

Anishinabek Regional Water Engagement Sessions





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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Anishinabek Nation has taken a leadership position on all water resources, and is dedicated to providing support to their member First Nation communities on water issues. The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) plays a significant role in ensuring that Ontario's water resources support the need of Ontarians and a healthy natural environment now and into the future.

With water being an important element for discussion, The Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) identified the need to host a series of four "Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions". The Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions were intended to provide the opportunity for communities and leadership to come together for the continuation of relationship building between First Nations, MNR, and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), as the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement continues to be implemented.

The purpose of these water sessions was to update the citizens of the Anishinabek Nation on recent activities, program initiatives, as well as facilitate an understanding of water issues at both the local and regional levels with respect to the Great Lakes Agreement. These sessions also provided the opportunity for capacity building within the Anishinabek Nation, through the opportunity to exchange information and provide technical advice on various water issues that were raised.

This report has been broken down into four sections that reflect each regional Anishinabek Nation territory. Each territory is unique and has different issues and concerns, so it was important to capture their concerns, recommendations, and suggestions.



Rob Messervey, MNR, Sharon Bailey, MOE, Laura Kucey, MNR, Karen Abraham, MNR

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The citizens of the Anishinabek Nation have Treaty and Aboriginal Rights with respect to water. The Great Lakes and all inland waters have sustained the life of the Anishinabek before the arrival of Europeans. The Creator gave the Anishinabek the responsibility to look after Mother Earth and all her elements. First Nation women (Anishinabe qwe) were given the role to be the traditional keepers and spiritual protectors of water, given that water has the responsibility to purify, cleanse, and give life to Mother Earth and all her Creations.

The Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) has taken a leadership position on all water resources, and is dedicated to providing support to their member First Nation communities. Community issues range from water quality and quantity, to the management of water and other resources that depend or rely on water.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) plays a significant role in ensuring that Ontario's water resources support the needs of Ontarians and a healthy natural environment now and into the future.

3.0 BACKGROUND

Approximately 120 First Nations and Tribes have occupied the Great Lakes Basin over the course of history. Today - in Ontario alone, there are 66 First Nation communities located within the Great Lakes Basin Watershed, and 40 of these communities are members of the Anishinabek Nation.

Prior to European contact the Anishinabek lived and utilized all waterways throughout Ontario, giving them inherent rights and intellectual property to water. Having this intellectual property also gave First Nation people an opportunity to build a special relationship with water, that they still hold today.

Throughout our recent history, the Canadian and United States (U.S.) Governments have been actively involved in protecting the Great Lakes Basin. The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 gave the Canadian & U.S. Governments, as well as the International Joint Commission (IJC) authority to approve or deny proposed water diversions directly from the Great Lakes Basin and other waters that are shared by Canada and the U.S.

The Great Lakes Charter of 1985 is a good faith agreement that was set in place to protect, and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes Basin. Through this charter, the Great Lakes states and provinces require prior notice and consultation with Charter member jurisdictions for any new or increased consumptive uses or diversions of water out of the Basin or between a Great Lake Watershed that require 19 million/liters/day.

The Great Lakes Charter Annex 2001 is another good faith agreement that is intended to reaffirm the principles of the Great Lakes Charter of 1985. The Annex is intended to commit and strengthen the protection of the Great Lakes Basin Waters through a more binding arrangement. The agreement involved a more broad consultation process and a new decision standard. It is important to note, however, that within the Great Lakes Charter and Charter Annex, First Nations and Tribes were not mentioned nor involved in any decision making processes.

As time issues arrived, the States and Provinces were once again discussing the implementation of new provisions to the Great Lakes Annex. During this time, the Great Lake First Nations and Tribes decided that action must be taken to protect their jurisdiction and inherent rights of the Great Lakes waters. On November 23, 2004, twenty-seven Great Lake Basin First Nations and Tribes gathered in Niagara Falls to discuss the future of the Great Lakes. This was a very significant event, as First Nations and Tribes asserted their jurisdiction and rights over the Great Lakes, and expressed that they wanted to have full participation in order to protect and preserve the Great Lakes for seven generations to come.

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement was signed on December 13, 2005. This time, the agreement included First Nations and Tribes in articles 504 & 702. Since the signing event of the Great Lakes Agreement, the Anishinabek Nation has become dedicated in providing support to their member First Nation communities and citizens on all water issues. These issues range from, but are not limited to, water quality and quantity, potable water, water and watershed management and the management of all Mother Earth's creations that rely on water, including water itself.

The Anishinabek Nation's goals and expectations regarding water management issues with governments are:

- To discuss the issues;
- Exchange information;
- Facilitate a common understanding;
- Option development; and
- Collaborate on the resolution of issues.

On March 24, 2007 the Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief John Beaucage appointed the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission. The Commission plays a key role in raising the awareness of the Great Lakes Water and the impacts to its quality and quantity. The Commission's focus is to provide advice to the Anishinabek Nation Leadership on all water issues, and to share their traditional knowledge, teachings, and values.



Anishinabek Women's Water Commission Appointment, 2007

On March 27, 2007, the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen the collaboration with respect to the "Implementation of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (aka. The Agreement).

Today, the Anishinabek Nation is committed to working with the MNR on resolving issues of concern using a positive solution based approach. The purpose of the MOU is to strengthen collaboration by enhancing the exchange and integration of relevant policy, technical information, provide advice and incorporating Anishinabek Traditional Knowledge principles and perspectives into policies, regulations and legislations.

On February 24, 2008, Chief Isadora Bebamash from M'Chigeeng First Nation was appointed the Political Portfolio Holder for the Commission. This appointment is to strengthen the leadership role in water policy.

On February 25 & 26, 2008, the Anishinabek Ontario Resource Management Council (AORMC) developed and managed the Anishinabek Traditional Knowledge and Water Policy Conference with the support of the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission. The purpose of this conference was to find directions that would be meaningful for Anishinabek Communities with regards to relationship building and water issues. A final report was developed and distributed to all Anishinabek Nation communities.



Traditional Knowledge Water Policy Conference Participants, February 2008

The Anishinabek Women's Water Commission facilitated a memorial event. The Water Retreat with Grand Chief John Beaucage and the Minister of Natural Resources Donna Cansfield. Chief Shining Turtle of Whitefish River First Nation hosted this event at a sacred traditional site called Sunshine Alley.

The Water Retreat provided the Minister with a cross-cultural awareness opportunity. The Anishinabek Women's Water Commission provided the Minister of Natural Resource, Donna Cansfield, the Anishinabek Nation's perspective on water and water issues. It also gave an opportunity for the Anishinabek Nation to reinforce the goal of co-management.



Anishinabek Women's Water Commission Water Retreat, June 2008

As part of the on-going engagement with respect to relationship building, and the implementation of the Agreement, the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) believed it would be beneficial to have the continued effort of the Anishinabek Nation', as their involvement is imperative. In February of 2009, the Agreement Implementation Committee all agreed that "Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions" would benefit the citizens of the Anishinabek Nation.



Agreement Implementation Committee, 2009

Left to Right: Jason Laronde, Lands & Resources Director, UOI, Roslyn Lawrence, Assistant Deputy Minister, MNR, Allan Dokis, Intergovernmental Affairs Director, UOI, Dan Marinigh, Director, MNR and Peter Hulsman, Manager, MNR

4.0 PURPOSE & PROCEDURES

Across Ontario, many water initiatives and programs are being developed and implemented by various government agencies. In some cases, the citizens of the Anishinabek Nation find it difficult to stay updated on the current issues and concerns.

