

*Honouring our Matriarchs*  
*Past, Present and Future*

**ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

Photo by Kim Smith



**Keepers of the  
Water Society**

# MESSAGE FROM KEEPERS OF THE WATER

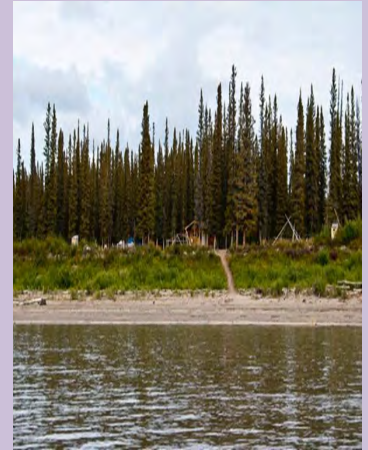
**Keepers of Water Society (KOW) acknowledges that water is life! She sustains us and is the life force of Mother Earth.**

KOW is Indigenous- led. The Board and staff include members who carry a vast amount of experience and wisdom as they walk together to elevate decolonized traditional Indigenous water governance guided by land based knowledge, language, and culture. Each one of the members are dedicated to nurturing and growing our organization as we continue to follow our mission to speak up for the voices that cannot be heard including the rivers, creeks, watersheds, and all those that depend on them for life.

Keepers of the Water has engaged in exciting and comprehensive on- the - ground work. We have grown over the past year with new campaigns and staff to lead them as they maintain and sustain our grassroots connections to ensure KOW projects are meaningful to all who strive to live in harmony with Mother Earth and all living beings.

Taking care of Mother Earth and protecting our waters has become ever more important as proven at the recent Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt and Biodiversity (COP15) in Montreal, QB, Canada

Some of the accomplishments of KOW are highlighted in our 2022 Annual Report. We hope you will read it and journey with us in the work we do.



Artist Bomgiizhik - "Still Here"

*The Keepers of the Water Board and Staff wish to thank and honour the members of our Elders Wisdom Council who guide and inspire us in all we do. We would also like to thank all who have walked with us and assisted us in accomplishing our work.*

*KOW's Executive Director, Co-Chairs, Board Members, Staff, and Settler Supporters recognize we could not have done it without the communities we have had the honour to engage with, the donors, and funders. It is all of you who enable us to carry out our impactful work.*

**The KOW 2022 Annual Report shares an in-depth picture of the many things KOW has engaged in.**

**We hope you will read it and journey with us in the work that we do.**

**KOW looks forward to another year and years to come with continued growth and motivating campaigns.**

*Together we can protect water*

*MUSSI CHOQH.  
KINANASKOMITIN.  
MIIGWECH. NAKURMIK.  
THANK YOU. MERCI.*

# FEATURED ARTIST *Isaac Murdoch*

Keepers of the Water would like to present the artist BOMGIIZHIK (REVOLVING SKY). ISAAC MURDOCH's art will be shared throughout our Annual Report.

## *BOMGIIZHIK (REVOLVING SKY) ISAAC MURDOCH*

Bomgiizhik is from the Nimkii Aazhibikoong First Nation. He is of the Fish Clan and is Ojibwe. He has 4 beautiful children. He currently lives in the forest at Nimkii Aazhibikoong, an indigenous community that focuses on indigenous language, art and land based activities. Being blessed with the opportunity, Bomgiizhik grew up in the traditional setting of hunting and gathering on the land. Having spent many years learning from Elders, he spends a lot of his time as a Story Teller. Many of these stories become his visual pieces which have become recognized world wide.

[isaacmurdoch.com](http://isaacmurdoch.com)



BOMGIIZHIK (REVOLVING SKY) - ISAAC MURDOCH



Artist Bomgiizhik - "Our People are Warriors"



Image by Keepers of the Water - "Sharing Circles" kaniyasihk culture camp

# Meet our Growing Team

## We Are Growing Our Organization to Sustain Our Work



[click to read full bio](#)

### **Autumn EagleSpeaker, Indigenous Outreach Coordinator - Thermal Coal & Treaty 7**

Autumn is Blackfoot from Kainai First Nation in Southern Alberta and mixed with African American descent. She believes firmly in the protection of the environment and Indigenous rights. She has worked in the area of Indigenous consultation, non-profit management and cultural event curation. Autumn will Assist in amplifying Indigenous communities impacted by proposed and existing coal and fossil fuel extraction projects. You can reach Autumn at [outreachcoordinator@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:outreachcoordinator@keepersofthewater.ca)



[Click to read full bio](#)

### **Paul Belanger, Science/Technical Specialist**

Growing up in Grouard, Alberta, where it was a blend of Cree and French people. Here he experienced self-sufficiency and living in balance with the land. He is an environmentalist, entrepreneur and has been a solar and straw bale home designer and builder for the past 23 years. In the past he has also patented innovations in the cleantech sector, and continues this passion to clean the land. Paul has been a Board Member since 2015 but is now KOW's Lead Science/Technical Specialist on our current campaign to 'Stop the Alberta Government from allowing Toxic Tailings Releases into the Athabasca River' and build the Community Based Water Quality Management Program with those who live and rely on the Rivers and Lakes in or near their communities. You can reach Paul at [science@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:science@keepersofthewater.ca)

