



WATER FIRST INTERNSHIP

THE PROGRAM

The Water First Internship Program works with First Nations communities to address water challenges by providing young adults with a 15-month paid internship opportunity in their home community. The program offers participants customized skills, training and tutoring to obtain certifications in drinking water treatment and environmental water quality monitoring.

The Water First Internship was developed in close partnership with the United Chiefs and Councils of Mniidoo Mnising, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, and the Anishnabek Union of Ontario Indians.

Together, the partners successfully piloted the program with seven First Nations on Manitoulin Island. The internship is unique in that it is highly adaptable to individual community needs.

THE RESULTS

In August 2018, ten interns graduated from the program, and began their careers as stewards of their community's health and well-being. In a male dominated profession, 40% of the graduates were female. The interns obtained a number of certifications required to work as an Operator in an Ontario drinking water treatment plant or distribution system: eight interns earned Water Quality Analyst Certifications, seven passed their Operator in Training exams, ten completed their Entry Level Course for Drinking Water Operators, and five interns completed Source Water Protection training. Each intern completed over 1,800 hours of work at their local water treatment plant.

During the course of the program, interns reported a substantial increase in water quality knowledge and application: at the beginning of the program, none felt confident in their ability to interpret water quality results — by the end 90% felt





very confident; 10% felt very confident in water chemistry at the start — by the end of the program 80% felt very confident; and very high confidence in using water sampling equipment rose from 10% to 90%.

Within eight weeks of graduating, 90% of interns were already working in the field or pursuing further study:

- Five interns are employed as operators at their local community water treatment plants;
- One intern has been hired as an operator with the Ontario Clean Water Agency;
- One intern is actively applying for work as an operator with neighbouring First Nations communities;
- Two interns are employed in the environmental water field working for a local First Nation and Tribal Council; and
- One intern is continuing their studies in the environmental field at Cambrian College.

Moving forward, numerous First Nations communities and Tribal Councils are expressing strong interest in hosting the internship program as soon as possible.

Water First acknowledges the significant contributions to the Internship program by the United Chiefs and Councils of Mniidoo Mnising, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, and the Anishnabek Union of Ontario Indians.



STRONG COMMUNITIES. SAFE, CLEAN WATER.

**W A T E R
F I R S T**

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