

*Keepers of the Water
Athabasca River*


Aboriginal Peoples and the
Future of Water Management in Alberta
Friday, June 11, 2010

Vice Chief Don Deranger
Prince Albert Grand Council

*Keepers of the Water
- a movement born in the North*

CLEAN WATER IS A FUNDAMENTAL
HUMAN RIGHT
AND IS ESSENTIAL FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL, COMMUNITY AND
HUMAN HEALTH.
AS STEWARDS OF THE MANY DIVERSE
AND SIGNIFICANT TRIBUTARIES OF OUR
GREAT ARCTIC OCEAN
DRAINAGE BASIN,
WE ACKNOWLEDGE WATER IS
SACRED.
- THE KEEPERS OF THE WATER II RESOLUTION, 2007 -

Keepers of the Water



Keepers of the Water I
Fort Simpson, NWT
September, 2006

'Tu Beta Ts'ena' Water is Life
Fort Smith, NWT
August, 2007

Keepers of the Water II
Fort St. John, B.C.
September 27-29, 2007

Keepers of the Athabasca
formed October 13, 2007

Keepers of the Water Saskatchewan
April, 2008

Keepers of the Water III
Fort Chipewyan, AB
August, 2008

Keepers of the Water IV
Hatchet Lake, SK
August, 2010



Keepers of the Water 1

- Dehcho FN – Fort Simpson, NWT

Keepers of the Water Declaration

'Water is a sacred gift, an essential element that sustains and connects all life. It is not a commodity to be bought or sold. All people share an obligation to cooperate to ensure that water in all of its forms is protected and conserved with regard to the needs of all living things today and for future generations tomorrow.'

Keepers of the Water II

- West Moberley FN – Fort St. John, B.C

Keepers of the Water II Resolution

'We commit our support to work in solidarity to protect and restore the ecological integrity and environmental health of the Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin watersheds. As stewards of the many diverse and significant tributaries of our great Arctic Ocean Drainage Basin, we acknowledge that Water is Sacred.'

Tu'Beta Ts'ena - Water is Life
 Fort Smith, August, 2007
 Tu'Beta Ts'ena Resolutions

- We work together in unity with First Nations, Aboriginal peoples, and environmental groups to protect our waters
- Youth must participate in conferences and other activities related to the environment, youth must learn the teachings from Elders, and youth must begin to take leadership in all efforts to protect our lands and waters
- Before any future development occurs we call for accountability from government, and for our leadership to ensure that proper consultation occurs in order to protect the environment and to ensure that no defacto extinguishment of our rights is caused
- The Elders from this conference support this resolution to ensure that the current insufficient knowledge of our rights is corrected, and call on leadership to support this resolution

Keepers of the Water III

- Athabasca Chipewyan FN, Mikisew Cree FN and the Fort Chipewyan Metis Community - Fort Chipewyan, AB

“... We therefore resolve to:

- initiate legal action to assert our rights;
- build unity between our communities, and to engage with other leaders to further strengthen this unity;
- work in solidarity with organizations that support these goals”

Keepers of the Water III
 Fort Chipewyan, August 13-17th
 Elders and Youth Resolutions

Where As: The Elders and Youth have met in a duly convened meeting at the *Keepers of the Water III* (Fort Chipewyan) and have reviewed the resolutions from the Fort Smith “*Water is Life*” Gathering and spoke to them in an open forum;

Where As: The Elders and Youth again clearly expressed their full support for the resolutions from Fort Smith;

Where As: Indigenous peoples have a longstanding relationship with the land, which is supported by Section 35 of the Constitution Act (1982) and our water is sacred and essential to life but is in great jeopardy.

Where As: First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other citizens of the Arctic Watershed came together at *Keepers of the Water II* and resolved to build an Arctic Basin watershed alliance that would implement the *Keepers of the Water Declaration and Principles*;

Where As: The *Keepers of the Athabasca* and the *Keepers of the Water Saskatchewan* have begun to implement the *Keepers of the Water Declaration and Principles* and can provide examples of how this can be successfully accomplished.

Be It Resolved: That the Elders and the youth call on the leadership, that is the chiefs and Councils of the Arctic drainage basin, to review and act on the resolutions from Fort Simpson, Fort Smith and Fort St. John Gatherings.


