

# Improving Access to Clean Water in First Nation Communities

Water First Education & Training Inc.



W A T E R  
F I R S T



Winter water monitoring with participants from Sheshatshiu Innu  
First Nation, Labrador

To date, we have collaborated with over

**90** Indigenous  
communities

across the country on over

**170** water science  
education and  
training projects .

# Who We Are

**Our Mandate:** To address water challenges in Indigenous communities in Canada through **education , training and meaningful collaboration .**

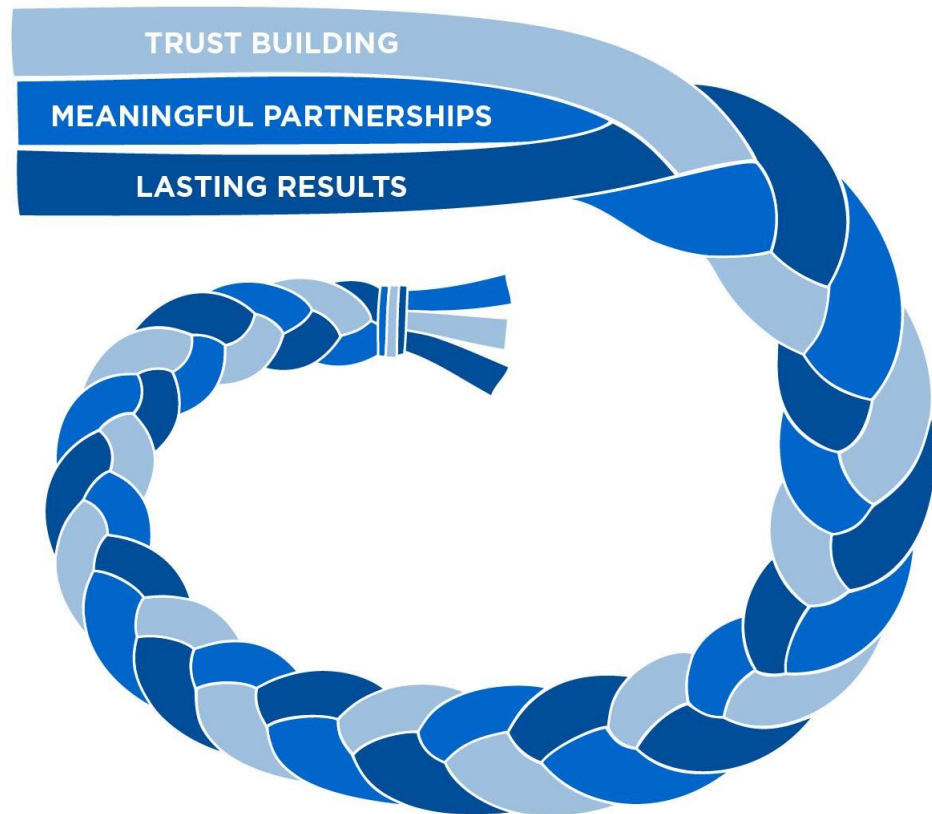
Water First has partnered with over **90 Indigenous communities** in Ontario, Quebec, Labrador, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, Alberta & BC on various water education and training projects.



# | How We Work

Our collaborations are built on respect and meaningful partnerships, with Indigenous youth and adults and community partners at the heart of our work.

We are guided by the Indigenous youth and adults who participate in our programs, our Indigenous staff and board members, local Indigenous community partners, and by members of our Indigenous Advisory Council.





