



A Newsletter for Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators!

THE WATERDRUM

June 2019

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Sheryl St. Pierre



AWWAO is pleased to announce the appointment of Sheryl St. Pierre who was elected as AWWAO's new board member. The new board member appointment was approved on January 30, 2019 at the 24th Annual General Meeting.



National Aboriginal Day

"REALIZE THAT WE AS HUMAN BEINGS HAVE BEEN PUT ON THIS EARTH FOR ONLY A SHORT TIME AND THAT WE MUST USE THIS TIME TO GAIN WISDOM, KNOWLEDGE, RESPECT, AND THE UNDERSTANDING FOR ALL HUMAN BEINGS SINCE WE ARE ALL RELATIVES."

-Cree Proverb

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Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario





The meaning of the AWWAO logo as described by the artist:

Tree—represents Mother Earth

Sun—brings Life to our Environment

Eagle—watches over the Environment

Sky—ensures the Cycle of Water

ABOUT US

The Aboriginal Water & Wastewater Association of Ontario is an information source for water environment and Operator training and certification issues and technology. AWWAO's members include professionals from Ontario First Nations, Environmental Health Officers, Tribal Councils, Municipal Suppliers and some Government Agencies.

AWWAO is dedicated to the transfer of information and concepts regarding all areas of the water environment. As members of the American Water Works Association (AWWA), the Ontario Water Works Association (OWWA), the Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the Water Environment Association of Ontario (WEAO), we provide an invaluable network for those involved in water and wastewater industry. AWWAO, through a partnering agreement with Keewatinook Okimakanak and Health Canada co-operates and liaises with the above noted associations, and all provincial and federal government agencies. AWWAO has a volunteer seat on many of the various association's committees.

AWWAO offers its members the opportunity to:

- ◆ Be updated and informed about issues that affect the water environment.
- ◆ Interact with persons in various fields of water expertise.
- ◆ Promote concerns of the membership through a collective voice.
- ◆ Exchange information and ideas to other members, the public and Chiefs and Council.

To date, the AWWAO consistently rank the training and certification of Plant Operators as its top priority. The attainment of Certification is widely recognized as essential to performing a good job, at a high level, in the water and wastewater treatment plant operations, and an indicator of a responsible and contributing community member.

MEMBERSHIP

\$200.00 Membership Fee for First Nations Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators per operator. This Membership entitles the Operator(s) to the AWWAO Newsletter, monthly bulletin, Annual Report and the Annual General Assembly and Training Conference cost reimbursement, if applicable.

\$400.00 Membership Fee for Non-Operator, Public Works Management, Administration and Management of a First Nation or Non-First Nation. This Membership entitles the Member to the AWWAO Newsletter, monthly bulletins, Annual Report and invitation to the Annual General Assembly and Training Conference.

Please Print

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

First Nation/Business: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

VISION

Our Vision is to be the Association that best understands and satisfies the training, education, certification and licensing needs of Operators of Ontario First Nations. Our dedication to supporting Operators touches not only health, but safety, spirit and empowerment ... most of all knowledge.

OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To act as a voice and forum for First Nation Plant Operators in Ontario, publish a newsletter, promote communications and networking among Plant Operators and other persons interested in AWWAO's objectives;
- ◆ Promote the importance of a safe and potable water supply and the highest standard of wastewater operations;
- ◆ Promote the development and delivery of continuing education and training programs for Plant Operators and others involved in water and wastewater treatment;
- ◆ Promote the importance of technical training in maintaining and upgrading the Operator's knowledge of proper water and wastewater operation and maintenance requirements;
- ◆ Promote the importance of involving qualified Operator's in the design, construction or upgrading of water and wastewater treatment plants;
- ◆ Promote the importance of proper training, certification and licensing of Operators;
- ◆ Promote the importance of enhanced lab testing of potable water and monitoring of wastewater effluents; and
- ◆ Promote the importance of establishing an effective Operations & Maintenance Management Plan to ensure proper care is performed for the assets.

