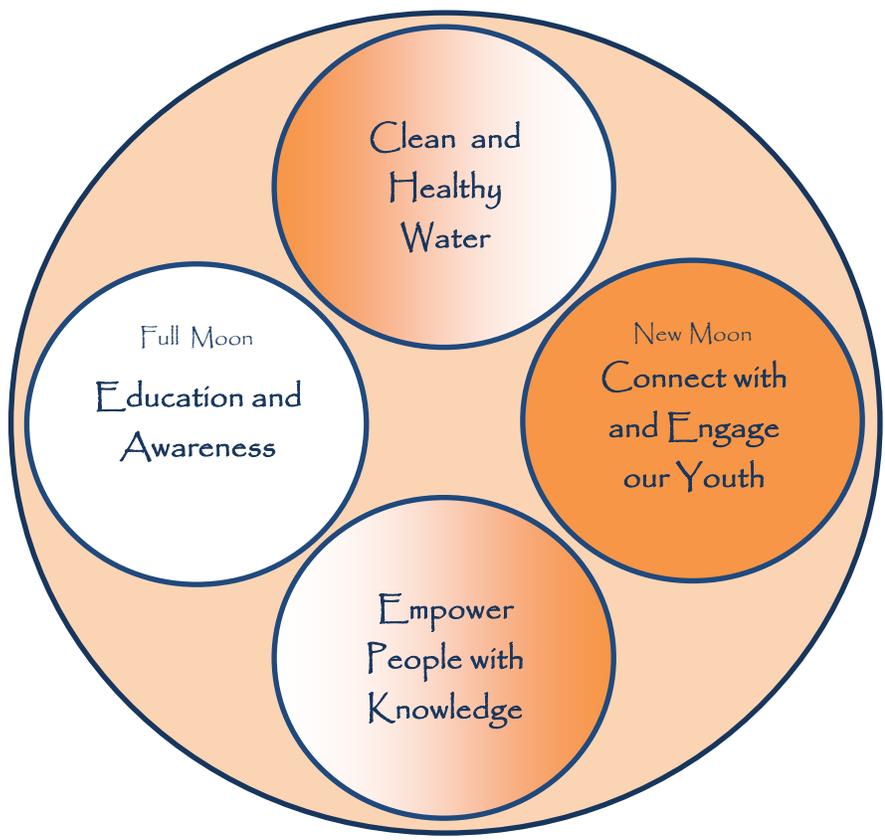


# Protecting the Waters

## VOICES OF OUR ELDERS

*...a celebration and conversation about the waters*



Hosted by

French River Visitor Centre First Nation & Aboriginal Advisory Committee

Tuesday May 10th, 2011 at the French River Visitor Centre

*...kind and gentle water*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Our Territories

- Christian Island
- › Dokis
- French River Metis
- ☾ French River Metis Youth
- Henvey Inlet
- › Kahnawake
- Magnetawan
- ☾ Shawanaga
- Wahta
- › Wasauksing
- Parry Sound Friendship Centre

## Our Friends

- Cultural Industries Council French River
- › Environment Canada
- French Planning Services
- ☾ Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve
- Georgian Bay Forever
- › Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ontario Parks