## Special Acknowledgment to Bruce Jackson

Acknowledging water, land and air as essential and sacred elements that provide life is essential to being a Keeper of the Water. In the spirit of "Ubuntu," my vocation calls me to seek justice, peace and sharing because, in life, all is connected. As a grandfather of 5 grand-daughters, I try to focus on their future as Treaty people. I have responsibilities to share and live in right relationships with all life in Creation. Learning, living and reflection remind me of how much I do not know. I am learning to listen to discover what I need to do next.

Working with the Keepers of the Water offers me challenge and growth.

"Change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability," warned MLK, "but comes through continuous struggle." - Bruce Jackson, KOW Elders Council



*We would all like to acknowledge and thank Bruce Jackson for his years of selfless dedication to the organization. He gave wholeheartedly to everything and everyone. He always had time for every one of us as a group or individually. Bruce's compassion and kindness were always front and centre. His care and love for Mother Earth and the protection of water are part of his being. Bruce has volunteered as KOW treasurer since 2012 supporting the organization with budgeting, accounting, maintaining email mailing lists and his wise advisory role. We will miss Bruce on the Board but are more than happy that he is now on the Keepers of the Water Elders Wisdom Council so his advice, caring, and compassion will continue to guide us in all that we do.*

*Mussi Chogh kinanaskomitin Miigwech from all the Keepers of the Water Board and Staff*

# Welcome 2022-2023 Board of Directors

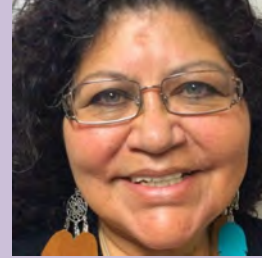
[Click on the photos for a link to their Bios](#)



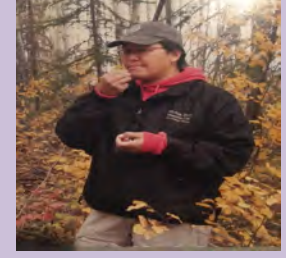
Jesse Cardinal  
Executive Director



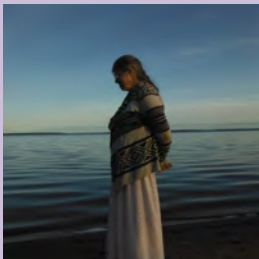
Su Deranger  
Co-Chair



Cleo Reece  
Co-Chair



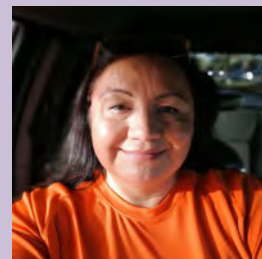
Jean L'hommecourt  
Co-Chair



Candyce Paul  
Board Member



Marius Paul  
Board Member



Dr. Josie C. Auger  
Board Member



Brenda Tourangeau  
Board Member



Dr. John O'Connor  
Board Member



Brian Deheer  
Board Member



Ken Dion  
Treasurer

- Alvin Manitopyes,  
Co-Chair
- Diane Giroux,  
Board Member
- MaryJane Sayazie,  
Board Member

**No Photos Available**

## Elders' Wisdom Council



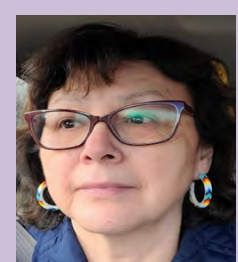
Karon Crowshoe  
Treaty 7



Harvey Scott  
Treaty 8



Nancy Scanie  
Treaty 6



Vera Cardinal  
Treaty 6



François Paulette  
Treaty 8



Bruce Jackson  
Athabasca



Florence Quinn  
Treaty 6



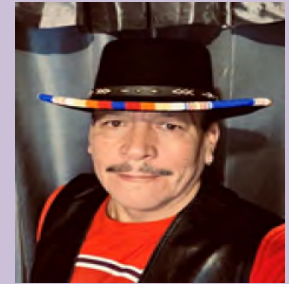
# WEBINARS

Our online events are always FREE and are live-streamed from the Keepers of the Water Facebook page.

All the presentations are also available on our YouTube and Facebook video channels!