Water being an important element for discussion, The UOI and MNR identified the need to host for a series of "Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions". The Sessions were intended to provide the opportunity for communities and leadership to come together for the continuation of relationship building between First Nations, MNR, and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE), as the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement continues to be implemented.

Citizens of the Anishinabek Nation were invited to participate in four "Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions", which updated participants on recent activities, program initiatives, and facilitate an understanding of water issues at both the local and regional levels with respect to the Great Lakes Agreement. These sessions also provided the opportunity for capacity building within the Anishinabek Nation, through the opportunity to exchange information and provide technical advice on various water issues that were raised.

The Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions also gave the Ontario Government an opportunity to participate in Anishinabek ceremonies and teachings, which provide them not only a cross-cultural experience, but also a greater appreciation for the relationship with water. This was a great opportunity for governmental officials to observe protocols on how a meeting takes place within a First Nation community/territory. There was opportunity for government officials and Anishinabek citizens to network and understand the local issues that First Nations face.

5.0 PROCEEDINGS

Rhonda Gagnon, the Water Resources Policy Analyst for the UOI, provided facilitation for all four Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions. The sessions were kept in a fair and consistent manner, providing opportunities for citizens, leadership and other participants to comment, raise issues and address any questions that they may have had.



Rhonda Gagnon, Water Resource Policy Analyst, Union of Ontario Indians.

The following sections are a breakdown of each session, including comments and recommendations that were heard from both citizens and leadership of the Anishinabek Nation. All regional water sessions followed the same format and agenda as seen in appendix A.

The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-resolution image of water ripples. The water is a vibrant blue, with lighter, almost white highlights where the ripples catch the light, creating a dynamic and textured appearance. The ripples are irregular and flow across the frame, giving a sense of movement and depth.

HURON REGIONAL WATER SESSION

5.1 HURON REGIONAL WATER SESSION

Introduction

On March 23, 2009, the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) hosted the Huron Region Water Session in Whitefish Lake First Nation. In attendance, there were seventeen Anishinabek Nation Communities, with thirty-two participants, plus provincial government staff. Various participants included Anishinabek Chiefs and Councils, Anishinabek Women's Water Commission, and representation from the UOI Women's Council and Youth Council.



Huron Region Water Session Participants, March 2009

Background

Lake Huron is a unique and dynamic watershed; it includes four separate interacting bodies of water: the North Channel, Georgian Bay, Saginaw Bay, and Lake Huron Proper. This Great Lake is the third largest fresh water lake (by volume) on Mother Earth. It has more islands compared to any other Great Lake, making it a unique ecosystem by creating habitat for many distinctive plants and animals.

For thousands of years, First Nations have occupied the Lake Huron Watershed that still stands today. Currently, there are twenty-four Anishinabek Nation communities located within the Lake Huron Basin.

Water Session Proceedings

Opening Greeting

Elder Elsie Bissaillon, member of Serpent River First Nation provided the opening greeting for the water session participants.

Opening Comments

Chief Steve Miller

Chief Miller welcomed the other Chiefs, Counsellors, and participants into his community. Chief Miller gave comments with respect to water stating that "Water is very important, our lifeblood, sacred for our hearts/souls/life, essential for our day-to-day dreams and aspirations. Early explorers saw freshwater. We continue to get a good feeling being beside such a body of water. Chief Miller thanked the Union of Ontario Indians for hosting this session to communicate and share information.

Anishinabek Women's Water Commission

During the opening part of the water session, The Anishinabek Women's Water Commission, Josephine Mandamin of Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve and Chief Isadora Bebamash of M'Chigeeng First Nation provided a traditional prayer and teachings of water.



Donna Debassige, Ellise Biallion, Isadora Bebamash, Josephine Mandamin

Comments

Chief Commissioner Josephine Mandamin

The former Anishinabek Grand Council Chief John Beaucage appointed Josephine as head commissioner. She is a water keeper, a (widjedankwe) person (a warrior). She was given the enormous task of speaking on behalf of the Anishinabek. Water keepers have the responsibility to speak for the water socially, politically and environmentally. Josephine indicated that Anishinabek are caretakers and share their work with their brothers and sisters from other nations, different colours (white/black/yellow). This is symbolized in ceremony when we look to four directions; the creator unites us all.

In creation, the Anishinabek were the last to be lowered to the earth by the Creator and we still carry these instincts. Things are done carefully, slowly and still holistically, Josephine mentioned that non-aboriginals are different in that they do things more quickly. Many treaties and promises were made, many broken. Anishinabek read paper slowly and carefully, as we believe language is meaningful, and words are used precisely.

All things rely on water causing the Anishinabek Women's Water Commission to do a lot of thinking about water. Some things the Anishinabek know are not ready for the public. Elders recommend that knowledge be shared when ready, when the time is right (i.e., Water filtering/tapping). When Josephine walks the Great Lakes, her and the other walkers notice the absence of birds – there are areas of no trees and therefore the birds do not know where to go. Josephine is a fish person (from the Fish Clan); therefore, she knows how fish think and how they spawn. The dams get in the way of fish travels and because of this, Sturgeons are rare. There is a lot of work needed to improve our natural world. Much needs doing. Josephine indicated that because the provincial government has changed the aboriginal names of the places/lakes, these places have also lost their meaning.

Commissioner Isadora Bebamash

Isadora Bebamash stated that Aboriginal people have to be careful about how traditional information is shared with others. Aboriginal women are trying to learn traditional knowledge; reclaim the teachings, as much aboriginal culture was lost to the residential schools.

Isadora recently attended an equinox ceremony, where many of the aboriginal teachings were not written. Aboriginal women learn from our ancestors. However, there are teachings, which are written, for example, "Basil Johnson" wrote many books. Aboriginal people learn from their people. Isadora's mother went to residential school for 9 years, thankfully, she did not. Isadora has a son that is 23 and when he was in school, he was shown a film about residential schools, which upset him. Experiences are extended through Anishinabek blood and hurt carries on. People were being hurt, they could not gather, they have lost their culture. It will return, as Elders share things.

UOI presentation

- Water issues
- First Nations Water Network – look for interest/input
- Summary of ATK Water Policy Conference in Garden River FN in Feb/08

MNR/MOE Presentations

- Information Exchange on the Implementation of the Great Lakes – St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (Presentations available)
- Agreement Overview
- Developing Ontario's Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategy
- Developing a Process for the First Nations Review of Future Proposed Major Water Diversion in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin
- Other Great Lakes Initiatives

Water Session Discussion Points

Traditional Knowledge (Including issues specific to Elders/Youth)

- At a recent ceremony in a FN community, the question was raised "How do First Nations advocate protecting Mother Earth"? How do First Nations influence the "mainstream" (meaning non-native). First Nations people offer spirituality for their generations ahead. They need to rely on Traditional Teachings for assistance in protecting Mother Earth. The linkage between spirituality and scientific concerns is an issue.

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- It is important to obtain elders perspectives on water issues (e.g. ATK)
 - Many First Nations youth have technical expertise, as they are newly graduated from technical programs, and their input to water policy initiatives should be sought.

