

Grades 1 – 3; Ages 6 – 9

Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe)/English edition

FIRST NATION  
COMMUNITIES  
READ

# Nibi Emosaawdang

## The Water Walker

written and illustrated by  
Joanne Robertson  
translated by Shirley Williams  
and Isadore Toulouse

Gaa-zhi-biiyaang miiniwaa gaa-mzinbiiyaang Joanne Robertson  
Gaa-aankinootimaagejig Shirley Williams miiniwaa Isadore Toulouse

## Nibi Emosaawdang

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## Teacher's Guide

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# Film Script



Boozhoo.  
Misko Anungo Kwe ndizhnikaaaz.  
Migizi ndodem.  
Ojibwe Anishinaabe Kwe ndow.

So, hi, everyone!  
My name is Joanne Robertson.  
I'm bald eagle clan, and my spirit name is Red Star.  
My communities are Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, Essex County, and Algoma.  
They are all near the Great Lake, in Ontario, Canada, on Turtle Island.

I'd like to start by telling you the story of how I came to write the story for my friend, Grandmother (Nokomis) Josephine-ba Mandamin...*The Water Walker*.

Nokomis had already walked around all the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River by the time I came on the scene. I was as green as they come when I volunteered to coordinate the 2011 Four Directions Turtle Island Water Walk. I had no idea what I was doing or what I was getting myself into when I stood up to help Nokomis and the water, but my heart was strong.

## **“As green as they come.”**

This is an old saying. To me, it means I was inexperienced, and I had no idea what I was doing or what I was getting myself into. My heart was strong, but I had a lot of learning and growing to do.

Having walkers walking in from four directions was going to be quite a big job to coordinate, so that year I introduced Spot. Spot is the orange GPS unit that we attached to all four of the copper water vessels. When the water is moving, it drops a footprint every 10 minutes on a live map online.

This was a way to ensure that we knew where the water and Nokomis and the water walkers were at all times, so we could help keep them all safe. It was also a way for communities to know when the walkers were getting close, so they could come welcome them into their territories, offer them a meal, fill their gas tanks, offer laundry services, give them a place to sleep, and share their Wi-Fi so walkers could contact home and tell their families they were okay.

The Four Directions Water Walk that covered Turtle Island was a difficult journey. Nokomis taught everyone to focus their heart and mind on “I will do it for the water. *Nga-zhichige nibi onji.*”

- 1) What is your school or community doing already?
- 2) What else could you do as a class?
- 3) Do you know the water nearest your school or home? Do you know what threatens it? How can you protect it?

Committed people from around the world shared with us this same message in their own languages.

How do you say it in your language? And, what is it you are committed to doing for the water?

Every walk takes courage. Water walkers, communities preparing for the water walkers' arrival, and coordinators face many challenges. During the 2015 and 2017 walks that went back and forth from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Superior, Nokomis taught us to focus on the words, "Go with the flow."

She taught us the water in the copper vessel has its own timetable and agenda, and we had to learn to let go of control and schedules and learn to listen to—and be led by—the water instead. When was the last time you did that?

During the 2011 walk, I promised everyone, especially the grandmothers, that we would archive and remember the work that they did for the water...that their grandchildren and future generations would know what they did for nibi.

Writing this book fulfills part of that promise.

Nokomis Josephine-ba walked for nibi for 14 years. Her final cross-country walk was in 2017, with over 1,000 people participating. She was 74 years old. She and the water walkers walked from Spirit Mountain, Duluth, just west of Lake Superior in Minnesota, USA, and headed east to Matane, Québec, in Canada over by the Atlantic Ocean.

1) Can you think of a time where you listened to and were led by water?

They walked 6,374,000 footsteps for nibi during that three-month-long walk...answering the question, "What are you going to do about it?"

A couple of weeks after her final walk, *The Water Walker* book was published through Second Story Press.

Her sneakers now carried her and her message to bookstores, libraries, and classrooms.

It was always our dream to have *The Water Walker* published in Anishinaabemowin.

Dreams do come true.

Josephine-ba handpicked her friend and fellow water walker Shirley Williams and fellow community member Isadore Toulouse to do the work of translating her story into Anishinaabemowin. Josephine-ba and Shirley went to residential school together...so this book in our language is something to celebrate!

Anishinaabemowin, our language, is important to our culture, to our identity... It ties us to the land. It holds our worldview.

