

Legislative Review Committee: Bill 46-Save Lake Winnipeg Act
Eugenie Mecredi, June 14, 2011

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me to speak. First of all, I want to acknowledge the Creator for being here today.

I greet you all, my fellow brothers and sisters. You are chosen to be leaders, and as a leader myself back home, as a ex-officio Cross Lake band councillor and elected through Pimicikamak Okimawin governance, we have our own self-government system.

I am an activist on environmental issues and speak the truth of environmental destruction. As you listen to me speak carefully, we all need to listen to the one who gives life. And sometimes we don't listen to each other carefully.

The mess that's happening, Creator is cleansing it, using the water to cleanse it. In your worldview, you say you blame the climate, the weather. It cleanses the earth, the air, and the fire. We are all aware of the climate change all over the world: mudslides, tornadoes, forest fires, and floods. We have floods happening in our lives every day back home in our backyard—Jenpeg dam. What is that Winnipeg regulation?

We have to listen to the Creator sometimes. That's why we are ill, that's why our Mother Earth is dying. You know, the Mother Earth is like those blood vessels, the lakes that we breathe, you know, we breathe on them. But who destroys it? We are all responsible; the Creator wouldn't have to clean it up.

That's my introduction, I just wanted to share with you who I am, and I'm going to read this. Pimicikamak, one is the name—where I come from is one of the names of the Cree Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Pimicikamak is a people of rivers and lakes. The traditional territory of Pimicikamak is around Sipiwesk Lake in the heart of the boreal forest, 500 kilometres north of Winnipeg. Flowing through our lands is Kichi Sipi, the great river. Pimicikamak traditional territory also is known as Pimicikamak.

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Pimicikamak and other related terms were understood as connoting flowing across. This is widely presumed to be the origin of the name of Cross Lake in Pimicikamak territory. Pimicikamak is the collective singular name for the whole people and also the collective name for its traditional territory.

Pimicikamak traditional territory is reported to have been a wide watershed of the upper Nelson River. It is located within the boreal forest of—or taiga of Canada. Like other indigenous peoples, Pimicikamak sees its spiritual relationship with the land, the water, as a fundamental to its identity. Oral history passed down by Pimicikamak elders say that Pimicikamak existed since time immemorial. Anthropological and archeological evidence places occupation of Pimicikamak after the last ice age sometimes before 14,000 BC. You can read this in Wikipedia of Pimicikamak, of who we are.

We need to change the view. This is about the water not just a lake that is ill.

Our relationships / beliefs are with water, earth, air, and fire. Water has to do with all of us – First Nations on the lakes, and our elders must be included in the future of the water and the Lake. We have much to share, to give to ‘saving Lake Winnipeg.’

Balance is needed to save the lake to save the water. To achieve balance all of us: all people and all communities must find balance in how we clean and keep the water. The creator gave us this water, as pure, as clean, as healthy and sustainable. If we cooperate and we all share our knowledge, remembering we all share the same world: water, air, earth, and fire.

Our spirits, all our faiths refer to living water, and the spiritual value of water. Now we are healing our water, and may heal ourselves also. It’s our responsibility and in our interest to clean up the mess in the water. In order to protect it to save it! If we view water as a living spiritual entity, we change how water is perceived.

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Water is life giving. It carries the spirit to heal and sustain all life. Keeping water clean is a responsibility of everyone. It is in our interest!

An elder is a 'wisdom keeper' not legislatively defined. An elder expresses love, peace and harmony through spoken word. The Manitoba government needs aboriginal knowledge and wisdom to heal the water.

The leadership must listen to our elders and to the women!! The government of Manitoba must listen to the elders and to the women of every nation. The elders are the wisdom keepers; and the women are responsible for they are the life givers and carriers. It is in the government's interest to invite all peoples, the elders, and the women, if they are going to seriously talk about cleaning the water, in an attempt to save it and protect it!!