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a member oriented, non-profit Association, providing province-wide and year-round high-quality services and an annual forum for the First Nations Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators, allowing for networking opportunities at the same time. We are committed to providing high quality information on the water and wastewater industry through the quarterly newsletter. We are dedicated to promoting, preserving and protecting the water, natural resources and environment through the education, training and networking of the Ontario First Nations Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators.

The Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario's newsletter is published quarterly by the AWWAO at Box 20001, RPO, Dryden, ON P8N 0A1
Tel: (807) 216-8085
E-mail: info@awwao.org

Advertising opportunities and/or submission or request of information, please contact the Association Coordinator.



Sheryl St. Pierre

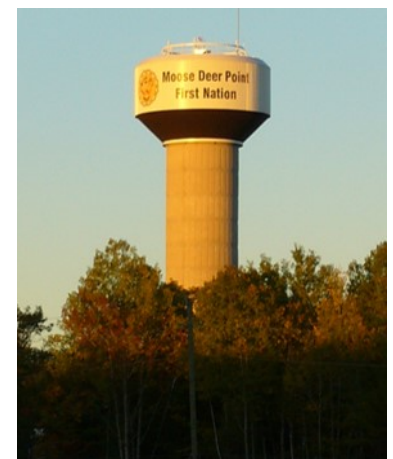


Sheryl St Pierre has been a Water Treatment Operator since July 2008 and has been the Overall Responsible Operator at Moose Deer Point First Nation for 9 years. She is mom to Ashley, 28 and Gregory 25, and has a home in Moose Deer Point. Sheryl brings a wide range of previous experience to our Board. As a Quality Systems Development Coordinator for a Barrie, Ontario company, as well as the Education Counsellor and Economic Development Officer for her community, Sheryl understands the needs of fellow operators and can assist the Board through proposal writing and strategic planning that can bring the supports AWWAO's operators and their communities need. "I'm excited to be a part of our Board. I would like to see our membership and opportunities for operators grow, and look forward to helping our organization over the next 4 years!"

Sheryl has lived and worked in her home community of Moose Deer Point First Nation, which is located along the shores of Georgian Bay approximately 2 hours north of Toronto, ON. Moose Deer Point had been on a Boil Water Advisory since the mid 1980's. The community commissioned its Multi Stage Slow Sand Filtration Water Treatment Plant in December 2010. The water treatment plant and distribution system has over 9km of High Density Polyethylene piping, 66m³ clearwell storage, a 582 m³ Water Storage Tower, and 2 rechlorination stations.



Chief Barron King accepting
keys from Alarie and Sons Ltd.



Aaron Beaucage



Nipissing Water Treatment Plant

Hello, my name is Aaron Beaucage and I am a Water Treatment Operator for Nipissing First Nation where I was born and raised. Along with my wife Jennifer, we have raised 3 children in our home community of Garden Village; which is located on the west side of Nipissing First Nation. I come from a family of 5 boys and 2 girls. My father had a lumber business where I occasionally worked on the weekends and summers. That is where I had learned the value of hard work and taking pride in your work. After high school, I attended college and graduated from machinist program. After college, I started working at Boart

Longyear starting as a machinist, then gaining more skills as a heat treatment operator following strict ISO quality standards. I also joined up with the Fire Department in 2012, where I am Captain for one of the 3 fire stations we have on Nipissing First Nation. Hard economic times have led to layoffs. After working a few jobs here and there I was able to get a OIT trainee position. I was able to achieve my OIT certificates and entry level courses quickly. I have been employed for Nipissing for 4 years now and I now have my Level 2 treatment and Level 1 Waste Water treatment and plan to further my skill and knowledge through AWWAO. AWWAO has been a great help in getting my certification.

