

This spring, we're celebrating! From the graduation of our newest Water Operators to the award-winning efforts of council members and interns, we're cheering on the many people making waves in water science right now. But that's not all – 2026 marks TEN years of Water First's work exclusively with Indigenous communities in Canada. This is a milestone that we could never have met without the hard work and collaboration of community partners across Turtle Island, and the dedication of supporters like you! Now that's something to celebrate.

Celebrating Earth Day

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our annual spring virtual event! This year, we celebrated Earth Day with a panel discussion featuring the people that help shape our work. Water is not just something we manage; it's something we have a relationship with, and responsibility for.



**WATCH EVENT
HIGHLIGHTS**

10 Years of the IAC

2026 marks ten years of collaboration and consultation with the Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC)! As an organization that is not Indigenous-led, Water First committed very early on to creating the IAC, whose members provide valuable feedback on the growth and development of our programming. The IAC offers expertise and guidance on the best ways to engage Indigenous youth, adults, and communities in building career pathways in water protection – and so much more. IAC members regularly offer their time, encouragement and knowledge during staff gatherings, donor events, throughout internships, and beyond. Water First simply could not be where it is today without the valuable contributions of the IAC members, and we are grateful to walk this path together throughout the past decade.



Cycles of Learning

Recently, Anishinaabeg of Kabapikotawangag Resource Council (AKRC) Drinking Water Interns had the opportunity to join students in Naotkamegwaning First Nation for several days of learning, in and out of the classroom.

The interns helped deliver engaging water workshops and later in the week, the group toured the Dog Paw Water Treatment Plant together. Reciprocal learning and mentorship opportunities like this benefit interns, students, and trainers alike! Thank you to AKRC interns Brandon, Nico, and Anthony for joining the School Water Team for a fantastic week.



Recognizing Dr. Lavell

Congratulations to Dr. Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, a long-standing member of the Water First Indigenous Advisory Council! Dr. Corbiere Lavell was recently recognized for her decades of work advocating for Indigenous women's rights, at the Senate of Canada's Virus of Inequality Symposium in Ottawa. Miigwetch for all you do, Jeannette!



Water First at AWWAO

It was a “family reunion” at this year’s Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario conference (AWWAO), as past and current Water First Interns attended with staff in April. Water First hosted a table at the annual Training Conference and Tradeshow, and enjoyed the opportunity to share news, success stories, and knowledge with other Water and Wastewater Operators from across Ontario.



“I love it here, it’s so cool. I’m so glad I came; **there’s so many great people to talk to here and so much knowledge.”**

- Water First Intern and AWWAO attendee

Monthly Giving, Daily Impact

Become a monthly donor and be part of the work we’re doing to support the next generation of water scientists through 2026 and beyond! Your monthly gift will help ensure safe, sustainable water solutions in Indigenous communities across Canada.



“I choose to donate monthly to Water First because it allows me to provide consistent, reliable financial support. Recurring contributions are easier for me to budget, and I know that the donation will add up to a meaningful amount over time. **Monthly giving also helps Water First plan ahead and respond more effectively to their short and long term needs.** That said, Water First is very appreciative of one-time donations if that is how an individual wants to donate.”

- Scott Stewardson, Toronto

Visit waterfirst.ngo/donate

Congratulations, Interns!

Brooklin Sword and Brayden Sands, Water First interns currently in the Southern Ontario Drinking Water Internship (SODI), are part of the group from Walpole First Nation that have received the 2026 Team Water Leader Award from Indigenous Services Canada!

Handed out on National Indigenous Water Operator Day (March 21), the award recognized the water operators at the Walpole Island First Nation Water Treatment Facility, where Brooklin and Brayden are working during the Internship. The team received the award for their collaborative leadership and commitment to improving water management in their community. A huge congratulations to the entire team!

Important upcoming dates

May

- 5** Red Dress Day (National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People)

June

- 1-30** National Indigenous History Month & Pride Month
- 6** Anishinaabe Day
- 19** World Refill Day/Day Without Plastic
- 21** National Indigenous Peoples Day

For more information, contact Ami Gopal, Director of Development at ami.gopal@waterfirst.ngo or 1-800-970-8467 ext. 106



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