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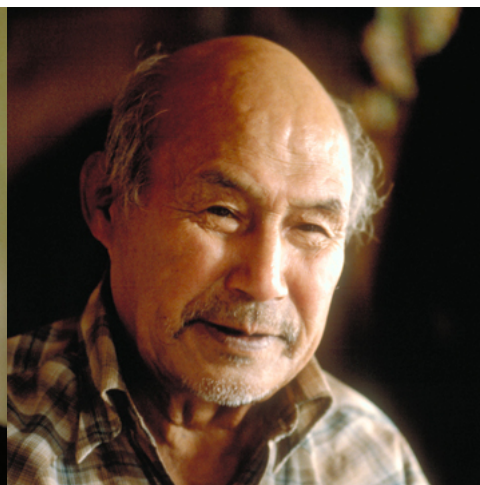
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*Your health and  
safety... our priority.*

*Votre santé et votre  
sécurité... notre priorité.*

# Health Canada's Implementation of the Drinking Water Safety Program: Successes and Challenges

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**Health Canada**



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# Management of Drinking Water in First Nations Communities South of 60°

## **First Nations:**

- Daily management & operation of services
- Design & construction of facilities

## **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada:**

- Funding assistance for design, construction, operation & maintenance of facilities
- Funding for training staff such as water treatment plant operators

## **Health Canada:**

- With communities, ensures drinking water quality monitoring programs are in place
- Training to build First Nations capacity
- Advice & recommendations on drinking water quality
- Review & advice for project proposals for water & wastewater systems from a public health perspective

## **Environment Canada:**

- Development of guidance and training materials Advice & technical expertise on infrastructure projects and federal legislation requirements



## Drinking Water to Residents of First Nations Communities

90 % First Nations communities with 1000 inhabitants or less

92 Average number of connections per community with at least one piped system

### Provision of drinking water to residents of First Nations Communities:

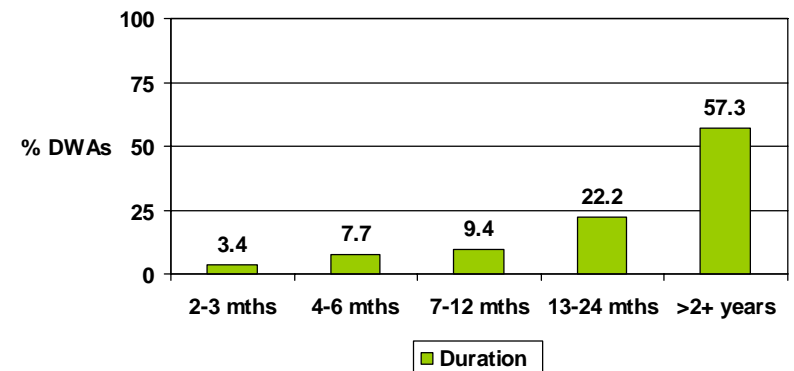
- 63% via pipes
- 16% via trucks to cisterns
- 15% via private water supplies
- 4% via community wells
- 2% without water service



# Barriers in First Nations Communities

- Water supply systems are very small
- Communities are small, remote & isolated
- Limited capacity (education and organization)
- Some issues are historical

Duration of DWAs in effect as of December 31, 2007 in Canada



# Background of the Drinking Water Safety Program

- 2003 Federal Budget identified \$600M over 5 years to implement the First Nations Water Management Strategy (FNWMS):
  - including \$116M for Health Canada Drinking Water Safety Program.
- Although progress has been made through the FNWMS, funding ends in March 2008.
- An evaluation of the Strategy, led by INAC, in collaboration with HC, was finalized in December 2007. The evaluation found that:
  - significant progress has been made under the FNWMS but there continues to be a need to address urgent issues with drinking and wastewater systems in First Nation communities.
- Budget 2008 committed \$330 million over the next two years (\$54 million to HC) to extend actions under the former Strategy which is now referred to as the First Nations Water and Wastewater Action Plan.



# Successes

Since 2001/02, HC has increased its own capacity and the capacity of First Nations communities to sample and test drinking water quality at tap from a public health perspective:

- There are now 647 community sites with access to a Community-based Drinking Water Quality Monitor (CBWM), up from 272 in 2002.
- Some regional offices are standardizing regional training of CBWM in communities.
- Nationally, 43% of piped systems met the recommended weekly monitoring for bacteriological parameters compared to 29% on 2002.
- Five out of seven regions are now fully staffed to implement the FNWMS as planned.
- Six out of seven regions now have a water database in place.