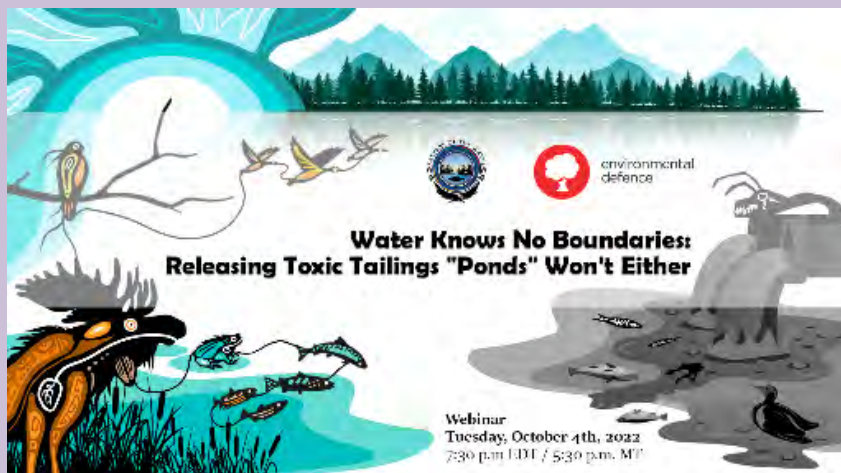
## Acimowin Storytelling with Jeff Wastesicoot - Understanding Maskihkiy

Jeff comes from Pimickamack Cree Nation (Cross Lake Manitoba). Jeff has served as a Language consultant and knowledge Keeper for many years. Jeff continues to dedicate much of his time to helping people overcome personal challenges through ceremonies, traditional medicines and counselling. He has dedicated his life to the preservation of the nehiyew (Cree) language and culture. Jeff recognizes the spirit within the tongue, as he interprets the parables within the nehiyew language. He is recognized and acknowledged among the First Nations community as a spiritual leader and traditional healer.



[click here to watch video](#)

## Water Knows No Boundaries: Releasing Toxic Tailings “Ponds” Won’t Either



[click here to watch video](#)

Join Keepers of the Water and Environmental Defence as we dive into the alarming findings of our recent report

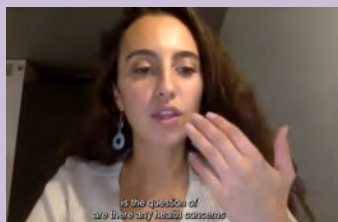
### "50 YEARS OF SPRAWLING TAILINGS"

Mapping decades of destruction by oil sands tailings, which mapped decades of the toxic takeover of Indigenous territories by “tailings ponds”.

Aliénor Rougeot  
Climate and Energy  
Manager at  
Environmental Defence

Daniel T'iselei, NWT  
Outreach Manager and  
K'asho Got'ine Dene  
from Radili Ko.

Jesse Cardinal, Executive  
Director of Keepers of  
the Water and local  
Kikino Métis



# SYMPOSIA: No Dumping! The Past, Present, and Future Of Tailings In Alberta; Tailings and A Just Transition

Keepers of the Water collaborated with the Edmonton Council of Canadians Chapter to educate the public about the imminent and serious threat to the Athabasca River.

Industry and government are using the massive and growing volume of the tailings ponds as justification for a new set of regulations –regulations which could allow for tailings pond water to be treated and released into the Athabasca River.



Image by The Narwhal

## October 5 : Tailings Past and Present

## October 26: Indigenous Rights, Knowledge and Tailings

## November 16: Tailings and A Just Transition

[Click on the date for the Session you want to view](#)



**NO DUMPING!  
THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF  
TAILINGS IN ALBERTA**

**TAILINGS: PAST AND PRESENT**  
OCTOBER 5, 2022. 7 – 9 PM

**INDIGENOUS RIGHTS, KNOWLEDGE, AND TAILINGS**  
OCTOBER 26, 2022. 7 – 9 PM

**TAILINGS AND A JUST TRANSITION**  
NOVEMBER 16, 2022. 7 – 9 PM

**TELUS LECTURE THEATRE 150, U OF A CAMPUS**  
111 STREET 87 AVE NW, EDMONTON, AB

**#WATERWAYSNOTWATERWASTE**

**THE COUNCIL OF CANADIANS**  
PEOPLE. PLANET. DEMOCRACY.

PRE-REGISTER HERE

o **Water quality is already degrading downstream of the tar sands.** While dumping might cost industry less than other tailings treatment options, it will have a dangerous impact on the water and downstream communities and ecosystems.

o **The symposia featured speakers with knowledge of tailings technology, history, ecology, Indigenous culture, and the lived experience of communities impacted by the tailings ponds.** These sessions took place in person at the University of Alberta Telus Centre

# World Water Day at Blue Quills University

*"I've always advocated for water because my parents and my grandparents raised us on the Athabasca River. So our water was was our connection. We're very connected to our water in our everyday life living off the land. As we harvest animals to survive.*

*We used to bathe and swim in the Athabasca Rlver, that no longer happens. We are the last generation that were able to swim in our lakes and rivers."* - **Jean L'homme**

