

We walk the Sibi Kitchi Gami (St-Lawrence River) and part of the Kitchissippi (Ottawa River). Together, the Great Lakes and St-Lawrence River are considered the largest freshwater system in the world and hold approximately 21% of the world's surface freshwater supply; 84% of North America's surface freshwater and drinking Water source for more than 40 million people in Quebec, Ontario and 8 U.S. states.

(<https://glslcities.org/fr/a-propos-de-nous/a-propos-de-la-region-des-grands-lacs-et-du-saint-laurent/>)

"From Lake Timiskaming, the river flows southeast to the Ottawa River, where it tumbles over Chaudière Falls and further takes the Gatineau and Rideau Rivers.

The Ottawa River empties into Lac des deux-Montagnes and the St-Lawrence River in Montreal. The St-Lawrence River and Seaway are of vital geographic and economic importance to the Great Lakes system, connecting lakes to the Atlantic Ocean and providing navigation for deep-draft ocean-going vessels. At about 800 miles (1,287 km) long, the St-Lawrence River can be divided into three major sections: the Freshwater River, which extends from Lake Ontario to just outside Quebec City; the St-Lawrence Estuary, which extends from Quebec City to Anticosti Island; and the Gulf of St-Lawrence, which leads into the Atlantic Ocean.

The St-Lawrence River flows 226 feet between Lake Ontario and Montreal to allow ships to cross the river and travel to and from the Great Lakes. The Seaway created the last link in the Great Lakes St-Lawrence systems. The St-Lawrence River system connects Duluth to Minnesota, some 2,340 miles (3,766 km) away at the head of the Gulf of St-Lawrence, through a complex network of lakes, rivers, deepened channels, locks and canals. Source :

<https://www.glc.org/>

Ginawaydaganuc – We are all connected

Why a Walk for Water? In 1995 Grandfather William Commanda (GWC) walked for Earth, he was a great pioneer of Water awareness.

In 2000, the women resumed Water ceremonies on Victoria Island after more than 400 years of hiatus, these ceremonies continue today every year at the Bear Moon in February; this ceremony began when an Algonquin woman received the Water song in a vision/a dream, a song that dates back hundreds of years that teaches us that our grandmothers already knew that Water was threatened. In 2004 the gathering of the *circle of all nations* focused on Water and inspired many people to take back their personal responsibility for this element on which all life depends. In 2006, GWC organized and facilitated the WaterLife conference to ignite a passion for the Ottawa River, the *Kichissippi – the mighty river* of his ancestors, through ceremonies (Pipe ceremonies & Full Moon ceremonies) with Elder Peter DeContie. In 2011 Josephine Mandamine initiated the Water Walk for Mother Earth joining the 4 directions of Turtle Island.



From May 1st to May 8th 2011, there was the first walk organized by the Algonquins including Louise Wawatie it was the Algonquin Water Walk for Mother Earth.

Kitigan Zibi - May 1st, 2011

Barriere Lake - May 2nd, 2011

Kitcisakik - May 3rd, 2011

Lac Simon - May 4th, 2011

Abitibiwinni - May 5th, 2011

Timiskaming - May 6th, 2011


Long Point - May 7th, 2011

Eagle Village & Wolf Lake - May 8th, 2011

The Water walk is a personal journey, the Water walk is a way for us to create a relationship with Water. Our body is mostly composed of Water and just like the waters of the oceans, the tide also rises. Grandmother Moon is the one taking care of all Waters including the Water inside our body and when we cannot understand our emotions or able to deal with them it is mostly because we do not have a relationship with that Water.

The Water walk is also to raise awareness about the disrespect towards our Water, the lack of knowledge concerning our Water sheds and the Water beings. It is to raise awareness about our negligence and lack of responsibility concerning our Water and our Mother Earth. The Water walk is to create a strong community around Turtle Island to care for the Water. The Water walk is the responsibility of all women.

I started walking at the beginning of May 2011 and I still walk today, I have never stopped. In 2017, Josephine asked me to continue taking care of the St-Lawrence River and I committed for as long as I could walk. Have I received special permission to walk? NO,. Grandmother Josephine did not give permission she wanted all women to walk for Water, I am not sure where this idea of permission to walk for Water came from, but certainly not from someone who knew her well. We, Algonquin people, have been caring for Water for millennia and have never asked anyone's permission. The Water Walk is for everyone on planet Earth. According to our traditions, women take care of Water, so not only do we have "permission" but it is our responsibility.

In 2017 Joanne Robertson received an email from an organization in Montreal: "*We sent our document to the United Nations in October 2017. We will be present in Geneva in 2018 during the pre-sessions. Our topic is the water crisis in Canada. I would like to have the contact's name of the person responsible for the Water Walk in the province of Quebec.* Here is Joanne's response: "*Francine Payer would be happy to speak to you on the behalf of the Water walkers. I have cc:ed her on this email. Miigwech. Joanne Robertson*  *For the Earth and Water | Water Walk 2017*" Joanne has been the coordinator of the Water Walks for many years. So, in 2018, I went to Geneva for "*The Water Crisis*" to speak at pre-sessions at the United Nations on behalf of the Anishinabe Water Walkers.

In 2019 I organized my first walk, we walked from Matane to Ottawa, we received a lot of support and several people came to walk with us.

From 2020 to 2022 we walked locally (200 km from Hawkesbury to Ottawa alternating every year) It was difficult because of the restrictions imposed by the governments but we did not give up despite all the challenges we had to go through. More than 40 women and men joined these local walks, they were probably the most intense walks I have ever organized. The ceremonies were so powerful that it is impossible to describe them. Several personal healing processes began during these walks.

In 2023 we returned to Matane, we left Ottawa on July 8th and arrived in Matane on August 5th.

