

Volume 2, Issue 1

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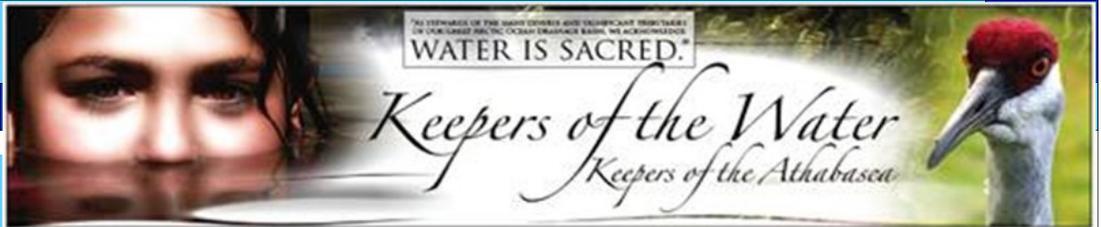
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CLEAN WATER IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT AND IS ESSENTIAL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL, COMMUNITY AND HUMAN HEALTH. AS STEWARDS OF THE MANY DIVERSE AND SIGNIFICANT TRIBUTARIES OF OUR GREAT ARCTIC OCEAN DRAINAGE BASIN, WE ACKNOWLEDGE WATER IS SACRED.



### Keepers Accomplishments

- co-sponsorship of an annual Healing Walk in "ground zero" of the tar sands between Fort McKay and Fort McMurray, Alberta, 2010-2014
- community meetings on groundwater protection, fracking, climate change, etc.
- conferences with Treaty 8 and the University of Alberta on the effects of open pit and in-situ tar sands mining on surface water, wetlands and groundwater
- press releases and advocacy on issues related to the adverse effects of industrial development in the watershed
- solar energy installation in partnership with Fort Chipewyan First Nation
- Canadian Aquatic Biomonitoring Network (CABIN) training and water monitoring through Living Lakes Canada's Community-based Water Quality Monitoring program (<http://www.livinglakes.ca/community-based-water-quality-monitoring>)
- participation in Canada/Alberta Joint Oil Sands Monitoring program
- participation on boards of other organizations; the Athabasca Water Council, Alberta Environment Network
- participation in government policy consultations through the Alberta Environmental Network
- participation in Water Week events
- supporting petitions and actions focused on water, environment, Aboriginal justice and Treaty rights
- sponsorship and participation in annual Keepers of the Water gatherings



# News from the Keepers:

## We Are The Land: Energy and Food Sustainability Conference

Focusing on constructive actions that communities can accomplish in order to become more sustainable, independent, and secure, the Keepers of the Athabasca has a new conference format.

Exciting speakers at the We are the Land conference include Dr. James Makosis, Carrielynn Victor, and Gordon Planes, Chief of T'Sou-ke Nation

Dr. James A. Makosis was born and raised in the Saddle Lake Cree Nation of northeastern Alberta, a Nation population 6 000 residing on-reserve. He currently practices as a Family Physician in his own community, which has been his life-long dream since he can remember at age 4.

He works to integrate nehiyaw mamawtanacihkan (Cree thought/world view) into all

aspects of his practice, as it is through this system that nehiyaw will regain miyopimatisiwin (the good life/"health"). Dr. Makokis believes in the integral nature that nehiyaw muskikiya (Cree medicines) and nehiyaw cicikewinah (Cree ceremonies) play in helping people become better, and is working with two other Indigenous physicians to create a clinic that integrates both within the next year.

Gordon Planes's is Elected Chief of the T'Sou-ke Nation for the past 8 years and previously a manager of the West Coast Trail for Parks Canada. He is a Coast



Chief Gordon Planes

Salish carver, artist, traditional singer and a captain of T'Sou-ke traditional dug-out canoes for the last two decades. He is actively working with the community in renewable energy, food security, cultural renaissance and Economic Development.

Carrielynn Victor was born and raised in S'olh Temexw and nurtured by many parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. The journey to understanding relationships with plants for food and medicine began at an early age. Many of the traditionally used food, medicine and technology plants are still widely used among the Sto:lo people today. In her adult years, and as a mother, Carrielynn was led to work with natural medicines harvested from the land, preparing them with sound intention and prayer.

## Keepers' Healing Walk 2010–2014 - never to be forgotten

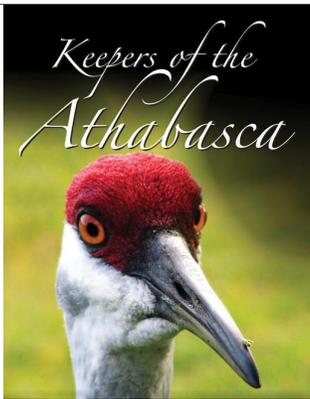
The Healing Walk was begun in 2010 by First Nation communities. It was an annual walk through Alberta's oil/tar sands, with the last walk drawing over 500 people from around the world in June 2014.