Keepers of the Water Saskatchewan
April, 2008
Prince Albert, SK

Keepers of the Water Saskatchewan Resolutions

- We ask that no new approvals on surface and subsurface resource interests be granted for Alberta and Saskatchewan Tar Sands development until a comprehensive Royal Commission has been conducted, and includes the duty to consult and accommodate First Nations and aboriginal peoples;
- That no new approvals for surface and subsurface resource interests be granted for Alberta and Saskatchewan Tar Sands development until there is a clear plan for full prevention of cumulative environmental and health impact in order to properly protect water quality / quantity and air quality for current and future generations;
- Keepers of the Water Saskatchewan and the Keepers of the Athabasca meeting in Prince Albert SK, April 6th 2008 formally support the Keepers III Gathering in Fort Chipewyan in August 2008 and commit to full support and participation towards full success of this Gathering/Conference

Northern Saskatchewan Watersheds

- Over 100,000 bodies of water in Northern Saskatchewan
- Watershed Councils are supported by the provincial government in the southern half of the province, not in the North.
- People and communities in northern Saskatchewan have a strong relationship and inherent interest in protecting the water sources that sustain their lives.
- Keepers IV will be the catalyst for a Northern Saskatchewan Watershed Council to establish a united voice and address the cumulative environmental issues in their area.



Keepers of the Athabasca

Mission... To unite the peoples of the Athabasca River and Lake Watershed to secure and protect water and watershed lands for ecological, social, cultural and community health and well-being



Overview of Human Activities in the Athabasca River Basin



- Forestry
- Coal Mining
- Oil Sands - Mining and In Situ
- Conventional Oil and Gas
- Agriculture
- Commercial/ Subsistence Fishing & Trapping

Contaminants

- Phosphorous & Nitrogen
- PCBs
- Dioxins and Furans
- Mercury
- Selenium
- PAHs and Napthenic Acids
- Arsenic
- Pesticides
- Uranium

Concerns

- Oxygen
- Tailings Ponds
- Groundwater



Tailings Ponds

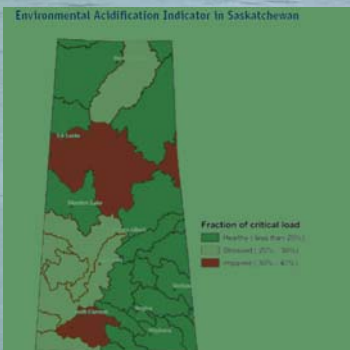


- During the extraction of bitumen from oil sands, large volumes of water contaminated with polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, naphthenic acids, and salt are produced, stored in waste water ponds and reclaimed in aquatic systems (Dixon et al., undated).
- Several documented leaks and discharges have occurred. Recent research indicates many more transgressions of environmental regulations


Human Health Issues

- The people, plants and animals of the Athabasca River Delta and western Lake Athabasca are exposed to higher levels of some contaminants than are those upstream.
- The primary contaminants of concern may be arsenic, mercury, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Concentrations of these contaminants, already high, appear to be rising.
- People most at risk of adverse health effects are those who eat an abundance of country food and those who consume untreated surface water.

Acid Rain



Water Quantity

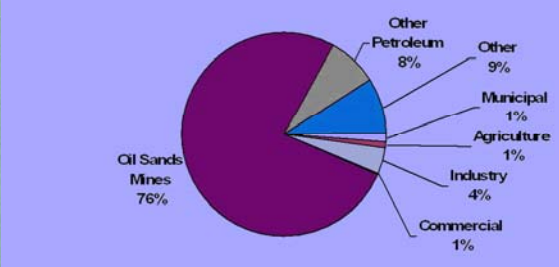


- Water Flow in Watershed
- Lake Athabasca
- Water Allocations
- Water Removal
- Groundwater
- Climate Change

Lake Athabasca




Water Allocations




Category	Percentage
Oil Sands Mines	76%
Other Petroleum	8%
Other	9%
Municipal	1%
Agriculture	1%
Industry	4%
Commercial	1%

Keepers River Surveys and Water Quality Testing

Mat Lebel from the World Wildlife Fund – Water Quality Testing Instruction for Keepers of the Athabasca at Lac La Biche (August 8th)



Water Quality Testing in the tributaries and main river stem of the Athabasca River August 9th – 12th)







Keepers Water Quality Samples – filtering particulate samples, cataloguing before sending to U of A Laboratory (August 9-12th)





