

World Water Day

Jimelda Johnston Speaks Out for Mother Earth

Stories and photographs by
Danny Beaton Turtle Clan,
Mohawk Nation
www.dannybeaton.ca

We first met in Cape Croker in 1990 during the Gathering of Elders for Bedehbun; Tom Porter was there, the late John Mohawk, Jim Dumont, Albert Lightning, that beautiful Mohawk woman with the white hair, Ann Jock, Basil Johnston, Leonora Keeshig, and so many more. That was awesome and a beautiful experience in the Cape. Wilmer is still here and he is over 86 years old now. Wilmer is one of the few who are left. I was born and raised in Cape Croker. My mom is Delina Keeshig, my dad is Orville Johnston. My parents were born in Cape Croker by the Georgian Bay. They were both very active community people; they wanted us to be raised on the reserve because they wanted us to have that sense of belonging and the sense of ownership. My dad was a fisherman but he also worked as a policeman, as a peacekeeper, for about 20 years; he



From left: Danny Beaton, Jimelda Johnston, Wilmer Nadjiwon
Photo by Stuart True

was a war veteran and a professional boxer. It helped with us, by teaching his kids how to protect themselves.

Danny, I think one of the silver threads to who I am and everything I've been involved in is my past growing up with the land and on the

land. The healing that the land has given us, growing up as children even though there were bad experiences too. We had the land, we were always out in the water, we were always in the bush which my dad believed was our church, he really made our freedom

available to us. A lot of outings, a lot of days in the bush using rocks for our plates, catching crabs, going fishing, riding home at night on a bed of cedar boughs, the smell of the cedar I

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Water Day Cont from prev page

remember that. Only to find out later as I grew up it was one of our sacred medicines. Then learning how to use that medicine in different ways. We had a lot of apple trees, we would leave in the morning go out and our parents didn't worry about us. We knew where all the good apple trees were, we knew where all the best spots to pick berries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, there was such a feeling of freedom, I guess the spirit of freedom that I had, that feeling I had as a child growing up on a reserve was reality and is a memory in the history of my people. They took us fishing all the time, they told us fishing stories all the time, how every family used to go out every night and there would be a hundred boats out there, you could go out on the dock and see the horizon at night, was spectacular with our people out there in their boats. Wilmer Nadjiwon knows all the stories, he still tells them, he still reminds me of the way it used to be.

We had a healthy diet; I remember the best dish I ever had was my grandmother's fish pie, it was a treat. We always had the best fish soup, I remember the old people coming to our house to eat fish heads. All parts of our fish were a delicacy, when we would get together the way we would eat them fish was delicious, our people made the feast look succulent the way they ate it up. I learned a lot just sitting with my people listening to the stories of the reserves from the elders how hard the struggles were.

I remember talking to a woman last night about peeking downstairs when I was young and seeing the men in the kitchen late in the middle of the

morning and they would be cutting up a deer because it was illegal to hunt at times when we were hungry. The government had programs to control us and the animals. So we had to hunt in secret, we had to cut up our deer at night in secret so we wouldn't be caught by government agents. We had to live in secret sometimes but it was worth it, our food was delicious. Times were tough but we could always go hunting and fishing, we never went hungry, people shared food, there was always plenty. People knew when others were having a hard time so there was sharing and support going on in the community. It's not there today.

I was born in 1955 and I have seen how things have changed, there's a lot of brokenness. There's a lot of healing that needs to happen. Knowing how sacred Cape Croker is to indigenous people around the Great Lakes, at one time it was a healing place. There is a water spirit in Georgian Bay, that's why we make offerings and do ceremonies. There were some anthropologists who came here and did some studies and told us Cape Croker is over 3,000 years old and it has been a gathering place for that long. We as Ojibway and Chippewa people need to establish a relationship by making offerings to the spirit of the water in a big way because of all the abuse the water has seen. This will help us in the future by working hard for this relationship with Mother Earth's Blood. We need to take our old songs that were sung and sing them in a way that our ancestors will hear them and help us to bring the land back to the way it was and revive the water to the way it was for our ancestors. We need to heal the water

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Water Day
Cont from prev page

so that the water can heal us. There are signs today about how valid our way of life was, how life giving our culture was in a healing way. Our songs worked in balance, in harmony, in rhythm with the sacred elements. We were in harmonious motion and relationship with the universe for thousands of years evolving with the four seasons. I find that our community are relationship people and everything around us we have a relationship with. The Earth, the Fire, the Air that we breathe that carries everything that is in energy that we work with and Mother Earth's Blood, the Sacred water that we drink.

