



The Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians



As original title holders of the lands and resources of Turtle Island, First Nations maintain their inherent rights over the waters in their traditional territory. These rights have never been given up through treaty or by any other means. Despite this, billions of litres of water continues to be extracted without consent from First Nations traditional territory each year and First Nations continue to endure extreme hardship attempting to access clean drinking water.

The Government of Ontario currently has a temporary ban (moratorium) on water bottling companies increasing the amount of water they extract from the ground. However, this ban will end in October 2020 and there are many serious concerns with increasing the extraction of water from Ontario's aquifers. These concerns include a lack of scientific data on water resources in Ontario and a lack of recognition of First Nations' free, prior, and informed consent. Further, there is scientific consensus that freshwater resources will become scarce due to climate change and it is crucial that First Nations protect their water rights from government and multinational corporations.

AIAI has been in contact with many water rights organizations throughout Ontario and has been in discussions with environment focused members of the Ontario parliament, including Green Party leader Mike Schreiner. It is our intent to work with a coalition of water rights activists to maintain a ban on extracting water from First Nations' traditional territory until two conditions are met:

- 1) there is conclusive evidence that water resources will not be comprised for future generations
- 2) the free, prior, and informed consent of First Nations is respected.

Despite safe drinking water being a basic human right, AIAI member First Nations are forced to consistently operate their water systems at substandard levels and justify their need for safe drinking water infrastructure. Meanwhile, neighboring municipalities have access to safe and reliable drinking water that never dips below provincial standards.

AIAI communities experience issues including::

- On-and-off drinking water advisories lasting upwards of 15 years.
- Severely contaminated drinking water supply sources (including raw sewage & uranium identified in drinking water)
- High rates of health issues related to poor quality drinking water
- Numerous wells that require decommissioning and inoperable aquifers due to drought
- In a 2017 AIAI specific study on seniors' care, one in four seniors surveyed reported not having dependable access to safe drinking water.
- Many AIAI communities are located close to land-use developments which impact source water, all of which are known to cause and chronic illness

To begin raising awareness on water issues, AIAI will be supporting all seven member Nations in their celebration of World Water Day on March 22, 2020. Additionally, there will be a main event hosted in Batchewana First Nation with a new community selected to host the main event each year. Details to follow shortly.

Community News

MOHAWKS OF THE BAY OF QUINTE TO RECEIVE FUNDS FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE



From Left to right MP Mike Bossio, Minister Seamus O'Regan, ISC Ontario Regional Director General Anne Scotton, Chief R. Donald Maracle of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte (MBQ) received \$44 million investment for water infrastructure. MBQ will be able to provide access to safe drinking water to community members by adding 23 km of water distribution lines to 750 homes and businesses. MBQ is hoping to have the project complete by this summer and will contribute to lifting a five year boil water advisory within the First Nation community.

More waterlines will provide clean water to un-serviced homes and take them off of well systems. The project will provide 2,500 residents in MBQ with access to clean and safe drinking water. When speaking to Water Canada MBQ Chief R. Donald Maracle said "The Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte is pleased Indigenous Services Canada has provided \$14.5 million to construct eight kilometres of watermains and an elevated storage reservoir extending water services along York Road to the village of Shannonville,"

<https://www.waterrcanada.net/mohawks-of-the-bay-of-quinte-receive-funding-to-improve-drinking-water-quality/>

BATCHEWANA TO PROVIDE CLEAN WATER WITH NEW TREATMENT PLANT

Earlier in 2019 Batchewana was able to get the assistance it required from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for a grant of \$320,000. The funds will go towards the design phase of the development of a new water treatment plant with the hopes that the system will begin running this year. As Batchewana has been under a boil water advisory for the past five years the facility will be able to provide clean drinking water to over 200 residents.



(Left) Sault MP Terry Sheehan, (Right) Batchewana First Nation Chief Dean Sayers

The new treatment plant would serve community members with decentralized water systems in Obadjiwan. Continued support from ISC will assist in advancing to the construction phase of the project. The building and implementing the new system will cost \$6-7 million. When speaking to the Sault Star Chief Dean Sayers stated "I am very proud of the progress within our community and that we'll be able to help provide this to our people. It's a step towards a brighter future with a cleaner environment for us".

<https://www.saultstar.com/news/local-news/batchewana-first-nation-gets-cash-to-design-new-water-treatment-plant>