

Artwork by Micaela
Gilbert, 2026.

Centre for Human
Rights Research



University
of Manitoba



Just Waters Annual Report

2025-2026



[chrr.info/
just-waters](https://chrr.info/just-waters)

The Just Waters project team lives, works and researches on original lands of **Anishinaabeg, Ininiwak, Anisininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Dene and Inuit, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis**. We honour the lands, waters and relationships that sustain us. The Just Waters team is based in the Lake Winnipeg watershed and acknowledges the lake and the many waters that flow into it including the Red, Winnipeg, Saskatchewan, Poplar, Berens, Pigeon, Manigotagan, Dauphin, Fisher, and Icelandic rivers. This lake, called Weenipagamiksaguygun in Anishnaabemowin, has been harmed by nutrient-loading from agricultural run-off, livestock production, and sewage.

Wetlands, which would normally protect the lake, have been drained for agricultural and construction purposes. These harms have impacted the traditional lifeways and relationships of the peoples that have lived with Lake Winnipeg for many generations.

We acknowledge that Winnipeg's drinking water comes from Shoal Lake, and that this led to Shoal Lake 40 lacking access to clean drinking water for more than two decades. Many First Nations communities do not have clean drinking water, both because of a lack of water treatment and distribution infrastructure and because the source waters have been polluted.

We also acknowledge that the production of Manitoba's hydroelectric energy often results in the displacement of Indigenous peoples and their communities from their land, as well as flooding, shoreline erosion, changes to water quality, disruption to fishing and hunting, and the destruction of habitat.

We offer this water acknowledgement to promote a shared understanding of the history that has led us to this moment. This history is a history of colonial violence, Indigenous dispossession, and environmental harm, as well as of Indigenous resistance, knowledges, and resurgence. The Just Waters project aims to address this settler colonial violence and to think about water from a relational, rather than a resource, perspective. To this end, we express our gratitude to the waters that sustain us.



Word Cloud generated by visitors to the Just Waters website.



Table of Contents

1 About the Project.....	3
2 Knowledge Mobilization.....	5
3 Events.....	7
4 Community Connections.....	8
5 Research.....	8
6 Impacts on Programs and Policies.....	9
7 Next Steps.....	9

1 | 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 (Vice-President International) 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 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.

From top to bottom: Just Waters team members on a tour of the Manitoba Museum collections with Advisory Circle member Amelia Fay, and Research Associate-Matriarch Jaimie Isaac and Dr. Adele Perry at the launch of tel'tales. Photo credits: Sarah Deckert.

Just Waters is led by **Dr. Adele Perry**, along with an interdisciplinary team of **sixteen researchers** from **seven faculties and ten departments** at the University of Manitoba, including the social sciences, natural sciences and humanities. **Jaimie Isaac** joined the team as Research Associate-Matriarch and is engaging art, research and curatorial practice to explore the health of waters. This year, **eight student researchers**, including undergraduate and graduate students from six different faculties, supported the project. The staff team includes Knowledge Keeper **Ramona Milliea** (Anishinaabe, Cree and Nakoda) and Project and Knowledge Mobilization Coordinator **Sarah Deckert**.

The Advisory Circle continues to offer important insight and guidance. Members include **Dr. Amelia Fay** (Manitoba Museum), **Lyle Ford** (Indigenous Engagement Librarian, UM), **Dr. Ramona Neckoway** (First Nations University), **Dr. Vince Palace** (International Institute for Sustainable Development-Experimental Lakes Area) and **Dr. Diane Redsky** (Shoal Lake 40 First Nation).



2

Knowledge Mobilization

From top to bottom: Taylor Galvin with Kookum Nameo at Respecting That Which Gives Us Life in March 2026. Photo credit Daniel Gwozdz, University of Manitoba; photos of the telltales exhibit in October 2025. Photo credit Sarah Deckert.

A. Storyteller-in-Residence

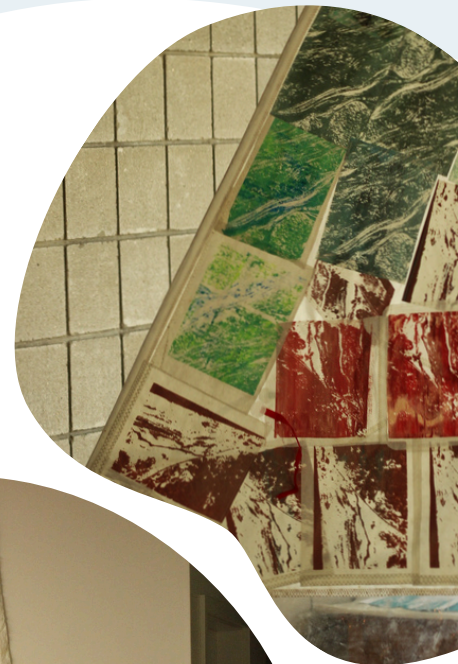
Taylor Galvin Ozaawi Mashkode-Bizhiki (Brown Buffalo) is a proud Anishinaabe woman from Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and a member of the Sturgeon Clan. She is a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, where her Master's thesis explores Lake Sturgeon conservation through Indigenous science, oral storytelling, and community-based knowledge. She is also one of the lead plaintiffs and knowledge keepers in the Lake Winnipeg personhood case, advancing Indigenous water governance on the legal stage.