Capacity

- UOI should calculate the resources required to allow each community to be fully consulted on issues related to agriculture, environment (especially water)
- First Nations communities have had millions of dollars in damages done to them and their lifestyles through environmental degradation. They do not have the capacity to effectively ensure a proper solution. Capacity funding (e.g. for community participation) is required.
- Will First Nations benefit from the Agreement implementation? Should they take a class action to emphasize the issue of their economic loss due to environmental degradation?
- First Nations would like to know if there would be further capacity funding for First Nations community involvement in Agreement implementation.
- Clarification was sought about if it is UOI's position that the economic value of water is important. FN communities do not have sustainable economies.
- There is ongoing conflict between spirituality and need for money. First Nations have power and knowledge but the biggest "pothole" is money. We need to find a balance between the power of water and the power of economics. There is not enough funding from government to do anything about (environmental) water issues for our First Nations. First Nations are not rich, and need support and resources to take steps to clean up water within their communities. First Nations need to know where to find funding resources.

Information Sharing

- A participant mentioned that historically there were just Anishinabek in the area and then other First Nations came to the Great Lakes Basin
- The opinion was raised that provincial legislation generally does not protect treaty rights and that legislation caters to the rich, and causes the poor (e.g. First Nations) to suffer.
- The government must act to protect the water. The government currently has the position of power to affect change.
- A participant asked if this meeting was a consultation. The reply indicated that the meeting was held as an information exchange opportunity related to many components of Agreement implementation
- FN communities need to know that the Political Treaty Organization staff (i.e. UOI) have reviewed and analysed information from government and that the information is sanctioned before it is disseminated to the communities.
- FN lawyers, (e.g. UOI legal people) should review new Agreement regulations.
- It is difficult to distinguish issues into their components – like just water issues as First Nations see issues holistically.
- First Nations want to network with each other, build relationships outside of their own community (i.e. good relationships with Environment Canada)
- Desired information from UOI through the FNWN includes – the impact of cottage septic systems on water quality, explanation of water sampling techniques.
- UOI and COO should be unified in dealing with water policy issues
- First Nations have the obligation to ensure they are speaking out and being heard about what is happening to the quality of the water and related creatures. In addition, they need to follow up to ensure what they say is being implemented.
- A comprehensive approach to the problem of poor water is needed (e.g. not a band aid solution)
- First Nations have been cheated and lied to
- First Nations must be consulted on water policy. Be part of a joint process for policy making and not only provide suggestions, but have the involvement be continuous, be accommodated.

- Media should be used to assist First Nations in spreading the word about their concerns and thoughts about water issues.
- The Anishinabek should develop their “platform” as advocates for water issues, and strategize about how to become more involved.

Education/Training

- More First Nations water inspectors are needed.
- UOI should develop online courses.
- Training and funding is required by First Nations to help First Nations meet drinking water standards.
- Appropriate messaging should be determined to spread the message of caring for water – i.e., Make a cartoon to spread message about harmful impacts of disposable cups, dogs and garbage on water.
- Enhancement of learning opportunities is required by First Nations regarding water. For example, there is an Anishinabek Educational Institute – which would benefit from enhanced on-line programs, at the high school level. These programs should be relevant, should meet Ministry of Education guidelines, and should enable participants to adequately address environmental issues.
- Basin information is required for First Nation communities about water policy issues to assist First Nations individuals in having effective input into policy (e.g. what is a water sample, how is it analysed).

Environment (Water Standards, Water Quality/Environmental Concerns)

- With both federal and provincial water quality standards, the FN should have their own standards for water quality. Some question why there are different federal/provincial standards.
- First Nations are concerned about uncertainty with respect to standards for bottled water, bottled water testing and bottled water safety.
- The government should be accountable for ensuring that drinking water standards are met in First Nation communities.
- Environmental standards should be promoted (i.e. ballast water) with appropriate monitoring and enforcement.
- Freighter ships dump garbage/invasive species into the water
- Those damaging water quality and activities damaging water quality should be monitored by the government and the damaging actions should be stopped.
- The government should ban ballast water exchange, not regulate it. (e.g. impact of zebra mussels)
- The government should immediately stop allowing chemical companies to dump any chemicals into the water. Immediate action is required.
- Damage to water quality is done and First Nations are being asked about how to repair the damage.
- Governments should be held accountable for loss of water quality (e.g. loss of species, invasive species).
- First Nations are concerned that future generations will have limited ability to consume fresh water.
- Issues of concern to First Nations people also include – dealing with global warming, dealing with garbage, animals, bears, swamps, outhouses.
- Seven years ago, David Suzuki presented his concerns to a specific FN community about their water quality. The number one concern with First Nations regarding water is drinking water quality (including dealing with polluted wells) – that it is not safe to drink anymore.

Water Quantity

- What percentage of the small amount of water that is renewable in the GL Basin goes to the US?
- Dams have resulted in the loss of channels in First Nation communities.
- Confirmation of the level of expected rebound of Lake Superior level was requested (e.g. 30cm rebound?). The response is provided as follows:

Information on Lake Superior, from March, 2009 (MNR):

- at the beginning of March Lake Superior was 11 cm above last year’s March level, and 10 cm below chart datum
- Lake Superior is expected to peak in August at 22cm above chart datum, 32cm above where it was at the beginning of March.

-
- Chart datum is an elevation measurement - Somewhat of a standard number that levels are measured from, that is just one number all year round (rather than monthly like the long-term averages that are used). Charted depths on nautical charts are measured from the level. For Lake Superior, it is 183.2 meters.

And current info, from Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN):

- Lake Superior is currently about 10 cm above its level this time last year
 - The lake is expected to rise another 10 cm over the next 30 days
 - Level is still about 18 cm below long-term average, but is well above record lows.
 - Lake level is expected to remain below long-term averages over the course of the year.
- Confirmation about which First Nation individuals in Ontario were involved in negotiating the Agreement was requested.
 - The question was raised about how the ban on diversion was going to be enforced, and who would pay for legal action if required under the Agreement relating to the Regional Review of water proposals. It was indicated that these details are being worked out through the newly established Procedures Committee. It would be likely that if there were a questionable proposal, that FN's and the province would share the desire to seek appropriate legal action.
 - First Nations would need to enhance their technical abilities in order to know how much water they use (e.g. if they were to contribute to the Regional Water Use Database).

Agreement Implementation

- First Nations would like input on the development of legislation and regulations.
- UOI and its communities need to strategize about how best to continue involvement in Agreement implementation (e.g. Regional Review)
- The question was raised about the role of the Federal Government in Agreement implementation, as the federal government regulate FN water use.
- How is implementation going to happen? What is the process?
- Who signed the Agreement?
- Will there be money/capacity building to help FN to implement the Agreement?
- What about NAFTA? The Council for Canadians think that the Agreement could make water a commodity. Answer was that the Agreement recognizes water in its natural state and does not view it as a commodity.

Water Conservation/Efficiency

- Concerned with all aspects of water, not just the water we drink. Conservation should include species and ecosystems.
- Does water conservation involve fish?
- The government should discuss the usage of water. People use water like it will not run out, run water too much.
- There is a proper way to do dishes (i.e. don't run water).
- Legislation by itself does not work (i.e. need for education/awareness campaign).
- Do the conservation objectives encourage government to seek/understand ATK or do they encourage others (i.e. the public, other water users) to seek/understand ATK.
- AFN/UOI are establishing some kind of initiative to look at the need and methods of protecting ATK.
- Municipalities waste water (e.g. through leakages). Governments should require them to pay and ensure that this stops, for example, billing them for their water wastage will get them to fix their leaks. This relates to the need for government monitoring and enforcement. Not letting powerful entities continue environmentally harmful practices is important.
- Everyone should have to conserve water, especially the big water users
- The poor should have guaranteed continued access to clean water (i.e. in Mexico if you can't pay your water is turned off).
- The Government may be asking too much to expect elders to give their ATK. What do the elders get in return?
- Meeting participants need to take this information back to Chiefs and Elders for their review and input.
- There is a cultural sensitivity – no one is above the law, but natural law is above everyone.

