

**Foreword by Dr. Gino Ferri for:
Not Wolf Nor Dog, by Wilmer F. Nadjiwon**

The young, 15 year old teenager, totally lost in an unknown stretch of the dark woods, was on the verge of panic. It was late in the evening, bugs were everywhere, no food or water; unprepared, agitated, an emotional wreck; tears were about to fall. A loud, booming voice from a total stranger returned the child to his senses. The man command him to stop his whining, quit wallowing in self pity, get up, and follow him to the trailhead. Nervously, the kid did so. By dusk, both were at the main road. At a nearby restaurant, the dark skinned adult treated the boy to a warm meal.

This was my introduction to Wilmer Nadjiwon, the world famous carver, over 50 years ago! I was the frightened young boy; he was the adult. After all these years, I'm still following my teacher and mentor.

Memories have dimmed with the passage of time, but that initial experience in the forest left an indelible mark on my psyche. What happened following our initial chance meeting is lost to me, but I do recall our many subsequent excursions and hunting trips into the wilds, camping in the outdoors, and drinking sparkling, clean water directly from the myriad of lakes, streams, and rivers that dot our verdant landscape. How the aquatic landscape has changed since those halcyon days.

Fast forward to the year 2000, to the town of Walkerton. Seven deaths, 2,400 people sick due to a contaminated water supply. I was teaching at an elementary school at that time, and it shattered my nerves and resolve when witnessing youngsters crying and buckling with stomach cramps. Yes, the aquatic landscape has indeed changed. In a seemingly short period of time, individuals residing in this region went from enjoying sparkling clean drinking water consumed directly from nearby lakes, to becoming poisoned by an e-coli laden liquid emanating from contaminated wells.

But we did learn our lesson from the Walkerton tragedy, did we not? We now know the devastating results and inherent dangers of polluting our precious water source, correct? Unfortunately, the blunt answer is no, and history was about to repeat itself. Although stringent laws now protect aquifers, and well-trained inspectors closely monitor the purity of our drinking water, Dump Site 41 came perilously close to changing our smug, complacent attitude.

Between Barrie, Midland and the small town of Elmvale, in Tiny Township, Simcoe County, a large pristine underground aquatic reservoir called the Alliston Aquifer forces a series of bubbling artesian wells to the surface. This water is apparently so clean that in purity, it compares to Arctic ice core samples from snows deposited many thousands of years ago, millennia before the advent of industrialized pollution. In fact, it's as clean as ancient ice sheets from Devon Island, the largest uninhabited island in the Canadian Arctic. In essence, the cleanliness of this unique aquifer is many times cleaner than our province's drinking water standards.

And this water supply is located underground. On the surface, rich, productive farmlands dot the landscape. In close proximity, tourist sites abound. Only kilometers away, we find Wasaga Beach, Simcoe County Museum, Ste. Marie among the Hurons, the Naval Establishment, Huronia Museum, Wye Marsh, Martyr's Shrine, and Tiny Marsh, to name a few. What does this have to do with Dump Site 41? Simply put, this historically significant, agriculturally productive, and naturally pure aquifer zone was destined to become a large landfill site.

The "problem" is the pristine underground aquatic deposits; this clean water is a bothersome nuisance to the proposed dump site. Since a pit has to be dug, the municipal government must pump many millions of litres out of the aquifer, thus preventing the landfill site from turning into a small lake. This ultra pure water would ultimately be diverted and drained into nearby streams. What a tragic waste of good, clean, drinking water. Best estimates are that the Alliston Aquifer can sustain a city the size of Owen Sound for many, many years. Once this 60 hectare landfill site was to become fully functional, it's designed to allow surrounding, clean water to percolate into the dump itself, and mix with garbage contaminants. This filthy, polluted liquid would ultimately be removed, and transported to a nearby sewage plant for treatment. If everything went according to plan, the inward movement of uncontaminated water would act as a buffer, and prevent the entire general

area from becoming a large cesspool. As solid wastes fill Dump Site 41, a proportionate amount of contaminated liquids must be diverted towards local streams or hauled to the sewage plant.

This brings me back to Wilmer Nadjiwon, my old teacher and mentor. Wilmer, an elder of the great Ojibwa nation, is an accomplished artist, a world famous carver, past chief of the Nawash Band, founder of the Union of Ontario Indians, WW II veteran, and a successful entrepreneur; he's also an avid conservationist. He teamed up with Danny Beaton, a Mohawk environmentalist, to protest the development of Dump Site 41. These two First Nation, ecologically-minded activists led a protest march to Queen's Park, where Danny proclaimed "The aquifers and waters of Georgian Bay do not belong to us, they belong to our children. It is our responsibility to protect the water for them." On March 10, Wilmer, in his address to the Environment Commissioner, eloquently highlighted the folly of proceeding with plans to complete the proposed dump.

Danny and Wilmer eventually formed a coalition in an effort to turn the spotlight on the proposed dump site. Their cause attracted many supporters, including Elizabeth May, then Green Party leader; Maude Barlow, senior advisor on water to the UN General Assembly; North Simcoe MPP Garfield Dunlop; and long time Site 41 opponent Steve Ogden.

It seems that collectively, we're under the false impression that, as Canadians, we'll always enjoy an endless supply of fresh, clean water. If we pollute or turn some apparently insignificant aquifer into a dump or toxic waste site, no problem ... we'll always find more underground springs; there will always be more water. This is simply not true. In reality, some years ago during an extended heat wave, more than a fifth of Ontario's municipalities suffered water shortages.

As the wonderful organizers and educators involved in Chesley's Cleanwater Festival point out to the many students during a series of activities stressing the need to conserve our precious water supply, "new" water cannot be created. The very droplets that were slurped by a lumbering brontosaurus, "recycled" by its anatomy, are here today; waters which refreshed and nurtured our ancestors are still with us; and rains that fell on ancient cities are falling on our urban landscape.

Have we learned from the Walkerton tragedy? If Dump Site 41 was allowed to proceed, this would have been a rhetorical question. Should the dump have been stopped? Do some research and educate yourself about this issue. On doing so, informed, rational individuals ultimately put an end to the madness of proceeding with this dump.

Thank you Wilmer, for leading by example. Metaphorically speaking, I'm still following in your footsteps, vainly attempting to catch up to you. Chi migwetch, nishomis.

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