



What is a Watershed?

A watershed describes the area where both surface and groundwater sources are connected and converge to feed into larger rivers, lakes and groundwater aquifers. Watersheds can span across large pieces of land and can connect a vast network of waterways.

What is Methylmercury?

Methylmercury is an organic mercury that is formed as a result of both natural and industrial sources of mercury entering into oceans, lakes and rivers. It is absorbed into humans through consumption of aquatic food and increases in concentration along the food chain. Symptoms include intellectual disabilities, decreased vision, impaired hearing, cramps, dizziness, loss of balance and motor ability, and tremors.

What is Surface Water?

Our drinking water comes from two major sources, surface water and ground water. Surface water is the lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands; while ground water sits beneath the Earth's surface.

“Water, our purest source of life with the combination of our Sun, without it we could not exist. The Elders of Weenusk First Nation and their forefathers have always lived and gathered from the life source, the river. From the river came many life forms which sustained our ancestors, animals come and drink from the river, and our Elders drank this water from the Winisk River. The rains provided water for everyday use, the frozen river provided frozen fresh water, the snow when skillfully gathered provided another source of water. Today, this practice is still taught and passed down from generation to generation. The Treaty #9 which was signed in our area in 1929/30, an adhesion to the existing Treaty #9 which was signed in 1905, a small excerpt from the Treaty, ‘as long as the rivers flow...
- Ivan D. Iserhoff, Weenusk First Nation
To my mom, Elder Agnes Hunter, and our much respected Elders of Weenusk First Nation.”

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Water Quality in Ontario First Nations



“As Long as the Rivers Flow”

THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

The United Nations adopted The Human Right to Water and Sanitation on July 28, 2010. It recognized that “the human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for realization of other human rights.....the right to water as the right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable and physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.” - UN General Assembly 64th Session, Resolution 54/292

Ontario contains one-fifth of the world’s fresh surface water, yet many First Nations communities in the province struggle with accessing clean and safe drinking water. Due to outdated and faulty treatment centres, contaminated waterways from industrial activities and the lack of infrastructure, clean running water in homes is a luxury that many live without in Ontario communities.

As of February 13, 2017, 49 First Nations in Ontario were under a Boil Water Advisory or Do No Consume Advisory



This map seeks to raise awareness and understanding surrounding the issue of water in Ontario First Nations. Mennonite Central Committee would like to offer a great deal of gratitude to the 134 First Nations across the Province of Ontario.

We will hold the stories told to us by community members, staff and leadership in a way that will continue to educate mainstream Ontario about the inequity that flows through this land.

Mennonite Central Committee would like to express special thanks to the staff of Mushkegowuk Council, who have worked with us to create the story map painting an engaging and transparent picture of this desperate situation in two-thirds of First Nations in Ontario.

Explore our interactive map Water Quality in Ontario First Nations by visiting: arcg.is/2ew5Pnu



We thank Creator God for the **gift of water,** and we pray that the most **basic human** right to clean, potable water will find its way to **Indigenous communities everywhere.**

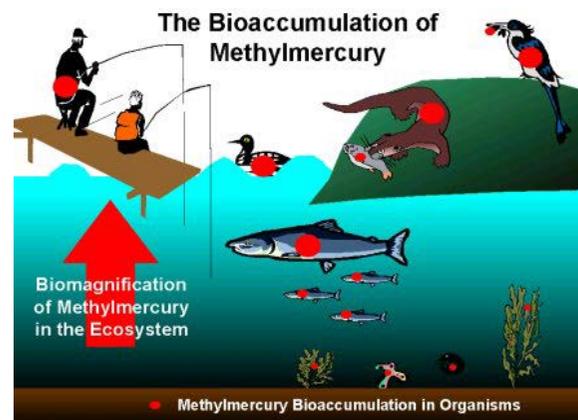
◆ GRASSY NARROWS FIRST NATION

Bimose Tribal Council

Population: 862

Between 1962 and 1970, Dryden Chemicals dumped 20,000 lbs of mercury into the Wabigoon River, the main water source for Grassy Narrows First Nation.

Since 1975, Japanese researchers and scientists have been studying the long-term effects of mercury pollution in the community. Cases of Minamata Disease, the result of methylmercury poisoning, were found among the residents of the Wabigoon River system.



Did You Know?

- 90% of the current population in Grassy Narrows First Nation show symptoms of methylmercury poisoning.

- CBC/Grassy Narrows/2016

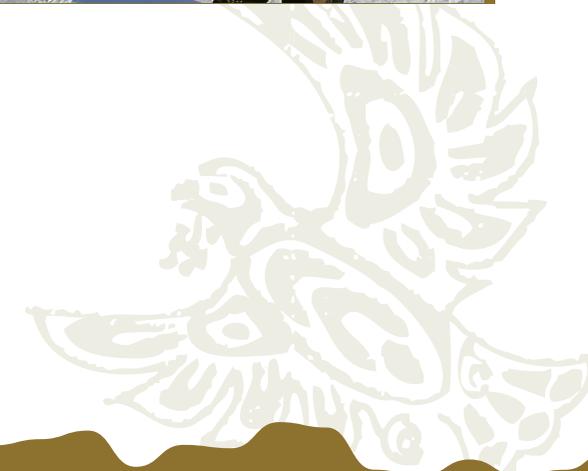
◆ KASHECHEWAN FIRST NATION

Mushkegowuk Tribal Council

Population: 1,900

Kashechewan First Nation is located on the Albany River near the shores of James Bay. In October 2005, Health Canada confirmed that the drinking water in Kashechewan First Nation had tested positive for high levels of the deadly E. coli bacteria.

More than 900 residents were evacuated as a result of numerous water-related illnesses such as diarrhea, painful stomach cramps and skin rashes.



◆ CURVE LAKE FIRST NATION

Union of Ontario Indians

Population: 768

Located in Eastern Ontario, the community of Curve Lake First Nation relies on deteriorating and aging water wells for drinking water due to the lake water having high incidences of blue-green algae.

In 2011, The National Assessment of First Nations Water and Wastewater Systems found that 48% of the individual wells tested in Ontario First Nations were found to have serious health concerns.



◆ PIKANGIKUM FIRST NATION

Independent First Nation Alliance

Population: 2,154

Of the 450 homes in the fly-in community of Pikangikum First Nation, 90 percent do not have running water or waste-water services. Most of the homes, which house an average of 18 people at once, do not have the space or the structural integrity to support bathroom facilities and proper plumbing.

Mennonite Central Committee, in partnership with the Assembly of First Nations and Habitat for Humanity, will be working to retrofit 20 homes with plumbing for clean water and sewage. The homes to be retrofitted will assist the most vulnerable families in the community.



Did You Know?

- Provincial regulations governing safe drinking water and sanitation, which operate to protect the health of most Canadian residents, currently do not extend to 134 First Nations in Ontario.

-Make it Safe/HRW/2015