The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-resolution image of water ripples. The water is a vibrant blue, with lighter, almost white highlights where the ripples catch the light, creating a dynamic and textured appearance. The ripples are irregular and flow across the frame, giving a sense of movement and depth.

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL WATER SESSION

5.2 SOUTHEAST REGIONAL WATER SESSION

Introduction

On March 30, 2009, the Union of Ontario Indians in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources hosted the second of four Anishinabek Regional Water Sessions in Chippewa's of Rama First Nation. In attendance there were seven Anishinabek Nation communities, with 13 participants, including the hosting Chief Sharon Stinson-Henry, Councillor Ron Douglas, Elder John Snake, plus the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment Staff.



Southeast Region Water Session Participants

Background

In the Southeast Region, many of the First Nation communities reside in either in the Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, or Lake Erie watershed. However, due to the size of the region and the community membership the Union of Ontario Indians decided to hold the Southeast Regional Water Session at Chippewas of Rama First Nation.

Chippewas of Rama is located on the eastern shores of Lake Couchiching. It is considered a very significant place for the Anishinabek as throughout our history, the Chippewas of Rama First Nation has been known as the “gathering place.” First Nation peoples would rest here before continuing on their journey. It was a place that held great meetings, where important agreements were signed.

Water Session Proceedings

Opening Greeting

Elder John Snake

Elder John Snake provided teachings about the relationship and connectivity among all of Mother Earth's relatives such as the insects, fish, ponds, eggs, the hoofed and winged animals. He mentioned the noticeable environmental problems including beetles attacking ash trees, which is affecting drum making, insecticides, and pesticides killing insects and negatively affecting the ecosystem, pandemics, and pollution from the fabricated industrial revolution. First Nation Elders have warned that the next wars will be fought over water, and we need strategies for water protection and promotion of water management in our leadership. We should look to our Elders (Grandma's) as they are obvious leaders; it is their responsibility to care for water.

Comments

Chief Sharon Stinson-Henry

Chief Henry welcomed participants and expressed concern about the state of water in general. She recognized it is difficult for people to understand the impacts of some environmental factors (e.g. the presence of zebra mussel and the Round Goby) on water.



Josephine Mandamin, Rhonda Gagnon, Karen Abrahams

UOI presentation

- Water issues
- First Nations Water Network – look for interest/input
- Summary of ATK Water Policy Conference in Garden River FN in Feb/08

MNR/MOE Presentations:

- Information Exchange on the Implementation of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (Presentations available)
- Agreement Overview
- Developing Ontario's Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategy
- Developing a Process for the First Nations Review of Future Proposed Major Water Diversion in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin
- Other Great Lakes Initiatives



Sharon Bailey, MOE

Water Session Discussion Points

Information Sharing

- First Nations are survivors. First Nations link the government's observation of this fact with the governments' current initiatives for seeking First Nation input to environmental programs.
- First Nations would like to see that the current government interest in talking to First Nations people is having a positive impact. First Nations people ask what will the government do with the comments/information being shared and will the communication continue?
- There is a concern that the government is not listening to what First Nations are telling them.
- Grass roots activism is very powerful in affecting positive change.
- People should become active to promote positive change in the way water is valued – to promote the ban of bottled water use in their communities.
- Bureaucrats need to take action/ensure action is taken on water issues (not be so bureaucratic)

Education / Training

- Some Board of Education Offices as well as Health Canada have packages to help educate elementary students about water issues. UOI should provide links to this information to the First Nations Water Network/UOI website.
- Even the First Nations people need to be reminded of environmental values and practices.

Environment (Water Standards/Water Quality/Environmental Concerns)

- The federal and provincial governments have different water quality standards. Some First Nations are using provincial standards, despite being federally regulated
- There was a great interest in ensuring that industry are monitored for pollution to the Great Lakes and that government have an increased role in the monitoring and regulating of water quality in the Great Lakes (i.e., don't rely on self regulation). There is a fear that the government will not take appropriate action to stop pollution until another disaster occurs like the drinking water tragedy of Walkerton in 2000.
- There is concern about the state of water management in the States outside of the basin. It was discussed that they have been relying on ground water, reservoir use to manipulate water supply and diverting existing water systems.
- Confirmation that the Ontario Water Resources Act and the Environmental Protection Act are the two main pieces of Ontario provincial legislation protecting water quality.
- There is a concern about drinking water quality in First Nation communities. Nipissing FN has a water system. Many community members are on wells- although water is high in iron and used largely for cleaning.
- Lake Nipissing surface water is undrinkable – with Giardia and harmful impacts of runoff.
- A participant was concerned with the negative impact of current and future human actions on even remote parts of our environment (e.g., icebergs and the moon)

Water Quantity

- The Moses-Saunders Power Dam near Cornwall controls the outflow of water from Lake Ontario.
- Climate is largely responsible for variation in lake levels.

Agreement Implementation

- First Nations and the Agreement Advisory Panel had the power to make the Agreement tougher (i.e. basin wide diversion ban)
- There was a discussion about how water use is measured and how, under the Agreement, baseline water use, intrabasin transfers and consumptive use for all water users will be established. The baseline amount will be used to evaluate future applications for water use.
- There was a preliminary discussion about how FN Regional Review of Major Water Proposals would occur. Participants inquired about when the suggested 90-day review period would start, and suggested that in addition to notifying the chief of each community, it would be necessary to notify water technicians and others interested in water issues.

Conservation

- There is support for the strict monitoring of water use. Water users (permit holders) are required to report daily water use on a monthly basis.
- To improve the conservation of water:
 - Only take what you need.
 - Communities/individuals should be educated with conservation techniques and practices;
 - First Nation water operators should be kept up to date on new technologies and requirements through training;
 - Individuals should self assess their water usage with the aim of conserving, and should be given the tools to do so.
- Youth should be educated about the importance of water – as youth are the leaders of tomorrow and have the ability to influence their families now. Curriculum should be updated to include water conservation programs.
- Older youth should be given opportunities to influence younger youth in water issues – more effective.
- Conduct a Water Festival Pilot study in a FN community. The pilot would include traditional information and information geared to First Nation communities. Also, incorporate information about First Nation views on water in Water Festivals outside of First Nation communities.

-
- Geraldton High School is the only high school in Ontario with a Natural Resources Technology class. Coordinate a weekend water festival for the area high school youth.
 - Encourage campouts or other opportunities for youth to experience the outdoors and understand where water comes from.
 - Initiate water education as early as in daycare programming.
 - Encourage grass root initiatives which support water conservation issues – like having communities “adopt a creek” within their community; support annual water walks in communities.
 - Launch many on the suggested initiatives at the Anishinabek Women’s Water Commission Basin Wide water conference (tentatively Fall, 2009)
- Language is very important to First Nations. There has been loss of traditional language usage – with residential schools contributing to this loss. There has also been a loss of knowledge and use of traditional names for Ontario’s lakes and rivers. The names have meaning and with the loss of the name, we lose the knowledge of the meaning. Both the First Nations people and the water loose part of their identity with the loss of this knowledge of traditional names. Research is needed to identify traditional Anishinabek names of lakes and rivers. Promote using the traditional names and understanding the original meaning associated with the names.