## Successes (Cont'd)

Development and distribution of national procedures, frameworks, and tools:

- *The Procedure Manual for Safe Drinking-Water Quality in First Nations Communities South of 60;*
- *The National Framework for the Training and Evaluation of Community-Based Drinking Water Monitors ;*
- *The Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60°.*





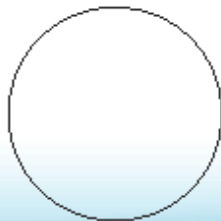
## Successes (Cont'd)

Health Canada also developed:

- Policy to address drinking water quality in individual wells on reserves and wells with two to four connections
- School kit, in collaboration with INAC & EC, to teach children the importance of keeping water clean and safe
- Collaborative agreements with WHO to carry out research, exchange information with developed and developing countries and generate knowledge on small community water systems
- Risk communication material to assist First Nations Chief and Council and Environmental Health Officers in communicating drinking water advisories



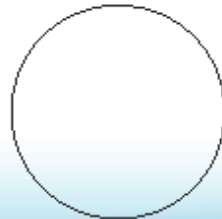




DO NOT USE YOUR TAP  
WATER FOR DRINKING  
AND COOKING



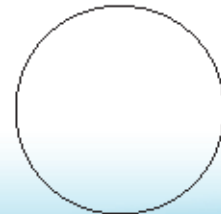
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BOIL YOUR WATER



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YOUR TAP WATER  
IS NOW SAFE  
TO DRINK



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# BOIL YOUR WATER



## ATTENTION RESIDENTS OF \_\_\_\_\_

As of \_\_\_\_\_ the community water supply is not safe to drink.  
Please read this notice for important health and safety information!

***Any water that  
is going to touch  
your mouth must  
be boiled.***

People using the community water supply must  
boil their water first.

- Water must be brought to a full boil for at least one full minute if you are going to use it for any of the following: drinking, cooking, washing food and brushing teeth.
- DO NOT drink water from a public drinking fountain. It has not been boiled and it is not safe.
- DO NOT bathe infants or toddlers in any water. They may accidentally swallow the water. It is recommended that you sponge bathe infants and toddlers during the Boil Water Advisory.

If you or anyone you know becomes ill with diarrhea or stomach pains, seek medical care immediately.

***Boil your water until you receive official notice  
that this is no longer required.***



Boiled water  
must be used for:

Drinking



Cooking



Making juice, drinks  
or infant formula



Brushing teeth or  
soaking dentures



Washing fruit and  
vegetables



Making soup, tea  
or coffee



Making ice cubes



You can continue  
to use regular  
tap water for:



Hand washing



Washing dishes



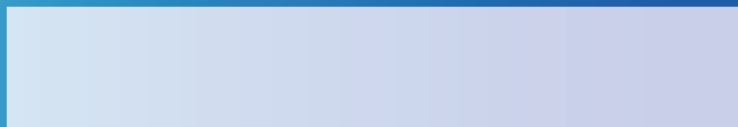
Bathing, except  
infants and toddlers



Laundry



For additional information, contact your Health Centre  
and/or Chief and Council



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# Challenges

- Evaluation of the FNWMS was undertaken by INAC and HC in 2007 to examine progress, relevance and cost-effectiveness/alternatives.
- It found the overall approach remains relevant although some elements need to be revised and/or improved.
- The challenges identified in the evaluation will be addressed over the next two years.



# Challenge in Capacity

**Limited capacity in First Nations communities to monitor and report on water quality:**

- Shortage and high turnover of EHOs and CBWMs;

## **Action Plan:**

HC will:

- Develop a recruitment and retention strategy to increase and maintain the number of EHOs and CBWMs;
- Examine the underlying reasons for limited compliance with sampling frequencies and quality assurance.



# Challenge in Perception

## **First Nations lack of confidence in their drinking water quality:**

- Continued First Nations perception that the quality and safety of their drinking water have not improved:

## **Action Plan:**

HC will:

- Explore the issue of First Nations confidence in their drinking water quality.
- Develop public awareness and education campaign to improve understanding of drinking water quality.



# Questions?

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