One of the many powerful ways in which Galvin shares her teachings is social media. Thousands of people pay attention as [@taylorontheland](#), otherwise known as Auntea Taylor, shares medicine teachings, advocacy for the waters, Indigenous science, and stories from Kookum Nameo (Grandmother Sturgeon). Just Waters is thrilled to partner with Galvin as Storyteller-in-Residence.



B. Artist-in-Residence

A culmination of work produced from Jaimie Isaac's art residency with Just Waters in 2025, **telltales** is a solo exhibition of work and research that provides visual indications of the state and presence of waterways. Isaac is working on reclaiming and restoring a relationship with water, and honouring the continuum of sustained relationships community has maintained for millennia. Mixed media of installation, film and experimental sound, the artworks telltales that Lake Winnipeg and the Red River are endangered. Telltales builds awareness of water injustices and deepens collective connection to water. For the month of October 2025, Isaac launched this exhibition in an intimate space, engaging small groups in conversation and consciousness-building.



2 | Knowledge Mobilization

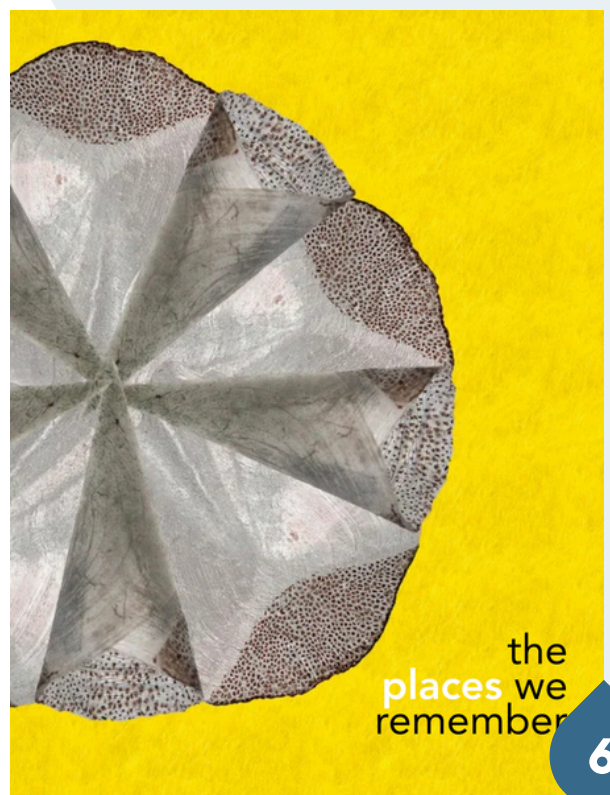
C. Resources

The Just Waters team produced a number of highly engaging resources, including an [Environmental Racism Resource Guide](#) and [postcards](#) that can be sent to government officials as an act of advocacy for the waters. Jocelyn Thorpe and Adele Perry published an article in the Winnipeg Free Press titled [“Investing for Ourselves, and Those Downstream.”](#) Video resources include a recording of Anishinaabe storytelling at [Aadizookaan: Winter Storytelling Gathering](#).

D. Open Educational Resource

In June 2025, a cohort of Just Waters team members, artists, students, academics and community members came together for a writing workshop with Kerri Arsenault and Cory Beizer of The Environmental Storytelling Studio (TESS). Just Waters hosted this workshop to support the creation of an Open Educational Resource that brings together perspectives on water and justice from a diverse set of disciplines. Throughout the workshop, we explored the idea of bringing our whole selves to the writing— the act of being un-disciplined, one could say. Some of the writing exercises from this workshop were published in a chapbook titled, [“The Places We Remember.”](#) The Open Educational Resource (title TBD) is currently under peer review and will be published in 2026.

From top to bottom: Cover of the Environmental Racism Resource Guide; Postcard for wastewater management advocacy; and cover of 'the places we remember' chapbook featuring artwork from Erin Konsmo.



3 | Events

Just Waters hosted **eight** events, attended by **more than 500 people**. Of special note are the September 2025 “Winnipeg, Wastewater and Environmental Racism,” featuring Jocelyn Thorpe, Elder Kathy Bird and City Councillor Brian Mayes and the January 2026 event titled, “Aadizookaan: Winter Storytelling Gathering,” featuring Elder Margaret Lavallee and Anishinaabe storytellers Jason Bone and Jason Parenteau. Our March 2026 event, titled “Respecting that Which Gives Us Life,” brought together Nookomis Hilda Atkinson, Nookomis Louise Pierre, Dr. Tasha Beeds and Taylor Galvin for a beautiful and moving gathering.