The background of the entire page is a close-up, high-resolution image of water ripples. The water is a vibrant blue, with lighter, almost white highlights where the ripples catch the light, creating a dynamic and textured appearance. The ripples are irregular and flow across the frame, giving a sense of movement and depth.

SOUTHWEST REGIONAL WATER SESSION

5.3 SOUTHWEST REGIONAL WATER SESSION

Introduction

On May 16, 2009, the Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) hosted the Southwest Region Water Session in Aamjiwnaang First Nation. In attendance, there were 17 participants from various communities.

Background

The southwest region is surrounded by three different lakes that is part of the Great Lakes Basin, the tip of Lake Huron, Lake St. Clair, and Lake Erie. The First Nations that are located within this region have experienced major changes to their lands, economies, culture, and ways of life as a direct result of imperialism and post-colonial processes of industrialization, urbanization, and globalization. .

Although, air, water and soil pollution affect every living entity, there is an unequal distribution of environmental health risks within the southern communities. Water quality has been an enduring issue for many First Nation communities, as they rely heavily on the waters to survive. First Nation people in the south have a higher risk of eating contaminated food sources because their traditional local food source of fish and wildlife is contaminated.

Lake Erie was considered dead in the 1960's, due to high nutrient loading. In 1983, Lake St. Clair was identified as an "Area of Concern" by the Canada-U.S. International Joint Commission (IJC). This designation was based on evidence of sediment contamination and toxic substances found in the surrounding waters.

The St. Clair River is a source of drinking water to some surrounding communities, and there has been a heighten concern on the potential health effects resulting from exposure to the contaminated water, food sources and traditional medicines.

Elders in the First Nation communities in the southeast regional have seen the cumulative changes in their environment over the course of their lifetime. Today water contamination and ecological degradation continue to threaten the livelihoods of the Anishinabek citizens in the southeast region.

Water Session Proceedings

Opening Greeting

Elder Jean Henry (Aamjiwnaang FN, welcomed session participants.)

Comments

Chief Chris Plain

Chief Plain welcomed participants to the community, and indicated that it was appropriate for a water meeting to be held at Aamjiwnaang, given the water issues of the community. He referred to the importance of the peaceful demonstration of First Nations at "Site 41" – a potential dump with potential to affect an artesian water supply.



Aamijwnaang First Nation, Telford Creek



Southwest Water Session Participants



Southeast Water Session Participants May 2009

Anishinabek Women's Water Commission

Chief Commissioner

Josephine Mandamin Provided a water ceremony and some messages regarding water. Messages included reference to the First Nations relationship and conversations with "Grandmother Moon"; who watches over the water; and who helps First Nations people understand water's greatness and to whom forgiveness is asked for the harm done to water.



Josephine Mandamin, Chief Commissioner

UOI presentation

Anishinabek Water Session 'Huron Region'

- Water Issues
- First Nations Water Network: seek interest

Summary of Anishinabek Traditional Knowledge and Water Policy Conference in Garden River FN in February 2008



Rhonda Gagnon, Water Resources Policy Analyst

MNR/MOE Presentations:

- Information Exchange on the Implementation of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (Presentations available)
- Agreement Overview
- Developing Ontario's Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategy
- Developing a Process for the First Nations Review of Future Proposed Major Water Diversions in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin
- Other Great Lakes Initiatives



Anne Marie Weslean, Ministry of the Environment

Water Session Discussion Points

Anishinabek Water Session 'Huron Region'

- Water Issues and the importance of First Nation involvement
 - Ron Plain would like UOI to provide assistance to ensure biological/invasive species inventories/research is done within Aamjiwnaang FN and other reserves.
 - How can UOI assist communities in asserting jurisdiction and sovereignty (e.g. in water issues like dredging and diversions). With rights come responsibilities and First Nations people need to be actively involved in water management.
 - The effects of dumps on water are an issue and questions were raised about leaching, membranes, and monitoring at dumps.
 - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada dialogue on water/fisheries issues is important. INAC meets monthly with the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Committee.
 - Josephine Mandamin is being honoured for her Mother Earth Water Walk at a World Water Day presentation on April 16.
 - UOI should develop a policy for water jurisdiction /sovereignty.
 - UOI could develop a policy regarding water withdrawals on reserve land and for commenting on water withdrawals off of reserve land.

First Nations Water Network

- Goal and Objectives, Information that should be shared / How it should be shared (format), Request for input and participation
- Participants commented that the FNWN could be:
 - Broadened to include other First Nations
 - web-based, through email/chat rooms/blogs;
 - could have standing information on issues like Site #41; water levels; location of water treatment facilities; community water boiling alerts (Kathleen Padulo to provide contact); water conservation information, precipitation
 - A body to receive analysed information from the PTO staff and provide feedback back to government
 - A body to review water proposals from both sides of border.

Water Issues and the importance of First Nation involvement

- Ron Plain would like UOI to provide assistance to ensure biological/invasive species inventories/research is done within Aamjiwnaang FN and other reserves.
- How can UOI assist communities in asserting jurisdiction and sovereignty (e.g. in water issues like dredging and diversions).
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Traditional Knowledge

- ATK is hard to express – it is a way of life, it is a way of thinking
- Mother Earth is something you take care of, it is not just a saying or a slogan, it is term of respect
- In the 1980s, ATK was shared with the Ministry of Education for curriculum development with an understanding that it would be used and appreciated, but when the Board of Education stamp went on the curriculum, it then belonged to the Ministry – this resulted in a lot of scepticism around sharing any additional information or knowledge
- First Nations perspectives on water and water management, which have been shared at various meetings and conferences, should be researched and documented.
- Once government and First Nations achieve true respect, then knowledge will be freely shared and government and First Nations will work as one.
- There is concern by First Nations of the risk that the meaning of various ATK teaching can be misrepresented by government. Knowledge changes its meaning when used out of context.
- Need to look at Motherhood to appreciate water, we all come from the water of the womb, and water takes care of us.
- The lake is a part of every point in life and every season (swimming, skating, drinking, and bathing) and for all of the birds and creatures in the ecosystem – everything is connected to the water. Water/water bodies are deeply part of all of us.
- Water is a gift provided by the Creator
- Water is living, water is alive, water has rights, water sustains life (plants, animals, edible plants, healing plants)
- Can't understand why people put things into the water or allow spills in the water – If water dies, everything dies
- Water provides life for medicines, water in itself is a medicine, and this medicine should not be exploited.
- The Aboriginal medicine wheel includes a component about taking care of the water (the medicine wheel has yellow, red, white and black components – water care is the black component)
- Water is used in ceremony, it is used in the sacred sweat lodge to help purify.
- Josephine's "Mother Earth Water Walk" is getting out the message about caring for water – e.g., water is for hand washing/related to wiping out disease
- You are with water as you come into the world from your mother's womb, this is your first teaching about water
- Water is all encompassing and we must pay attention to water.
- There is a connection of youth and health to water – it impacts our everyday lives.
- We are preaching to the converted – not reaching those that make the decisions (politicians and industry).
- The water problems are not First Nations' fault, FN are taught to take care of the water, to never waste water.
- Water is not to be treated as a commodity.