Nipissing First Nation is located on the north shores of Lake Nipissing spanning 30 km between North Bay and West Nipissing. Nipissing has a population of 959 living on reserve and 1720 living off reserve. Because of the size Nipissing has different subdivisions and most of them have a water treatment system. Our main Garden Village Plant is a groundwater plant that uses Potassium Permanganate with green-sand for iron and manganese removal. We also soften the water and filter the water, then treat with U.V. disinfection as well as Sodium Hypochlorite. The plant has been upgraded in 2008. Our plant is a Level 2 treatment plant. We also have 10 other systems separate from Garden Village that supply water for the different subdivisions. They are way past their prime and are generally undersized and lack needed equipment. There are many challenges with these small old systems. Nipissing employs 3 Water Operators, myself, Dan Beaucage, and Mark Mcleod. We strive to keep water safe and reliable. We also have a Waste Water Treatment Plant that is a level 2. Although we have a Waste Plant operator we will take turns helping out at the Waste plant.



Nipissing WTP Filters



Nipissing WTP High-lift Pumps

I am honored to be selected as operator of the year for AWWAO. I am grateful for all the help from AWWAO and other training programs that have help me become successful. I would also like to thank all my co-workers and team members from Nipissing that have showed me so much support and help. And also thanks to those who nominated me for Operator of the year. I will be sure to see you all at future AWWAO functions. Thank you.



Nipissing First Nation's Aaron Beaucage South End Water Operator of the Year



anishinabeknews.ca/

By Kelly Anne Smith

NIPISSING FIRST NATION—Social media lit up with congratulations for Nipissing First Nation's water operator Aaron Beaucage when he received the Aboriginal Water Wastewater Association of Ontario (AWWAO) Water Operator of the Year Award.



Aaron Beaucage (L) from Nipissing First Nation receives the Aboriginal Water Wastewater Association of Ontario (AWWAO) Water Operator of the Year Award from AWWAO Chair Ian Fortin. Photo courtesy of AWWAO.

A post from Chief Scott McLeod reads, "Congratulations to the AWWAO South End Operator of the year Aaron Beaucage."

Beaucage, the overall responsible operator for Nipissing First Nation's water and wastewater, is known for taking pride in his job.

Approximately 500 people rely on Beaucage for fresh water and wastewater maintenance. He is responsible for all of the systems and keeping current records on required tests. There is a main plant with nine other smaller systems.

After receiving training and employed as a machinist, Beaucage moved into the operator's position with Nipissing First Nation.

"Then I went through the steps to get the licensing which is challenging. Sometimes the testing is available locally but the courses involve travelling out of town."

Beaucage is grateful for the Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario.

"That organization helps out a lot with our training needs. I wouldn't have been able to get that award without their help," expresses Beaucage. "It takes about two years because after you do your testing and certification, it takes about a year before you get your level one. Now I am at level two which took me three years."

The award came as a surprise to Beaucage.

Cont'd

"I was nominated by people I work with and nomination also came from the tribal council."

Beaucage is going on his fifth year working for his community. He describes his best days of work as "when everything goes smoothly".

Worst days involve a water main break.

"There are long hours, a lot of overtime, and working out in the cold. The latest I've worked was until 2:30 in the morning. Out on a field, in a big deep hole, trying to fix a water main."

Beaucage enjoys working on Nipissing First Nation's Asset Management Program.

"I have been helping with that. For example, a pump is an asset to the plant or to the organization. It's a program that keeps track of maintenance and preventative maintenance that has to be done. If something breaks down we can track it a lot better."

The job of a water operator gets a bit tougher during the winter months; however, summer months have also proven to be problematic.

"In the summer it is hard to keep up with demand because people are watering their lawns. And the systems are old. They weren't designed for today's needs."

The plant was originally built in the late 1980s and then upgraded in 2007.

"Regulations were not as strict. There is much we have to keep track of but the infrastructure was designed differently back then," explains Beaucage. "We have to continuously monitor the chlorine. But the plants can't because they are so old. They need upgrades to do that."

"The Trudeau government wanted to eliminate boil water advisories, but there are a lot of places like us that aren't really under a boil water advisory but we have to meet Ontario regulations," adds Beaucage. "We need some big upgrades to a lot of First Nation communities. Some water plants for First Nations are going on decades of needing upgrades, but aren't under boil water advisories."

Congratulations Aaron Beaucage "2019 AWWAO Operator of the Year"!

