

Sustainable access to safe, clean water in Indigenous communities continues to be a critical issue in Canada. The challenges are complex and layered – and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Communities may face issues relating to infrastructure, source water quality or having enough people to manage water systems – or more than one of these issues at a time. Many Indigenous communities in Canada have identified the need for certified personnel to operate and maintain their drinking water treatment systems.

Water First partners with Indigenous communities that have identified education and training as part of the solution to the water crisis. Our programs support participants in developing technical skills to go on to employment or further education in water science fields. Participants build confidence in themselves and a passion for making positive change in their communities. Our programs also support Indigenous communities in strengthening capacity to manage and protect water resources for generations to come. Safe water needs skilled people.

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](http://www.waterfirst.ngo).

## **GREATEST NEED**

Sustainable access to safe, clean water in Indigenous communities in Canada continues to be a challenge today. Water challenges are complex, and infrastructure and technology alone cannot solve the water crisis. Having enough skilled people to operate and maintain the systems is also critical. Safe water needs skilled people.

Water First is a Canadian charity that partners with communities that have identified education and training as part of the solution to the water crisis. To support the next generation of water scientists, Water First works with Indigenous communities to deliver education and training programs that help participants develop technical skills to go on to employment or further education in water science fields.

## **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**

Many Indigenous communities face unique challenges when it comes to managing water resources – from tracking the effects of industry and climate change, to understanding fish health and population dynamics. No matter the challenge, many communities have identified technical skills training as critical to building capacity to address those challenges.

The Environmental Water Program designs and delivers training programs based on community-identified priorities to support Indigenous communities in building the technical skills to manage water and fish resources independently and for the long term.

## 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.

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### THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR

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.



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