Information Sharing

- Communities would like help in completing biological inventories for invasive species and species at risk – coordinating inventories might be possible by establishing relationships with universities, organizations and government
- Request made to have federal representatives at these meetings in addition to provincial representatives
- The First Nation Water Network could be used to share information through e-mail updates, a website or blog, or attached to the UOI website
- Information shared through the First Nation Water Network could include any relevant water information. Some information shared could include: Monitoring and reporting around water levels and quality, water treatment information, maps of reservations that don't have access to water treatment, conservation initiatives, restoration and cleanup of waterways and wetlands, precipitation information and ice and snow cover, observed changes to the environment in different areas, a list of communities that have boil water advisories, information about government initiatives, information around the government's responsibility and duty to consult, early access to reports and information, information about water permits and permit holders, sources of the water being returned to the rivers and lakes
- More meetings are needed for ongoing sharing of information,
- An annual water conference should be held
- The July 7th date listed for Sault Ste. Marie to discuss the Proposal Paper conflicts with the All Chiefs meeting that week (June is also a very busy month)

-
- There are some draft tools (INAC products) available under the First Nation Water Strategy – Rod Whitlow will provide details
 - Many environmental assessments are delivered to First Nation communities for review, but many times, they don't get looked at in time due to lack of capacity and resource availability
 - Suggestion made to set up a meeting to discuss how communities can address the reports and what process they should go through to focus capacity and resources

Education / Training

- It is very important to explore and promote efficient technologies to conserve water, but we also need to be careful about green washing as people may buy these technologies and think that they don't have to do anything more to conserve water
- Elders have always been conservationists – their teachings are about the value and conservation of water – there is a need to bring back these teachings because water is a part of everything
- There are opportunities for green jobs and a link should be made between First Nations and organizations with green jobs
- Public broadcasts (TV and radio) should be developed to dispel the myth of abundance of clean water and the importance of conservation - communities and youth should be involved
- Should explore the concept of incentives (e.g., prizes for water conservation – e.g., for the best garden; make it a measurable; have competitions between households – this would get the whole family involved in water conservation)
- Public should be informed of the impacts of their actions on water – e.g., the effect of pesticides on the groundwater

Environment (Water Standards, Water Quality / Environmental concerns)

- Discussion around how dumps affect water quality – specific mention of site 41
 - potential leaching of toxins into surface or groundwater if the liner (clay or rubber) has a leak or is of poor quality
 - there is a need for monitoring and reporting on the state of dump sites – monitoring and management should be done into perpetuity
 - questions around the purpose and effectiveness of berms – whether they serve an aesthetic purpose or reduce surface water runoff – discussed the risk of increasing pressure from the dump pushing water up and over the berms
- There is concern about the quality of water from the rivers and watersheds going into the St. Clair River – there is pollution from both the land and air and this flows through the reserve on the way to the St. Clair River
- There is concern about water quality throughout the basin, especially with the quality of water discharged upstream, whether it is from an industry in Sarnia, or an industry located on the shores of Lake Superior, it affects everyone downstream

Water Quantity

- Interest was expressed in learning more about water use permit holders and reviewing criteria for permits
- Request made to UOI about UOI position on diversions and dredging in light of sovereignty issues – suggestion made to develop integrated management planning and to become actively involved in water management
- Industries that require large amounts of water to produce their product should be restricted (example: tar sands – 3.5 units of water are required to refine 1 unit of dirty oil)
- There is a trade-off between producing a product and the environmental cost (use of resources) – As refineries are built, attention should be paid to the unit of water required per unit of refined product
- Best management practices / targets/ performance indicators should be used or developed to reduce water use in refineries and other industries

Agreement Implementation

- Discussion around the signatories of the Great Lakes Charter, Charter Annex and the Agreement (Premiers of Ontario and Quebec and the 8 Great Lake States)– point made that First Nations should also have been included as a signatory
- Input from First Nations and Tribes influenced the provisions included in the Agreement and provided input to the negotiations
- Questions around who enforces the Agreement and what repercussions there would be in another jurisdiction diverts water or continues to allow large water withdrawals (example of current Nestle water withdrawal in Michigan)
- Concern was expressed around the possibility of Coke (or any other industry) bottling water and selling it under NAFTA – how and what would stop them from doing it?
- Cumulative effects of water taking and use are a concern
- It is important to communicate the importance of addressing cumulative effects (an opportunity was lost when the pesticide ban came into effect – messaging around pesticides contaminating water would have been effective in raising public concern)
- Will the exemptions under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) override the Agreement? Do they need a Permit to Take Water? Who approves the permit if an environmental assessment is not required? [follow-up on this issue is needed]
- How will the province implement the Agreement in Federal jurisdictions (waterways)?
- How are Tribes being engaged? [The Council of Great Lakes Governors are holding meetings and setting up conference calls to engage Tribes and First Nations]
- First Nations would like information on Agreement committees and opportunities for First Nation participation.

Conservation

- Legislation and regulations will be needed to ensure water conservation – the example of reduced energy consumption, but increased costs was used to illustrate that even with reduced water use, municipalities would charge more to provide the water – there is a concern that the high costs of maintaining water services and infrastructure will be passed on to individuals
- Billing for water should offer incentives for water conservation – i.e. if you use less you pay less, financial incentives for switching to low flow toilets.
- How can people be effective in saving water in small amounts at home when big companies like Nestle and Coke are exploiting Great Lakes waters? What is the legal recourse for stopping companies from shipping so much water in their products out of the basin?
- In developing a conservation program, “common sense” should be a criteria for actions – there should be a cap on water usage for specific industries – e.g., the tar sands oil refining
- Within the Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategy, reference to ‘Seeking a greater understanding of ATK’ should be changed to ‘Seek and include a greater understanding of ATK’
- The strategy should identify an activity for government to review all of the existing ATK reports, meeting and conference summaries



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NORTHERN SUPERIOR REGIONAL WATER SESSION

5.4 NORTHERN SUPERIOR REGIONAL WATER SESSION

Introduction

On July 16, 2009, Fort William First Nation hosted the Northern Superior Regional Water Session, with eight community participants in attendance. Currently, eleven Anishinabek member First Nation communities reside in the Lake Superior watershed.

Background

Lake Superior is the largest, least populated, and cleanest of all the Great Lakes. First Nation Peoples have inhabited the Lake Superior region for thousands of years and continue to live along the shores and practice traditional lifestyles, such as harvesting wild rice, fish, and wild game as part of their traditional food source.



Northern Superior Water Session Participants, July 2009

Water Session Proceedings

Opening Greeting

Elder Victor Pelletier (Serpent River FN)

Elder Victor provided the participants with a ceremony and teaching with respect to water. However, out of respect notes were not taken during this time. We would like to thank our Elder for the teachings and ceremony that was conducted for this session.

Comments

Councillor Phillip Pelletier – Councillor Phillip welcomed everyone to his community. He expressed that their landfill is full and that there is a high possibility that contamination from the landfill is entering waters in their area. The landfill is not closed and some dumping of garbage is legal, however, illegal dumping is still occurring.

Anishinabek Women's Water Commission

Comments

Chief Commissioner Josephine Mandamin

Josephine expressed that everyone should appreciate and learn more knowledge, however, she stated not to forget that we are about traditional knowledge and that our knowledge was never written. Our knowledge that was passed down to us has always been oral.

Josephine expressed that the lake is part of us, and that water is alive. Water itself is medicine; it helps ceremonies and sacred sweat lodges. Our people were careful on what natural medicines to use. Today we see water being exploited, and a good example is Nestle. We have to remember that water is our natural gift from the Creator, and water is all-encompassing.

