

# Voices of Today's Elders

*Eastern Georgian Bay*

*Together, we celebrated the fall equinox with sharing the gift of life, our water.*

*We learned, shared knowledge, feasted and visited with one another and promised we would walk together.*

*During the month of the Little Bear Spirit Moon all of creation was gifted with Grandmother Moon visiting twice as we walked to the Winter Solstice.*

*Grandmother Earth adorns her beautiful white coat. She rests her body from the long journey of providing the life giving circle.*

*With these precious gifts, we celebrate the abundance by giving thanks, sharing stories, visiting, feasting, singing songs and preparing for the new life the summer winds will bring.*

voices  
of the river

les voix  
de la rivière

September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

Hosted by

French River Visitor Centre First Nation and  
Aboriginal Advisory Committee

Sponsored by

Environment Canada  
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
Ontario Ministry of the Environment





## ***The Voices of Today's Elders***

During the first days of the fall equinox, over 100 elders from the coastline of eastern Georgian Bay participated in a day's celebration of knowledge, sharing and addressing concerns for our water.

This day was hosted by the French River Visitor Centre First Nation and Aboriginal Advisory Committee, and was sponsored by Environment Canada, Ontario Parks, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Randy French and Marilyn Capreol were the co-emcees for this event.

- *Opening Ceremony conducted by Elder Nancy Noganosh.*
- *Welcoming Address Chairperson Wilmer Noganosh and Vice Chairperson Gaetan Gauthier.*

Today, we came together as one voice to share traditional and scientific knowledge and to learn about our water and wildlife. There was great conversation, food, prizes and lots of laughter.

## ***Voices For Water***

Following a presentation by Janette Anderson (Environment Canada) on water quality and other issues in Lake Huron and it's watershed, these key points were raised:

1. Dumps have serious impacts on water quality.  
*... we need information and promote awareness about these effects.*
2. The youth are the key to our future.  
*... we need to train our youth and increase awareness about Mother Earth and how we impact her.*
3. Algae are more abundant in recent years.  
*... we need more information about algae, bacteria and the effects on our health by drinking and swimming in the water.*
4. Fish farms can cause impacts.  
*... we need information on the impacts from the fish farm on Parry Island.*
5. Our resources are really important to us.  
*... we have a concern about pollution, but "what can we really do about it?" What can we really do as individuals and as a group of people or community?*
6. It seems like "us against the government" and others.  
*... how can we really work together? A key word is respect.*
7. As First People, we must start our own recycling programs. Local Government is not buying into this and therefore we must do it.

### ***Today's Elders***

*Shawanaga  
Magnetawan  
Henvey Inlet  
Dokis  
Wasauksing  
Pointe au Baril  
French River  
Metis Tribe  
French River  
Tourist  
Association  
Ontario Parks  
Environment  
Canada  
Ministry of  
Natural  
Resources  
Ministry of the  
Environment  
Georgian Bay  
Biosphere  
Reserve*



## Voices For Fish and Wildlife

Following a presentation by Arunas Liskauskas (Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources) about the current health of fisheries in Lake Huron, these key points were raised:

1. Wormy bass are more abundant.  
*... we need information about what this condition is and whether the bass are safe to eat.*
2. We are seeing more cormorants.  
*... are cormorants a good or bad indicator of lake health? What are the effects and how can they be controlled?*
3. There are many dams that block fish passage.  
*...what is the effect of dams and other human impacts on fish?*
4. Fish species are changing.  
*...what happened to the smelt? Why are there so many gobies? Does anyone have any good goby recipes?*
5. We need to establish community priorities.  
*... why is there a need for human control of Mother Earth?*
6. 2009 was a good year for walleye.  
*... what are the current health problems with walleye (e.g. lumps, sores, lesions etc)?*
7. There are many other questions.  
*...what are the results of recent fisheries research? Are there remedies on the shelf to deal with current issues?*  
*... how are the inland lakes doing?*  
*... what about fish stocking programs in our community (e.g., pickerel in Shawanaga)*

## One Voice ... Working Together

There was unanimous agreement to continue our discussions and the sharing of thoughts and advice through a 2 day gathering in 2010 on "Working Together to Make a Difference". Key discussion topics to consider include:

- How to deal with groundwater and waste management issues (e.g., individual actions on 3Rs [Re-use, Reduce and Re-cycle], and working collectively to pressure government).
- How to get involved in monitoring lake and river water quality and other impacts (e.g., monitoring/research, local involvement to gather samples).
- Discussion on changing legislation to lift ban on cormorants.
- How to get involved with the G8 Summit in 2010. We need to send a message that we want to be involved. Request to Elders from Roger Noganosh "go to your communities and talk about the importance of water and gain support for a 2 day gathering 1-2 weeks before the G8".
- How to take care of our tributaries (especially Sturgeon River). We are especially concerned about pollution and nutrient loading from agriculture, drainage, and stormwater.





*Today we are grateful for many things...*

- to the sponsors and organizers of this event*
- to Ontario Parks for hosting this event at the French River Visitors Centre*
- to be in each other's company*
- AND, we are very grateful to Mother Earth.*