WBAFN congratulates Aaron Beaucage on winning the Aboriginal Water/Wastewater Association of Ontario (AWWAO) operator of the year for Northern Ontario. Job well done! Aaron is the Overall Responsible Operator (ORO) at the Garden Village Water Treatment Plant (WTP), as well as the 9 pumphouses spread throughout the territory. Aaron also assists in the operation and maintenance of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Aaron holds Class 2 Water Treatment and Class 1 Waste Water Treatment operator licenses.



WWOTC's new "Partners Working Together for Operators" wall

From the very beginning of WWOTC's existence, one of the company's cornerstone philosophies has been to seek out and establish partnership relationships with other leading Ontario organizations. For the most part, everyone brings a slightly different skill set or need to the table and by working together; we can provide greater training diversity and degree of support services to operators. In an effort to showcase and promote those who WWOTC believes are Ontario's leading organizations, we have created our new "wall of fame" at our Hamilton training center. Thousands of students pass through that hall annually and we are proud to "hang the AWWAO flag", drawing attention to those we feel really make a difference.

WWOTC considers AWWAO as an extremely important and very valuable partner when it comes to supporting the needs of operators. Time and time again, the AWWAO leadership team has demonstrated how committed they are to helping operators. WWOTC recognizes this dedication and, shares this passion. When thinking about who the leaders were, there was absolutely no doubt that AWWAO needed to be part of our new feature wall.

WWOTC is always open and willing to exploring ways that we can provide additional support to AWWAO and we look forward to future collaborations! We already have a few new ideas on the shelf!



Ontario Drinking Water and Wastewater Certification Exams

Upcoming Exam Changes

April 1, 2019– New Exam Booklets

Effective April 1, 2019, exam booklets used for **Class 1 to 4** operator certification and **water quality analyst** examinations will have a new look. The all-in-one booklets combine the exam, scantron sheet, scrap paper and formula/conversion tables. Ontario exam content will remain unchanged until July 1, 2019 (see below). The new booklets are provided by the Association of Boards of Certification (ABC) and they will mark the exams.

ABC is an Iowa based organization that has developed certification exams adopted by jurisdictions throughout Canada and the United States. Ontario is a member of ABC and has been using their exam question bank for the past 30 years.

ABC exam marking-What to expect:

- You will continue to receive your exam marks from OWWCO within 30 days.
- OWWCO will continue to provide your mastery report.

July 1, 2019-ABC Standardized Exams

On July 1, 2019, Ontario will adopt ABC standardized exams for **Class 1 to 4** drinking water and wastewater operator certification examinations, replacing the current Ontario exams. The standardized exams were developed in 2017 and have been adopted throughout Canada and the United States. The **water quality analyst** exams will continue to use current Ontario exam content.

Standardized Examinations (Class 1 to 4)

- Water Treatment
- Water Distribution and Supply
- Wastewater Treatment
- Wastewater Collection

Standardized Exam Format

- Multiple choice
- Includes both metric and imperial units
- 110 questions, 10 of which are not included in the final score
- No regulatory questions, as the exams are used in other jurisdictions.

Preparing for your Exam Scheduled on/after July 1st:

- Visit http://www.abccert.org/testing_services/2017StandardizedExams.asp for:
 - Updated Need-to-know criteria
 - New formula/conversion tables for the new exams
 - Study material developed for the standardized exams can be purchased through OWWCO.
- If you have any questions, please contact the Ontario Water Wastewater Certification Office (OWWCO)

Email: www.owwco.ca/contact

Phone: 416-231-2100 (toll free: 1-877-231-2122).

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do the standardized exams being implemented July 1st have 110 questions?

The 10 additional questions will help ABC gather data about new items before they are included in future exams. These questions are unidentified and will not be included in the final score. Their level of difficulty is appropriate and consistent with the level of difficulty of the scored questions.

Will ABC send me my exam mark?

No, ABC cannot provide your exam mark. OWWCO will send you your exam mark.

If I want to check the status of my exam mark, should I follow-up with ABC?

