

How much water do I use?

Few of us spend much time thinking of how much water we consume every day. We spend even less time thinking about the many different ways in which we rely on clean water for our day to day needs. This questionnaire will help put into perspective the difficulties of not having clean water available by simply turning on a tap. (note that in some communities the water is undrinkable and unsuitable for skin contact and that in some, there isn't even running water.)

1. How many glasses of water do I drink during the course of a day?
How many does my household consume? Do I let the tap water run until it's cold?
2. How many pots of water do I fill each day when preparing meals?
How much water do I use washing dishes?
3. How many gallons of water a day do I use for bathing/showering?
Teeth brushing? Hand washing? Shaving?
4. How many times a day do people in my household flush the toilet?
5. How many loads of laundry do I wash in the course of a week?

The Reality for many First Nation Communities

- At any given time there are 120 communities under boil water advisories, some for more than a decade.
- In some communities there are young people who have never drank tap water
- In Grassy Narrows, as just one example, families receive 2 – 5 gallon jugs of potable water every third day and they have to walk or drive to the band council office to pick it up.
- Contaminants in drinking water on First Nations reserves includes coliform, E. coli, cancer-causing Trihalomethanes, mercury and uranium.
- Many households surveyed reported problems related to skin infections, eczema, psoriasis and other skin problems
- Poor water quality contributes to the chronic housing shortages in First Nation communities – new houses can't be built until water and wastewater infrastructure is upgraded
- Many communities rely on surface water sources and conditions are worsening due to industrial pollution
- Ceremonies, customary fishing and hunting practices, and ways of teaching children and sharing traditional knowledge are impacted when water is contaminated.

Petition to the House of Commons in Parliament Assembled

We the undersigned residents of Canada draw the attention of the House to the following:

THAT there at any given time are more than one hundred First Nations communities who are unable to access safe, clean drinking water – some for more than a decade. The UN has recently released a report calling on Justin Trudeau and his government to address the issue. Clean water should be an obvious right in this country and yet First Nations' communities are ignored in their calls for help from the federal government.

Therefore, your petitioners request that Parliament pass legislation that will ensure safe drinking water on all on First Nations by the year 2021.



(sign your own name – do not print)

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Sample Letter

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Bennett,

I am writing to demand that your government to take action on the water crisis that is facing so many First Nations in Canada today. There are 125 Aboriginal communities that are currently under boil-water advisories. Some have been for years.

Access to safe and clean tap water for drinking and bathing is an absolute necessity. It is appalling that so many First Nations communities are not guaranteed this basic human right.

I urge your government to introduce new legislation that will guarantee clean water to all Aboriginal people by:

- Providing appropriate funds and resources to support the development of much-needed water infrastructure.
- Supporting the training and certification of First Nation water operators.
- Implementing more effective water treatment processes, guaranteed by the federal government.
- Ensuring adequate education and training for First Nations to be able to make decisions about the treatment of their own water.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

cc: Justin Trudeau
cc: Rona Ambrose
cc: Tom Mulcair
cc: Elizabeth May

Postcard

Dear Prime Minister

125 First Nation Communities don't have safe drinking water, and for some it has been for more than a decade. This basic need has been ignored by the federal government for far too long. There can be no reasonable explanation for a neglect of this magnitude.

There is momentum building for the rights of Aboriginal peoples, their voices are being heard - in the streets, in the boardrooms and in the courts. Citizens, corporations and governments cannot turn their backs on Canada's first peoples any longer.

I am signing this card to let you know that I am appalled of this situation and of many other examples where the Indigenous population receives public services that are far inferior to those offered to other Canadians. I urge my government to adequately fund water systems so that First Nations families will have secure and hopeful futures.

Signed

Date

Office of the Prime Minister.
80 Wellington Street.
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2.

Points to Ponder

1. Where can I best circulate the tools?
2. Who can I recruit to work with me? Individuals? Other like-minded organizations?
3. Who are people that already support the issue? Who are those that might be neutral and who are ones who would be in opposition? Would you speak to each of these groups in the same way?
4. Is there a regional Indigenous Circle where you live?
5. Is there a community event where you can set up a booth or table?
6. Is there capacity to hold a public event/meeting?
7. Is there a public figure in my community that I could ask to speak on the issue?