UOI presentation

- Water issues
- First Nations Water Network – look for interest/input
- Summary of ATK Water Policy Conference in Garden River FN in Feb/08

MNR/MOE Presentations

- Information Exchange on the Implementation of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement (Presentations available)
- Agreement Overview
- Developing Ontario's Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategy
- Developing a Process for the First Nations Review of Future Proposed Major Water Diversions in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin
- Other Great Lakes Initiatives

Water Session Discussion Points

Water issues

- Concern was raised over the spraying of chemical along the water's edge in Thunder Bay to control weeds. Environment Canada is responsible for enforcing subsection 36(3) of the Fisheries Act, which prohibits the deposit of a deleterious substance into waters frequented by fish.
- Concern was raised about the movement of large ships (i.e., cruise ships) through Lake Superior in terms of water being emptied from ballasts, possibly introducing new invasive species, as well as stirring up lake bed sediments and redistribution of organisms into the water.
- There is a need to improve technical capacity within northern FN communities. A suggestion was made to develop formal linkages with university students and the communities – encourage them to undertake research or projects within the communities. Also, sharing of technical staff among communities was suggested – e.g., Red Rock FN has a Class 3 Water Treatment Plant Operator that will train staff in other communities.
- A suggestion was made to inventory technical/scientific expertise of the people in First Nations communities and off reserve and to look for ways for these individuals to apply and share their knowledge among communities.
- There was support for the development of a FN Technical Team, where communities can get quick email answers to technical inquiries. Small communities do need this type of support from UOI.
- A local issue of concern was raised – illegal dumping at a closed dump on reserve. This is a jurisdictional issue where the FN is having difficulty getting Thunder Bay police or the federal government to assist in dealing with the problem.
- A question was raised about the impacts of Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area on commercial fishing.

First Nations Water Network – look for interest/input

- Presently there are 29 members
- The FNWN is used to post job opportunities, policy/program updates from MNR, circulation of material relating to major water proposals
- Currently much information is sent to Chiefs and can be adequately disseminated. The FNWN would provide information to broader audience.
- Suggestions include a:
 - First Nations website including community concerns
 - Elaborate on capacity building opportunities including workshops, guide about how to obtain funding
 - Posting of government initiatives
 - Webpage for communities to post local initiatives
 - Technical skills support team behind the site to answer questions or concerns from members – would require resourcing.

Traditional Knowledge (including youth/elders issues)

- Contract should be available for a person to work within a community to collect traditional knowledge
- There are many sensitivities involved in collection of traditional knowledge (e.g. need for confidentiality).
- It may be up to the Chief to decide how to share knowledge from his community
- Initiate a program for youth – studying/improving shoreline habitat, reducing garbage, water monitoring

Capacity

- Funding/bursaries would help with Traditional Knowledge collection

Information Sharing

- The effectiveness of First Nation engagement initiatives should be monitored. Perhaps poll communities to determine individual's awareness of the Agreement.

Environment (Water Standards/Water Quality/Environmental Concerns)

- Diane Maracle requested a chronology of key water related agreements be sent from MOE
- An interest in how far Canada will go in matching the US funding commitment for Great Lakes clean up of \$475 M
- An interest in the status of Thunder Bay sediment cleanup as an Area of Concern
- Kathleen Padulo requested a list of the 17 Areas of Concern: investments, what has been cleaned up, what is still to do.
- A discussion about the desire for polluters to pay for clean-up – but not always possible for historic problems, that now this is often case –by –case. Now laws are in place-requiring funding be put up prior to projects, and greater penalties for spills.

Agreement Implementation

- It was clarified that a project that was exempt from an environmental assessment by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, would still be subject to Agreement provisions

Conservation

- Water conservation and public ownership/availability of water is important. We would not want extreme conditions like in Africa, where some people are being stopped from gathering dew and raindrops from trees.
- It would be important to consult with First Nations if water conservation communication initiatives would involve traditional messaging (e.g. the Sacred Droplet)
- Business and Government should be key target for conservation plans. They should be leaders in ensuring their buildings (e.g., Government office buildings/schools) contain conservation technologies.

6.0 DISCUSSION SUMMARY

There was much discussion with respect to the presentations given by both the Union of Ontario Indians and the Ministry of Natural Resources. While there was great comments and recommendations received from each regional water session, this discussion section attempts to condense and highlight the common themes that has been mentioned throughout all the water sessions. The summary of the main themes include:

- Traditional Knowledge
- Capacity
- Information Sharing
- Education/Training
- Environment
- Water Quantity
- Agreement Implementation
- Water Conservation and Efficiency
- Suggested Initiative

6.1 Traditional Knowledge (Including issues relating to Elders/Youth)

First Nations people strongly believe that water is sacred and that it is the lifeblood of Mother Earth. Water plays an essential part in our day-to-day lives and aspirations. The importance of water and the message that was received is that water must be protected and be included in traditional ceremonies. Many Traditions and teachings are not written, they are passed orally from generation to generation. Certain traditions and teachings have been written, however, the authors who wrote them are truly trusted by the Anishinabek.

There are various opinions about how to share traditional knowledge, however, initial Internal understanding and agreement is required about what to share and with whom.

Elders and Youth should have identified roles in water programs, as it is believed that adults can learn through children, as children are quick to reprimand.

There is much recovering to do from the damage of residential schools. Much of the oral tradition and language was lost, meaning and understanding was lost with it. There is a need to restore the language and meaning to the Anishinabek Nation - this includes the names of rivers and lakes.

It is important to obtain elder perspective on water issues while being aware of sensitivities and the hesitation to share information (e.g. Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge). Many First Nations youth have technical expertise, as they are newly graduated from technical programs, and their input to water policy initiatives should be sought.

6.2 Capacity

First Nations consultation costs relating to Agreement implementation should be determined and provided. First Nations have experienced financial hardship related to environmental (water) degradation, and currently do not have the capacity to adequately contribute to or ensure a solution.

There is an ongoing conflict between spirituality and the need for money. First Nations have the power and the knowledge to assist with the protection and preservation of water resources in Ontario but lack the funding for this type of work.

6.3 Information Sharing

There is an immediate need for collaboration between the First Nations and the Government of Ontario. It is believed that the Ontario (and Federal) Government is in a position of power to implement positive change, and they must take immediate urgent action to do so. First Nations people are looking to see how government is listening to and acting on information that is being said at these meetings. First Nations want to ensure that what they are saying is having a positive impact.

First Nations have a historic presence in the Great Lakes Basin. The First Nations people link their long-standing history in the Great Lakes and their survival skills in the area as the reason for the Ontario government to seek their assistance in these matters. There is a general belief among First Nations that provincial water legislation does not protect treaty rights, caters to the rich and makes the poor (e.g. First Nations) suffer. Past events have caused First Nations to generally distrust actions of the government related to water issues. First Nations want the Political Treaty Organizations to be united in dealing with water issues, and to provide the service of analysing and sanctioning the masses of information from the government before it is forwarded to communities. First Nation lawyers should do legal analysis on provincial policy (e.g. Agreement regulations).

First Nations have the obligation to speak out about water issues, to develop a “water platform” and to strategically implement the platform, including using media to get their message out. The First Nations people believe in encouraging “grass roots” activism. The First Nations people see water issues holistically and do not want to deal with issues by distinguishing them into components (i.e. quality / quantity).

Anishinabek people need to be in communication with the Government of Ontario during the implementation of the Agreement, but should also increase networking with each other and within other First Nations communities on a continual basis. Now and in future meetings, participants need to have time to share the information presented with their Chief/ Council for their review and input. There should be a process established for reviewing regional proposals.

