

INFORMATIONAL READING COMPREHENSION:

WATER PROTECTORS

Read the text below and then answer the questions that follow.

Fresh water is an incredibly important and surprisingly rare resource. Although it makes up less than three percent of all of the water on Earth, clean fresh water is vital to life as we know it. Read the profiles below of three inspiring indigenous women who have worked to protect this precious resource.

JOSEPHINE MANDAMIN

Josephine Mandamin was born in 1942 in northern Ontario, Canada. Mandamin spent much of her life living by the Great Lakes that lie along the border between Canada and the United States. As an Anishinaabe (a member of one of Canada's First Nations), she was raised to recognize water as sacred.

In 2000, when she was a grandmother in her fifties, Josephine Mandamin heard a **prophecy** from an elder. The elder had had a dream that because of pollution, the price of an ounce of water would be as high as the price of an ounce of gold within 30 years. Mandamin realized then that the global community was facing a water **crisis**.

Mandamin wanted to bring attention to the destructive effects of water pollution, which she had seen firsthand living by Lake Superior. Inspired by the Anishinaabe tradition in which grandmothers lead others, especially other women, to take care of Earth's water, she founded an organization called Mother Earth Water Walk. It was through this organization that Mandamin empowered others to take action to protect Earth's water.

In the spring of 2003, Mandamin led a small group on a "water walk" all the way around Lake Superior, for a total of about 1,300 miles. Participants took turns carrying a copper pail of water, taking care not to spill a single drop. Following Anishinaabe tradition, only women and girls carried the copper pail of water. The walkers sang and offered blessings on the water as they walked from sunup to sundown.

Men and boys were there to offer support and transport supplies.

In the following years, Mandamin continued to lead water walks, earning her the name Grandmother Water Walker.

Between 2003 and 2017, she covered more than 10,000 miles in water walks, traveling the shorelines of all five of the Great Lakes, as well as other bodies of water across North America.

The water walks served to raise public awareness of the importance of water conservation. That awareness put pressure on the Canadian government to clean up polluted waters. Governing bodies of the indigenous First Nations created organizations to manage their water and work with the Canadian government to end water pollution. In 2007, the Anishinaabek Women's Water Commission was established, and Josephine Mandamin became the Chief Water Commissioner. The group has worked tirelessly to protect waterways, groundwater, and ecosystems.

Mandamin passed away in 2019 at the age of 77, leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire others to follow in her footsteps as water protectors.



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Continue reading the text, and then answer the questions that follow.

AUTUMN PELTIER

Mandamin's great-niece Autumn Peltier grew up understanding the importance of water conservation. But when she saw firsthand the water pollution on the Serpent River First Nation's land, eight-year-old Autumn dedicated herself to the issue. She was horrified to learn that people couldn't drink the water because it was so **contaminated**, and she began speaking out to advocate for clean water.

Autumn demanded that Canada clean up water pollution from oil pipelines and other development on First Nations' lands. When she was 12 years old, Autumn attended a meeting of the Assembly of First Nations, where she boldly spoke up to Canada's Prime Minister. She told him that she was disappointed that he had failed to protect the water. In 2018, Peltier spoke at a United Nations meeting about the importance of access to clean water. She told the attendees, "We believe our water is sacred....No one should have to worry if the water is clean or if they will run out of water."

And in 2019, after her great-aunt Josephine Mandamin passed away, Autumn was appointed to take over Mandamin's role as Chief Water Commissioner. At just 14 years old, Autumn proudly stepped into the leadership role, just as her great-aunt had years before.



DEB HAALAND

Those who work to protect the environment, whether they're activists or government officials, are inspired by the belief that all people have a right to clean drinking water.



One such official is Deb Haaland, who made history in 2021 when she became the first Native American Secretary of the Interior. The U.S. Department of the Interior runs many agencies, including the National Parks, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

As a member of the Pueblo of Laguna Native American tribe, Secretary Haaland's family has lived in New Mexico for 35 generations, and her values were influenced by her upbringing there. As a child, she spent the summers with her grandparents in a Laguna Pueblo village. It was during those summers when she learned the importance of protecting water resources and gained a deep respect for the Earth.

In July 2021, as the American West was in the midst of a severe drought, Secretary Haaland met with leaders and water experts in Colorado. She expressed her **commitment** to utilizing her position in the government to protect and manage water resources, and she **acknowledged** the importance of working together on this goal. As Haaland noted, "We all have a role to use water wisely, manage our resources with every community in mind, work collaboratively, and respect each other during this challenging time."

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Answer the following questions about the article.

1. Complete the chart below with at least three similarities and three differences between Josephine Mandamin, Autumn Peltier, and Deb Haaland based on the information in the text.

	Josephine Mandamin	Autumn Peltier	Deb Haaland
Similarities			
Differences			

2. Based on the text, what three things inspired Josephine Mandamin to begin her water walks?

- A. hearing a prophecy from an elder about the price of water in the future
- B. her firsthand observation of water pollution in the Serpent River First Nation
- C. her firsthand observation of water pollution in Lake Superior
- D. her deep love and respect for animals that live in the water
- E. the summers she spent in her grandparents' village
- F. her belief in the traditional Anishinaabe values of women protecting Earth's water

3. Read the following excerpt from the passage.

"The elder had had a dream that because of pollution, the price of an ounce of water would be as high as the price of an ounce of gold within 30 years. Mandamin realized then that the global community was facing a water crisis."

Why do you think Josephine Mandamin was alarmed after hearing this prophecy?

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Keep going! Answer the following questions about the article.

4. According to the text, what two factors influenced Autumn Peltier's decision to speak out about water pollution?

1. _____

2. _____

5. According to the text, which of the following influenced Secretary Haaland's values?

A. Josephine Mandamin's water walks

C. summers spent with her grandparents

B. Autumn Peltier's UN speech

D. seeing water pollution in Colorado

6. Write the correct letter to match the words from the passage with their synonyms on the right.

_____ prophecy

A. pledge

_____ crisis

B. polluted

_____ contaminated

C. confirmed

_____ commitment

D. disaster

_____ acknowledged

E. prediction



BONUS!

Think about the impact of water in your own life. Choose one or more of the activities below to complete.

- Make a list of all the ways you and your family use water regularly. Think of ways you might be able to conserve water.
- Research your local water source(s). Find out where your water comes from and how it's managed by your local leaders.
- Humans aren't the only ones who rely on water. Make a list of wildlife in your area that lives in or near your local water sources.
- Look up some ways to prevent water pollution in your local community. Share your ideas with others!