Here is the story of this beautiful walk:

It all started well before July, the decision was made in 2022 to walk from Ottawa, Ontario to Matane, Quebec in order to converge the Fresh Waters of the Ottawa River with the Salt Waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

In April I started contacting the communities and people who had hosted us in 2019, several had moved and others had simply moved on and were unable to accommodate us this year. I also made a small reconnaissance trip to chart our path; I did not go all the way to Matane on this trip because of the cost of gas but I went just far enough to find the right roads to use, especially to get out of Ottawa which had a lot of construction sites at that moment. Moreover, the place chosen for the departure was chosen because of the construction between Gatineau and Ottawa.

Communications, especially with communities, are very difficult. We start on my territory, the Algonquin territory and then on the way we walk through Mohawk territory in Kanehsatà: ke, then Abenaki territory in Odanak and Wolinak, Malecite territory in Cacouna and we arrive on the Mi'kmaq territory in Matane. Despite all the difficulties of email, this year we had a super nice surprise in Kanehsatà: ke, which proves to never give up, the day will come when we can meet more communities on our way and share our beautiful Water ceremony.

We start all our days at 4am, unless a ceremony is planned, and then we walk until around 3:30pm/4pm. We are in ceremony the minute the Water is poured into the copper pail and this until touchdown (TD) at the end of the day. In 2017, during the walk to Matane I had picked up a beautiful grandmother (stone) in the shape of a heart in the Atlantic Ocean and I had shown it to Josephine by telling her that I had found the grandmother for the next walk, it is she who protects the place where we stop for the night; we offer our Tobacco on the grandmother (heart shape stone) and the next morning we start to walk again at the same place we stopped the night before, our grandmother is well wrapped and put back in the car until the next TD. We walk about 50 km a day, it's a relay walk, so our cars follow us.

There are only 2 people walking at a time, one carrying Water and the other carrying the walking staff. Women in their Moontime and men do not carry Water, they carry the staff. The walking staff protects the Water carrier. Becoming a Water Walker means adopting a lifestyle that protects Water, Mother Earth and Grandmother Moon at all times. Walking is a dance just like the Moondance and the Sundance. You have to walk a minimum of 4 days a year for 4 years to become a Water walker, so it's a commitment on your part, but you can also come and walk with us at any time, we ask for a minimum of 2 days of walking and of course there are protocols to follow. There is a beautiful video made by Carlos Mao F. Cortés that demonstrates very well how the walk takes place. I invite you to watch it, it lasts less than 10 minutes. (<https://www.anishinabesacredcircle.org/marches-de-l-eau>)

A few words about the Turtle staff (Mikinak): when I had the staff made I asked for a turtle and I totally trusted the sculptor, I was not disappointed. The Turtle is the guardian of the house (the Earth), it is she who guides us. I was born into the Turtle clan and this staff is not just a piece of wood, it has incredible strength & power, everyone who carries it, can feel it. I trust the staff 100%, he is the protector. He wears 4 Eagle feathers and each has its meaning. There is a white one that I received from Josephine in 2017 when we arrived in Matane, this feather represents **wisdom** and my **commitment** to Water. Another feather, was received at the same time as my wing, the feather and wing come from a 3-year-old Bald Eagle named Victory Kitpu and this feather represents **healing**. The other feather I received from a beautiful grandmother who is now in the spirit world, Grandmother Heather, she gave it to me during her rite of passage of 65 years and represents the **Lifegivers**. The 4th feather was given to me by Leo Lanois dit Watier when he finished sculpting the staff, it came from Grandfather Claude and represents for me the **community**. It is a privilege to carry the Mikinak walking staff.

The copper pail was handmade by a young man named Victor. He went into the woods, near a stream and opened the Sacred Fire, he put so much intentions and love into the making of this pail, it was for him an unforgettable experience and we can feel the strength and serenity of our pail. She has been carrying our Water since 2019.

Day 1 - Saturday, July 8: The ceremony is scheduled for 10 a.m. at 1 Donald Street at the Rideau River, we will be 8 walkers for the first 2 days. About fifteen people were present for the departure ceremony and shared a meal including Carlos Mao F. Cortés and his team Kristen on camera and Anthony on sound. Carlos had made a short film about walking in 2019 and this year he will make a documentary. We start walking around 1:00 pm, direction Matane. The temperature is nice and warm, our first stop is in Gloucester at Kim Boyer's who welcomed us with a great meal, lots of love and a nice space for our first sleep. It was a big day even though we didn't walk more than 5 hrs. Thank you Kim!

Day 2 - Sunday, July 9th: We leave at 3:30 AM to go to our first Touchdown (where the Water stops at the end of the day and where it starts the next morning) We start our walk at 4:30 AM as planned. We are still 8 walkers: Michelle Davidson-Légère (Mickey), Sylvie Méryneau, Lionel Thiebault, Suzanne Osborne, Carolle Monette, Bonita Ford, Alain Bergeron and myself. After 11 hours of walking under a strong sun, we are going to Cedar Shade campground in Alfred. We are super welcome and after hearing that we were walking for Water, we are offered a dormitory for free. A good acquaintance Lise Perras had sent an email asking them to host us and it was agreed that the price would be reasonable; so, a big thank you to Lise for this beautiful contact and a big thank you to Cedar Shade for their warm welcome. A beautiful lady named Christine Guindon from Plantagenet brings us a super good dinner, a vegetarian stew and dessert. We have a nice visit from Céline Guibord who comes to pick up Alain to take him back to his car because it was in excess; just so you can understand, our walk is a relay walk, so the first car with 4 people, 2 walking and 2 doing the relay, then all other cars must have 2 people; So we were 8 and we had 4 cars.