Through events, we have received multiple requests for collaboration and further knowledge mobilization from organizations such as Seven Oaks, Louis Riel, Winnipeg, and River East Transcona School Divisions; the Manitoba Band Association, and the UM’s Faculty of Education Summer Writing Institute.

The Last Drop webinar series, a collaboration between Just Waters and the UM’s UNAI SDG 6 Hub, features scholars from diverse disciplines speaking to issues of water justice and climate justice. This year the series included a special conversation with Dr. Mihir Shah, Distinguished Professor at Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR, which co-chairs the UNAI SDG 6 Hub with UM.

From top to bottom: Dr. Kathy Bird at Winnipeg, Wastewater and Environmental Racism in September 2025 (Photo Credit: Sarah Deckert); Jason Bone, Jason Parenteau, Elder Margaret Lavallee, Rylee Nepinak, Sarah Deckert and Ramona Milliea at Aadizookaan: Winter Storytelling Gathering in January 2026 (Photo Credit: Vanessa Lillie); and Christy Bird, Ramona Milliea and Caleb Atkinson at Respecting That Which Gives Us Life in March 2026 (Photo credit Daniel Gwozdz, University of Manitoba).



4 | Community Connections

A. Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective

Just Waters' first Community-Led Projects grant was awarded to **Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective (LWIC)** for a project exploring what makes a healthy shoreline for Indigenous peoples around Lake Winnipeg. Building on conversations with their Indigenous monitoring network, Pinesiw Maskihkiy Totem, LWIC is working with Indigenous communities to identify healthy shoreline indicators and develop restoration options.



LAKE WINNIPEG
INDIGENOUS COLLECTIVE

B. Just Waters team members presented in classrooms and professional development workshops with Seven Oaks, Louis Riel, and River East-Transcona school divisions and have received further invitations for 2026-2027. Just Waters sponsored a guest lecture by Les Dysart, who is a lifelong resident of O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (South Indian Lake) for ECON-2350 - Community Economic Development. As a part of his work with Wa Ni Ska Tan - Alliance of Hydro-Impacted communities, Dysart talked about the effects of the Augmented Flow Program on the fishing industry and livelihoods in South Indian Lake.

5 | Research

A. A SSHRC Insight Grant application titled, "**Flow Together: Connecting Water Justice and Menstrual Justice in the Canadian Context**" was submitted in October 2025. This project would bring water justice and menstrual justice into conversation, interrogating the structural roots and lived experiences of these interwoven injustices in Canada, with a focus on the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. We will revise the application and re-submit in fall 2026.

B. Research Associate-Matriarch **Jaimie Isaac** submitted a Letter of Intent to the Canada Water Agency for the Lake Winnipeg Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative Cultivating Collaboration and Indigenous-Driven Action funding stream. This project, led by Isaac, would work with community to gather intergenerational Indigenous voices and foster the transfer and sharing of Indigenous ways of knowing to increase freshwater stewardship through artistic and creative storytelling tools such as an exhibition, publication and related programming that includes a podcast on water.

6 | Impact on Programs and Policies

After speaking at the “Winnipeg, Wastewater and Environmental Racism” event, Brian Mayes wrote in a press release titled, “Mayes / Rollins announce support for Water / Sewer Rates due to inclusion of \$500m for NEWPCC in budget”: “I’ve been calling for progress on this file for over a decade, and I want to thank the Just Waters Coalition for keeping the focus on both the environmental and reconciliation dimensions of this work.”

Postcards handed out at this event were mailed to MPs and MLAs to advocate for increased funding for NEWPCC upgrades.

Jocelyn Thorpe and Adele Perry were invited to collaborate with Glen Koroluk on the “Water” chapter of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative’s (CCPA) [Alternative Municipal Budget](#) (in progress).

Nicole J. Wilson and Taylor Galvin presented at World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, with Galvin speaking at the Opening Ceremonies and Wilson hosting a presentation titled, “Water and the Just Transition: Exploring the Linkages Globally” that brought together Indigenous presenters from across Turtle Island and Sapmi.

Wilson was invited to participate as an author on the water chapters for two important climate assessment reports including the [Canadian National Assessment Process](#), overseen by Natural Resources Canada (Contributing Author, Chapter 5. Water) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Assessment Report 7 (Lead Author, [Working Group II](#), Chapter 16).



7 | Next Steps

A. Just Waters will continue to pursue funding for both “[Flow Together](#)” and Isaac’s curated exhibition. With guidance from the Advisory Circle, a second Community-Led Project will be chosen.

B. A full roster of [events for 2026-2027](#) is under development, with an event already scheduled at The Forks for April 23, 2026, titled “[Rivers, Relatives and Reciprocity: How we care for the waters.](#)”

In addition to events, knowledge mobilization through accessible and engaging resources will continue, with particular focus on publishing the [Just Waters Open Educational Resource](#) on University of Manitoba’s eScholarship platform.

Artwork by Micaela Gilbert, 2026.



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