

Sacred ceremony takes place in Catchacoma Old Growth Forest

Event featured symbolic blessing protecting the forest and the water

MARLYS KERKMAN, PETERBOROUGH EXAMINER, 9 Jun 2025

A water walk, an Indigenous led ceremony where individuals walk with a vessel of water to raise awareness about water rights and protection, was held in the Catchacoma old growth Forest recently.



The old growth Catchacoma Forest hosted not only a spring walk but also a water walk led by Liz Osawamick at The Pencil Creek Marsh.

The event also included a spring walk where water rights, animal rights, the need for fresh air and the diverse growth of plants and animals were spotlighted during the same ceremony. The Pencil Creek Marsh provided the water setting. These water walks are often seen as a way to honour water as a lifegiving force and to pray for its wellbeing. And the forest walk brings attention to the need for the trees that surround one that could potentially live for centuries.

The Catchacoma Forest Stewardship Committee (CFSC) and Curve Lake First Nation could not have wished for a better day. No ice storm or slashstrewn trails. No rain. And it was bright if not sunny. Curve Lake First Nation Chief Keith Knott and water walker Liz Osawamick brought together the Indigenous ceremony of consecration starting with a fire ritual and drummers.

The symbolism of the strawberry was also part of the event. The strawberry is a symbol of life, health and forgiveness and is associated with the heart and feminine energy. These ceremonies led by leaders of both CFSC and the Curve Lake First Nation add to the Forest's prestige. They are a symbolic blessing protecting the forest and the water. Curve Lake's strong support for CFSC efforts to save the Catchacoma Forest may be pivotal in sparing this traditional land — a unique natural treasure — from the axe.

For five years, the CFSC has strived in many contexts to save the Old Growth Hemlock Forest that, under other provincial regimes, according to the CFSC, could have been easily done for sustainably minded and progressive politicians.

The CFSC adds the current commercial disposition has fallen woefully short of conservation targets and has put initiatives on the backburner that, in these times of wild fires, ice storms, hurricanes, drought and deluge, are critically important to our future on a beleaguered planet. This walk that happened June 1 in the Catchacoma Forest is exemplary of the natural world infrastructure on which our future depends. Those who joined the hike experienced an event with spiritual and cultural significance.

The CFSC expresses the immense gratitude they have that is owed to First Nations supporters of the conserve Catchacoma campaign. As residents of the planet, this reminds us that, if we fail to save the Forest and its inhabitants, it will be at our extreme peril.