The Water is not like it used to be, they are putting fish in the water that are alien to the environment and these alien fish are destroying all the indigenous fish life. There are toxins in the Bay, four feet high in some places from fish farming. There is a lot of waste being created now from mismanagement; waste kills everything; waste kills life. Christian Island, Perry Island, Midland, Penetanguishene, Cape Croker, Wiki, that is our whole fishing area and it has been for thousands of years for all our Indian people and all the nations of our people living there, it is a biosphere. Our people have been struggling hard to educate Canada about the sacredness of the Great Lakes, Georgian Bay and Mother Earth ever since they brought mailboxes to our communities and Ontario Hydro started sending us all these bills to pay up while we live on our own territories. Ontario Hydro has been sending us bills ever since they came on to our land. How is

that right? No one is conscious of our water at Ontario Hydro; there is no respect. We are surrounded by water and now we are surrounded by nuclear power plants, fish farms and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, they are stalking fish in Midland and Penetanguishene; the toxins from the fertilizers are never removed that is another impact on the water. How effective are these treatment plants, Danny, we are watching activities going on which are really criminal to life.

Our communities are boiling water up north and you can see pollution contamination in our creeks all over our territories especially in the past twenty years, when is it going to stop?

Our people are trying to bring awareness to the world but sometimes the work goes slow and changes don't happen as fast as they should. We need to work together because we don't have time anymore, because there is so much to clean up from pollution. That means if things aren't cleaned up our children will not have quality water to drink.

Our songs will help the water. We need to be singing more to the water. We have proof that sounds help and heal water which is something our people had in songs. The vibration of the music and song I connected to our Creation Story, the Rattle represents the first movement of the water, the first beginning with sound and how all things lined up and began to take form. Our Ceremonies represent the vibration of creation, the Drum touches so many people and brings us back to that first movement. It's a beautiful feeling just listening.

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Application forms are found on the Husky website www.huskyenergy.ca. Applications must be completed and returned to Husky Energy by May 31 at 4:00 p.m.



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Please join the Facebook Campaign to Stop Dump Site 41

www.thepetitionsite.com/1/stop-dump-site-41

Target: Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Environment Minister John Gerretsen

Sponsored by: Danny Beaton
(Turtle Clan, Mohawk Nation)
The Council of Canadians
Citizens Concerned for Safe Water
Green Party of Canada
Sierra Club of Canada



We the undersigned demand that the Ontario Government reverse its decision granting permission to drain water from the aquifer at Site 41 in Simcoe County to allow for a landfill to be built on the site for the following reasons:

1. Scientists have referred to the pristine artesian aquifer in the area as one of the cleanest sources of freshwater in the world, comparable to ancient arctic ice. The water is so clean it can be used as a benchmark for gauging the purity of other water around the world.

2. There is widespread resistance to the proposed dump site within the communities around the

aquifer. The citizens and First Nations of Simcoe County are demanding that the County explore other options to manage waste by implementing waste reduction strategies, upgrading the 50 existing landfills, and recycling recyclable products lying in older landfills.

3. Several sources, including Environment Canada, agree that Canada is on the brink of a freshwater crisis. It is important that we make the protection of freshwater sources -- not the placement of new landfills -- our first priority.

4. All life drinks from the springs that will be drained: beaver, bear, wolves, deer, fox, coyotes, turkeys, eagles, ducks and many others. The draining of the aquifer at Site 41 will affect the Wye River and Wye Marsh -- an important bird sanctuary in Ontario. Your government must assess the impacts on the entire ecosystem of draining this crucial water supply.

5. Building a dump site on a pristine aquifer fundamentally contradicts your government's stated goal of moving Ontario "toward a zero-waste future."

6. The native peoples have not been consulted about the development of a garbage dump known as Site 41 in the territories of Georgian Bay and the Ojibwe, Chippewa, Metis, Wendat (Huron) and Mohawk Nations.

