



CSJ Blue Community Updates and Invites

Here is our December summary of news and invitations to protect water as a human right, shared commons, and sacred gift. If you have any news to share or are interested in specific themes or issues, please contact Paul Baines.

It has been a few weeks since my last update and now here we are at the end of the year. Sometimes it is so interesting to be doing the work that I forget to write it all down and share it. A good lesson for us all I suppose: **share the work as a form of reciprocity to the gifts we have been given.**

A few weeks ago I took a training course to create story maps -- online tools that help people tell stories about specific places. For our Blue Community program, I plan on collaborating with local water protectors to build maps that reveal the sacredness of and the harms to our local waterways. I have been gathering lots of resources over the past few months and I might first start with the Otonabee river here in Peterborough where I live, but gradually move on to the Humber River (Toronto), Junction Creek (Sudbury), and the Thames River (London). One of the biggest threats to protecting water as a human right, shared commons, and sacred gift is that water issues and authority are divided and subdivided between so many people. Water quality, water quantity, navigable water, ground and surface water, shorelines, sewers, permits, tap water, and bottled water -- all of this water is one and yet it is managed as many. These maps can be for on and offline use and hopefully support people's informed and inspired relationship to their larger water bodies -- **maybe even be adapted for field trips and boat tours.**

This place-based awareness also braids with our collective commitment towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. We can not learn and talk about water justice without understanding the role of colonization in general and past and current strategies for removing Indigenous peoples from their territories and undermining their inherent right to be sovereign. Here is where I try to build upon my years of experience through more education, practice, and humility. I have been using and sharing a recent resource and discussion guide called **Listening to Indigenous Voices**, published by the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice. Water justice issues are interconnected within systems of colonization and knowing about

kinship relations, languages and world views, treaties, resistance to dispossession, and pathways to decolonization. It is also important to note that this resource not only centers Indigenous voices, but was funded and produced by a Catholic organization and that there are many Indigenous people who are Catholic.

This just in: The Jesuit Forum is hosting online discussion circles about their resource guide. [Find out more or sign up here](#). There are three 2-hour circles running 5-7pm on January 9, February 16, and March 16.

On this same theme, I was recently asked to speak with the Federation Board about reconciliation. The three Congregations updated each other about their work on this critical relationship and asked me about my outlook on the pathways forward. I noted several key shifts underway that could have a profound -- **even transformative** -- effect on what we now call Canada.

- We have an Indigenous (Inuit) Governor General.
- Our new Crown-Indigenous Minister (Marc Miller) accepts that giving land back is a key solution to build trust and Indigenous sovereignty.
- There is a (postponed) Indigenous delegation travelling to Rome in 2022 to prepare for a Papal visit, triggered by the thousands of graves being recovered at residential schools.
- There is a growing call for the Pope to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery (Canada's founding legal principle for sovereignty).
- The Chief of the AFN (Assembly of First Nations) has several demands for a meaningful Papal visit including "return diocese lands to Indigenous Peoples".
- Queen Elisabeth is 95 years old and has been in and out of hospital recently.
- After almost 400 years, Barbados recently became a Republic, cutting ties with the British monarchy as their head of State.
- Indigenous land defenders are working in solidarity across Canada (such as the Wet'suwet'en blockade to stop a natural gas pipeline) because either with or without Treaties, their nationhood consent has not been given to development plans and commercial interests.

One important step in this work of reconciliation is understanding how the Church has benefited from colonization (i.e. access to property and wealth) and how we can work with settlers and immigrants to decolonize mainstream water governance and protection. I have been collaborating with Arlene Slocombe (Wellington Water Watchers) and Taylor Wilkes (Our Living Waters) to organize a series of reflective and aspirational conversations with about ten other non-Indigenous water protectors who work for large and small

non-Indigenous water organizations. We have had three private conversations, one public event at the end of September [you can watch here](#), and we are venturing on a new format and series in the new year. **This kind of work is typically not supported by people's employers so it is a real gift to be able to devote part of my time towards this effort.**

A more public facing effort was the Watershed 2021 online convention that happened early October. Our Blue Community program was a recognized sponsor. This one-day event featured 18 sessions talking about watershed political priorities, Indigenous-led water governance, youth-led climate action, fights to stop urban sprawl, challenging the bottled water industry, and two musical performances. A full day indeed. If you want to watch any of these sessions, [you can access them all here](#). With such a rich assembly of voices, I will be writing a blog post about this event in the new year with some of the key themes. I just need to finish watching all the sessions first. **Pick the one that interests you the most and let me know what you think.** You can always reach me at: info@bluecommunitycsj.org.

In the past several weeks our Blue Community program has sponsored four water protection efforts so that our presence can touch work across the province. We are a funding partner for a sculpture and education project coordinated by the [Junction Creek Stewardship Committee](#) (Sudbury); documentary films about water in the upcoming [ReFrame Film Festival](#) (Peterborough); community water testing kits with the [Water Rangers](#) organization; and an Anishinaabe water residency project called [Agency for Water](#).

This Fall I was asked to speak at two events organized by a Development and Peace volunteer who coordinates people in Bowmanville, Peterborough, and Lindsay. If there is an event or audience that you think would value a Blue Community presentation, please get in touch. It can be in-person or online. I continue to distribute our stickers, postcards, and poster ([One River, Two Futures: reflections on water](#)). Every few weeks I get a request for these materials. This week it was Jean Lamberg near Kemptville because she is helping her municipality become a Blue Community. **Get in touch if you would like any of these outreach and education materials.**

Everyday I read interesting articles and watch relevant videos that inform and align with our Blue Community mission. Here are a few of them.

