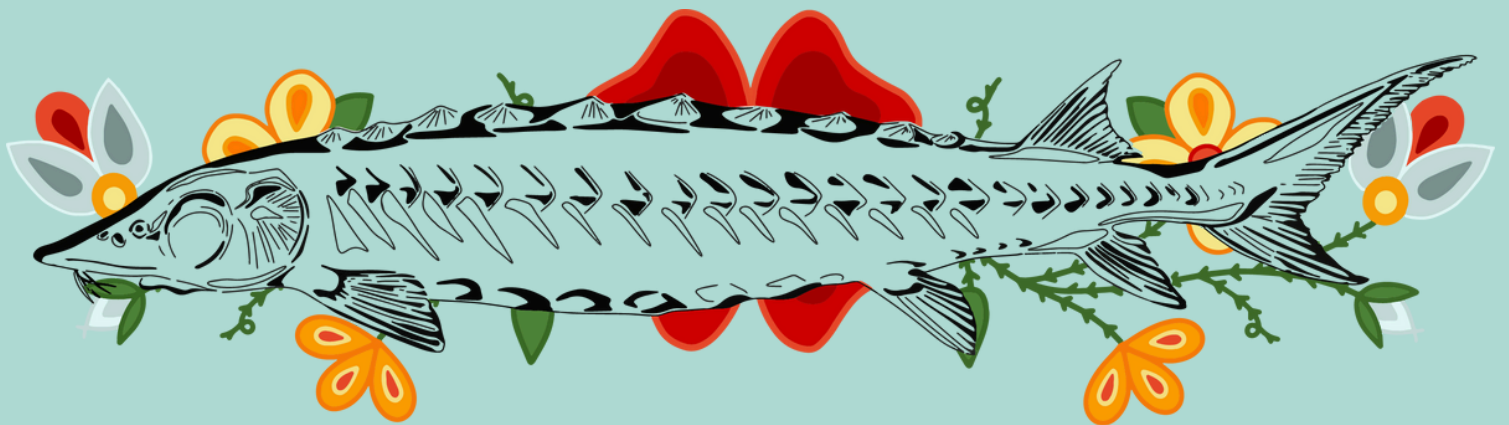


ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

JUST WATERS



Art by Nadya Crossman-Serb



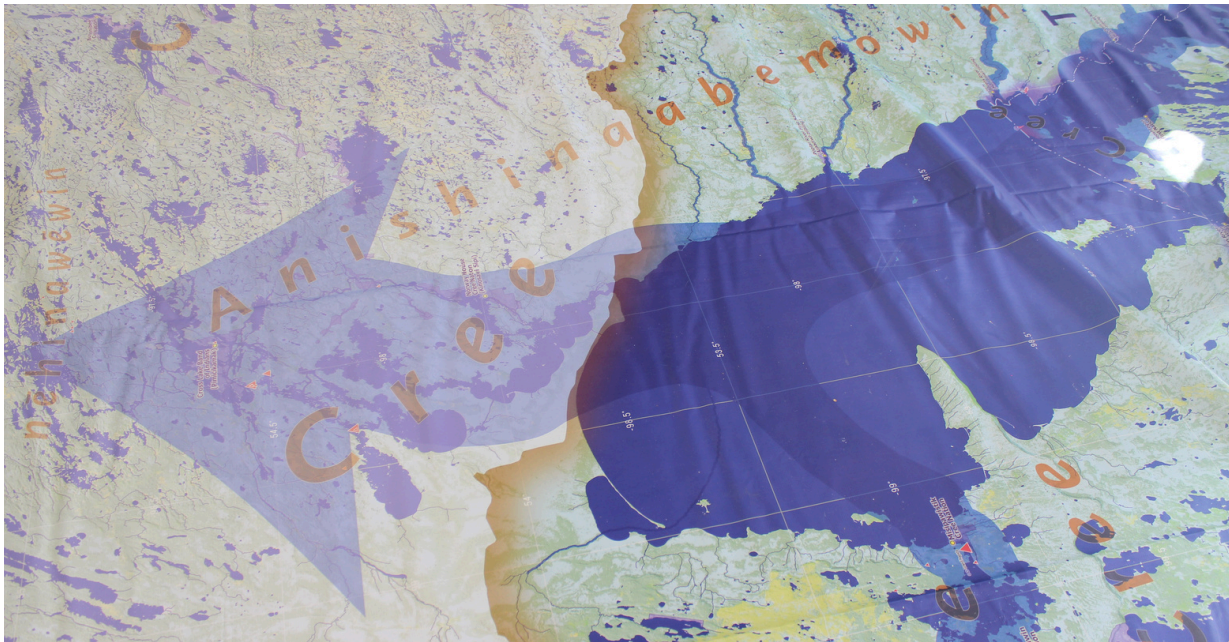
Centre for Human
Rights Research



University
of Manitoba

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Just Waters: Thinking with Hydro-Social Relations for a More Just and Sustainable World is a project funded by the University of Manitoba's IGNITE program and supported by the Centre for Human Rights Research. It is housed in St. John's College. Created to shed critical light on the connections between water, injustice and broader struggles for a more just and sustainable world amid the climate crisis, *Just Waters* engages a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to research and knowledge mobilization. Central to this is the understanding of water as a living entity, not simply a resource for human use.



Lake Winnipeg Watershed Map. Photo credit: Just Waters staff.

ABOUT THE TEAM

In its initial year of IGNITE funding, *Just Waters* has developed a strong interdisciplinary team and expanded its network of collaborative relationships, both internal and external to the university. This team includes thirteen researchers and associated graduate students from seven faculties and ten departments at the UM including the social sciences, natural sciences and humanities, along with five student researchers from five faculties. Ramona Milliea, an Anishinaabe, Cree, and Nakoda Knowledge Keeper, joined the staff team, along with Project and Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator Sarah Deckert.