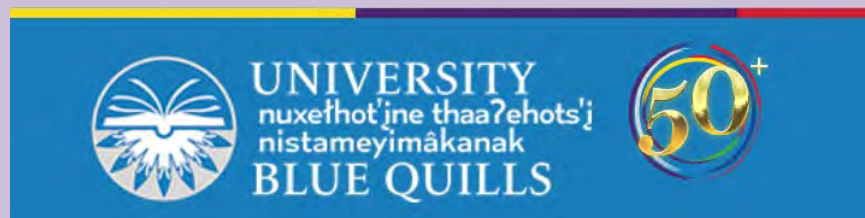


Image by Keepers of the Water

## World Water Day March 22, 2022 Nîpiy Pîatîsiwin/Tu b'eh t'ah eh ts'eh nah/Aohkîi/ iihtaipatapiiyop/Water is Life

[Click here to watch the video](#)

KOW spent a full day at an in-person and online event co-hosted with nuhelot'ine thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak (Blue Quills University) near the town of St.Paul Alberta Canada in the Treaty Six (6) territory.



## OUR SPEAKERS

**Jean L'homme** - Fort McKay First

**Nation Paul Belanger** - Science Lead KOW

**Calvin Cardinal** - Saddle Lake Cree Nation

**Alsen White** - Saddle Lake Cree Nation



image by Keepers of the Water - Alsen at kâniyâsihk Culture Camp



Image by Keepers of the Water - Calvin Cardinal



# Protecting the Arctic Drainage Basin

**The Arctic Drainage Basin spans the territories of many Indigenous Peoples and is vital to Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights and abilities to hunt, fish, trap, and gather medicines. Because of the size of the Basin and its resources, colonial governments (both provincial and federal) have taken over and identified themselves as the owners of the river. But you cannot own the Water.**

**We have a responsibility to care for the Water and protect it, which these governments have not done. We look at what is impacting the Basin and the effects on all the people, plants, and wildlife that rely on it. The Deh-cho (Mackenzie) River Basin is fed by four major rivers in Canada. It is a massive and powerful water system that supports life in a vast territory. The Athabasca River originates in Jasper National Park and travels 1,230 km northeast draining into the Peace-Athabasca Delta near Lake Athabasca, south of Fort Chipewyan, Alberta.**

**"Indigenous peoples named the Deh-cho (Mackenzie) River; in the Slavey language, Deh-cho [tèh tʰò], literally means big river; and in Inuvialuktun, the word Kuukpak [ku: kpak] literally means great river. The big river flows through a vast, thinly populated region of forest and tundra entirely within the Northwest Territories in Canada, its many tributaries reach into five other Canadian provinces and territories." - Personhood for the Deh-Cho (Mackenzie) River Report, Keepers of the Water**

Image 'Arctic Drainage Basin' wikipedia.org

***The proposed release of any poorly treated tailings is a clear violation of Dene, Cree, Inuvialuit and Metis Natural Laws, this is something we cannot allow to happen***

Tailings are toxic to people and ecosystems, and there is no science establishing that tailings can be treated to levels that make them safe. The treated tailings still retain high levels of naphthenic acids and salinity.

Indigenous peoples in our movement have already experienced the detrimental impacts of tar sands extraction on our lands and our Ingenious ways of life. These impacts are exacerbated by increasing impacts from climate change and other industrial activities.

Given that Indigenous culture, language, spirituality, and history are all intimately tied to the land, the loss of our land-based way of life infringes on our basic human rights to pass on essential aspects of who we are as sovereign peoples to the next seven generations.



Image by The Globe and Mail



Image 'Mine tailings' philippineone.com



Image 'Mackenzie River Basin' cbc.ca

# The Dene National Special Assembly - July 18-20, 2022

## Denendeh is the Land of the People

The Dene have existed for over 30,000 years, with one language and many dialects: Gwich'in; Sahtu; Deh Cho; Tlicho; and, Akaitcho. The Dene have always been sustained by the land.

The Dene National Special Assembly was held July 18-20, 2022 at the Wiliideh Site (Yellowknife River) in the Akaitcho Territory.

A community hosts the assembly where Dene leaders have discussions, consultations and make resolutions. It's where the leaders come to make their voices heard and commemorate the struggle for retaining sovereignty and advancing Dene concerns.



Image 'On the Land Education' by indspire.ca



Jesse Cardinal and Daniel T'iselei - Interviews with APTN National News "**Alberta tailings waste could pollute Athabasca River, say Keepers of the Water**" [Watch the interview here](#)

Keepers of the Water had a big presence at the Dene National Assembly and worked hard to bring forward education about the proposed dumping of the toxic tailings ponds. We worked with Dene representatives and allies to bring this message to the Assembly.



### A Resolution was signed by the Dene National Chief Gerald Antoine

"**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Dene Nation opposes the release of treated tar sands tailings into the Deh Cho watershed and requires Canada to abandon its plans to allow such action; and

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Dene Nation calls on Canada fulfil its obligations to obtain the free and prior consent of the downstream Dene.

