says Jack, “and we need to start thinking about the future we are leaving for our children.”

#WaterWalk #WaterIsSacred
#ConnectedToLand #ConnectedToBody
#EnvironmentalViolence #ReproJustice

To donate to the Anishinaabe Water Walk go to: <http://anishinaabewaterwalk.causevox.com/>

For more information about NYSHN work in reproductive justice and environmental violence go to: <http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/environmentalviolenceandreproductivejustice.html>

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