After dinner we do a Pipe ceremony and take care of our feet. We smoke the Sacred Pipes with our feet in the Water, this creates a very special connection with Water and Fire, moreover, we have a SunPipe and a MoonPipe. Thus, in addition to taking care of our feet we also take care of our Spirit and we take the opportunity to have a sharing circle that also takes care of our emotions and our mind. So, after a big day of walking we take care of our 4 bodies, emotional, physical, spiritual and mental. Tonight, I made a big decision and I take full responsibility for it, I gave Carlos permission to film the ceremony. As Grandfather William and Jacob Wawatie said: *it's time to create a library because our elders are becoming more and more scarce.*

Day 3 - Monday, July 10th, today we will be 7 walkers because Alain had to leave. We get up with severe rain, a deluge is in front of us, outside our dormitory there is Water almost half-leg, so we have to delay our departure; We don't leave until 7 a.m. So, we have breakfast before leaving and prepare accordingly for the day, because it will be a rainy day. We made a big detour this morning, Google map played tricks on the Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail but

we got back on the right path in a short time, just a few extra km. We stopped for dinner at the school in Plantagenet and we set-up in the back yard where we found a picnic table that we used. We knocked on the door to ask permission, because there were cars and the lights were on, but no one answered. A few minutes later a young man named Maximilien, opened the door to put things in recycling, we explained to him what we were doing and he let us use the toilet, thank you Maximilien.

Around mid-afternoon it started raining very hard again and we had to stop in a restaurant to dry ourselves a little. So today we only walked 9 hrs. Later we carried the Water on the Hudon-Oka ferry and we touch down on the other side. A few minutes later we arrived at our beautiful hostess Julie Longpré in Ste-Marthe-sur-le-Lac. She welcomed us with a great dinner and a place to sleep. Bonita was in her moons and she did a beautiful blood ceremony, we played the drum and sang some songs. Julie was very open to this ceremony in her yard. Then we went to bed after a day filled with Water ha! ha!.... Water actually has several methods to send us messages we just need to listen.

Day 4 - Tuesday, July 11: We were not in too much of a hurry this morning as we were going to Kanehsatà:ke hoping to connect with the residents. I had sent an email and received a reply but no follow-up from them so we weren't sure what to expect. We leave Ste-Marthe-sur-le-Lac at 6 AM to go to our Touchdown at the ferry to start our walk. Once on the reserve we must take the Chemin du Milieu, we have 8 km to do so about 1 ½ hour walk. We arrived on the chemin du Milieu and after a few km I saw a sign that says health center, education center, I decide to do a TD to determine our next step because we had not yet seen anyone. So, we touchdown at the health center and we meet a lady named Viviane and she tells us that everything is closed because July 11 is a public holiday on the occasion of the crisis of 1990 - *The Oka Crisis, also known as the Kanehsatà:ke Resistance, was a land dispute between a group of Mohawk people and the town of Oka, Quebec, Canada, which began on July 11, 1990, and lasted 78 days until September 26, 1990, with two fatalities. Eventually, the army was called-in and the protest ended. The golf course expansion was cancelled, and the land was purchased by the federal government. However, it did not establish the land as a reserve, and there has since been no organized transfer of the land to the Mohawks of Kanesatake. The crisis was sparked by the proposed expansion of a golf course and the development of townhouses on disputed land in the Pines that included a Kanyen'kehà:ka burial ground.* Nothing has yet been resolves concerning the Pines Forest I give you these facts because Viviane suggests that we go to this sacred place in the Pine forest to do our ceremony and she explains how to get there.

This place is beautiful and I gave the walkers the teaching on the meaning of the Pine in the "*Great Law of Peace*". We were settling in for our ceremony when a man arrived by truck it was John, he announced that they were waiting for us at the center with a meal ... Wow.... How special is it that he finds us in this forest? Very special.. Linda his wife shows us around the center/museum, she shows us the language classes, impressive, everything is super well organized and I knew that we were in the presence of traditionalists. A beautiful feast is served including traditional soup, several people join us. We are offered to go near the Water to do our ceremony. The 3 Clan-Mothers are there and several elders, plus 13 women join the Water ceremony, a first for them, there are many emotions. What a beautiful day, we all hope to keep in touch and organize more get together during the year. When we walk for Water, the meeting with the communities is so important and one of our objectives is precisely to meet the communities and share the Water ceremony. This day will forever be etched in our hearts. Thank you, life!

It was already 1PM when we resumed the walk, tonight 3 walkers leave us, they will come back to join us for the last 4 days of the walk. So, we walked until 4pm.

Tonight we have no place to sleep, we couldn't of known that we would spend part of the day in Kanehsatà: ke, so it is one of the unexpected event of the walk and one that I call a beautiful surprize. We rented 2 rooms in Oka at L'Abaye St-Benoit and we have a small dinner at the restaurant Chez-nous.

Day 5 - Wednesday, July 12: We are now 4 walkers and we will do the whole trip together to Matane (Sylvie, Mickey, Lionel and myself). We leave early this morning, Sylvie will walk with Lionel, Mickey and I will walk alone and carry the Water and the staff. This will be a first for Mickey. In the morning I always follow the walkers with my car until the sun rises for safety so from 4 to 5 there are only 2 teams and 1 relay car. We did good time today and we made it to Terrebonne, 11 hours walk. Well done walkers!

Our hostess for tonight is Jocelyne Leblanc, a reference from Viviane Doré-Nadeau, thank you Viviane you are always there to help us during the walk. Jocelyne welcomed us with open arms with a good dinner, she even took out her dish and soaked her feet with us and offered us fresh mint from her garden in herbal tea and for our feet. What a beautiful person! Small note: every night we take out our basin and take care of our feet, it's part of the walking ritual.

