

## WALKING TOGETHER



Volume 2

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### **7th Fire Jiiman (Canoe) Journey**

Edited by Carol Ann Amour

#### **Things I've Heard**

This coming summer preparations for an amazing journey will begin.

The ultimate goal is to follow the path of the original Ojibwe migration from the east coast to Madeline Island in Lake Superior.

But lots of preparation needs to happen first. Large voyageur canoes need to be built. Money needs to be raised. Volunteers need to be recruited. Paddlers need to learn how to paddle upstream.

Then, in 2027, the journey will begin. AND a documentary will be made of the entire project!

#### **Things I've Read**

from the Jiiman Journey Website

#### **ABOUT THE JOURNEY**

*Beginning on the summer solstice (June 21, 2027), Anishinaabe (Ojibwe/Odawa/Potawatomi) and their allies will travel up the St Lawrence Seaway, following ancient trade routes throughout the Great Lakes.*

*The mission of the 7th Fire Jiimaan Journey is to:*

- *Reawaken canoe culture and protocols throughout the Great Lakes by retracing the ancestral migration.*
- *Strengthen Tribal Nationhood, traveling as united Indigenous Nations across Turtle Island*
- *Increase awareness to protect the waterways of the Great Lakes*

And Lac du Flambeau tribal member Tina Kuckkahn is coordinating the entire project.

*Tina Kuckkahn, JD., is a citizen of the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa and a descendant of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe. Since 1996, her career has been dedicated to nurturing Indigenous arts and cultures through a lifelong commitment to supporting Native artists and culture bearers through various educational and philanthropic initiatives.*

*At the Evergreen State College, Tina served as the founding Director of the Longhouse Education and Cultural Center, a center dedicated to advancing Native arts and cultures. She established programming to directly serve Native artists, including developing classes, workshops, grants, markets, and art residencies. The latter included initializing exchanges with international Indigenous artists throughout the Pacific Rim. After more than 20 years leading the Longhouse, Tina eventually became the college's first Vice President of Indigenous Arts, Education, and Tribal Relations. She then expanded her planning to include the establishment of an Indigenous Arts Campus, which involved the construction of buildings explicitly dedicated to carving, weaving, and fiber arts.*

*After her extensive commitment to Native arts education, she shifted her focus to a more expansive approach to Indigenous philanthropy and joined NDN Collective, "an Indigenous-led organization dedicated to building Indigenous power." She began as NDN's Director of Grantmaking, overseeing a variety of grant programs, including the Radical Imagination Artists Grant Program. She eventually became the Managing Director of the NDN Foundation, which allowed her a wider purview as a thought leader shaping and refining the organization's holistic strategy through the liberation and repatriation of wealth that honors sovereignty and community self-determination.*

*Tina is now President/CEO of First Peoples Fund.*

### **Things I've Written**

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

*An amazing canoe journey is set to take place. Tina Kuckkahn, J.D., a Lac du Flambeau (WAASWAAGANING) tribal member and CEO of the First People's Fund, is coordinating the 7th Fire Jiimaan Journey project to recreate the Ojibwe migration from the east coast to Madeline Island here in what is now called Wisconsin. The trip will be made in large voyageur canoes made by a team led by master canoe builder Wayne Valliere also of WAASWAAGANING. Valliere is a 2020 recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship and many other awards.*

*The WAASWAAGANING Institute of Indigenous Teaching and Learning, located here in Lac du Flambeau, is one of the partners on this project. If you would like to contribute to the Jiimaan Journey or find out more, contact WIITL CEO Kamewin at [kamewin@gmail.com](mailto:kamewin@gmail.com), Tina Kuckkahn at [tina.kuckkahn@gmail.com](mailto:tina.kuckkahn@gmail.com) or search [www.7thfire.org](http://www.7thfire.org).*

### **Things I've Heard**

*"Water has to live, it can hear, it can sense what we're saying, it can really, really, speak to us. Some songs come to us through the water." Jul 20, 2017*

*Josephine Mandaman*

### **Things I've Seen**

*"The river that saved Humankind"*

by Carol Ann Amour  
published in the Milwaukee Journal

I want to see the Missouri before the Dakota Access Pipeline has the chance to ruin it.

I have a fascination with rivers, and I have traveled down several of them.

The first one was the Colorado. A dear friend, the late Sandy Cornelius, and I had decided to take a week long raft trip through the Grand Canyon, and it lived up to all the hype. We were on a large raft piloted by experienced and fit professionals who did all the work. Our only task, really, was to stay on the raft when we went down the rapids. The scenery was awe inspiring

At night we shared delicious meals cooked on the riverbank by the crew and we slept on cots under the stars. We stood in waterfalls, listened to the songs of beautiful birds, and felt connected to every living thing. We got hot, very hot. And we often got wet.