## And Facilitators of the Thirteen Moon Circles

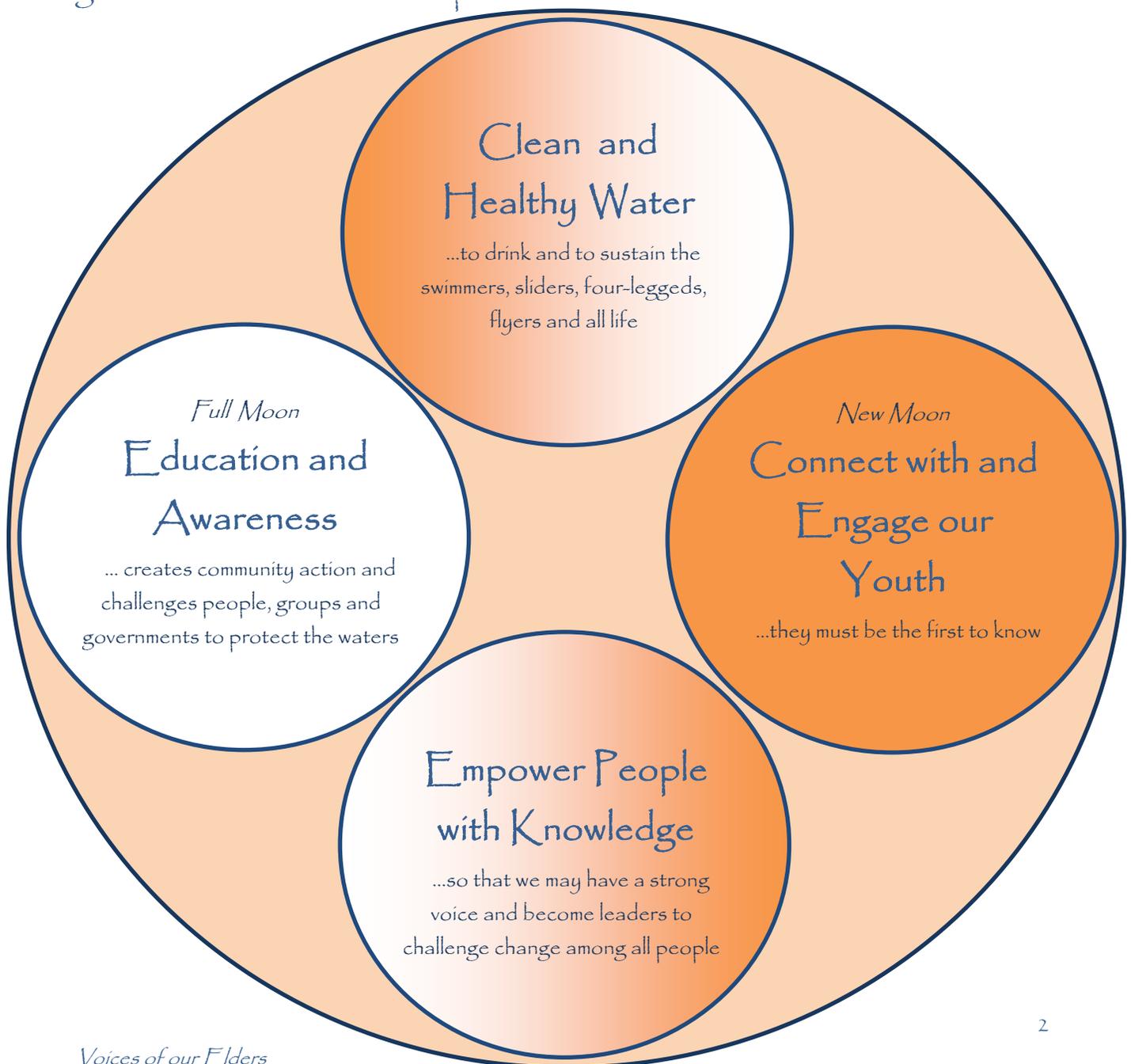
- ☾ Spirit Moon – Angie Noganosh
- ☾ Bear Moon – Nancy Noganosh
- ☾ Sugar Moon – Lynda Sullivan
- ☾ Sucker Moon – Leslie Joynt
- ☾ Flower Moon – Dawn Gagne
- ☾ Strawberry Moon – Kate Noganosh
- ☾ Raspberry Moon – Ruth Gauthier
- ☾ Thimble Berry Moon – Chuck Miller
- ☾ Corn Moon – Roger Noganosh, Evan French
- ☾ Falling Leaves Moon – Leonard Dokis
- ☾ Freezing Moon – David Sweetnam
- ☾ Little Spirit Moon – Mike Hensel
- ☾ Blue Moon Big Spirit Moon – Greg Mason
- ☾ Thirteen Moon Big Circle – Randy French

# VOICES OF OUR ELDERS

In the past we used to have to haul water from the river to use, drink and cook with. Every drop was precious and we were very careful on how we used it.

The voices of our elders tell us now that we must be even more careful to protect the waters for our children and their children.

As long as the rivers flow, as long as the grass grows we must cherish and protect the waters.