Day 6 - Thursday, July 13: We leave Terrebonne at 4am like every morning and our goal today is Lanoraie. Mickey walks till lunch and then she has to leave us until tomorrow morning for a family obligation. So, we have 1 car and 3 walkers. It's another rainy day and we had to stop this morning to dry and then again for lunch. We encounter a lot of construction, just over 2 hrs of extra walking just for detours. We had to drive the Water as there was part of a road that was not accessible to walk. This year I had to make decisions because of situations never encountered in the past but I always consulted the team to get everyone's opinion. So, to cross the Water by car we have designated a walker to hold the Water in her arms (in a glass container, the same one that is used in the evening and well wrapped in a red cloth) the passengers of the other cars offer Tobacco along the road; A bit like when we take a ferry. We arrived in Lanoraie on foot and the sky is overcast, it's not very reassuring. Marielle comes to meet us and we waste no time in getting to her house. Ouff... Just arrived in time, the rain falls very hard and the wind is furious, we are in a tornado. Once we reach our destination there is no electricity, so no Water, Lionel brings in our big container of Water to share. We are at André Villeneuve, the mayor of Lanoraie and his wife Marielle Boisjoli. Just a few minutes after we arrived, the trees fell on the road and the paths out are now inaccessible. André and a whole team of residents work very hard to clear the paths and make sure everyone is safe.

We have nice discussions with André, a little political, but I'm doing well, I think lol. Being from the Turtle clan I stay away from all things political. We are super welcome despite the situation. I had planned a ceremony at the dock for 8am tomorrow morning so it will give us time to prepare because everything is soaked and of course still no electricity.

I have to tell you about Lanoraie and why we always do a ceremony here. This place is very special for me because during the Peace Mission we always stopped, we were always welcomed and this city has a long history of battle against the Trans-Canada-Pipelines; the Longhouse of the Wolf Clan of Kahnawake and I have always supported them in their battle.

[February-March 2015, Quebec and the Canadian Oil Order, Gérard Jean](#)

Lanoraie says no *"As mayor of the municipality of Lanoraie in the MRC d'Autray, I want to explain the municipal council's progress on the Energy East pipeline by TransCanada PipeLines.*

To begin, I would like to remind you that the municipal council of Lanoraie unanimously adopted a resolution, on March 10, 2014, in which the council categorically and energetically refuses to allow the pipeline to pass through the territory of the municipality of Lanoraie. Then, the MRC de D'Autray adopted a resolution of support, once again unanimously, by the 15 mayors of the MRC on April 9, 2014. On February 4, 2015, the council of the MRC de d'Autray adopted a unanimous resolution by categorically and energetically opposing the passage of the pipeline on the territory of the MRC.

Source: (<https://www.action-nationale.qc.ca/tous-les-articles/245-numeros-publies-en-2015/fevrier-mars-2015/le-quebec-face-a-l-ordre-petrolier-canadien/690-lanoraie-dit-non>)

So Lanoraie will always be on my list of places to stop and do a ceremony. In addition, we have also created a relationship with residents including André Desmarais and Claire Latour as well as the members of the "Comité vigilance hydrocarbures Lanoraie" of which Marielle is the president.

Day 7 – Friday, July 14: Before starting the ceremony, we need to fill our Water containers and who better than our dear Mr. Desmarais. I met André Desmarais during a peace mission, he had arrived with his dog who was carrying a small wagon with Water containers, yes, he brought us good Lanoraie Water, then once the Water disembarked he offered small rides to the children of the mission in his wagon. I have always kept in touch with Claire, his wife... What else can I say: good people that we always look forward to see again from year to year!

We finish our beautiful ceremony around 10am and we start our walk, Mickey comes back in the walk around 11am, she was there earlier but with the storm and everything else, she could not find us. The team is complete again, 2 cars, 4 people yeah!

What damage this storm has caused, there are trees everywhere on the road, still no electricity and the road is closed, it is a detour of 15 minutes by car but for us it will be 3 hrs of extra walking. At the end of this detour, we decide to stop for dinner before taking the 138 towards Visitation de l'Ile Dupas. I do a TD to find a park or a place where we can have dinner. The house just across the street has a beautiful yard with a table/swing and we knock on the door to ask

permission and the lady does not hesitate at all, what generosity. We settle in her yard and eat, she joins us and voilà, a new acquaintance, thank you Denise Boisjoli.

We arrive at our destination around 3:30 pm, we will be at the community center of Visitation-de-l'île-Dupas for 2 days before taking the ferry to go to Odanak and continue our journey on the 132 towards Matane. L'Île Dupas is another place that always welcomes us. I don't know the name of the neighbor of the center but a big thank you for helping us find the right person with the key.

Days 8 – Saturday, July 15: During these 2 days of well-deserved rest, we take the opportunity to do our laundry and groceries. The main reason for taking 2 days is that we cannot be met in Odanak until Sunday. We have a kitchen at our disposal and we take the opportunity to clean our provisions and prepare lunches for the coming days. Lionel prepares our chia pudding like he has been doing since the beginning. Suzanne thought him on the 2nd night lol... he has now mastered the chia pudding...

Day 9 – Sunday, July 16: the ferry does not open until 6:00 am and we have to walk about 4km to get there, so we leave at 4h30. The crossing goes well, we arrive on the 132 at 6:30 am and we walk until 5 pm destination Odanak. We are welcomed as always by our beautiful friend Nicole O'Bomsawin, she brought us food that we also shared with her granddaughter. We will sleep at the elder's center but unfortunately there are no elders, how sad. I love coming to Odanak but I would love to meet the community and share our beautiful Water Ceremony.

