



Water Walker

Autumn Peltier, Chief Water Commissioner,
Anishinabek Nation, Canada

★ Call to Action

Respect water. Take a stand for the water rights of Indigenous peoples. Follow Autumn on Instagram and share her posts: @autumn.peltier.

★ Values

- Courage
- Commitment
- Dedication
- Respect
- Legacy

★ Lessons Learned

Stand up for what you know is right.
Raise your voice and speak the truth, even to very powerful people.

It's not enough to believe in what's right: we are all called to do something about it—to walk the walk.

We can do more in our homes and at the local level, through awareness campaigns: inspiring people to bring about change.

The granddaughter of Josephine Mandamin—an Anishinaabe First Nations elder who started the Water Walk movement—Autumn Peltier has activism in her blood. Still in her teens, she has been a powerful voice for Indigenous people everywhere, calling on world leaders to protect precious water resources that are threatened by drilling for oil pipelines and climate change. She has especially held her own government in Canada accountable, and famously told Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that she was “very unhappy” with the choices he had made regarding First Nations lands. She continues to talk the talk and walk the walk every day for water rights around the world.

★ Language Arts

Research the fight of Indigenous people for water rights in your country. With the information you have gathered, write a short story for children that helps to explain the importance of clean and safe water for everyone.

Using public domain images, create a series of posters (no less than six) inviting people to participate in water conservation activities. The posters must have both images and text. Explain your choices (why you chose the images and the words you chose).

Write a letter to your local government highlighting the importance of clean, safe water in your area, and the adverse effects of not having access to it.

STEM Activities

Research and evaluate one current project/development that negatively affects Indigenous lands, and explain why you disapprove of the project; then offer alternative solutions.

Compare the price of and access to clean water in Indigenous communities to that in suburban areas. Create a graph to display the differences between these communities.

Identify one long-term drinking water advisory that is currently in effect that should be remedied; explain why addressing this [particular advisory is a priority](#)¹.

Sustainability Innovations

Evaluate the various aspects of water efficiency. Create a flow chart that details the problems, and shows the steps that can be taken to [solve them](#)².

Access to fresh water and sanitation is a challenge, particularly in slums. [Here is an article describing three different strategies for providing sanitation in slums](#)³. Assess the pros and cons of each. Then work as a group to think of other strategies that could work.

Access to water is a fundamental human right. Yet often water is treated as a commodity to be sold--sometimes at unaffordable prices. Explore the conflict between community water rights and the commodification of water. [Watch The Story of Water](#)⁴, then research and write about one of the case studies mentioned in the video.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Do you want to dedicate your career to bringing fresh water to people? Here is a [good article](#)⁵ to describe the dozens of careers you could choose to do just that. And here are a few examples:

Water Rights Activist. Nearly a billion of the earth's people lack access to clean water; it will take concerted action to hold governments accountable for providing this essential right to people. As activists, we can put pressure on governments to build the infrastructure needed and protect the sources of water for communities, and on companies to ensure they don't pollute the waters. Interested in learning more? Read this review of [water activism](#)⁶ and visit groups like [Clean Water Action](#)⁷ to learn about their work.

Environmental Lawyer. In many countries, clean water is protected by law. Lawyers can help to enforce these laws, and can sue to stop violations of these laws, as groups like [Earthjustice](#)⁸ do. Here is a brief overview of what an [environmental lawyer is](#)⁹, [how to become one](#)¹⁰, and a [guide to careers in Environmental Law](#)¹¹.

Water and Sanitation Engineer. Would you rather help actually get the water to the people, than fight for their right to have it? Water and sanitation engineers help plan and build the water systems and piping needed to deliver fresh water to communities, and take away sewage. Here is an [introduction to this essential field](#)¹².

Water and Wastewater Managers. Water and sanitation systems need trained operators to maintain them. Technicians, managers, and plant operators are all essential for the smooth delivery of water and the removal of waste. These essential jobs are in demand all around the world. [Learn more here](#)¹³.

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- 1 <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660>
 - 2 <https://www.allianceforwaterefficiency.org/impact/research-priorities>
 - 3 <https://www.good.is/articles/the-silicon-valley-of-shit-nairobi-is-ground-zero-for-sanitation-innovation>
 - 4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04jTleV0gK0&feature=emb_logo
 - 5 <https://www.learnhowtobecome.org/make-a-difference-careers/clean-water/>
 - 6 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-12-30/the-year-in-water-activism>
 - 7 <https://www.cleanwateraction.org/about/who-we-are>
 - 8 <https://earthjustice.org/healthy-communities/clean-water>
 - 9 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/environmental-lawyer>
 - 10 <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/cool-schools-2017/how-be-environmental-lawyer>
 - 11 <https://hls.harvard.edu/content/uploads/2008/07/full-working-draft.pdf>
 - 12 <https://www.careerexplorer.com/careers/water-engineer/>
 - 13 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/wastewater-treatment-operator>



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