No. Please contact OWWCO if you want to check on the status of your exam mark.

How were the exams developed?

Exams were developed based on results from a 2014-15 job analysis conducted by ABC where input from over 7,000 industry stakeholders was collected. Operators from Ontario and across Canada were involved in developing the exam questions. The new exams were piloted in Ontario in Spring, 2017.



Ontario Water Wastewater
Certification Office

OWWCO

KO Northern Chiefs Expand Public Works Program in Dryden



A new era for Keewatinook Okimakanak in the City of Dryden.

Officials and dignitaries gathered Wednesday for the official Grand Opening of the Public Works' newly renovated building at 41 Duke Street.

Manager Bill Hutchison says the facility was purchased for administrative use years ago, but when services got transferred to Thunder Bay, Public Works came in and they included Edward Jones and Co-operators as tenants.

However, Hutchison says they have slowly been expanding Public Works operations to Dryden and stresses they needed that space to accommodate the extra bodies.

He says they have nine staff at the site and two more at the Centre of Excellence at the Auditorium.

They operate water training programs for northern First Nations and area municipalities.

The bright, vibrant and modern building has eight offices, two conference rooms and a lounge for those coming from remote communities for meetings.

Hutchison believes Public Works is not done growing yet in Dryden and he's thankful for the communities support.

The Keewatinook Okimakanak Northern Chiefs Council serves Deer Lake, Fort Severn, Keewaywin, McDowell Lake, North Spirit Lake and Poplar Hill First Nations .



Drinking Water and Wastewater Facility Certificates



The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks is issuing facility certificates to First Nations communities that request an assessment of their drinking water and wastewater facilities. Assessments and certificates are provided at no cost to First Nations.

Why get your facility assessed?

-A facility assessment is an important first step for participating in Ontario's operator certification program. The assessment determines:

- The appropriate type and class of certificate/licence an operator should have; and
- The training that is required to renew a certificate.

If your facility has already received a notional letter and there have been no significant changes to the facility since it was last assessed, you can request a facility certificate without sending in an application.

If your facility has never been assessed by the Ministry or has undergone significant changes since the last assessment, you can request an assessment and certificate through an application process.

Contact the Ontario Water Wastewater Certification office at 1-877-231-2122 or owwco.ca/contact for more information, and for assistance with preparing your application.

More information can also be found on the [Facility Assessment page](#) of the Ontario Water Wastewater Certification office website.

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Autumn Peltier named chief water commissioner by Anishinabek Nation

An Indigenous teen from northeastern Ontario is taking over her great aunt's role as an advocate for water protection of the Great Lakes.

Peltier taking on the role from her great aunt Josephine Mandamin
CBC News · Posted: Apr 25, 2019 3:18 PM ET | Last Updated: April 26



Autumn Peltier has been named the chief water commissioner by the Anishinabek Nation.

A water advocate from northern Ontario has recently been named Chief Water Commissioner for Anishinabek First Nation. We chat with Autumn Peltier, who is aiming to ensure that water is given the same rights as human beings.

An Indigenous teen from northeastern Ontario is taking over her great aunt's role as an advocate for water protection of the Great Lakes.

Autumn Peltier, 14, has been named the chief water commissioner by the Anishinabek Nation. It is a political advocacy group for 40 First Nations across Ontario.

Peltier is no stranger to speaking up about protecting water. From Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, Peltier's quest to protect water started when she was eight years old when she visited a community under a boil water advisory. Since then, she has had meetings on the importance of clean water with the Prime Minister and the Assembly of First Nations.

In 2018, she spoke at the United Nations on the topic.

[Josephine Mandamin, water activist who walked 17,000 km around the Great Lakes, dies at 77](#)

[Canadian teen tells UN 'warrior up' to protect water](#)

[Anishinaabe teen only Canadian up for International Children's Peace Prize](#)

Peltier says it's an honour to take on the role from her great aunt, Josephine Mandamin.

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"She's my biggest mentor," Peltier said. "She's my hero. Every since I was a little girl, she taught me everything I needed to know about the importance of water and becoming a woman. She was one of the most important people to me."