6.4 Education/Training

Messaging from First Nations about the value and care of water should be prepared and provided to non-First Nations schools.

Enhancement of learning opportunities is required for First Nations regarding water. These programs should be relevant, should meet Ministry of Education guidelines, and should enable participants to adequately address environmental issues. For example, training is required for First Nations water operators to ensure drinking water standards are met.

6.5 Environment (Including Water Standards, Water Quality and other Environmental Concerns)

Ensuring good drinking water quality on First Nations reserves is of top priority. Clarification regarding the difference between provincial / federal drinking water standards is required. The government should be accountable for the standards being met on First Nations reserves.

Anishinabek people have experienced environmental degradation – i.e. not being able to drink from lakes and rivers any more, fish spawning problems, an increased amount of cancer within First Nation populations. It is believed that more effort on the part of the government is required regarding monitoring and enforcement of all water related standards and regulations. There is a need for urgent action – to stop the disregard of environment by the rich, to enforce provincial laws better (ballast water controls, industrial discharge, monitoring of water use)

First Nations people see reminders of the severity of environment degradation if no action is taken - like the black out in Ontario in 2003 or the drinking water tragedy of 2000 in Walkerton.

6.6 Water Quantity

First Nations are concerned about the impacts of dams on existing natural channels. More information is needed regarding the status of lake levels and causes of lake level fluctuation.

6.7 Agreement Implementation

There is a need for everyone to be involved with protecting water. First Nations have already demonstrated positive impacts on the Agreement through a revision of having a tougher stand on diversions.

First Nations people seek involvement in the process of policymaking, and development of regulations. There is a need to strategize about how to best continue involvement in Agreement implementation (e.g. Regional Review).

Continued information sharing is desired between First Nations and the province regarding Agreement implementation and should always include technical procedures. The role of the federal government related to Agreement implementation with respect to First Nations requires further clarification.

6.8 Water Conservation and Efficiency

First Nations can have significant input for the people of Ontario about how to value and conserve water (e.g. through Traditional knowledge). Legislation alone is not enough, and there is a great need for an education/awareness campaign.

Government needs more effective monitoring and enforcement, while not allowing powerful entities to continue environmentally harmful practices. First Nations believe that everyone should have to conserve water, especially large water users.

There is much support for initiatives and programs to improve water conservation and efficiency in the areas of public awareness/ education, training for water operators, involvement of youth and elders, enhancement of education programs and support of related “grass roots” initiatives.

6.9 Suggested Initiatives

During the course of the four meetings, many suggested initiatives were recorded. They are categorized and listed below.

6.9.1 Research/Data Gathering Initiatives

- Research names of rivers and lakes – this will restore meaning, help to further understand water related teachings. Work with government to “give back” the names (and their meaning).
- Obtain funding/grant to assist with a Traditional Knowledge collection.
- Use First Nation Water Network as a database of information for First Nation people. It could include monitoring results, reporting, water levels and quality reports, water treatment information, boil-water communities, early access to reports and information – including possible proposals for review.
- Create a database of First Nations technical/scientific expertise and look for ways for the identified individuals to assist in communities where possible.
- Encourage Universities to develop formal linkages and to engage in research projects with First Nations communities to assist with research of natural resource issues.
- First Nations would like funding for completing biological inventories for invasive species and species at risk.

6.9.2 Education & Training Initiatives

- Use cartoons to teach about water issues (i.e., Effects of pollution on water)
- Provide educational opportunities through the Anishinabek Education Institute (relevant online courses), meeting guidelines of the Ministry of Education at the high school level.
- Provide basic technical information to First Nations – e.g. “what is a water sample?”
- Have older youth teach younger youth.
- Develop a water festival pilot (on reserve, and FN information for off-reserve festivals), provide programming for daycares.
- Organize campouts – to encourage youth to connect with the natural environment.
- Develop water related curriculum for youth at schools.
- Create a self-assessment tool for individuals to determine how much water they are using.

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- Create water education programming for early-childhood education facilities.
 - More First Nations water inspectors and needed.
 - Make better utilization of media resources to assist First Nations in spreading the word about their concerns and thoughts about water issues.
 - Explore the idea of incentives more – have neighbourhood contests to see what family can reduce their water use the most.
 - The First Nation Water Network could also be used for training purposes – online courses and tutorials and for ‘green’ job postings that would be of interest to First Nations.

6.9.3 Government Level Initiatives

- Document what we have heard to date from First Nations at these and other meetings and show how it is being acted on through Agreement implementation.
- Government can encourage grass root initiatives (e.g. Municipal level ban on water bottling)
- Support “adopt a water course” programs
- Look into how to support Josephine Mandamin’s Women’s Water Walk

6.9.4 Union of Ontario Indians (UOI) Initiatives

- a policy for water jurisdiction/sovereignty
- develop a policy for water withdrawals on First Nation reserve land.
- develop standards for commenting on water withdrawals off of reserve land (proposals from other jurisdictions)
- provide information to First Nation communities about available tools and information to educate youth about water issues.
- develop online courses to further technical knowledge in First Nation communities regarding water and natural resources.

7.0 CONCLUSION

First Nation communities have been severely impacted by the degradation of surrounding watersheds and water bodies. Our citizens have a way of life that is heavily reliant on water, so we as the Anishinabek Nation, we have a responsibility to our watersheds. We will continue, but are not limited to:

1. Raise awareness, educate protect and preserve our Treaty Rights and Jurisdiction over water;
2. Support our Anishinabe-Kwe who are taking back their responsibility to care for the water;
3. Incorporate the Anishinabek Traditional Laws within in the communities;
4. Promote cultural awareness within our communities and to governments;
5. Facilitate and involve our youth to increase their understanding.

APPENDIX A



ANISHINABEK REGIONAL WATER SESSIONS
MARCH 23, 2009
8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
Whitefish Lake First Nation
AGENDA

8:30 AM – 8:45AM	Opening Prayer
8:45 AM – 9:15 AM	Traditional Water Ceremony – Women’s Water Commission
9:15 AM - 10:00 AM	Opening Comments – Hosting Community Chief & Elder
10:00 AM- 10:30 AM	Anishinabek Women’s Water Commission – Teachings / Discussion
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	<p>Union of Ontario Indians Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ First Nation Water Network ◆ Report from the Anishinabek Traditional Knowledge / Water Policy Conference – Held in Garden River FN, February 2008 ◆ Other Updates
11:00AM- 11:15 AM	Break
11:15 AM - 12:00 PM	<p>Information Exchange on the Implementation of the Great Lakes .St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources (MNR/MOE presentation with a facilitated discussion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Agreement Overview – Protecting the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Waters ◆ Developing Ontario’s Water Conservation & Efficiency Strategy
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM	<p>Information Exchange on the Implementation of the Great Lakes .St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources (continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Developing Ontario’s Water Conservation & Efficiency Strategy (continued) ◆ Developing a Process for the First Nation’s Review of Future Proposed Major Water Diversions in the Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin ◆ Other Great Lakes .St. Lawrence River Basin Initiatives
2:30 PM-2:45 PM	Break
2:45 PM – 4:30PM	<p>Discussion lead by the Anishianbek Women’s Water Commission and Local Elders on the changes that are happening with Earth & Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Opportunity to discuss local issues, initiatives and / or projects ◆ Women’s concerns about the Water and our Mother Earth
4:30PM - 5:00 PM	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Closing Prayer</p>



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