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 20th day of July 2022 in Wiliideh Site (YK River), Chief Drygeese Territory, Akaitcho Region, Oenendeh."

[Read the Full Resolution Here](#)

# The 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) took place from November 6 to 18 Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

As we face the collective threat of climate change, Keepers of the Water, NWT Outreach Manager Daniel T'seleie recently travelled with the Indigenous Climate Action delegation to amplify Indigenous voices at COP27.

"When Indigenous Peoples withhold consent, that is a positive exercise of their jurisdiction and authority to protect their language, culture, and spirituality. They have made a decision that some proposed activity would have a severe enough impact to the land that it would somehow impact their fundamental human rights, and they are making a conscious decision to withhold consent in order to protect those rights"

**Daniel T'seleie, NWT Outreach Manager for Keepers of the Water, Executive Steering Committee for Indigenous Climate Action**



Daniel T'seleie stands in front of the Red Sea at Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. (Submitted by Daniel T'seleie)

[As COP27 continues, N.W.T.'s Daniel T'seleie says 'land back' to Indigenous people part of climate solution \(cbc.ca\)](#)



Artist Bomgiizhik - "Revolution of the Heart"

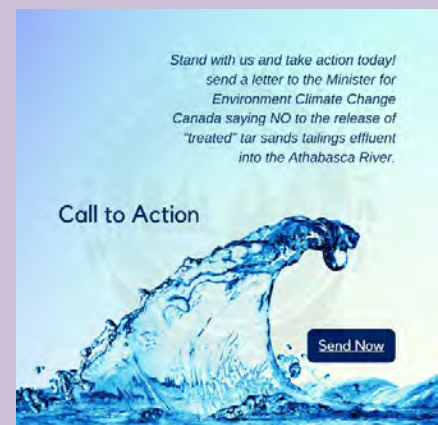
"Canada has a long history of violating the rights of Indigenous peoples in their pursuit of promoting and subsidizing the extraction of tar sands. This trend is being continued by Canada's latest proposal to legalize the release of treated, but still toxic, tailings into the Deh Cho (Mackenzie) River watershed without first obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of downstream and impacted Indigenous nations, which is required according to international standards and Canadian domestic law. Canada needs to start respecting Indigenous rights instead of promoting false climate solutions like carbon capture if they are serious about stopping the climate crisis and preventing ecological collapse."

**Daniel T'seleie, NWT Outreach Manager for Keepers of the Water, Executive Steering Committee for Indigenous Climate Action**

## Stand with Keepers of the Water

It is unacceptable to continue to violate the rights of and sacrifice northern Indigenous communities and lands to industry profit. It is unacceptable to contemplate any dumping of retreated tailings into the Athabasca

**Send a letter to the Minister for Environment Climate Change Canada saying NO to the release of "treated" tar sands tailings effluent into the Athabasca River.**



# Protecting Our Headwaters

## Canada needs to BAN Thermal Coal BEFORE 2030

Keepers of the Water is passionate about protecting water from resource development and industrial projects such as the Vista Mine Phase 1, and the proposed Vista Mine Phase 2 expansion and Vista Coal Underground Mine. Alongside Ecojustice, Canada's largest environmental-law charity, we have been working together against Coalspur Mines Ltd. since 2019 in their application to expand the Vista thermal coal mine by appealing to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. It has been a battle. Vista Mine Phase 1 produces six million tonnes of thermal coal per year. Open pit mines decimate the environment.



Image by cbc.ca

**An "Impact Assessment" will consider potential environmental, health, social and economic impacts of proposed projects. The Government of Canada has a duty to consult, and where appropriate, accommodate Indigenous groups when it considers conduct that might adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or treaty rights. [CLICK HERE TO READ THE REPORT "Thermal Coal Update on the Vista Mine Proposed Expansion by Autumn EagleSpeaker](#)**

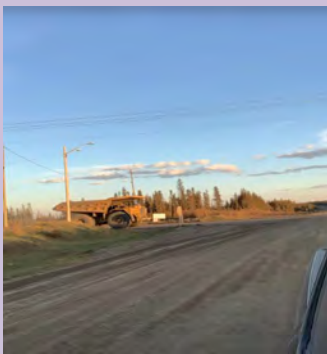


Photo by Autumn EagleSpeaker - Coalspur Mines (pre-construction disturbances)

**This is not enough. Canada must ban thermal coal extraction sooner than 2030. Canada needs to ban thermal coal in its entirety by 2023.**

- Canada needs to respect Indigenous people, their voices, their sovereignty and their traditional knowledge.
- Canada needs to fully implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the 93 calls to action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
- Canada needs to respect the Indigenous peoples right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent, especially when it concerns sovereignty and decisions regarding resource extraction.

The Vista 2 Expansion will increase thermal coal production capacity to 50,000 tonnes per day, which is ten times the threshold for automatic designation under the IAA for new coal mines presumed to have major impacts. It could produce 22 to 33 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year.