Day 10 – Monday, July 17th: as always, we leave Odanak at 4am towards Wolinak. It's always complicated with Wolinak and hoping that in the years to come we can organize ourselves better. Therefore, as with all the other communities I sent a first email in May and I never got an answer. I was not too worried because every time we went there in the past, there was never any communication but we were always helped once there. I had called last Friday and left a message and sent another email. I call again this morning; the receptionist tells me that the community centre has been transformed into a daycare and that she will do some research today to try to find us something. Meanwhile, we have 2 beautiful souls who brought us a beautiful lunch behind the presbytery of St-Grégoire, thank you Lorraine Desaulniers and Patricia Robitaille, plus Lorraine had her 2 granddaughters what a joy to share a meal with them. The 132 bears the name of *Acadian Route* in St-Grégoire and the place where we are has a long history, it knows among other things a considerable demographic expansion around 1758, with the massive arrival of Acadians deported in 1755 by the British. Alain joins us for dinner and he is very moved by this place that reminds him of the crossing of his ancestors.

I contact Wolinak again in the afternoon and she tells me that it will be impossible this year to help us, I mention having sent an email several months without response and she tells me that the person who opens the emails has been absent for several months.... Well, there's nothing we can do about it, that's the way it is. When I did a reconnaissance trip before the walk in 2019 I stopped at the band council and I thought everything was well organized but when we arrived, one month later, no one knew anything about us but we had been given passes for a shower at the gym and someone opened the community center for us to sleep. So, even with a visit beforehand our arrival was also complicated. All this to say that we must now find a place to sleep... We stop in a motel in Bécancour and of course without reservation in July it is very difficult to find 2 rooms, it is full but the owner tells me *wait a minute, I will not let you go like that, all of us here work as a team* and he calls another motel that was also full then he says I still have another option, it's in Gentilly and it has to be done online, so he organizes everything, gives me the phone and we have 2 rooms for tonight at Mustang about 20 km away. Wow thank you the gentleman from the Motel in Bécancour! Everything is done online but I have a conversation with the owner, he supports us for the Water walk and he is super nice, it is his father-in-law who welcomes us, the rooms are fantastic and the price is very reasonable. Alain has just contacted me; he brings us France who will come to walk with us tomorrow. Tonight, she will camp with Alain and they will meet us at the TD tomorrow morning in Bécancour. We eat at a potato stand tonight, a small potato truck well installed with sink, composting bin and recycling plus we are served in real dishes; super impressive... Well done!

Day 11 – Tuesday, July 18: Today would be my dad's birthday and I had a little thought for him when I woke up. We leave early as we have 20 km to drive before arriving. We are here and Alain arrives but he had car problems so he leaves France with us and I team her up with Mickey, for today she will carry the staff and then we will see tomorrow.

Rainy day but we are progressing well! Today, it is my beautiful friend Marie-Hélène Rhéault who meets us and brings us lots of beautiful things for lunch and more, we meet for a lunch break at the rest area of Lotbinière. Thank you Marie-Hélène, it was very appreciated.

It's raining quite hard so it's time to stop to dry and we were so lucky as we are almost in front of Bleuets et Cie chez Philippe in Saint-Pierre-les-Becquets. So, we stop to take a good herbal tea. Philippe had welcomed us in 2019, the blueberry farm being closed because the season was over, he just gave us the keys to the place, we were able to use his kitchen to cook our food and we slept in the restaurant section. Philippe follows us closely on our FB page, he and his wife Sonia are great people. Before leaving he offers us a beautiful basket of blueberries and some healthy cookies. Thank you Philippe! If you ever drive through St-Pierre-les-Becquets, go for a visit to the small café of Bleuets et Cie, it is a beautiful place and super warm welcome.

Note: Water is chaotic today and this is felt in the team. When the Water is troubled it is because it is not going smooth with one of the walkers.

Tonight, we will sleep in St-Apollinaire at a good acquaintance Aline Falardeau, who lets us use her apartment while she is on vacation in Gaspésie, what generosity, she had also hosted us in 2017. We are a little far from our TD but by car it is not too bad. We found only one restaurant that was open on a Tuesday night, La Fabrique it was delicious, but France is a little nervous, she is not used to protocols and she wants to leave so she is looking for a lift to go home tomorrow. Back at Aline's house, we do a Pipe ceremony because it was a very difficult day with a new walker, the ceremony is followed by a sharing circle but France refuses to speak.

Day 12 – Wednesday, July 19: France don't want to walk so she sits in the back seat where we have prepared a space for her. It will be a difficult morning, she sleeps and we walk. We are looking for a place to prepare our breakfast and we get permission from the owner of *Fruit'Aki* to use one of his picnic tables. I ask him what the word aki means, because in Spanish it means here but in Anishinaabemowin it means Earth... so he answers Earth and he tells me that here we are in Abenaki territory and that he asked permission and that the reason he wanted to use this name was to recognize that the First Nations taught them everything about berries, I found this interesting.

We stop at the municipal park of Ste-Croix for lunch and France wants us to leave her there with all her luggage, I tell her that it is not the ideal place, I do not think I need to explain everything to you in relation to France, we left her a little further away and she went home, without any problem. Thank you France for coming to experience walking and it's okay that it wasn't as you had imagined, walking is a ceremony and it's not for everyone. The Water Walk is a personal journey and it is not an easy walk.

Tonight we sleep in Lévis but we are not there yet so we will have to drive about twenty km to get there. Angèle Pelletier welcomes us to her home with a good meal and a very warm welcome. We do a beautiful Water ceremony in her garden after soaking our feet of course. Almost everyone goes to bed but I stay up because Stuart from the longhouse of the Wolf clan in Kanhawake asked me to participate in the weekly zoom and talk about the walk, I also invite Lionel to speak, it's a bit long because there is translation into French and Spanish, So we go to bed a little late but I'm very happy with the zoom. Thank you Stuart Myow for always supporting us during the Water Walk. In 2019 he came to join us in Lanoraie to share the Water ceremony by the river.