Did you know that November 18 was **World Toilet Day**. This year's UN theme is Valuing Toilets. Watch this short video about those who have to manually clean India's sewers because of the caste system. [Produced by WaterAid Canada](#).

ENERGY

Say no to new nuclear in the GTA

Ontario Power Generation has announced that it plans to build a new nuclear reactor in the Greater Toronto Area (near Oshawa) for \$3 billion with US-based GE Hitachi – this will cost two to five times more than solar, wind, or water power. There are no working commercial small nuclear reactors in the world; it is a technology that is still on the drawing board with unproven performance and no track record of safety. Betting on this unproven technology makes little sense when renewables are a fraction of the cost, safer, and will not create radioactive waste that has to be stored for hundreds of thousands of years. **Tell Ontario's political leaders and your MPP to say NO to a new nuclear reactor in the GTA and YES to renewables and conservation.**

Hundreds of Groups Reject Greenwashing of Destructive Hydropower Industry at COP26

While highlighting the harms of dams—from exacerbating methane emissions and jeopardizing freshwater species to violating the human rights of impacted communities—the statement emphasizes that "free-flowing rivers and natural lakes have immense value for the welfare of the ecosystems they sustain, humankind, and survival on the planet."

Why Do Canadians Seem to Care So Little about Protecting the Great Lakes from Line 5?

Many Canadians have been boisterously loud about stopping new and existing pipelines within Canada. But why are Canadians so seemingly ignorant, or ambivalent, about Line 5? A major reason is certainly that most of the fossil fuels sent through Line 5 ends up in Ontario and Quebec. Of course, Canada is also a type of petro-state, addicted to the profits and efficiencies of fossil fuels; many have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

WATER ACCESS

We Have No Water To Waste

Recently, a giant American corporation, Blue Triton, was granted permission to extract and bottle billions of litres of groundwater from Ontario. Blue Triton, formerly Nestlé, would have enough groundwater to fill as many as 14 billion plastic bottles. Laid end to end, those bottles would stretch 5.6 million kilometres – enough to circle the globe 70 times. **This is unacceptable. Water is a human right – not a commodity to be bought and sold. Sign to this call for action [read more about the new regulations granting corporations rights to shared and sacred waters.](#)**

[Who Owns the Waters of the Upper Midwest?](#)

The question of who owns, has claim to, or controls the water of the Great Lakes should have a simple answer. But in practice it does not. Like many matters pertaining to American geography, it is rooted in a history of stolen land—further complicated by the current, sometimes competing needs of tribal, local, and federal governments; and private interests. Rachel Havrelock curates a conversation delving into water sovereignty, rights, and jurisdiction that challenges the very idea of humans owning water. **Watch the conversation using the link.**

[Areas hard hit by B.C. drought now the target of bottled water corporations](#)

According to the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, B.C. currently licenses about 16.75 billion litres of water for bottling each year, at a return of \$44,000 (or less than a penny per bottle) for the provincial government. This amounts to the annual water use of more than 92,000 British Columbians over the course of a year — a significant portion of which, the province says, is sourced from municipal water systems.

[New York Changes Constitution for the Right to Healthy Environment](#)

New York Proposal 2, the Environmental Rights Amendment, was on the ballot in New York as a legislatively referred constitutional amendment on November 2, 2021. A "yes" vote supported adding a right to clean water, clean air, and a healthful environment to the New York Constitution's Bill of Rights. **68.90% of voters said YES.**

WHERE WE LIVE

[Keep Up the Pressure to Ban Single-Use Plastic Water Bottles](#)

Pressure the Federal Government to add single-use plastic water bottles to the their single-use plastic ban, starting with sending a message to the new Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, at **Steven.Guilbeault@parl.gc.ca**. Use the template linked above and customize with your own words and name. Your unique voice matters and is needed at this crucial time, and this is a simple step to reduce fossil fuels and reduce the plastic impact on the natural environment.

[Six Nations case more than 25 years in the making](#)

In 1995, Six Nations of the Grand River launched a court case against the governments of Canada and Ontario over the outcome of the Haldimand Tract, land subject to a treaty that Monture said was not fulfilled. The Six Nations of the Grand River Elected Council, who represented the Six Nations in the case, is seeking a comprehensive accounting for the money

and property that was owed to the nation as a result of the Haldimand treaty. **Kitchener, Waterloo, Brantford, Orangeville and Haldimand County are all on Haldimand Tract land.**

How to Give Back to the Land

Since time immemorial, First Nations peoples have lived in harmony with the land. We consider the land, water, and all the plants and animals to be our relatives, and that both humans and animals have an equally important role in creation. Incorporating thinking about giving back to the land is innate for First Nations peoples and ensures we maintain the sacred balance and connection between the earth and ourselves. People often ask how they can also give back to the land in a respectful way. **Read on for more information about how you, too, can embrace giving back to the land in your daily life.**

Land back: Unsettling the original injustice

Land back. Two words simple in premise and profound in meaning. These two words get at the essence of the original injustice between our three oceans: the separation of nations from their homelands. Interweaving movements spanning generations, land back is a longstanding request and a growing chorus for redress. Land back is at the heart of demands for justice, restitution, and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. The root idea is relatively simple: returning land to Indigenous stewardship. **But it means much, much more.**

We have a Facebook page for this work too. Every week there are new posts for you to see and share. To contact Paul Baines email: info@BlueCommunityCSJ.org

All these updates and more can be found on our CSJ Blue Community website: BlueCommunityCSJ.org



Blue Community - Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph

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