## If the project is approved, Vista mine will be the largest thermal coal mine in North America.

In early October, Keepers of the Water journeyed together to the community of Mountain Cree Camp - located in northwestern Alberta. This traditional, isolated community is located deep within the Rocky mountains near Nordegg, Alberta.



Photo by Autumn EagleSpeaker - looking east at Mountain Cree Camp



Photo by Autumn EagleSpeaker - Mountain Cree Camp



Photo by Autumn EagleSpeaker - Matriarchs at Mountain Cree Camp

# Keepers of the Water Engagement with Mountain Cree (Smallboy) Camp



Photo by Autumn EagleSpeaker - Wild Horses along the drive to Mountain Cree Camp

In early October, Keepers of the Water journeyed together to the community of Mountain Cree (Smallboy) Camp - located in northwestern Alberta.

Report by Autumn EagleSpeaker

Outreach Coordinator KOW

[click here to read the full report](#)



## We are proud to Launch our Indigenous-led Community Based Water Quality Management Program

Spring of 2022 marks the beginning of a long-term Athabasca Watershed water monitoring program initiated by the Keepers of the Water (KOW) board and staff. The first day of water sampling began in June. A vital part of this project includes the upcoming sharing of our citizen-based water monitoring data on the KOW website in a viewer-friendly and interactive style.

Paul travelled with five community members in early June, and fieldwork began with water samples taken in the Smallboy Camp/Mountain Cree area. The sampling data showed us good water quality in the immediate area around the Small Boy Camp community. Water quality could have been better in the Pembina River on the way to the community Southeast of Hinton.



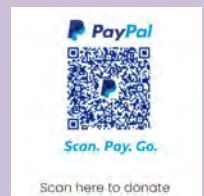
Photo by Keepers of the Water Jesse Cardinal water data collection

During the week of June 20th, sampling was done from Jasper to Ft. McKay along the Athabasca River with the help of Jean L'hommecourt in the Ft. McKay area and Art Jackson in the Jasper area.

About 18 sites were sampled altogether. The rivers were high, and water temperature increased dramatically from 6 deg C in the Jasper area to 16°C in the Ft McMurray area.

Quality citizen-based water monitoring is challenging to maintain and can be expensive. Our approach is to start small and grow the program as we acquire more funding. Core funding will be required for consistency and suitable staffing.

**Become a Water protector by supporting the grassroots work of the Keepers of the Water today!**



[click here to read the full report](#)

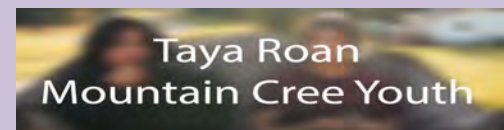
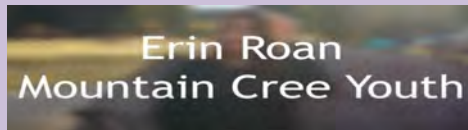
**A Report by Paul Belanger  
Science Lead KOW**

# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

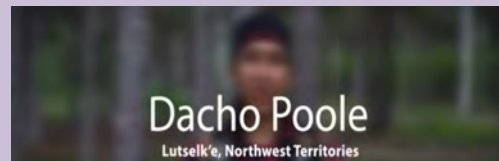
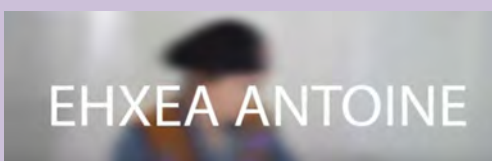
Click on the photos to watch their videos

***The Coalspur Vista Mine expansion will be detrimental to the health, well-being and traditional ways of the community of Mountain Cree Camp and their ability to exercise their aboriginal and treaty rights.***

**The traditional way of life these young people know will be directly effected by the mine's expansions. Causing direct and cumulative effects, including loss of fish, animals and thier habitats.**



**Water contamination including selenium and other detrimental metals and toxins, will cause a loss of access to traditional territories that must be protected for our next seven generations.**



***The potential "treated" tailings will flow through the Dene territory watershed before eventually ending up in the Arctic Ocean.***

**It is the responsibility of KOW to ensure that youth living within the Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin have the necessary support to advance Indigenous Sovereignty over their territories and watersheds.**

**Canada has not obtained the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Dene People downstream of the tarsands.**

**UNDRIP guarantees the Dene the opportunity to participate in state legislative and policy initiatives that will directly and negatively impact the watershed they live in and rely on.**

# Water and Medicine Gathering



Photo by Cameron Adams - inside the tipi at the camp

**Keepers of the Water has been partnering with kâniyâsihk Culture Camps for the past 3 years to co-host a land-based gathering.**

**The gathering takes place at kâniyâsihk Culture Camps on the Ministikwan Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, Treaty 6.**

Each year since 2020 we understood the critical need to create a safe space to gather on the land. This past July, we hosted many Indigenous knowledge keepers who shared teachings on harvesting medicine and teachings on water. Many participants took the opportunity to go “off-grid” as there was minimal access to any cell service, it was a relief to turn off our technology and just revel in the beauty of our natural environment.

