WATER FIRST

LANGUAGE GUIDE

The water challenges faced by many Indigenous communities in Canada are complex and unique to each community. Currently, 35% of First Nations communities in Ontario are under a drinking water advisory.

Many First Nation communities in Canada have identified the need for certified personnel to operate and maintain their drinking water treatment systems. Water First's mission reflects our commitment to listening to community partners.

In speaking about Water First, please try to reference the below paragraphs or direct those interested in learning about our programs to our website at **www.waterfirst.ngo**. We are currently running three programs and have worked with 60 Indigenous communities since 2009.

DRINKING WATER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM:

Technology alone does not provide clean and reliable drinking water; the people who run the systems are critical. Many Indigenous communities in Canada have identified the need for more young, qualified, and local personnel to support solving water issues, independently and for the long term.

The Drinking Water Internship Program supports young Indigenous adults to become certified water treatment plant operators. The Internship is welcomed by Indigenous communities that view training and skill development as a key part of the solution to drinking water challenges. This approach ensures sustainable access to safe drinking water in Indigenous communities for the long term.

ENVIRONMENTAL WATER PROGRAM:

While working with many Indigenous community partners, we have heard time and again of a vision of Indigenous-led land management. Communities want to manage water resources and track the effects of industry and climate change. As a result, they are seeking ways to strengthen their technical capacity to do so.

First, the Environmental Water Program consults with Indigenous partners about long-term environmental water goals, priorities and local training needs. We then design a custom training program related to fish habitat restoration, water quality monitoring, mapping, and data management.

INDIGENOUS SCHOOLS WATER PROGRAM:

Considering the water crisis faced by many Indigenous communities, there is a profound underrepresentation of Indigenous voices in Canada's water governance. Couple this with a lack of employment opportunities for Indigenous youth and it becomes clear that it is critical we continue to offer Indigenous students the most impassioned, empowering and exciting water science education learning opportunities possible.

Water First delivers engaging, hands-on STEM-based water science programs to schools in Indigenous communities, where students spend time on the land and in the classroom. These programs create opportunities for students to strengthen their understanding and relationship with the environment, and to foster a love of water science.

THINGS TO AVOID:

Avoid using phrases such as "Water First brings clean drinking water to Indigenous communities."

Water First works in skills training and education; we do not bring water bottles to communities or work in infrastructure at all.

Instead, consider saying: "Water First works with Indigenous communities across Canada to address critical water challenges through education and training".

Avoid using phrases such as "Water First is solving the water crisis."

The water challenges faced by many Indigenous communities in Canada are **complex and unique to each community**.

In some communities, local concerns may be around infrastructure, for others, source water contamination. And numerous communities have challenges recruiting and training young Indigenous adults to join the drinking water field.

Water First programs are just **one part of a solution** to the water crisis facing many Indigenous communities. We work with communities that see training and education as a solution to their water challenges.

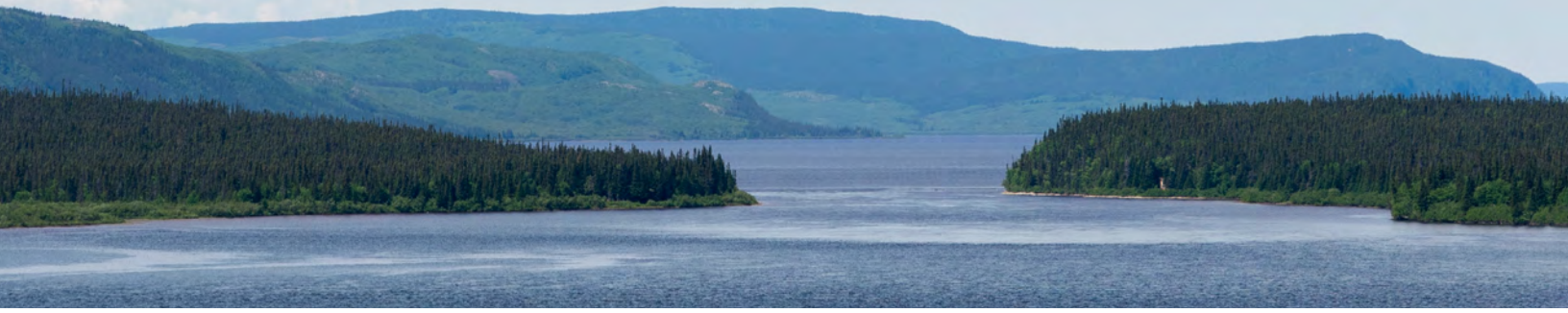
Avoid referencing the government when speaking about our work.

Water First is a non-governmental organization and therefore please avoid speaking about the government when referencing our work.

Avoid referring to Water First as an Indigenous organization.

Water First is a multicultural organization led by the voices of the Indigenous youth and young adults who participate in our programs, Indigenous staff and board members, local community partners, and by members of our Indigenous Advisory Council.

Our collaborations are built on respect and meaningful partnerships, with Indigenous youth and community partners at the heart of our work.



Water First is a registered charitable organization founded in 2009, dedicated to partnering with Indigenous communities to address local water challenges through education, training and meaningful collaboration.

For more information, contact Sam Murray, Development Manager at sam.murray@waterfirst.ngo or 1-800-970-8467 ext. 118

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