## Minwaakgimisin Nbi ~ Thirteen Moon Circle Summary

First Moon - January Spirit Moon	Empowerment	Empower people through knowledge
Second Moon - February Bear Moon	Participation	Participate + Action creates clean and healthy water
Third Moon - March Sugar Moon	Challenge	Challenge our family, friends, peers and foes to live sustainably and protect the waters
Fourth Moon - April Sucker Moon	Respect	Respect ourselves, the earth and everything in it
Fifth Moon - May Flower Moon	Education	Aggressive education and early intervention for ourselves so that we can teach our children and others
Sixth Moon - June Strawberry Moon	Sparkling	We must forever see water this way, clean and sparkling
Seventh Moon - July Raspberry Moon	Voice	Educating others by starting at home, school and work
Eighth Moon - August Thimble Berry Moon	Spirituality	Believe and never giving up on what you have and know
Ninth Moon - September Corn Moon	Educate	Create awareness and get the message out about conservation
Tenth Moon - October Falling Leaves Moon	Start Today	Start today, not tomorrow, educate people about the waters and clean up our garbage
Eleventh Moon - November Freezing Moon	Life	All creatures are connected to water, it is the essence of life
Twelfth Moon - December Little Spirit Moon	Change	Education + awareness = Change Together we can effect change
Thirteenth Moon - January Blue Moon Big Spirit Moon	Enforcement	Improved enforcement

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

First Moon  
January

Spirit  
Moon

### EMPOWERMENT

#### Why is water important to us?

- The body needs it, it quenches our thirst
- Water is a life force for all plants and animals
- Water cleanses and calms us
- We have a spiritual, cleansing and calming connection (sounds, peaceful, smell)

#### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Conserve water and use it more wisely
- Be aware of what we are putting back into the water
- Take special care when purchasing soaps ~ use green products that are phosphate free and other alternatives
- Clean up the dumps that are full of our waste and that leach and share chemicals with water
- Ensure we are disposing our waste properly
- Prevent further contamination from occurring

#### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Voice our concerns and actively speak out
- Help people to care and respect water
- Understand and make the connection with the Circle of Life

Second Moon  
February

Bear Moon

### PARTICIPATION

#### Why is water important to us?

- To drink, garden, food source (growth), recreation, swimming, work/balance
- Water is used for everything, survival, cleansing body and clothes, drinking, refreshment, cooking
- Both forms (liquid and ice) are important
- Used to produce electricity
- We are water based
- Water is connected to so many activities and functions - animals sustenance, women in childbirth, religion (holy water), used to purify and cleanse the body

#### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Don't waste it, we now have to buy water for elders
- Develop a better understanding of what people can do to protect the water and tell others
- Deal with problem areas first ~ the Shawanaga Water Treat Plant is not providing clean water and we need to build a new plant
- Deal with the water purity problem in wells, creeks, Georgian Bay water (algae, zebra mussels)

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Pressure Chief and Council to address algae and water pollution issues
- Water testing in private wells
- Speak to friends and neighbours about the problem, create awareness
- Remove landfill sites and restore the site
- Conduct a Community Cleanup on Earth Day

Third Moon  
March

## CHALLENGE

Sugar  
Moon

### Why is water important to us?

- We need it, can't survive without it
- Water is a resource for ALL inhabitants
- We want our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to have clean water
- Our first nine months are in water
- Swimmers, loons, water fowl need clean water
- Our bodies are mainly made up of water

### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Walk for Water – grandmothers are walking in four directions from the three oceans and are going to converge in Minnesota
- Raise awareness about insecticide and pesticide that kills all kinds of life
- Hold a water conference, like today
- Making people more aware
- First Nations are challenging big corporations and industry
- Individuals need to conserve water and energy (energy efficient appliances, better emission controls and rain barrels)

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Challenge people and create awareness to cause change
- Increase enforcement measures
- Think globally about water – what is being done to the oceans
- Conservation
- Continue education
- Start with the youth
- Oil spills and toxic waste contamination of our water must be prevented
- Higher fines for corporations that pollute the water

Fourth Moon  
April

## RESPECT

Sucker  
Moon

### Why is water important to us?

- Things are very different now, then they were before. In the past there was a lot less pollution and garbage
- There use to be groundwater in Shawanaga, now there is no water – water has to be trucked in and we are not sure why
- Can't drink water straight from the well or creeks anymore

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

- Lots of packaging and garbage ends up in the water.

### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Conduct a river clean-up
- Conduct water quality testing
- Learn about what's harming the water (oil, cow manure, septic sewage, ship sewage and ballast)
- There are changes in the wildlife when the rivers change (e.g. now lots of seagulls along the St Lawrence River and the water is polluted)
- Conduct a clean-up day to pick up litter on Earth Day
- Teach kids about proper disposal of garbage and to respect the earth and water – get children to learn at an early age – that's #1.
- Hire more people to work as conservation officers/animal protectors who are working to protect habitat

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Stop all nuclear reactors that can destroy the earth
- Everybody is responsible for future generations
- We have to respect ourselves first and then bring back respect for everything around you
- Be a good example – a good role model for others to learn from
- Provide programs for youth – but, they often start out good and are not sustainable
- The consequences of today's actions seem more serious, but a concern is that many people are in a state of denial

Fifth Moon  
May

Flower  
Moon

## EDUCATION

### Why is water important to us?

- A large part of our bodies is water and we need it for survival.
- We cherish water
- We are concerned about climate change and buying water and using treated water
- Creates electricity
- Very afraid and we should have lots of respect
- As water changes... food sources change and it effects every aspect of life

### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Aggressive education and early intervention
- Re-cycle properly
- A water tax may be good
- Access to recreational water quality information such as algae, water levels, water plants
- Understand why water levels are down and how long will it last?
- The transfer of nuclear materials on water is unsafe
- Protect the ground water - not having clean and clear wells – wells are dry and contain contaminants leached from sources
- Provide safe drinking water – now we have to pay for every drop of water. We

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

are afraid and have to ration every drop.

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- We are not doing enough, we need to work harder
- Education – invasive species – work with Georgian Bay Forever to connect on research and education
- Recycle our waste –
- No garbage – whatever you take into the wilderness you must bring out
- Provide education in school about recycling
- Clean the highways and byways, show people the clean way

Sixth Moon  
June

Strawberry  
Moon

## SPARKLING

### Why is water important to us?

- We need water to live, bath, heal, medicine, animals, for fun (swimming, exercise, health), visions, fish, exploring, livelihood, ceremonies
- It is very important that we listen to the waters voice

### What are we doing to protect the waters?

- Be mindfull of how we dispose of our garbage, and pick up garbage
- Conserve water (gardens and grass)
- Raise \$'s to create wells in other countries
- Use rainwater – recycle – for plants etc.
- Don't put stuff in the water - no leaky oily boats, no butts in water
- Signage for awareness and to be respectful of area
- Don't do any do-do near the shoreline
- Use garbage bins
- Be an Earth Commander – Litter Police
- Net garbage instead of fish
- Better awareness about septic systems
- Clean Beaches – When you go swimming, pick up garbage – “Having fun but getting some clean up done”
- Upgrade old outboard motors with new more efficient models.

Seventh Moon  
July

Raspberry  
Moon

## VOICE

### Why is water important to us?

- Sustenance of life, we would be dead without it

### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Respect, preserve, conserve, and protect the water
- Conserve and limit the use of water
- Upgrade septic lagoons – need control for septic systems and how they dispose waste around the water
- Attend to the environmental issues in the local sawmills
- Farmers that abut waters need to attend and control their activities

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Deal with all pollution that harms us
- Air, in the earth
- Protect beaver dams and wetlands – they filter our waters
- Do not destroy wetlands by industry building too close
- Work with government
- As individuals we can call our MLA
- Heighten awareness of issues to all levels of government
- Create Awareness to address big corporation consumption
- Educate youth, family, community and through gatherings
- Be concerned about water tables in all regions
- Ask an individual to take a plant and take care of it, not using water from tap
- More water dialogue

Eighth Moon  
August

Thimble  
Berry  
Moon

## SPIRITUALITY

### Why is water important to us?

- We could only survive a few days without water, our bodies are mostly and we can become quickly dehydrated
- Water is life giving
- We grew up on water – could go swimming or just dip your hand in and get water to drink anywhere, and when in we are in town we miss it.
- Water provides river spawning areas for fish and now we see people clear out wed beds and alter shorelines and that's wrong
- In St Charles, Ontario many wells dried up because the water table was drained and people had to re-dig wells
- Site 41 (Elmvale) – People wanted to stop new dump from being located on an aquifer, but not enough people to put a stop to it
- We can run out of water – we need to look after it and manage it wisely
- People waste water – you should only use what you need and only take what you need
- People are wasting water - for lawns, washing machines, showers don't need to be long, In the past people used an outhouse and all the kids used the same bath water, we drank water out of the lake – and now its hard to believe that people in our communities have to pay for water and believe people drink contaminated water in other parts of the world
- A big concern is that nobody acts until it is too late
- Everything connected to water

### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Become better educated about sewage and fertilizer
- In the past we didn't know about pesticides, fertilizers, big lawns, septic systems that run on and through the ground to get to the water.. but now we see the algae.
- In the past people didn't talk about preserving water and people put sewage into the water
- Now, we use better systems for sewage disposal

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

- Better testing of water – drinking water and recreational water for swimming
- Get young people excited about water – grand kids – get excited about recycling
- Clean up highway and stop people from throwing things out – our current behavior is “if you don’t need it, discard it”
- Need to educate people to stop them from throwing things out along the road. Provide bins for garbage and promote community clean up – take the lead and pick up garbage and be an example and make a difference in your community

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- We live in a throw away world (e.g., clothes, food, values, morals) and we should start with ourselves, through your family and then spread out from there
- Reduce the use of plastic and recycle it properly – people get sick from plastic, ovarian cancer is linked to plastic bottles, so we should stop burying plastic in landfill sites
- Kids must learn to be self sufficient and make things themselves
- Teach basic survival skill – how to eat and live on the land
- Spirituality – never give up – learn how to use what we are given

Ninth Moon  
September

Corn Moon

## EDUCATE

### Why is water important to us

- We need it for life and for fishing!
- Water = life. Water sustains everything, it moves through everything, plants, trees, animals, us and all contamination in water therefore flows through everything
- We all grew up around fresh water and have a deep spiritual and emotional connection to it
- We need to understand how to use a limited quantity of water
- Our responsibility is to take care of it ... it is not the animals responsibility
- Movement of water = movement within the self

### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Write a protest song
- Work with the government
- Increase awareness and educate through school system
- Protect water through our professions and by involving students
- Ontario River Alliance (ORA) is working to stop hydro dams. 64 dams for 1.4% increase in electricity? – the dams hurt the environment and we have to ask is it worth it?

### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Conserve – but it never happens when we don’t have to
- Nurture
- Use rain barrels
- A big concern is the large percentage of urban people with an urban mentality that misuse water resources
- Awareness increases knowledge which leads to action, therefore we must educate

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

Tenth Moon  
October

Falling  
Leaves  
Moon

### START TODAY

Some of our conversations were not recorded. We must always remember to respect and maintain our oral tradition.

Eleventh Moon  
November

Freezing  
Moon

### LIFE

#### Why is water important to us?

- All life is connected to water... Now and in the future
- To life, create energy, natural resource, drink, sanitation, supports all life including fish, birds, rodents, frogs, turtles, camels and elephants
- We crave it, we need it

#### What can we do today to protect the waters?

- Understand why we continually contaminate our water sources, who is in control of the resource, and how we can clean the water
- Educate people starting with your youth and kids
- Increase fines to enforce infractions
- Change to 4 stroke outboard engines
- Stop dumping in the environment and water
- Simply not pollute –safe disposal of chemicals, pharmaceuticals and antibiotics
- Conserve water (do laundry with full load, shower with a buddy, use rain barrels, apply mulch, composting)
- Protect it (use biodegradable, phosphate free products, no fertilizer on lawns, no herbicides or pesticides, apply herbicidal treatments, plant ground cover along shorelines)
- Protect natural ecosystems by removing invasive species
- Oppose oil sands and increase fines
- Change the process
- Education – so that we are all connected to the waters

#### What can we do tomorrow to protect the waters?

- Preserve the Water – not selling the waters
- Let rivers repopulate with natural fish species and keep invasive species out
- Educate people who are on the water – snowmobilers, boaters, residents, worldwide.
- Apply new technology to treat water to remove chemicals like birth control pills
- Protect shorelines
- Dispose cigarette butts properly

## 13 Moon Circles ~ Key Points of Conversation

- Reduce levels of contaminants in fish
- Reduce metals in the environment

Twelfth Moon  
December

### CHANGE

Little Spirit  
Moon

Some of our conversations were not recorded. We must always remember to respect and maintain our oral tradition.

Thirteenth Moon  
January

### ENFORCEMENT

Blue Moon  
Big Spirit  
Moon

Some of our conversations were not recorded. We must always remember to respect and maintain our oral tradition.

Note – Not all of our conversations were recorded in textual form. We must always remember to respect and maintain our oral tradition.