# Our Programs

School Water  
Programs

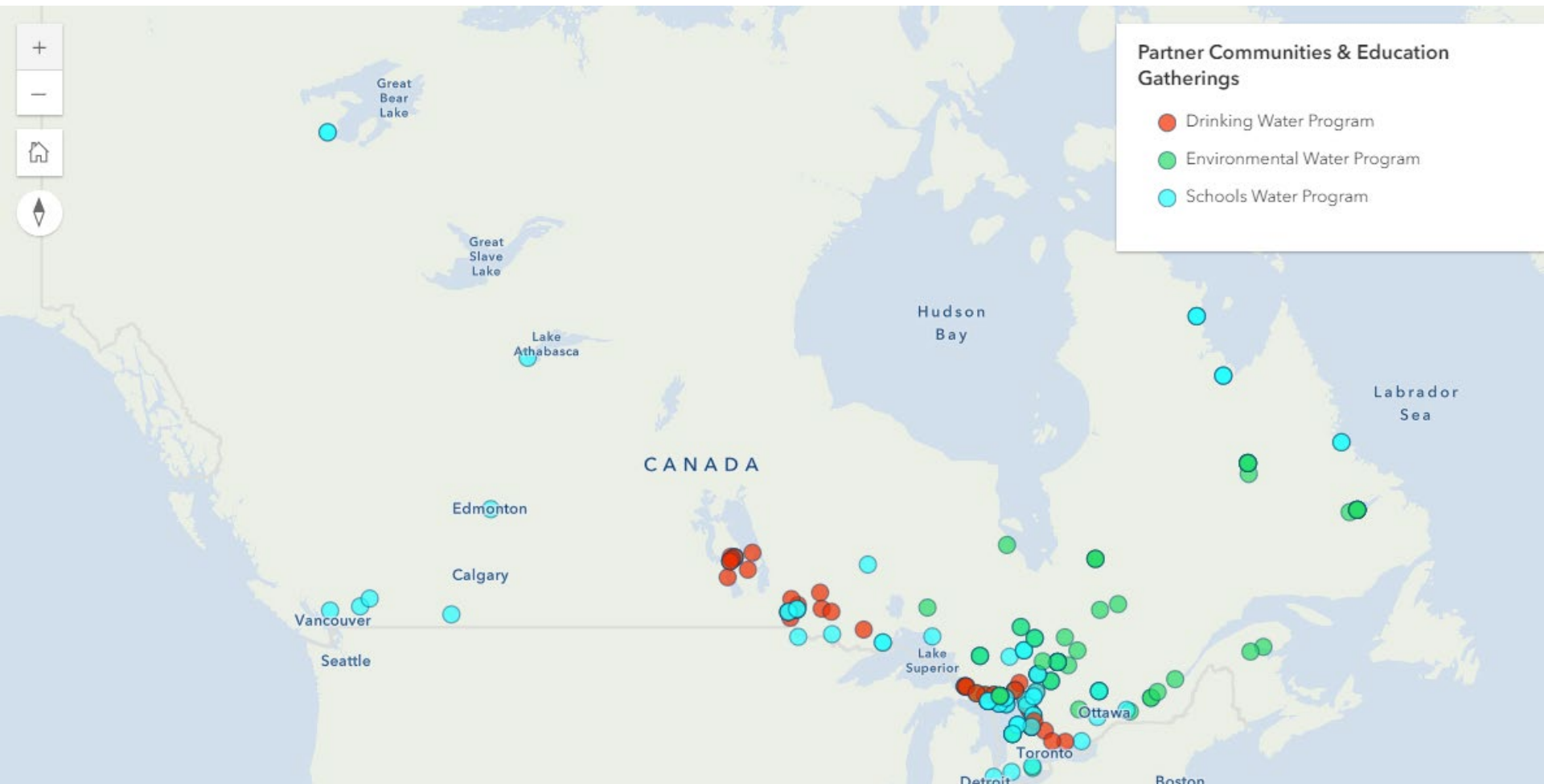
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Environmental  
Water Program

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Drinking Water  
Internship Program





# | Guided by Traditional & Community Knowledge



# Benefits to Communities

- Training in-community (lasting results)
- Independent stewardship of water resources
- Increasing community capacity
- Inspiring the next generation of environmental water scientists



