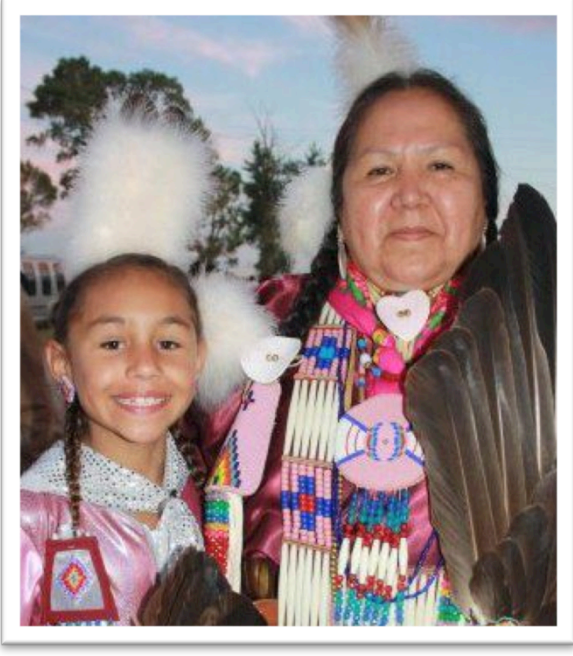


# WATER & SPIRITUALITY

*A conversation with Linda EagleSpeaker*



**Linda EagleSpeaker** is Elder in Residence at the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center. A member of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Blood Tribe, she is a social worker, teacher, healer, and herbalist who we interviewed about the role of spirituality in public health and water.

Her words guided our framing of spirituality, but this panel by no means encompasses the complex role spirituality plays in public health. You can watch her full interview on the iPad.

## Water is Life

Linda shared how the opioid addiction crisis affects pregnant mothers and newborns.



1 in 10 American Indian women who are pregnant are diagnosed with opiate dependency or abuse in MN.

"Water is life. During pregnancy, for 9 months, the baby lives, breathes, and exits in water. If the mom is healthy, the first trauma the baby experiences is birth. But if the mom is addicted and using – **whatever she is using is transferred to the water that surrounds the baby.**

The addiction transfers. The withdrawal transfers."

## Water is Sacred

Linda also noted that water is used ritualistically in the release of life and energy.

### Full Moon Ceremony

Every month, female elders gather at the Elder's Lodge in St. Paul to celebrate the full moon. They **share blessed water** and release their hair and tobacco ties into a sacred fire to **create new life**.

### Pre-Burial Ritual

Linda described the ritual of **boiling cedar in water**, and using the water to clean and braid a passed family member's hair before burial.



Elder's Lodge in St. Paul

## Water is Healing

Linda shared her experience meeting Standing Rock Water Protectors.



"So you've got a group of young people, incredible people, that traveled into the four directions to bring back medicines..."

They're so courageous. They're modern warriors. Willing to give their life for water. They will do anything to protect it..."

**She has a spirit, that water. Water has a spirit that keeps us alive."**