Day 13 – Thursday, July 20: my feet are sore and Mickey's too, but we don't give up. It is 4:30 when we start the walk because we had to drive a short distance to get to our TD. It is so pleasant to walk before the sun rises, we can enjoy the awakening of nature, the silence and then the song of birds, the wind in the leaves, this Earth on which we live is so amazing. Today we will cross Lévis, never easy big cities with traffic, construction, patient people and those who are less so. Red lights and even more construction, today we will have to drive with the Water once again. After properly assessing the situation, it is impossible for us to cross the construction site, there are no alternative roads and no space to walk. Tonight we will sleep at Angele's again, she will be at work so it will be pizza night, we sit on her balcony in front and soak our feet while eating, passers-by look at us a little strangely lol. What a great life we have! Thank you Angèle for your welcome.

Day 14 – Friday, July 21: This morning we leave Beaumont, we stopped at the Beaumont theater in St-Michel-de-Bellechasse to prepare our breakfast, the place was closed and we did not see anyone on site But picnic tables were available and we took advantage of them. Normally we do not stop for breakfast but with only 4 walkers we do not have time between cars to eat. Every night Lionel prepares us good chia puddings that we eat every morning with

fruit and hard-boiled eggs that we prepare in advance, so everything is ready we just need a little space to eat. Tonight we rent a trailer at *the Chalet de la Baie* in Berthier-sur-Mer and we are received by Dianne Bérubé. We manage to settle in well for the night. Our TD was made at the entrance of Montmagny but Lionel had noticed this place during the walk, it was perfect and the price was very reasonable. When we rent a room we also have to eat at the restaurant so these are big expenses for the walk.

Day 15 – Saturday, July 22nd: this morning we have 2 other walkers joining us Valentine and Carlos. This is a first for Valentine but Carlos has walked with us in previous years and he knows the walk well as he prepared the short film in 2019 but today, he will walk, no camera or sound recording, it will be a day in ceremony for him. It rained almost all day, but we do not give up, we walk. We have to go to Maria, more precisely to our Mi'gmaq sisters and brothers in Gesgapegiag for the Sundance, so we stop walking in Kamouraska around 3:15 pm, it is still raining. Valentine and Carlos leave us and we get ready for our trip, it was a long drive, we had a bad storm on the road, we don't arrive until midnight. Thank you to the Sundance chiefs, Ramona and Bernard Jerome for lending us their trailer for the night.

Day 16 - Sunday, July 23: this morning very early, we are invited to the Water Ceremony followed by the ceremony of the little people and a feast. I will not explain the ceremonies to you, the ceremonies must be lived to understand them well. One thing I can tell you is that everyone's welcome is very warm, what a beautiful community and what beautiful ceremonies.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday are preparation days for the Sundance, there are sweats every nights, cedar preparation and more, everyone keeps busy. I meet a lot of new people and reconnect with a lot of acquaintances, including my beautiful friend Anik whom I had not seen for several years.

Thursday is Tree Day and it's quite a ceremony, what a beautiful day. During the dance I will be a volunteer and I will take care of the protocols in the supporter's area. I must tell you that this is not my first Sundance, I was the grandmother of a Sundance in my territory for 12 years.

The dance ends on Sunday, it's a beautiful dance with lots of love, it's what I call a beautiful community, it's been a very long time since I had been with really good people and even if it's very far from home I would like to come back to continue supporting, plus I know a lot of people here and I met a lot of beautiful souls. Only time will tell.

Was stopping walking for 8 days a good decision? Not all agree but I think so. First of all we needed a rest, walking for 14 days with only 4 people for the majority of the time, the intense heat and rain almost every day made these first 2 weeks very difficult. Not everyone can stay in a ceremonial state, especially during a Sundance, which can be very intense. I realize that, but I am convinced that it was beneficial for everyone even if I know that for some, the Sundance is not for them. In addition, we wanted to support Mickey who is dancing here. Coming just for 4 days made no sense because of the long distance to travel and to fully understand and support a Sun dance it is important to participate in the preparation. Of course, I don't plan to stop walking every year to go to the Sundance, next year it will be something else, but a downtime is important over a long distance like this year's walk. Once the dance is over Mickey announces that she will take a few days off and will join us a little later in the week so we will leave with only one car and 3 people... Ouff I am happy that the other walkers will join us in a few days, but we will have one person too many or should I say we will be missing one car because we will be 7 with 2 cars, I do not know if you follow me, otherwise it does not matter lol.

Sunday evening, we arrive at Isle Verte and we are welcomed by Rachel Lemire, she had welcomed us in 2019, it's late and we had dinner on the road. She has a nice hostel and she receives us in a big way, we are 3 and we have 2 rooms at our disposal, the next morning she offers us a super good breakfast, we are not in a hurry this morning because it is a day of reflection and we must also go to Cacouna and prepare the ceremony of August 1st. She offers us to come back on August 1st for another sleep with the whole team this time. Wow Rachel you are so beautiful and generous xo.

Day 17 – Monday, July 31: This will be our 17th day of walking, our 24th day of ceremony since leaving Ottawa. Today we must go to Cacouna on Maliseet territory. Friday I had phoned the band council of Cacouna and I had spoken with the receptionist, she told me that she was leaving that afternoon for her vacation but that there is no problem for a lunch for a dozen people and that she will communicate with the elder Pierre Morais with whom we had

worked in the past; we will need accommodation for 3 people on Monday night, she was supposed to call me back, which she never did.