The trip was memorable in every way including that I was rescued from almost certain death. It had been a particularly hot day on the river when we arrived at the junction of the Colorado and Havasu Creek. The big raft was pulled over and we were invited to hike up the creek bank and then float back down the creek on our life vests.

We were warned not to get too close to the various waterfalls we would encounter on our journey as the undertow was strong. How strong, I remember thinking to myself, could the pull of the undertow be? Those falls weren't massive.

So I ventured too close. Not as a rebel. Rather as a sceptic, a doubter, a non-believer, a fool.

Before I knew it, I was pulled under. And I could not get out,

At first I struggled. Fighting for my life.

Before long, I realized the struggle wasn't helping. So I gave in.

Looking up, I could see the light. This was not the way I had thought I would die.

Luckily, before my last breath, I could feel myself being pulled straight up out of the water by the hair on the top of my head. One of my fellow travelers had rescued me. It was not the first time, nor the last, that I would need and receive a little help from my friends. It was not the first time, nor the last, that my life was saved when I let go of the notion that I was in control.

I have also spent a week on the Amazon. I fished for piranha, held both a three-toed sloth and a caiman, jumped in the river to get clean and escape the heat, and followed the path of the amazing Maragaret Mee, renowned watercolor artist, in the rain forests of Brazil. A highlight of my museum days, this trip was also a highlight of my life.

Another highlight took place over, not on, a river. This event also occurred during a work trip for the Milwaukee Public Museum. We were in the field collecting plant material from which to make casts for fabricating the exhibit we were creating called "Rainforest: Exploring Life on Earth."

We were hiking at La Selva, a biological research station in northeastern Costa Rica. Somehow I had become separated from our small group and found myself standing on a narrow wooden footbridge suspended high above the Sarapiquí River. I paused and looked upstream. Not a person in sight. The sounds of tropical birds filled the air.

And, then I saw them. Blue Morpho butterflies. First one, then hundreds. Coming right towards me, bright blue to mimic the sky. Had I been a natural predator, they might have fooled me as I looked down upon them. But I meant them no harm.

I was transfixed by their beauty and my great good fortune to be suspended high above them on this bridge at just the right time. One, flying higher than the rest, landed on my shoulder. Even Disney couldn't one up that.

I stood as quietly as I could, grateful for all the beauty of the natural world, grateful for good work, grateful for amazing opportunities, grateful for the blessings I have received. I knew then that if not one good thing ever happened to me again, I had been blessed.

That moment has become a touchstone. When things get tough, I sit very still, I close my eyes and I am there, suspended over the Sarapiquí River. I feel that Morpho on my shoulder and know that I will be OK.

But there are other rivers I would like to see. Other rivers I would like to experience.

First on my list is the Missouri. Not because it in itself is so exceptional, but I want to see it before the Dakota Access Pipeline has the chance to ruin it. The pipeline people say it's perfectly safe, but corporations always say their byproducts, their effluents, their spills are safe. That's what corporations do.

The Standing Rock Sioux and many Native and non-native allies are trying to stop them. Their prayers and their presence have held DAPL off for months, but it is getting cold.

The river and Standing Rock are calling to me. I want to help in whatever small way I can to stop that pipeline from running under the river. I want to stand with the Sioux to protect their sovereignty. Our 250-year-old land grab has got to stop. It doesn't make me proud to be an American.

And equally important, it is time for us to acknowledge that we are destroying the quality of our water and our air.

And so I must go, as hundreds, maybe thousands have done before me. Not for the fun of it. Not for making memories. Not for the excitement.

I must go see the Missouri River to help restore balance. I must go stand with the Sioux to help protect the water, to help protect sovereignty, to help protect sacred sites.

In the sixties, I marched for open housing. It was the right thing to do. In 2016, I need to stand with the Sioux. It is the only thing to do.

If enough of us heed that call, perhaps, together, we can make a difference. If enough of us heed that call, perhaps the Missouri could become the most important river of all. It could become the river that saved humankind.

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## Why Walking Together?

I think often of Sitting Bull's words, "Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children." It seems to me those words are more important now than ever.

People are fighting all over the world. More than ever, people are fighting in our country. Fighting over politics, fighting over school policy, fighting over books, fighting over money.

The fierce fighting often keeps us from hearing each other. It even keeps us from listening to, much less caring about, each other.

If we could begin doing those things, even a little bit, we might begin to find that we have more in common than we think. We might be able to make a better life for our children.

That, in any case, is the goal of this newsletter.

We're sharing short positive stories, think pieces, poems, brief examples, ideas, and more about what can happen when", as the late Menominee elder Irene Payawasit says in *The Making of A Tribute to Survival*, "people and forces come together."

This is meant to be an apolitical and non-denominational effort to find ways to move forward together for the future of our children and our world.

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