

Water Walker – Josephine Mandamin

Indoor/Outdoor Activity

Curriculum: science, biology, social studies, wellness

Josephine Mandamin (February 21, 1942 - February 22, 2019) was an Anishinabek First Nations Grandmother and Elder from the Wikwemikong First Nation on Manitoulin Island in Ontario. Every day, like women in her family before her, she would pray and sing for the water. Starting in 2003, Josephine walked every spring on a series of water walks to protect water. Carrying a copper pail and a staff, she walked over 17, 000 km completing the circumference of all five Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River.

“We’ve known for a long time that water is alive. Water can hear you. Water can sense what you are saying and what you are feeling. There’s been a place where I put tobacco in the water, where the water is so still. It was dead. I prayed for it. I put my tobacco in the water and my tobacco started floating around. So the water came alive. It heard my prayers. It heard the song. So I know it listens, and it can come alive if you pay attention to it. Give it respect and it can come alive. Like anything. Like a person who is sick....if you give them love, take care of them, they’ll come alive. They’ll feel better. It’s the same with our mother, the earth, and the water. Give it love.”

Instructions:

- Watch the following three video clips to learn more about Josephine’s water walks and how she understands water from her lived experience and traditional teachings.
 - [Video 1](#) (10 min)
 - [Video 2](#) (9.5 min)
 - [Video 3](#) (5 min)
- There are many ways society gains knowledge. Science and the scientific method are one way. Traditional Ecological Knowledge is another. Think about what you have learned from your own experience, learnings, and Josephine’s teachings to complete the following table.

Ecosystems – Western Science & Indigenous Ways of Knowing	
How does Western Science define an ecosystem?	
How would Josephine Mandamin, an Indigenous Elder, define an ecosystem?	
What is similar between a Western Science and Josephine's Indigenous view of an ecosystem?	
What is different between these two worldviews?	
Provide a definition of an ecosystem incorporating both worldviews.	
In your opinion, does science benefit from incorporating an Indigenous worldview?	

Learning Extension – Nature Check-In

Materials: science journal

Instructions:

- Take a walk outside and look for a water source in your nearby nature or local park. It could be a creek, pond or an object that represents water to you.
- Walk for 15 minutes and reflect on why water is important to you.
- In your science journal, draw your water source or object and in a few sentences or sketch, capture your feelings/thoughts.