Graduation Day, Waabnoong Drinking Water Internship





# Drinking Water Internship Program

*Training the next generation of  
Indigenous water operators*

46

Graduates

22

Current interns

192

Operator Certifications  
achieved

98k

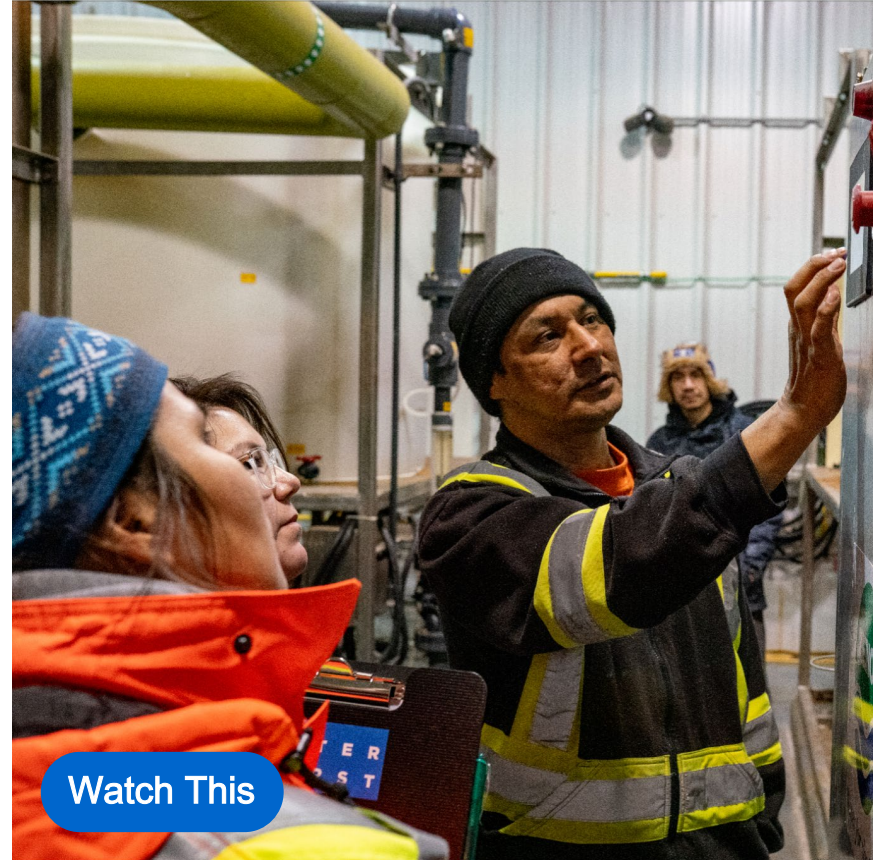
Hours working in local  
treatment plants

## Drinking Water Internship Program

Program focuses on recruiting new people into the field and giving them the necessary entry level training and skills to continue their careers as operators after graduation.

No prior experience necessary!

There is a focus on young adult recruitment, but we often have second career participants as well.



Watch This

## Program Components

- 15 month paid training opportunity
  - 1800 hours of in-plant training
  - 10 week-long training workshops
  - Drinking water and wastewater certification exams
    - Tailored to province
  - Work placements in community water/wastewater treatment plants
  - Online learning modules & tutorials
  - Mentoring



Interns during Entry Level Course prep



## Wrap Around Supports

**1:1 Mentoring** leads to successful certifications.

It also addresses possible barriers that could potentially interfere with program completion. Some examples are:

- **Childcare**
- **Equipment Supplies**
- **Computer Literacy**
- **Transportation Support**





# Funding & Budget

- \$1.5 to \$2+ million
  - Highly dependent on number of participants and location of participating communities.
  - Wages = ~\$41,000-\$46,000 (inc MERCS) per participant for the 15 months of full time work.
- Funding models:
  - Philanthropic donations.
  - Contributions from Gov (e.g ISC) in whole or in part.
  - Interns wages covered by local employment and training dollars (e..g ISETs).



## Sustainable Outcomes

About **30% of Interns are women** .

**89%** of grads are employed or pursuing further education

Of those, **87.5%** are working in water treatment or environmental water

**80%** are working for a First Nation community

Most graduates have **work lined up prior to graduation** or shortly after.