We are counting on you to make the right decision. Put a stop to Dump Site 41!



Coalition launches Facebook campaign

BY DOUGLAS GLYNN

The campaign to stop Simcoe County's landfill Site 41 is going global on the Internet.

A coalition of environmentalists and social justice activists told a news conference at Queen's Park yesterday that they are launching a petition on the Internet site Facebook calling on Premier Dalton McGuinty and Environment Minister John Gerretsen to halt the controversial dump.

Danny Beaton, a Mohawk environmentalist, was joined by Elizabeth May, Green Party leader; Maude Barlow, senior advisor on water to the President of the UN General Assembly, and long-time Site 41 opponent Steve Ogden in calling on the government to stop the dump.

Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop, who last year introduced a Private Members' bill in the Legislature aimed at stopping Site 41, said in an interview that he hopes people across Canada will respond to this latest effort.

"I've said before that Site 41 is a mistake," Dunlop said. "The best thing would be for everybody to save face; to drop this thing and move on."

"Hopefully this (Facebook) effort works and the Premier and Environment Minister listen," he added.

Beaton, who with Steve Ogden, walked from Tiny Township to Toronto in November to publicize their concerns about the impact of a dump over what has been described as a "pristine aquifer," told the news conference that proceeding with the dump "is a form of eco-genocide."

"The aquifers and waters of Georgian Bay do not belong to us," Beaton said, "they belong to our children. It is our responsibility as adults to protect the water for them"

By failing to act in the public interest, the Liberal government is "allowing the potential destruction of one of most pristine water supplies in Ontario," he added.

Barlow, who is also chair of the Council of Canadians, said it is a myth that Canada has an abundance of water resources. Twenty per cent of the municipalities in Ontario experienced water shortages last year.

May told reporters that the federal government has failed to consult with aboriginal people about the impact of Site 41. She said the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has failed to adequately investigate its potential impact on McDonald Creek.

"If the McGuinty government is serious about protecting Ontario's water and reducing waste, it needs to revoke the (County's) water taking permit immediately," she said.

Ogden said if the Ministry of the Environment is serious about creating a zero waste society it can prove it "by killing this dump site now."

Beaton said support for the campaign is growing. "We have the backing of the Sierra Club of Canada, the Environmental Law Association and the Ontario NDP."

Opposition to Site 41 has also spread beyond Ontario.

The Montana-based Traditional Circle of Indian Elders and Youth, a grassroots group of spiritual and cultural leaders from throughout North America, has also urged McGuinty to stop the landfill.

In a letter to McGuinty, Eric Noyes, the organization's executive director, called the premier "to consider carefully the proposed action, which puts at undue risk the precious waters that belong not to you but to your children and their children's children."

"We protest in the most severe terms the proposed Dump Site 41 and ask for your help to cease the proposed action. If not, water will be contaminated at the expense of our children, yours and mine alike."

Approval of landfill Site 41 was initially sought by the North Simcoe Waste Management Association (NSWMA), which included Midland, Penetanguishene, the townships of Tay and Tiny, Victoria Harbour and Port McNicoll.

The application was rejected by a Joint Board in 1989 after public hearings. As Ray Millar, former community monitoring committee chair, said in a letter to Gerretsen last year: "In November of 1989, the Joint Board found that the EA (environmental assessment) carried out by the proponent (NSWMA) was irredeemably deficient', the site selection process was non-existent', site comparison flawed' and the overall process was not logical, traceable or replicable."

The NSWMA reportedly appealed to the then Liberal government of David Peterson.

In June of 1990, the Cabinet through an Order-in-Council, rescinded the Joint Board decision and directing a resumption of the hearings. Site 41 was eventually approved.

At the time, the board chair, Robert Eisen, wrote, in part: "I am unable to reconcile the Board's previous findings and my interpretation of the OIC (Order-in-Council) in this regard. In the final analysis, I must regard the OIC as an interim order, the provisions of which nullify the Board's earlier criticisms'."

In 1990, the County of Simcoe assumed the responsibility for waste management.

Preliminary work at Site 41 began last year. In December, the Ministry of the Environment granted the county's application for a permit to take water.

A statement issued by Simcoe County after the permit was approved said it expects construction will be complete by autumn 2009, allowing the site to be fully operational by the end of next year.