Keepers of the Water III – Fort Chipewyan, August 13-17th, 2008

Keepers of the Athabasca Watershed Council addressing First Nations, Metis, watershed citizens and environmental groups at Keepers of the Water III

Voices of the River

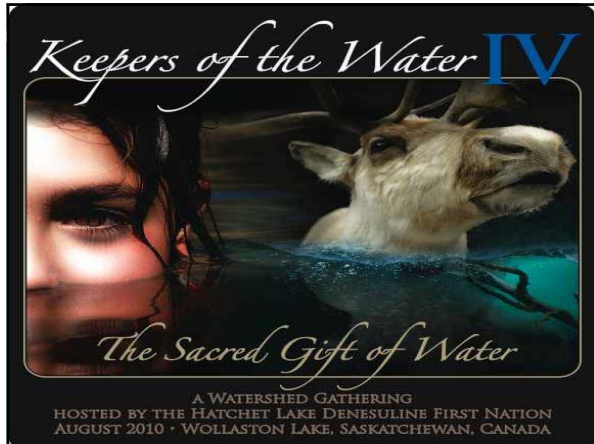
What are the people saying?

- Concerns with climate change and lower overall flows in the rivers
- Need to work together within communities to address problems – inspire, inform - ACT!
- Need for higher regulatory standards for industry
- Great concern about proposed nuclear power development
- Great concern about impacts on traditional ways of life and culture
- Need to move towards a green economy and green energy
- Need to hold industry and government accountable
- We are running out of time! We must act NOW!
- Worry about ground water – how is it being effected?
- We ARE the Water!

- Metis Nation is affected by SAGD – great need to protect the water and land
- It rained for 2 days and the grass was yellow! Its in the bush, in the berries, in the water in the creeks, and runs into the reservoir
- Suncor polluting for 40 years – big effluent release this spring, no one would have heard a thing except that someone let it out to the public
- Big polluter are uranium mines – still contaminating Lake Athabasca
- This place has meaning – it has history before the Tar Sand. This is our home...there is an archaeological site, we were here for thousands of years, we were singing and dancing
- People are not being consulted about the impacts, the land is being put into jeopardy – they are not following their duty to consult, it is creating problems for our people.

Keepers in 2010

- Building relationships with all communities
- Participating in Keepers of the Water IV
- Helping people to help themselves through providing information – traditional ecological knowledge and western science
- Communicating – people, communities, governments
- Water Watch program
- Working with the wisdom and guidance of the Elders, and the energy and fire of our youth



Keepers of the Water IV Goals

- **Goal #1:** Build capacity for informed and effective watershed strategy development and advocacy. Integrating the understanding of traditional knowledge, ecological and science based theory and practice in the management of human impacts on the watershed ecosystem and Mother Earth.
- **Goal #2:** Promote awareness of Keepers of the Water principles through education, cultural experiences and celebration of place.
- **Goal #3:** Promote the recognition of the Constitution Act, section 35 on Aboriginal Treaty Rights and the recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples with regards to water.

Keepers of the Water IV Partners

- Communities and First Nations, Non-Government Organizations, First Nations Government, Municipal, Provincial and Federal Government, Environmental Interest Groups, Industry and Elders. It is the assumption of this Planning Committee that it is only through collaboration and participation at all levels that long-term change can be affected.

Mackenzie River Basin

Transboundary Waters Master Agreement

Part C Principles


The Parties are committed to:

- ...4. Providing for early and effective consultation, notification and sharing of information on developments and activities that might affect the Ecological Integrity of the Aquatic Ecosystem in another jurisdiction.

Importance of Working Together...

Athabasca Watershed Council

- Alberta's 10th watershed planning and advisory council covers most of the Athabasca River watershed, from the headwaters in Jasper National Park, through north-central Alberta to Lake Athabasca... **excluding Saskatchewan.**
- It includes membership from agriculture and forestry industries, the region's oil sands industry, Aboriginal communities, municipalities, academic institutions, environmental organizations, provincial government, and citizens in Alberta... **excluding Saskatchewan.**
- Water does not have boundaries, it is critical that membership to this organization partner with communities and organizations interprovincially for the sustainability of the entire Athabasca sub-basin.



■ Athabasca Watershed Council
■ Lesser Slave Watershed Council
■ Athabasca River Basin- Saskatchewan