Building on relationships with external partners, we formed an Advisory Circle, the majority of whom are Indigenous. Members include Dr. Amelia Fay (Manitoba Museum), Lyle Ford (Indigenous Engagement Librarian, UM), Dr. Ramona Neckoway (University College of the North), Dr. Vince Palace (International Institute for Sustainable Development- Experimental Lakes Area) and Dr. Diane Redsky (Kekekoziibii Development Corporation – Shoal Lake 40 First Nation). Along with Ramona Milliea, the Advisory Circle will provide connecting points to the wider community and advise the *Just Waters* team on priority areas and best practices.



Knowledge Keeper
Ramona Milliea

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE



Photos from Jaimie Isaac's residency (clockwise from top): Jaimie Isaac at *Messages in the Water* (April 2025); Jaimie Isaac and workshop participants (March 2025); screen-printed postcard that reads, "Protect Nibi"; Daniel Gladu Kanu, Jaimie Isaac and Margaret Lavallee standing on Lake Winnipeg Watershed Map (March 2025). Photos by Just Waters staff.

Conversations about art as both research and knowledge mobilization led to the creation of a five-month artist residency. Jaimie Isaac, curator and interdisciplinary artist from Sagkeeng First Nation, brought energy, insight and a new web of relationships to *Just Waters*. Along with continued work on her project, *Nibi*, Isaac hosted several events with *Just Waters* and is currently developing a podcast. We are grateful to Jaimie for inspiring us with her knowledge, heart and love for the waters.