## North Shore Tribal Council Graduation September 2023



Ogemawahj Tribal Council  
Drinking Water Internship June 2023





# Environmental Water Program

*Skills training to meet a community's vision*

34

Community-based water projects completed

80+

Environmental Water training workshops delivered

Community-Based  
Water Projects

Environmental  
Water Internship



# School Water Programs

*Inspiring future water scientists*

97

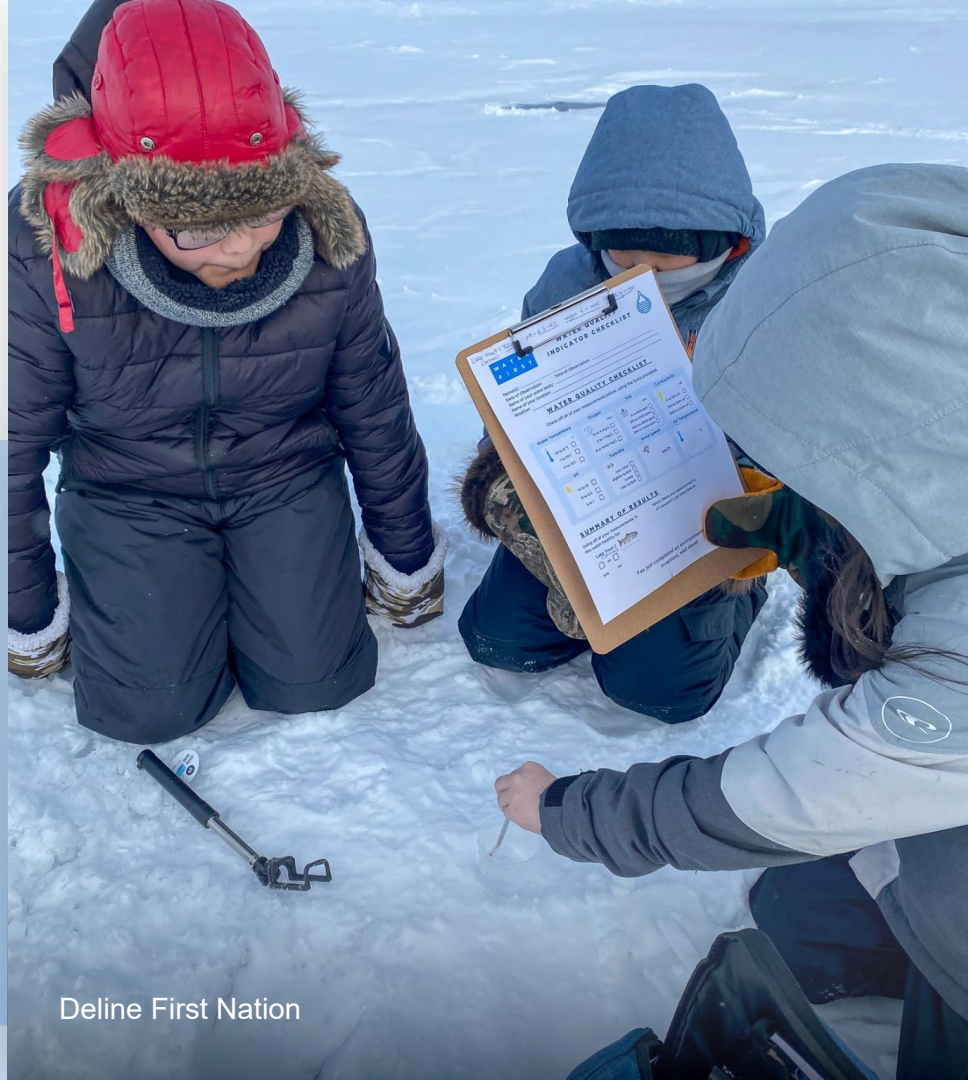
Week long workshops delivered

84

high school credits earned through the Summer Credit Program

7,495

student participants in water science workshops



Deline First Nation

# | What's new?

6th Drinking Water Internship cohort launched in spring 2024 with **Interlake Reserves Tribal Council, MB**

New Director of **Western Partnerships** is building relationships with communities in western Canada.

Enhanced **Alumni Network** to support graduates with professional development, job opportunities and networking.

Piloting **Environmental Internship** program.





# Thank you

[www.waterfirst.ngo](http://www.waterfirst.ngo)