



## LAKE WINNIPEG INDIGENOUS COLLECTIVE

### LWIC Accord



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#### Preamble

Our Creation stories speak of how our people were placed on Mother Earth by the Creator. Our ancestors have inhabited Lake Winnipeg basin since time immemorial, long before the current political boundaries were drawn. Our spiritual and cultural connections to our Mother Earth are evident by our willingness to embrace the responsibility of protecting and preserving the land and waters.

Traditional teachings and modern science combine to strengthen our historical understanding that water is the life-blood of our Mother Earth. Indigenous women continue their role as protectors and keepers of the water. Ceremonial teachings are reminders of our heritage, they are of our current peoples, and they are treasured gifts that we hand to our children.

When considering matters of great importance, we are taught to think about seven generations ahead. We also are taught that each of us is someone's seventh generation. We must continually ask ourselves what we are leaving for our seventh generation.

We understand that the whole earth is an interconnected ecosystem. The health of one part affects the health and well-being of the whole. It is our spiritual and cultural responsibility to protect our waters in order to help protect the whole Mother Earth.

#### Our responsibility

Indigenous peoples continue to exercise cultural and spiritual rights of self-determination and property rights within traditional territories of our people. As First Nations, it is our right, our responsibility and our duty to work in cooperation and with the utmost mutual respect to protect and preserve Lake Winnipeg. Within our collective we lend strength to each other in this work while acknowledging that the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective is not a body for government, industry or others to use for consultation and accommodation.

The assertion that the Province of Manitoba own and have the sole responsibility to protect Lake Winnipeg is flawed. The efforts of the Province of Manitoba to protect the waters of Lake Winnipeg is flawed because these efforts do not include the direct participation of First Nation Elders, women, men and youth. This fundamental flaw endangers the interest of all the inhabitants of Lake Winnipeg and ultimately, because of the interconnectedness of the worldwide ecosystem, endangers the interests of the entire earth.



## Relationship to water

Our people have a strong spiritual connection with water. Our people are connected and united to life with water, and as we are united by water; we must be conscious of all things united. This connection helps us understand life; and a respect of the connection between water, humans, nature and animals. We are all connected and united by water. Water is life.

Our people understand that the earth is a woman – Mother Earth – because from her comes all living things. Water is her lifeblood. It flows through her, nourishes her, and purifies her. Indigenous women have the innate responsibility as water keepers. Women carry new life in water and it is the breaking of that water vessel that brings new life into this world. As such, they hold the teachings and water ceremonies.

Our people have a spiritual and direct relationship with all waters. Our traditional territories include all forms of water such as rain waters, rivers, streams, creeks, springs, bedrock veins, marshes and snow.

Our people have a variety of cultural and social practices that involve water. These include places of prayer, stories, dances and oral histories about water and water bodies, sweat lodges, purification ceremonies, drinking water collection sites, spring water of spiritual significance, medicinal plants nourished by water of spiritual significance, and medicine making.

Our people have a collective wisdom about water that has been woven into culture, traditional ways of life, practices for resource management, oral histories, stories and ceremonies. This traditional ecological knowledge is a valuable contribution to water science and policy, while also helping to bridge understanding and relationships between Indigenous peoples and resource manager.

## Commitment to solutions

Our vision is based in the belief that water is sacred. The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective will support efforts to ensure a healthy Lake Winnipeg, restore our people's traditional livelihoods, and ensure that our perspectives lead the protection and sustainability of Lake Winnipeg as a source of life for all future generations.

Lake Winnipeg is increasingly subject to review and governed by foreign economic values that alienates the relationship between Indigenous Peoples in Manitoba and our relationship to Lake Winnipeg, our people assert our relationship with Lake Winnipeg to ensure that there is clean water for the future generations - those children not yet born.

Our Elders perspectives and knowledge on water, the importance of ceremony, songs and fasting, and all aspects of our spirituality are the foundation in moving forward to protect Lake Winnipeg.

We will work together collectively and uphold the values, integrity, truth, and equality of their respective communities and keep a holistic and community driven approach. The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective will ensure fair representation from Indigenous women, Elders and youth.



## Our objectives

1. Unite First Nations within the Lake Winnipeg basin to promote our interests with respect to water, water rights, governance, and management.
2. Articulate a Treaty-based position on water rights and governance and support First Nations in asserting and exercising water rights and responsibilities.
3. Develop a communications plan for both internal communication (amongst First Nation communities to support and strengthen collaboration) and external communication (other governments and groups to promote public education on rights).
4. Work to establish the proper protocols when our traditional knowledge is shared. Ensuring respectful and proper protocols will build positive working relationships
5. Support the collection of First Nations information about Lake Winnipeg by assisting communities in developing the capacity to document and compile data, and by helping communities to coordinate the collection of data within the basin.

**Who are we**

The Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective represents the First Nations who live around Lake Winnipeg.

Our VISION is that our sacred waters are healthy, traditional livelihoods are restored and Indigenous perspectives are influential in leading the protection and sustainability of Lake Winnipeg as a source of life for all future generations.

Our MISSION is to seek healthy and equitable solutions for our waters and our people from the diverse communities who have a relationship with our sacred great lake.

Our VALUES are: Integrity, Truth, Equality and a Holistic approach.