STUDENT RESEARCHERS

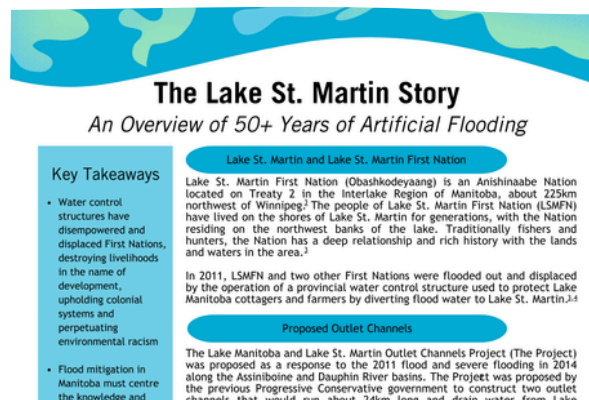
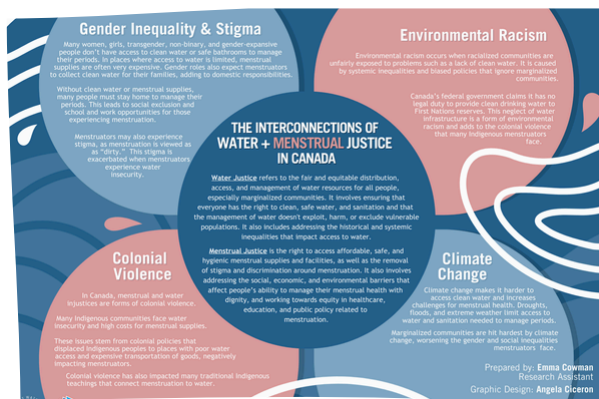
Like the Centre for Human Rights Research, which supports *Just Waters*, we prioritize research training and mentorship for student researchers. As part of their work with *Just Waters*, student researchers receive training opportunities in a range of research and knowledge mobilization skills, such as policy briefs, podcast recording, use of social media for public education and more. A vital part of the project, student researchers have contributed to the project's research outputs, producing a variety of materials including literature reviews, blog posts, resource guides, zines and social media campaigns for the general public, academic audiences and for use as teaching materials.



Just Waters Student Researchers (clockwise from top): Shaylyn Pelikys, Jenny Chinoye Amadi, Cameron Armstrong, Kiersten Sanderson, Emma Cowman.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

Knowledge mobilization plays a key role in the *Just Waters* project. We bring research to the public eye in an engaging and accessible way. In Summer 2025 we will launch a website developed by Relish Ideas Inc., which will serve as resource hub, event calendar and connecting point for the public. Relish was selected because of their extensive experience in the development of accessible web resources and adherence to the International Indigenous Design Charter to guide best practices when working with Indigenous knowledge in design projects.



Resources featured on the site will include *Connecting Gender and Water Justice: A Zine*, *The Lake St. Martin Story*, an infographic titled *The Interconnections of Water and Menstrual Justice in Canada*, video clips from events, a resource guide on water justice, and more.

EVENTS

A successful series of six events in 2025 reached over 350 people. Starting in February, Isaac's Rosemary Gallery hosted a film screening at The Forks in collaboration with *Just Waters* and *The Decolonizing Lens*. Featuring *Poplar River* (Kevin Settee), *This River* (Katherena Vermette and Erika McPherson) and other films, the screening was followed by an engaging panel discussion with Erika McPherson, Chukwudubem Ukaigwe, Becky Cook and Chimwemwe Undi, moderated by Jaimie Isaac and Suzanne Morrisette.



On February 20, 2025, *Just Waters* hosted an event titled *Water Justice is Menstruation Justice: A conversation with co-resistors* in collaboration with the CHRR, UM Office of the Vice-President (Indigenous) (OVPI), Moon Time Connections and Douglas College. This event was grounded in a Water and Tobacco Ceremony led by Knowledge Keepers Ramona Milliea and Bill Milliea and featured a live graphic recording by Anishinaabe artist and facilitator Roxanne Balan. Moderated by Christine Cyr (UM, OVPI) and Lisa Smith (Douglas College), the panel discussion continues to inform efforts to collaboratively develop an external funding application for a project exploring the intersection of water justice and menstruation justice in Canada and the United States, an area that has received scant attention in the literature.

This event really opened my eyes to the connection between menstruation and water injustices. It then promoted conversations with my aunts about it and we were able to share traditional Indigenous teachings about menstruation.

EVENTS

In March 2025, Jaimie Isaac led a powerful workshop exploring the personhood and sacredness of the waters. We are grateful to Elder Margaret Lavallee and Knowledge Keeper George Muswaggon for starting the workshop in Ceremony and for sharing their teachings with us.