Mandamin died earlier this year at the age of 77. Her life was spent protecting the Great Lakes. She founded the Mother Earth Walk and also helped establish the Great Lakes Guardians Council.



Autumn Peltier, far right, sits by the water with her sister, great aunt Josephine Mandamin, and mother. Peltier says her great aunt taught her the importance of protecting water. (Submitted by Stephanie Peltier)

Peltier says before Mandamin died, she asked her to continue working to protect water.

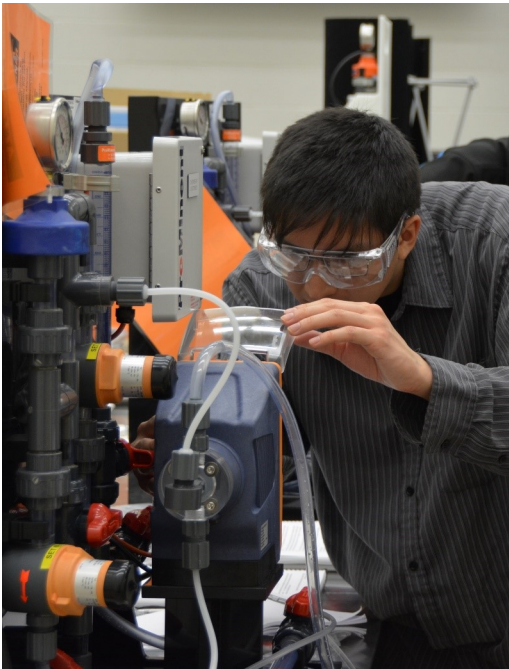
"I'm going to carry on her work until we don't have to anymore," she said.

Peltier says she will continue to advocate for water protection, in hopes others join her.

Drinking Water Training and Support available for First Nations Communities

The Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, established in 2004 to coordinate and provide education, training and information to drinking water system owners, operators and operating authorities, and the public, to help safeguard drinking water. Through partnerships, WCWC also provides training for the 133 First Nations communities in Ontario.

Training for Operators of First Nations Drinking Water Systems



WCWC, in partnership with Keewaytinook Okimakanak and the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation, is delivering the Entry-Level Course for Drinking Water Operators for First Nations. Curriculum and delivery have been tailored to meet the needs of operators of First Nations drinking water systems and training is delivered by instructors who have experience training operators in First Nations communities. Each course delivery is a two-week initiative with one week of supervised self-study and one week of practical hands-on training. Training is provided at no cost to participants, including all associated expenses. Since 2017, more than 80 Indigenous participants have successfully completed the course.

***Participants in the Entry-Level Course for Drinking Water Operators
for First Nations
work on hands-on activities***

A new course, Managing Drinking Water Systems in First Nations Communities, has been developed and will be available in August 2019. The one-day course will focus on components of effective drinking water system management, resources and practical tools. The target audience for this course is individuals in management and supervisory positions in drinking water and those interested in becoming managers or supervisors.



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Drinking Water Resource Library

WCWC has developed an online reference library containing thousands of vetted resources addressing common issues facing drinking water systems, the Drinking Water Resource Library. The library features multiple search functions to ease the research of information. This free resource can be accessed at drinkingwaterresourcelibrary.ca.

Pilot Testing

WCWC's pilot testing program provides site-specific information to address challenges regarding source water characteristics, treatment process performance, and alternative treatment technologies. Projects can be undertaken on a bench-scale at the clients' location or at the Technology Demonstration Facility in Walkerton. The Technology Demonstration Facility features a lab and many pilot systems, including a dual train conventional treatment pilot plant, ozone systems, a dissolved air floatation pilot plant, ultraviolet light treatment systems, slow sand, green sand and membrane filtration systems. Side-by-side comparisons of various technologies can be carried out using the same feed water.

WCWC has years of pilot testing experience in areas such as natural organic matter removal, disinfection by-products control, iron and manganese treatment, and coagulation optimization. Clients are involved throughout the process to ensure their needs are met.



