

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **The International Joint Commission and Garden River First Nation meet for important discussions on water protection in Ketegaunseebee**

July 11, 2024



*Leadership and staff of the Garden River First Nation and the International Joint Commission met on July 9 at the Garden River Community Centre to discuss water issues. Credit: IJC.*

Sault Ste. Marie, ON (Bawating)

Ketegaunseebee (Garden River First Nation)

The International Joint Commission ([IJC](#)) met with Garden River First Nation ([GRFN](#)) at the Garden River Community Centre on July 9, 2024. The engagement served to establish a relationship and enhance communication about water issues of mutual concern.

The IJC was established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to help the governments of Canada and the United States prevent and resolve disputes over the use of the waters they share. IJC Commissioners are Canadian or US government appointees, and [Canada appointed Dr. Susan Chiblow](#), lifelong resident and band member of Garden River First





Nation, to serve as a Commissioner to the IJC in December last year. Dr. Chiblow studied and worked as an environmentalist for many years. Ketegaunseebee honors the hard work and dedication that Dr. Chiblow has put forth to be appointed to this important position with the Commission.

Garden River First Nation Ogimaa (Chief) Karen Bell said “We are tremendously grateful and proud of Dr. Chiblow who pursued her dreams and attained her PhD. She continues to work tirelessly towards achieving her goals to ensure that water quality and access remain at the forefront of discussions of all levels of government both nationally and internationally.”

Though Ogimaa Bell was not personally in attendance at the engagement session, she said of the meeting, “GRFN leadership is committed to ensure that clean and clear water remains for time immemorial. As one of the natural resources gifted by the creator and one of life’s sustainers, we have a great responsibility to ensure it remains pristine for generations to come. The creator gave Indigenous peoples the responsibility of protecting resources one of which is water. Sustainability of resources is key to GRFN’s future success and prosperity. We the leadership understand that water protection and clean drinking water remain of vital importance. Recently GRFN along with the Lands and Resources Department met with the IJC of which Dr. Sue Chiblow is one of the Commissioners.”

“GRFN leadership has and continues to support the Lands and Resources Department by building capacity. We are making, and continue to make, informed decisions in concert with staff, we are challenging industry and government, and foremost we have the understanding that it is our political duty to protect the environment from harm,” she said.

The July 9 gathering of about 25 people was the first between GRFN and IJC and included all six IJC Commissioners, IJC staff, and departments from GRFN such as Lands and Resources, Fish and Wildlife, Public Works, and Education.

The opening and closing prayers were provided by Doreen Lesage, an elder of GRFN, and Dr Chiblow opened the meeting. The conversation





highlighted the importance of water protection, limiting water pollution, ecosystem impacts of shoreline erosion, and how that erosion is affecting cultural practices of GRFN people such as hunting and fishing.

Discussions during the meeting helped to identify opportunities for enhanced communication and engagement between IJC and GRFN, such as through the activities of the [International Lake Superior Board of Control](#), which regulates the outflow of Lake Superior and manages the control works on the St. Marys River.

The engagement session is the beginning of a collaborative relationship between IJC and GRFN to address water issues faced by the Nation.

Commissioner Chiblow said “Building relationships with Anishinaabek and listening to our N’bi Kendaaswin (water knowledge) is an important part of Great Lakes water governance. This meeting with Garden River First Nation is part of the IJC’s broader commitment to building respect, trust and understanding with Indigenous people in all the places we work where the water brings us together.”

Ketegaunseebee welcomes the input and help of the International Joint Commission and looks forward to continuous long-term engagement.

Media inquiries:

**GRFN** Dustin Hollings, 705 –946 –6300 ext 250  
[communications@gardenriver.org](mailto:communications@gardenriver.org)

**IJC** Allison Voglesong Zejnati, 519-551-0952, [allison.voglesong-zejnati@ijc.org](mailto:allison.voglesong-zejnati@ijc.org)