We learned from Daniel Gladu Kanu of Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective about the Lake Winnipeg watershed while standing on a massive floor map, which according to one participant, "showed the gravity of the issue and the way our inaction has life-threatening consequences." We put our learning to action by creating postcards with messages including "Protect Nibi," and "Water is Sacred" that can be sent to policy-makers, and got to contribute to one of Isaac's larger projects by screen-printing an image of an algae bloom onto sail cloth.



Participant screen-printing at Jaimie Isaac's workshop, with screen-printed images hanging in the background.
Photo by Just Waters staff.



Photos from *Indigenous Water, Indigenous Science* (March 2025) clockwise from top: Dr. Myrle Ballard, Dr. Miguel Uyaguari, Dr. Az Klymiuk, Dr. Ayush Kumar.
Photos by Just Waters staff.

Just Waters hosted a well-attended and exciting series of three *Critical Conversations on Water and Justice*, held in partnership with the Centre for Human Rights Research, the UNAI SDG 6 Hub's Last Drop speaker series and WAG-Qaumajuq. Titled *Indigenous Water, Indigenous Science*, the first conversation on March 13, 2025 featured Dr. Myrle Ballard (University of Calgary), Dr. Az Klymiuk (UM) and Dr. Miguel Uyaguari (UM), and was moderated by Dr. Ayush Kumar (UM). Panelists spoke on flooding, water contamination, fungi, *manomin* (wild rice), and the need for all of us to stand together to advocate for the waters.

EVENTS

On March 27, 2025, Dr. Jeffrey Ansloos (Critical Health and Social Action Lab, University of Toronto) joined *Media Indigena*'s Rick Harp for a conversation titled *Navigating Water Injustice Under Climate Colonialism*. In his presentation, Dr. Ansloos highlighted the critical need to develop an affective attachment to the waters, because a deep love, not hope, is what will motivate us to put ourselves on the line to protect them. Ansloos and Harp talked politics, critical minerals, and revolution in an exciting conversation that garnered significant engagement even on the evening of a spring blizzard.



Photo from *Navigating Water Injustice Under Climate Colonialism* (March 2025) left to right: Rick Harp and Dr. Jeffrey Ansloos. Photo by Just Waters staff.



Photos from *Messages in the Water* (April 2025) top to bottom: Jaimie Isaac, KC Adams, Taylor Galvin, Aimée Craft. Photos by Just Waters staff.

The final installment in the *Critical Conversations on Water and Justice* series, titled *Messages in the Water*, featured Jaimie Isaac (*Just Waters* Artist-In-Residence), Aimée Craft (*Decolonizing Water*, University of Ottawa), KC Adams (*Relational Maker*) and Taylor Galvin (*Mother Earth Protector, Scientist, Community Organizer*). Each panelist presented a snapshot of their work bringing attention to the health of our relatives, including the Red River, the clay, the sturgeon and more. Again, this group of powerful artists and scholars called the standing-room only audience to action and advocacy, with an exhortation to also sit and listen to the water-- only then can we truly understand what the water would have us do.

NEXT STEPS

The *Just Waters* research team and partners from *Decolonizing Water* (University of Ottawa) are developing an Open Education Resource (OER) with \$10,000 of support from the University of Manitoba Advance Open Ed fund. This will be a wide-ranging, visually rich collection of material that puts water in the centre of human and more-than-human life. In June 2025, a workshop led by [The Environmental Storytelling Studio](#) will support contributors in increasing the appeal and accessibility of their writing.

We are in the process of hiring a Research Associate in Water and Justice. This position is designated for an Indigenous candidate and they will pursue an independent research project with support and mentorship from the *Just Waters* research team.

Our Community-Led Projects grant will be launched in late Spring 2025 after the Advisory Circle has offered their feedback on the application process. Indigenous communities, community-led organizations, and governments will be invited to apply for up to \$15,000 for short-term projects related to water and justice.

Further knowledge mobilization strategies are under development.