This summer we offered opportunities for Healing Sessions, Cleo Resse – Energy Healing, Darlene Auger – Swing Therapy and Marda Cote – Therapeutic Massage was experienced by many participants. Comments from some participants were to continue to include this type of body, mind and spirit healing as we are connecting to Mother Earth and Water.

There were sessions including Sharing Circles, Tipi teachings, Moon teachings and Beading lessons. Daphie Pookyak provided Medicine teachings taking our participants on a Medicine Walk through and around the camp, sharing how to identify the medicines and how to use them in the traditional way.

Photos by KOW - Culture Camp Activities



A special blessing was that the camp was honoured with a moose that added to our teachings.

We are grateful for the animal that allowed us to share our traditional teachings. There were lessons on how to cut, prepare meat and smoke the meat.

After a day of stories and learning, we all enjoyed a delicious meal of moose stew and fried bannock.

We were honoured to be hosted by the Lewis Family and are looking to co-hosting the 4th Water and Medicine Gathering with kâniyâsihk in the summer of 2023.



Photo by Keepers of the Water - kaniyâsihk Culture Camp  
'Moose meat drying, Moose stew on the cooking fire'



Photo by Keepers of the Water - kaniyâsihk Culture Camp- 'canoeing on Ministikwan Lake'

# The United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) December 7 - 19 Montreal, Quebec, Canada

The **United Nations Biodiversity Conference**, referred to as COP15, was held in Montreal, with governments from around the world coming together to agree, amongst other things, on a new set of goals and targets that will guide global action on nature through 2030.

While it sounds similar to COP27, the recent UN Climate Conference held in Sharm El-Sheikh, the two meetings focus on different but related issues. COP27 addressed action under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to these changes.

**COP15 focuses on the living world through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) a treaty adopted for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and related issues.**

December 15, 2022 - **Environmental Defence and Keepers of the Water held a press conference as part of COP15** to highlight the dangers posed by tar sands tailings ponds to the biodiversity of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Participating in this briefing are Aliénor Rougeot (Climate and Energy Program Manager, Environmental Defence), Melody Lepine (Director of Government Industry Relations, Mikisew Cree First Nation), Daniel T'seleie (NWT Outreach Manager Keepers of the Water, Dene from Fort Good Hope), Tori Cress (Communications Manager, Keepers of the Water, Anishinaabe from G'Chimnissing,) and Paul Belanger (Science Lead, Keepers of the Water).

[Watch the Press Conference Here](#)



Image by YouTube - Environmental Defence and Keepers of the Water press conference

"Every day, every year, I become more honored to be a part of this organization, its emotional to think of the water and what is happening around us, but working together with you all makes this journey more hopeful.

**We are fulfilling a sacred vision and role, and I believe the ceremony we uphold helps our path. Our voices are being uplifted on behalf of the sacred water, and water will be heard!**

Please check out this video of the press conference with Keepers of the Water and Environmental Defence at COP 15 in Montreal."

- **Jesse Cardinal, Executive Director Keepers of the Water on the panel discussion (Dec 19, 2022)**

"We are here to raise our voices during these international conversations on biodiversity..... no matter who you are each of us is born from the water before we ever breath our first breath of air.

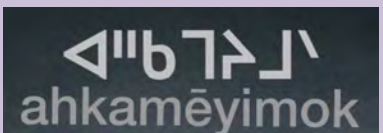
**We want to remind Government and Industry in the settler state of Canada they do not have free prior and informed consent from Indigenous Peoples to create Fisheries Act regulations that will allow the Dumping of Toxic Tailings into the Athabasca River!**

It is our position that there is absolutely no release of so-called treated tailings into the watershed. Water know no man-made boundaries."

- **Tori Cress, Communications Manager KOW**



Artist Bomgiizhik - "Look, the Tree has a Heart"



keep persevering  
don't give up



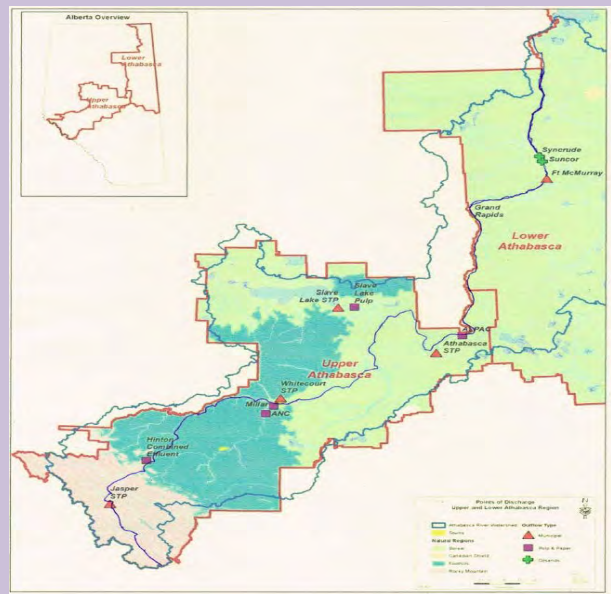
# Highlights of our Upcoming Work for 2023