*Pilot Testing in the
Technology Demonstration Facility*

WCWC has undertaken pilot testing for a number of First Nations communities. Upon completion of a successful project conducted for Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the client said, "WCWC is well equipped with knowledgeable staff to provide effective pilot testing services. They took the time to listen to our needs and provided the best options for pilot testing our intended water treatment process."

For more information on any of WCWC's initiatives to support drinking water improvements in First Nations communities, please visit www.wcwc.ca/en/training/first-nations-zone/ or contact us at 866-515-0550 or training@wcwc.ca. For technical questions, connect with our knowledgeable staff at the Helpline, 1-855-306-1155 or helpline@wcwc.ca.

Laced with fear: why some Ontario First Nations don't trust tap water or eat the fish

London•The New Wave

Colin Butler · CBC News · Posted: Apr 01, 2019 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: April 1

Some Indigenous cultures see water as their 'mum' and they say she's very sick



Josephine Mandamin was a tireless advocate for clean water.

That's the case in Delaware First Nation, an Indigenous community of about 500 people an hour southwest of London, Ont., a place where fishing was everything 60 years ago.

"I come from a community where we used to fish," Gordon Peters said. "Every year we had a social event that lasted maybe two to three weeks and we all fished."

"Families came and everybody came, but we don't do that anymore because the fish is contaminated."

Now 69, Peters, who is a local band councillor and a regional deputy grand chief, said the water in Delaware First Nation is so ravaged by industrial filth, most people are only allowed to eat one fish a month; while small children and pregnant women are allowed none at all.

People don't even trust the groundwater, Peters said. His community believes their water has been tainted from the legacy of Ontario's oil boom and even though it's treated and runs cool and clear from the taps of peoples' homes, it goes unused because it's laced with fear.

"People don't even trust it, they go to the next town over and buy big bulk water," he said.

It's why Peters has made the trip to London's Victoria Park, where a number of high-ranking Indigenous leaders have gathered to pay tribute to a woman **who fought** for clean water.

"In our world, the women are responsible for the water," Peters said. "Josephine Mandamin had a huge impact on a lot of people."

That impact was evident in the London park on World Water Day, where about 100 gathered to pay tribute to the Anishinaabe woman, who walked around the rim of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, which together, make up almost half of the circumference of the Earth.

People told stories about how she walked so much, she wore out three knees, 11 pairs of shoes and galvanized entire communities to stand up for their water as a human right.



Gordon Peters (right) said when he was a boy, fishing was a part of the Delaware Nation's collective identity. Today, the fish is so contaminated, his people no longer fish together.

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"Josephine was like a mother and a grandmother to everyone who wants to protect the water," said Mary Duckworth.

Duckworth is the chief of Caldwell First Nation near Leamington, Ont. As Canada's southernmost Indigenous community, its traditional territory stretches from Point Pelee to Pelee Island.

"We are from the water. Our traditional name is 'the people from the water,' she said. "Not having toxins dumped into our water is really important to me. My relationship runs deep."

What worries Duckworth when it comes to water are nitrates, a common byproduct from manure spreading and fertilizer use in agriculture. While nitrate levels in water is monitored by the province, the chemical has been linked to a number of health risks.

This is 2019, farms shouldn't be dumping things in the lake."



Lela George shouts into a megaphone during a world water day protest in London, Ont. on March 22.

To show they mean business, the 100 or so demonstrators marched from Victoria Park in downtown London to Harris Park on the rim of the Thames.

On their way, they waved placards, chanted slogans and stopped traffic at major intersections to get their message across: if we don't have clean water, we won't survive.

"Water is life," said Amanda Doxtator . "It's the blood of our Earth and it's the only thing that keeps everything alive."

Doxtator, who delivered the opening prayer at the Water Day ceremony honouring Josephine Mandamin, is from Oneida Nation of the Thames, about a half hour's drive south of London.

The Indigenous community of about 2,000 people has its own share of water troubles. Toronto's landfill site, Green Lane Environmental, is on the community's doorstep and its putrid aroma can blanket Oneida when the conditions are just right. Many believe the dump has contaminated not just the air, but their water as well.