For example, in English it is common to use the plural form “waters” when referring to various lakes, rivers, oceans, and/or streams. In Anishinaabemowin, we say “nibi” because we know there is only one water. There is no plural form of “nibi.”

Know that what we do to the water now will affect every other living being on Earth—now and into the future.

Our language, Anishinaabemowin, was an oral language.

To ensure that our young ones pick up on the language today, we have taken to using the English alphabet to read and write our language. This system is called the Double Vowel System.

Let’s go through the seven vowel sounds now. We’ll start with the Long Vowels.

aa, ii, oo, e

- aa – jaw – **emosawdang** (walker)
- ii – meet – **miigwech** (thank you)
- oo – oats – **gzaagi-igoo** (we love you)
- e – café – **semaa** (sacred tobacco)

Now let’s go through the short vowels...

a, i, o

- a – but – **Anishinaabe** (the people)
- i – bit – **nibi** (water)
- o – book – **Nokomis** (grandmother)

Let’s see if you can recognize any of these sounds now as Jessica reads through a few passages from the book *Nibi Emosaawdang*.

I hope you were able to recognize some of the sounds you learned earlier.



Now, I'm going to share with you some resources to help you on your language-learning journey. I hope you have a pencil ready!

Our first fun site to visit is [www.nanabush.ca](http://www.nanabush.ca).

Here you'll find lots of fun words and stories to practice with.

Next, if you go to [www.mchigeeng.ca](http://www.mchigeeng.ca), you'll discover, under the "Anishinaabemowin" tab, tons of words, read-alongs, and illustrated legends. There's lots to do here!

Go to [www.anishinaabemodaa.com](http://www.anishinaabemodaa.com) for downloads you can print to practice your words. You can also listen to elders speak.

[www.wakingupOjibwe.ca](http://www.wakingupOjibwe.ca) has a really good film on their home page that will be good for you to watch. Then, go to their resources tab "For Families," where they've shared tons to read, watch, and sing!

These next suggestions aren't language resources, but instead give you some insight into our worldview. They are put out by the Toronto Zoo, with writing and editing by our community members.

You can download PDFs of the three guides. I believe they will help you build your appreciation for water. Links to these documents can be found at the end of the credits.

The centre spread of the book is full of stories from the 2011 Four Directions Turtle Island Water Walk.

You can visit Nokomis Josephine-ba's website to read more about all of her journeys for nibi.

Go to [www.motherearthwaterwalk.com](http://www.motherearthwaterwalk.com) to appreciate how extraordinary the work was that the water walkers did and continue to do.

One grandmother who is continuing to do her work is Sharon Day. She was the lead walker for the southern direction during the 2011 Turtle Island Water Walk. This courageous grandmother continues to walk for nibi today, and you can follow her work at: [www.nibiwalk.org](http://www.nibiwalk.org).

There is a filmmaker out there with great love for Nokomis Josephine-ba.



Jeff Bear, from Urban Rez Productions, was at her sendoffs during the 2011 Turtle Island Water Walk, and he recorded the beauty and hardships of the work being done for nibi. During the filming, he and his crew also put down their cameras and picked up the eagle staff to help the women out on the road.

The film he produced is called *Water Journey*, and you can watch the trailer on YouTube. Sometimes the film is shown on APTN in episodes. Try to tune in when it does appear.

You can also see a few episode trailers on his website.

[www.samaqan.ca](http://www.samaqan.ca)

(Go to: [Episode Trailers: Season Two: Page 2](#))

In June of 2018, Nokomis and I had the joy of visiting Peter Cameron’s classroom in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

Our visit was documented by Google Earth.

The film they produced is called *Great Lakes and The Water Walker...* I encourage you to watch it on the Google Earth channel on YouTube.

The special thing about this visit is it’s the birthplace of the Junior Water Walkers.

Their motto is: “Learn, Adopt, Protect, and Walk” for a body of water near your school.

At teacher Peter Cameron’s website you can learn more, and I’d like to share words from his site: “Josephine has inspired us to continue her walk, and we are inviting classes from around the Great Lakes, across Canada, and throughout the world to join us! We ask that you decide on a body of water in your area to *learn* about, *adopt*, and help *protect*. Then, join us in the spring, on any one of the Fridays in May, when classes from around the world will *walk* around their body of water to honour Nokomis Josephine-ba Mandamin and continue to bring awareness to water.”