## Community Based Water Monitoring Program

- **Education Resources Page**  
**Comprehensive Visual Multi-media Interactive Map Project**

Keepers of the Water has begun the journey to create educational resources for schools and communities that can serve as teaching tools on the importance of biodiversity in Northern watersheds. Our Community Based Water Monitoring Program - Comprehensive Visual Multi-media Interactive Map Project will expand our strategic communications capacity beginning with grassroots water monitoring of the Athabasca River.

**This is an ambitious campaign as we look to advance our knowledge of impacts to our sacred watersheds across our traditional territories across AB, BC, SASK and the NWT. Building our online resource tools for use by schools and communities- indigenous knowledge on muskegs and wetlands Expanding our education program of both Indigenous Ecological Knowledge, Traditional teachings and Western Science**



Images and Map by Paul Belanger - Upper and Lower Athabasca River Reaches

- **Ongoing training and guidance will be provided by our Science and Technical Team throughout the year**



If a community or volunteers are interested in participating in the program please contact:

Jesse Cardinal at [ed@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:ed@keepersofthewater.ca)  
Paul Belanger at [science@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:science@keepersofthewater.ca)



# Water is Life - Legal Summit Dec 8-9, 2022

The Indigenous Knowledge Wisdom Center and Keepers of the Water have partnered to host a Legal Summit which looks at '**Exploring Water Protection through an Indigenous Lens**'. This event will bring together some of the most knowledgeable and thought-provoking Indigenous legal and traditional knowledge helpers from our communities to look at how the various colonial constructs have impacted our ability as Indigenous people to protect water and what needs to change to ensure water is protected for future generations.

**At this summit, we will have sessions and presentations that look more closely at:**  
UNDRIP (the varying views on this International declaration from a local lens)

Doctrine of Discovery,  
The Indian Act,  
Inherent Rights and Treaty rights,  
The criminalization of Indigenous people,  
The Canadian legal system vs. Indigenous legal systems,  
Pre- Contact,  
How much Canada spends in court fighting Indigenous people



**We will provide a summary report of our Summit in Early 2023. Stay Tuned!**

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## 4th Annual Water and Medicine Gathering



The gathering takes place at kâniyâsihk Culture Camps on the Ministikwan Cree Nation in Saskatchewan, Treaty 6.

We will be hosting many Indigenous knowledge keepers to share teachings on harvesting medicine and teachings on water.

**Keepers of the Water is looking to co-host the 4th Annual Gathering with kâniyâsihk in the summer of 2023.**

**If you are interested in co-hosting please contact Jesse Cardinal at [ed@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:ed@keepersofthewater.ca)**

# Personhood for the Deh Cho (Mackenzie) River



Image - Mackenzie River by geologypage.com

"Indigenous peoples and grassroots environmental groups are leading a global movement to give legal personhood to rivers and waters to conserve and protect nature. Globally, river systems are under extreme pressure with many of the world's rivers suffering from damming, pollution, loss of water quantity, and changes to river ecosystems, habitats, and watersheds."

- [Personhood for the Deh-Cho \(Mackenzie\) River Report, Keepers of the Water](#)

Many Indigenous communities live downstream from the oilsands and everything that goes into the Athabasca River flows into the Slave River and to the Deh-cho River, and ultimately into the Arctic Ocean. We continue to endeavour to pursue legal personhood for the Deh-cho River Basin.

KOW understands this could be a key factor in protecting the people, the river, and a land base from over-exploitation by humans. Since colonization, humans have overused the land and decimated animal populations key to the survival of Indigenous Peoples

As an Indigenous-led organization based on a coalition of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, environmental groups, grassroots citizens, and communities concerned about protection of Water, Keepers is well aligned to begin the discussions to create a "Northern Rivers Alliance".

We continue to expand our work into the NWT and to the Arctic coastal communities.

## Other Ways to Support Our Work

- Partnerships are a huge part of our community engagement, outreach and educational opportunities. We are always looking to connect with communities and educators to strengthen our relationships with current philanthropic partners and build meaningful connections with new ones.
- Help us to connect with potential donors who share the same core values and goals we carry so that we can reach out to them directly.
- Volunteer your skills and knowledge.
- Donate to our campaigns.

We are able to send charitable receipts for donations over \$20. Please provide your name and address to [finance@keepersofthewater.ca](mailto:finance@keepersofthewater.ca)



Send e-Transfer donations to:  
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# Thank You to Our Donors and Supporters