The tar sands in Alberta affect different communities across Canada and the United States. First Nations are communities that face the consequences of these developments for the convenience of others. Many First Nation communities are surrounded or nearby to these oil/tar sands and depend on government regulations for the protection of their health and human

rights. When government regulations are not effective, human rights to clean air and water are degraded. As a result of the oil/tar sands, Treaty rights are also violated. There are currently approximately 20,000 Treaty rights violations. Affected First Nations are not able to fish, hunt, gather, or farm as a result of pollution, leading to the violation of Treaties 6 and 8. The healing walk is not a protest about these devastations but is to bring awareness, sense of community support, Traditional prayers, and to strengthen the voices of the First Nations. This was the only grassroots tour giving people the

chance to walk through the tar sands and experience the impacts. During the walk, people had to stop due to bleeding noses and distressed breathing.

The healing walk assured communities that they have support, and gained attention non-aggressively in regards to these issues. The end of the healing walk is not the end because the problems are solved, or people are healed, it is because the purpose of the healing walk was met, and the healing walk is only a part of the journey. continuation on the journey will be focusing on constructive change: 'We are the Land' conference on June 1 and 2 of 2015.



## KEEPERS OF THE ATHABASCA

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## In-Situ Conference at University of Alberta: March 2015

First Nation Leaderships, students, researchers, environmental non-governmental organizations, listeners, and organizers gathered on March 20, 2015 at the University of Alberta to express their concerns about energy development on the Athabasca watershed in Northern Alberta. From the effects of so many energy developments arise issues regarding water governance, sustainability, and the rights of First Nations. The questions that many have, that have not been addressed or answered in regards to in situ drilling and hydraulic fracturing, were addressed in this conference. Keepers of Athabasca presented issues linking in situ/ fracking and climate change. In situ drilling makes up 80% of the oil land reserves and hydraulic fracturing has grown exponentially. Speakers Dr. Bill Donahue, a water/environmental scientist, Dr. Kevin Timoney an ecologist, Professor Dr. William Shotyk, Matthew Whitehead, a traditional knowledge holder, Andrew Nikiforuk, an investigative journalist and Caleb Behn a lawyer/Indigenous Dene, addressed issues of regional environmental change, heavy metals in water, water use, tailings ponds, underground formations, land disturbance, and Treaty commitments. This conference also looked at the change in oil extraction techniques from open pit mining to in situ, and hydraulic fracturing. Mathew Whitehead spoke about the concept of indigenous knowledge. He gave the First Nation's perspective and worldview. Dr. Kevin Timoney talked about in situ impacts and how Primrose Lake CSS affects the wetlands. Professor Dr. William Shotyk addressed the issue of heavy metals from industries and the concern of a silver lining in the bituminous sands. Dr. Bill Donahue talked about the risk of hydraulic fracturing and in situ oil sands development on freshwaters. Andrew Nikiforuk looked at fracking Alberta in a political and realistic way. Caleb Behn addressed his concern toward "decolonizing water governance"; due to the impact of industries, the struggle for achieving control and rights of water is important. The conference ended with resolutions and follow up actions.

## Keepers' Solar Project #1 with Athabasca Chipewyan FN

Solar energy can protect water: this form of energy does not use water to function. No water extraction, no water pollution, and no danger to water tables occur with solar energy.

In September 2012, the *Keepers of the Athabasca* initiated a Solar Demonstration Project in partnership with Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation with funding in part from the Alberta EcoTrust Foundation.

This project included the Fort Chipewyan Community Energy Baseline study, completed by Marc Huot and Paul Cobb of the Pembina Institute. The study details the long term effects of various energy options, lists tips for household and industrial energy efficiency, and provides details for this community's potential alternative energy strategy.

Two community meetings were held in Fort Chipewyan to create a vision and a work plan. The meetings included a solar presentation, but were focused on allowing the community to ask questions, discuss options, and make a community-based decision on how to proceed. The community meetings also gave local residents the opportunity to identify employment options for community members on this project,

As the project proceeded, solar panels were installed by Paschen Electric on the roof of the Youth and Elders' Lodge in Fall of 2014. These panels will contribute 3,200 kwh annually to the local grid in Fort Chipewyan, and save diesel. Two local electricians, two carpenters, an office manager, and three youth participated in the solar panel installation and learned appropriate skills for

installing and maintaining solar electric systems. The professionals who led the project were highly experienced in solar energy and committed to proper instruction.

We are most proud of the fact that this is Fort Chipewyan's first solar installation and that it has attracted a lot of attention, both locally, from media, and from other First Nations.

After seeing the results of the Solar Demonstration Project, ACFN decided to follow up with other solar projects. Having one in place already enabled ACFN to secure funding toward two future solar energy demonstration projects. Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation are now planning at least two more solar installations of this size, one grid-tied without batteries on a Fort Chip residential unit and one off-grid at a cabin in the countryside.