The Junior Water Walkers’ new motto is to *connect, reflect, respect, protect*. We encourage you to connect with the water near your school or home and reflect on your relationship. Then, come up with your own ways to respect and protect it.

As of June 13, 2020, there are 250 classrooms from around the world that have taken up this work.

My heart explodes with appreciation when I see photos of these young ones who began by following in her footsteps and who are now setting off on their own trails, learning, adopting, protecting, and walking for nibi.

When Nokomis Josephine-ba Mandamin heard the water was in trouble and was asked, “What are you going to do about it?” she put on her sneakers and got to walking. In ceremony...with gratitude, love, and respect for nibi...she crisscrossed Turtle Island by foot, weaving people together and teaching them:

I will let my friend and teacher Nokomis Josephine-ba Mandamin close off today.

*“We’re  
all born of water,  
we’re all connected with  
the water; we’re all related in  
that way. Even though we’re not  
related by blood, we’re related  
by water. So water is very  
precious for us.”*

I recorded this for youth on World Water Day in 2018:

*Miigwech* for your good listening.

Nokomis Josephine-ba Mandamin recording:

The kids who participated in our book—*The Water Walker* book Joanne and I did—I want to say thank you for your leadership. We know that you are the next—you are the now generation that is going to be taking care of the water, the waters around here, around

where you live, and around the world. You are the leaders that are going to be talking about the water with your people, to all the four-leggeds, the two-leggeds, the water kingdom, the flyers, the crawlers—all the animals and the trees and the plants. You are going to take care of them. I know you will. You have been very, very instrumental in doing the work that we are leaving behind for youths.





“We know that you will continue the work that we’re leaving behind. I can’t walk anymore. You can see that I have to use a walker to walk. My knees are not the way they used to be, but you guys are stronger than me. So you’re the next generations to work with the water.

“I want to say *miigwech* for all that you have done for me. For all of the prayers that you have prayed for the water and all of the prayers that you have sent my way. I can feel it, I can sense it. I want to say *miigwech*, thank you, for the beauty of who you are. I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you....”





# End Credits

1. Miigwech: Nibi  , Biidaasigeba  , Bawdwaywidun, all the Water Walkers, Eagle Staff Carriers, Water & Land Protectors
2. Miigwech: Shirley Williams, Isadore Toulouse, Jessica Shonias
3. Miigwech: Tesa Fiddler, Peter Cameron, the Junior Water Walkers and their teachers, Google Earth
4. MIIGWECH: Second Story Press, Emma Rodgers, Ontario Creates
5. CREDITS: Jeff Bear—Urban Rez Productions; Mike Clark—film footage: 2017 touch down; Barb Baker-LaRush—image: “I Will Do It for the Water”; George Campana—image: Shirley Williams & Josephine-ba Mandamin; Sharon Day—image: Spirit Lake; Peter Cameron—images: Junior Water Walkers; Simcoe County District School Board—images: Junior Water Walkers. MIIGWECH
6. LINKS:

[secondstorypress.ca](http://secondstorypress.ca)

[nanabush.ca](http://nanabush.ca)

[mchigeeng.ca](http://mchigeeng.ca)

[anishinaabemodaa.com](http://anishinaabemodaa.com)

[WakingUpOjibwe.ca](http://WakingUpOjibwe.ca)

[TorontoZoo.com/pdfs/tic/Stewardship\\_Guide.pdf](http://TorontoZoo.com/pdfs/tic/Stewardship_Guide.pdf)

[TorontoZoo.com/zootoyou/TurtleIslandActivities.pdf](http://TorontoZoo.com/zootoyou/TurtleIslandActivities.pdf)

[TorontoZoo.com/pdfs/tic/Walking\\_with\\_Miskwaadesi\\_1-8.pdf](http://TorontoZoo.com/pdfs/tic/Walking_with_Miskwaadesi_1-8.pdf)

[MotherEarthWaterWalk.com](http://MotherEarthWaterWalk.com)

[NibiWalk.org](http://NibiWalk.org)

[mrcssharesease.wordpress.com/junior-water-walkers/](http://mrcssharesease.wordpress.com/junior-water-walkers/)

Jeff Bear: [www.samagan.ca/category/season-two/page/2/](http://www.samagan.ca/category/season-two/page/2/)