Protesters circle dance at the intersection of Dundas Place and Talbot Street in downtown London, Ont. as part of World Water Day demonstrations in the city.



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In Ontario, the government says it's trying to fix the problem. In March, the province announced \$15 million to end drinking water advisories for 91 First Nations communities in the province.

There are 62 Indigenous communities that don't have potable water. Many of them are under boil water advisories and at least one has been under such an advisory for more than two decades.

At least four can't consume their water under any circumstances.

Doxtator believes people need to do more and that includes realizing what they're doing to the planet. She characterizes her relationship with water as mother-daughter and says her "mum" isn't well.

"She's very sick. She's not the way she's supposed to be. Our weather is getting more fierce," she said. "There's more earthquakes, more tsunamis, more tornadoes, that's her sign to us that we need to smarten up."

Canada: Pressing Need to Improve First Nations' Water Supply

MARCH 22, 2019 6:22AM EDT On World Water Day, New Guide to Water Rights



Aerial photo of the vast freshwater resources in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, Ontario, Canada, October 2018.

(Toronto) – World Water Day on March 22, 2019 is a reminder that many of Canada's First Nations communities do not have safe drinking water, Chiefs of Ontario and Human Rights Watch said today.

The groups issued a draft guide on the human right to water for First Nations communities and advocates. This guide will be open for comment through September 6, and then finalized.

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“Most Canadians have easy access to fresh water, but many First Nations communities in Canada face a daily struggle to get safe drinking water,” said Amanda Klasing, acting women’s rights co-director at Human Rights Watch. “We hope this guide will serve as an important tool for communities to help them achieve their right to a safe water supply.”

Human Rights Watch conducted research in First Nations communities in Ontario in 2015 and 2016, and found that the Canadian government had violated a range of international human rights obligations by failing to provide a safe water supply to First Nations reserves.

Since that time, the federal government has taken steps to increase transparency in situations in which First Nations communities have long been without a safe water supply and to work more closely with the communities to address the problems. The government recently announced new investments to support ongoing efforts to eliminate and prevent long-term drinking water advisories.

But as of February 4, there were 62 long-term drinking advisories throughout Canada. The Neskantaga First Nation in Northern Ontario, for example, has had a water boil advisory in place for the last 23 years.

The Chiefs of Ontario continue to apply pressure and influence governments to provide safe potable drinking water – which is a human right – for First Nations peoples, leading toward a sustainable future and one that is based on truth and reconciliation.

Despite some progress, the government has failed time and again to deliver on its promises for safe drinking water. In developing the guide, Human Rights Watch and Chiefs of Ontario seek to develop an additional tool for First Nations to build their advocacy for safe drinking water access. The guide provides an overview of the legal framework behind the human right to water and recommendations on how to engage government officials on the topic. The commentary period will be helpful in producing a final guide to address the needs of communities and advocates.

“We need to guide and inspire a process of truth and healing leading toward reconciliation between First Nations and Canada,” said Chief Shining Turtle, of Whitefish River First Nation and member of the Chiefs of Ontario Environment Committee. “Collaboration on a renewed relationship based on inclusion, respect, and mutual understanding is paramount. Let’s begin this important process first by protecting our sacred water, in the spirit of true partnership.”

It is often those who least contribute to water crises around the world who are most affected by the outcome, Human Rights Watch and the Ontario Chiefs said. World Water Day 2019 serves as a reminder that everyone all over the globe should have access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Canada has played an important role in promoting efforts to meet this goal globally. First Nations communities are on the front lines of demanding that Canada should meet this obligation at home as well.

“Water is life. It is recognized that women are the sacred keepers of the water and know that it's a gift that connects all life,” said Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald. “Water is significant to our way of life and livelihoods, and we recognize our inherent responsibilities as caretakers to protect water. Our responsibilities and our rights include all aspects to the use of water, jurisdiction and stewardship over use and access to water, and the protection of water.”