



Inaugural Great Lakes Water Walk Takes Place Along Toronto Waterfront Trail, Sunday, September 24, 2017

Inclusive FREE public event #BecauseOfWater, the first [Great Lakes Water Walk](#) concludes at Marilyn Bell Park with respected Anishinaabeg Grandmothers and Elders leading participants in a blessing of the Great Lakes



Photos L-R – Annual Water Awareness Walks in the Kawarthas, 2017, 2010, 2014. Credit: G. Horton-Baptiste

TORONTO (August 28, 2017) – The source of all life on Earth – water – is sacred to Canada’s First Nations Peoples. That special relationship is the inspiration behind this year’s first annual [Great Lakes Water Walk](#) on **Sunday, Sept. 24 from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.** on Toronto’s Waterfront Trail.

Led by Indigenous Grandmothers, Knowledge Holders, and Elders, with collaboration and guidance from [Nibi Emosaawdamajig](#) and [Ecologos](#), the **Great Lakes Water Walk** unites First Peoples and Canadians in a symbolic walk towards reconciliation through a shared reverence for life-sustaining water, and to ensure the health and well-being of the Great Lakes of Ontario for future generations.

Open to all, the walk will have two starting points: Scarborough Missions (Kingston Road and Brimley Road) in Scarborough, and [JC Saddington Park](#) (53 Lake Street) in Mississauga, with multiple stops along the way. Throughout the walk, following Anishinaabe ceremonial protocols, Grandmothers and Elders, with collaboration and guidance from Nibi Emosaawdamajig, will make water offerings, sing water songs, and coordinate a collective agreement among participants to uphold the sacredness and purity of the Great Lakes.

The **Great Lakes Water Walk** will culminate at [Marilyn Bell Park](#) (851 Lakeshore Blvd. West, Toronto) at 3 p.m. The final ceremony and blessing will be led by Anishinaabeg Grandmothers [Shirley Williams](#), [Josephine Mandamin](#), and Liz Osawamick. They will be joined by First Nations leaders of the traditional territories where the Great Lakes Water Walk takes place, the Grandmothers’ advisory circle, leaders of cultural and faith groups, government agencies, as well as youth and community organizations.

“The mission of the Great Lakes Water Walk is to awaken the innate, sacred reverence for water that ripples deeply within us all, and harness the individual and collective energy and commitment among all participants to preserve and protect the Great Lakes,” says Kim Wheatley, the GLWW representative for Nibi Emosaawdamajig. “This walk demonstrates a spirit of truth and reconciliation by sharing a path for First Peoples and Canadians to walk symbolically together towards a new relationship grounded in peace, friendship and mutual respect through the collective experience of ‘Walking for the Water’.”

“We are fortunate to have four of the five Great Lakes and many other beautiful lakes and waterways here in Ontario. They are a vital part of our ecosystem and way of life,” said Eleanor McMahon, Minister of Tourism, Culture, and Sport. “Increasing awareness and support for their long-term preservation, in addition to advancing reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities, is an important endeavour to undertake. Our Government is pleased to support the Great Lakes Water Walk through the Ontario150 program.”

The **Great Lakes Water Walk** is a partnership project of Nibi-Emosaawdamajig, Ecologos, [GREATNESS](#), [Toronto and Region Conservation](#), and [Faith & the Common Good](#). The Walk is supported by the province of Ontario through the [Ontario150 program](#) and community partners including Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Toronto and Region Conservation for The Living City, LUSH, Toronto Foundation, Toronto Area Interfaith Council, Bata Shoe Museum, Halton Environmental Network, Water Docs Film Festival, Toronto United Church Council, Community Foundation of Mississauga, ASWCO (Aboriginal Sport & Wellness Council of Ontario), NA-Me-Res (Native Men’s Residence), Native Child & Family Services of Toronto, Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, PRISMA Light, and Trent University’s Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Environmental Studies Departments and Sacred Water Circle. The Walk is also a signature member program of “GREATNESS: The Great Lakes Project”, inspired by Ontario’s Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

For more information about the **Great Lakes Water Walk**, how to participate, become an ambassador or to volunteer visit: <http://greatlakeswaterwalk.ca/event-details/>.

Please preview the [Great Lakes Water Walk video](#) online.

Social Media Links:

Twitter: [@GreatLakesWalk](#)

Facebook: [@GreatLakesWaterWalk](#)

Instagram: [@greatlakeswaterwalk](#)

#BecauseOfWater

About Ecologos

Ecologos is a charitable, volunteer-driven organization that engages thousands of people each year in programs that celebrate a sense of reverence for water, inform about the challenges that threaten clean water supplies, and inspire action in defence of nature’s most precious gift. Other programs include the Water Docs Film Festival every March around World Water Day, and Water Docs @ School Action Projects, available to Grade 8 classes across Ontario.

About Nibi Emosaawdamajig

The Water Awareness Walks in the Kawarthas, led by Elder Shirley Williams and Liz Osawamick, were inspired by Grandmother Josephine’s work and by attending a “Water Matters Conference” at Trent University. After the first Water Walk in 2010, the group Nibi Emosaawdamajig – Those Who Walk for the Water – was

formed. It is comprised of women and men from Peterborough and the Kawarthas who are committed to sharing Traditional Anishinaabeg Water Teachings with the local community through annual Water Walks.

About Ontario150

2017 is the 150th anniversary of Ontario as a province. To recognize this historically significant year, the government has launched Ontario150, a year-long commemoration that is honouring the province's past, showcasing the present and inspiring future generations. Through the Ontario150 grant programs and a series of signature initiatives, Ontario is engaging youth, encouraging cultural expression, promoting participation in sport and recreation, and creating economic opportunities across the province.

– H₂O –

Media contact:

Patricia Garcia, Great Lakes Water Walks Publicity -- 416.302.9318 or p_garci@yahoo.com

Great Lakes Water Walk Contacts:

Alix Taylor, Program Manager, ataylor@greencommunitiescanaa.org, 705-745-7479 Ext.114

Kim Wheatley, Nibi Emosaawdamajig representative, wheatleykwewag@gmail.com