We go to the Pointe to plan tomorrow's ceremony and we have a talking circle to discuss the Sundance. Since I did not get a return call from the receptionist, I called early this morning and I speak with a Pierre, but not the right Pierre, I explained to him my conversation of Friday and he was not aware of anything, he tells me that he will reach Pierre M and call me back. Well, the day progresses and no call from the band council, so I decide to go in person. What a nightmare! I'll spare you our experience in 2019. So, the Pierre I spoke with is not here and he hasn't told anyone about our conversation of this morning, we meet General Manager Larry Jenniss, who doesn't know anything about Water walks, apparently, employees come and go in this place. Thus, I explain to him all the steps taken since May and he tells me: *I do not think it is possible to find you a place to sleep tonight because everyone has gone on vacation and today is Pierre Morais' day off.* So, I ask him what about tomorrow's lunches for the ceremony (the thing is that since 2015 Cacouna has always offered us at least one lunch) and well he answers me: *Madam, I could not even have dinner today because all the shops are emptied everyone having gone on vacation.* Did I tell you correctly that I was talking to the general director? Ouch, he thinks I am stupid or what! I swear that's what he said and I have witnesses lol.

So, I held my head high and tell him don't worry, do you give me permission to do tomorrow's ceremony on the Pointe? Before giving me the Ok, he asked me what the ceremony was about and I told him a Water ceremony followed by a Pipe ceremony and a feast. He responds of course and I invite him to join us tomorrow at noon and his employees.

Now we have to find a place to sleep, we opt for the Youth Hostel suggested by Sylvie, lucky for us there is space in the dormitories. We go to Rivière du Loup and we buy something for our dinner, we are still 3, Sylvie, Lionel and me. It will be a first for me in a hostel. It's very clean and there is a nice kitchen at our disposal which is perfect because we have a feast to prepare for tomorrow, we bought everything we will need, it's weird, Maxi was full of food lol, a little sarcasm. The night is going great.

Day 18 – Tuesday, August 1st: The girls are coming back today and I can't wait, so there will be Carolle, Suzanne, Bonita and Dominique Goyette, Suzanne's spouse will also join us and Alain will also be back which will solve my car problem.

So early this morning, after our breakfast, graciously offered by the hostel, Lionel and I start cutting the fruits for a nice fruit salad and then our vegetables for another nice salad. We bought 2 more salads, hummus and desserts.

We arrive in Cacouna and we set up by the Water, at the very place we had chosen the day before. Sylvie volunteers to go to the band council and invite people to the ceremony and the feast (of course no one came) but we had a great big feast and we had a great ceremony. What a delight to see the tide rise and the Water come to us during the ceremony, it was a memorable moment for all of us.

Since yesterday, a journalist from Rivière du Loup has been trying to reach me, I hesitate a little, but I decide to contact her and give her a few minutes, you have to be careful with TVA but she was recommended to me by Goulimine Cadôret who tells me that I can trust her and that's what I did, she did a local report and from what I saw it was good, so thank you Goulimine.

We start the walk around 2pm, direction Isle Verte, we are 8 and 3 vehicles, it's perfect.

There is a strange thing that I notice during the walk so did the other walkers: there are dead bees all over the road, hundreds all along the road from Cacouna to Isle Verte. To be followed.....

We have 18 km to do so we walk until 5pm and we arrive at Rachel's, a good dinner is served to us, there are lots of people at her place, friends from Gatineau, more precisely from Aylmer. But we have several rooms at our disposal and everything goes well despite the visitors. We have a very different schedule from most people during the walk, sleep at 19:30 at the latest and up between 3h and 3h30 not easy for our hostesses. Thank you again Rachel for your warm welcome.

Alain is going through difficult times and he tells me that he will not continue walking tomorrow, so I still find myself with a missing car; In the evening, he changes his mind and stays one more day... thank you Alain.

Day 19 – Wednesday, August 2nd: Today Bonita will walk with Alain, she is very happy to be able to carry the Water, it is a great team but at dinner time her Moons start again and I have to change the teams. The day is going well and we walk 10 km more than expected, bravo to the team and the temperature is ideal with a wind coming from the east. We walk longer days because it would be better to arrive in Matane early. Mickey comes back early this morning and our team is now full, we are 9 walkers and 4 cars. Alain leaves after the TD. Thank you Alain for all your days of walking for Water.

Note: still full of dead bees along the paths, I'm talking about hundreds of bees, everywhere adding up to thousands since yesterday.... But what is going on? What makes bees die in the MRC Les Basques? Story to follow!

Tonight we are welcomed by Isabelle Fortier in Sageterre au Bic at the Ego-Eco farm. <https://www.egoeco.ca/> Her friend Nicolas David, an outstanding pastry chef makes us pizza, homemade dough and a lot of love in his bread oven that he made himself ... it was so good, nice welcome on this land, we had 2 trailers at our disposal, what a beautiful place, I invite you to read the story of Sageterre <http://www.sageterre.org/index.php/a-propos> Thank you Isabelle and Nicolas.

Day 20 – Thursday, August 3rd: We are 8 walkers, 3 cars, everything is perfect! Today we crossed Rimouski, it is always difficult to cross this city, traffic, no place to walk and park cars and yes still construction, but we did it, we have a group that is not easily discouraged, we are a strong and resilient team. Wow another fantastic day, the wind is on the right side and the walk is going great despite the rain and pitfalls, we still exceed our goal tonight and the touchdown is in Ste-Luce, we are approaching our final destination.

Tonight we return to Rimouski to sleep. Our hosts Christian St-Pierre and his beautiful wife Lisette welcome us with open arms. Thanks to Alain Aspirot for this beautiful connexion. Wow! So Lisette and Christian were expecting 4 people and we are 8... But don't panic, we added 1 table and chairs and shared the food and everyone ate well, it was delicious. Then we visited the beautiful garden and Bonita did a blood ceremony near the grandfather (very special tree trunk) I really connected with this grandfather (Lisette's grandfather) during the songs we sang for the ceremony. Once everyone settled in for the night, we went back inside for the Pipes ceremony and soak our feet, even our hosts soaked their feet and of course Lionel prepared the chia puddings for tomorrow morning. It was a super fulfilling visit and we have new friends, that's for sure.

Day 21 – Friday, August 4: we start the walk at 4:25 am. The river is beautiful and we are pampered with the presence of seals. Despite the rain again we had a great day. We stopped in a small café to dry and warm up a little with a good herbal tea, then we go back to walk until 4:30 pm, wow we are now in St-Ulric 15 km from Matane. We didn't have a place to sleep tonight, so I contacted Youla, where we were supposed to sleep tomorrow night, but she immediately said not to look anywhere else that she and her mom Tita will host us tonight and tomorrow night. She works until around 6pm but I told her not to hurry because tonight we are going to eat at the restaurant, it is Suzanne's birthday and we will arrive after dinner. She recommends that we go at the Fabrique in Matane and that's exactly what we did. A well-deserved dinner after 21 days of walking and 8 days of Sundance. Carlos and his team also joined us and together we celebrate our last full day of walking and Suzanne's special day.

We go to Youla Bourgoin's house in Ste-Félicité, I was far from suspecting that her mother had a inn. What a welcome from Youla and her mother Tita St-Gelais, everyone has disappeared with Tita as soon as she arrived and she is taking care of everyone. Mickey and I stayed with Youla and then Carolle join us. Youla is a leader in the Sundance, just like Mickey, she also experienced the Moondance and we have lots of friends in common. We chat a little and then it's bedtime, tomorrow will also be a big day.

Day 22 – Saturday, August 5: We have about 6 hours of walking before arriving at our last TD in Matane and the last steps in ceremony. We start the walk around 4:30 am and our last Touchdown is around 10:30 am. There are a lot of emotions, Suzanne and Lionel started the walk in Ottawa and without having planned anything, they were the first team to cross Matane and they were the last team to walk and make the last touchdown. We thank our beautiful grandmother for protecting the space for the last 21 days and we retire the Water for now and place the staff in the car. We must now find a place to prepare the ceremonial food for the convergence of fresh and salt Waters and the final ceremony.

We find everything we need in the local stores and after a few turnstiles we find a picnic table that can accommodate us. It's raining a little, but not enough to intimidate us.

So let's have lunch first then get things ready. This food that is intended for the Ocean is prepared ceremonially by women only. We light the sage and smudge the place and each of us who will participate in the preparation: Mickey, Sylvie, Carolle, Suzanne and myself; Bonita is in her Moon. Dominique prepares his bundle for the smudging. There are normally 7 dishes but I only have 3 Women because Sylvie and I will carry the Water. So, we prepare 4 dishes that will be covered with a cotton fabric. There is the fish in recognition of the people of the East, the Mig'mac; berries to thank our beautiful mother Earth for the abundance; wild rice for the Western door* and corn for the Southern door.

*The route we walk every 2 years (Ottawa / Matane alternately) is very significant for several reasons, one of them is 3rd Fire prophecy: The third prophet told the people: "In the third Fire, the Anishinabek will find the way to the land of their choice, a land to the west where they move their families; this path will be revealed by the sacred shells of the Mégis (in the Atlantic Ocean). This will be the land where food grows on the Water. The ancients determined that this food was wild rice (in Kitchissippi).

Mickey had brought a small stove that was very useful for cooking the wild rice. We prepared all the food and we are ready to go. We have about twenty minutes walk from our final destination. We will all walk together and cross the bridge that will take us to the edge of the ocean. Lionel is the lead walker and will lead with the Turtle staff, then it will be me with the Water in the copper pail, then Sylvie behind me with the jar of all the Waters gathered along the way, then Mickey with the fish, Suzanne behind her with the berries and corn, Carolle will follow with the wild rice then Bonita with the bowl of Tobacco and Dominique with the smudge bowl and the medicines.

Upon arrival at the ocean Sylvie empties the Waters into the copper pail and I pour everything into the Ocean and it is mission accomplished, the Waters were converged, the Water song is sung at the same time by all the women. Dominique installs the staff holder and Lionel position the staff. Dominic proceeds to the smudging followed by Bonita with the Tobacco and we walk into the Ocean to make our offering.

Then each in turn will serve the ceremonial food to those present and then offer it to the Ocean. We sing a few songs and then sit in a circle inviting people to join us for the Pipes ceremony. There is Youla, Tita, Laurie, Christian & Lisette and 2 other women who join us a little later. The Pipes ceremony is followed by a powerful sharing circle where each walker can speak on how they feel. Then I continue with some recognitions: Sylvie completed her 4th year and can now call herself a Water Walker, thank you Sylvie, I gave her a copper cup and an owl feather (an owl picked up in 2019 during Sylvie's 1st walk). Mickey had given me necklaces with a small copper pail that I present to the walkers who completed their 3rd year: Carolle, Suzanne, Bonita & Mickey, then Lionel for having done the whole walk and completed his 1st year of walking and also recognizing all the work he has done and all the help he has given us since the beginning of the walk. And of course Dominique who has just been introduced to walking and who has done the last 5 days, rain or shine and thus completed his 1st year.

Then we end the ceremony with some songs. We now go to Youla and Tita who welcome us with so much love. We prepare the meal together; Tita had made us pudding chômeur and Laurie a tiramisu. We eat and everyone looks happy as they create new relationships. The walk is over but it will always be engraved in our hearts and each of the people we meet along the way are now part of our beautiful Water Walk family; Without your help and support walking would not be possible.

In 2024 I will celebrate my 13th year of walking, I do not know yet what I will do, but one thing is certain I will walk for Water.

This year the walk cost just over \$5000.00 and your contributions are always welcome throughout the year so that we can already plan our next walk in 2024. If we raise enough money, we would like to make Water walk T-shirts and organise a fundraiser, without your help it will be impossible. Thanks in advance, every \$20 counts. We are a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency and a tax receipt is available upon request. Chi migwetch!

