



ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS
TECHNICAL SERVICES
CORPORATION

Northern Ontario First Nations Environmental Conference

First Nation-Led Source Water Protection Planning

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About Us ...

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Overview

What is Source Water Protection Planning?

Why do we need a First Nations specific process?

Our First Nation-Led Process – the Petal Framework

Challenges

Discussion & Questions





WATER

Family, connection, togetherness, unity, peace, Original Instructions



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What is Source Water Protection?



Definition: “Source water” refers to sources of water such as rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs, springs, and groundwater that provide water for drinking water supplies and private wells.

SWP refers to preventing contaminants from reaching water sources by using a number of planned safeguarding, preventative, or rectifying actions.

What else can encompass source water protection?

Protecting Water

Water Safety

Water Security

Water Sovereignty

Caretaking Responsibilities & Rights



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Why Protect Source Water?

- Protecting source water from contamination helps reduce treatment costs and may avoid or defer the need for complex treatment.
- Co-benefits such as protecting water quality for wildlife and recreational use, human health, and protecting the availability and quantity of water supplies.
- Prevent contamination and keeps communities safe from waterborne illnesses.
- Our own Values: Revitalize our relationship to Water, including the role as stewards of the land and water.
- Protect our Rights



Why include Traditional Knowledge?

- Elders & other Community Members feel that cultural or traditional teachings about water are a key factor missing from current decision making processes regarding water.
- Elders & community members feel First Nations have a collective responsibility to use traditional knowledge (TK) to protect water.
- We are in situation where we need to renew or own ways of protecting water.
- TK should be shared to increase understanding, but there is a need for some precautions to protect against appropriation of Elders' knowledge.





Why do we need a First Nation specific process?

- Current federal and provincial water governance regimes do not adequately protect First Nations (policies, laws, regulations, programs, funding etc.).
- Lack of Environmental Protection regimes in First Nations
- The current provincial SWP processes (e.g. Clean Water Act) have limited applicability.
- INAC, ECCC SWP protocols are limited
- We need to acknowledge Indigenous knowledge, relationships with water, sovereignty, self determination
- Water uses beyond drinking water



Values, Priority Setting & Assessing Natural Assets: Co-Benefits

Protecting natural assets, will protect water and offer benefits to the community beyond drinking water (mental health, exercise of rights, land based learning, etc.).

Co-benefit to protecting natural assets would be water security (quality and quantity), climate change, mental health, exercise of rights, keeping our traditional knowledges.

Examples of a Natural Asset:

- Rivers, Wetlands, Forest, Hunting & Fishing areas





What is a source water protection (SWP) plan?



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As stated in the Clean Water Act (2006), the objectives of the Source Protection Plan are:

- To protect existing and future drinking water sources in the source protection area.
- To ensure that for every activity identified in [Plan] that is or would be a significant drinking water threat,
 - >The activity never becomes a significant drinking water threat,
 - OR
 - > If the activity is occurring when the source protection plan takes effect, the activity ceases to be a significant drinking water threat.

This approach excludes the many other water uses and values from a First Nation perspective . . .





Introducing the OFNTSC “Petal” Framework

A community-led and -driven SWP planning framework

The “Petal” Framework

A process that is accessible to First Nations to develop and deliver on their own terms.

It acknowledges and supports actions that First Nations are already doing, and have already been doing since time immemorial.

It allows for the result to be First Nation-led and –developed while keeping community and traditional knowledge at its core.



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Key Principles of the framework

- Your SWP plan is based on your First Nation vision, goals, values and priorities.
- A SWP plan can be customized to each First Nation.
- A SWP plan is place based (culture, geography, context, history etc.)
- This SWP process meets the First Nation where they are at.
- This framework takes a strength-based approach to SWP (rather than deficient based).
- First Nations are already engaged in SWP actions and this process aims to define those.

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Key Principles con't

- A SWP plan offer benefits to the community beyond water security.
- First Nations' close relationship to the land and waters enables insights into threats to the land and waters and actions required to restore water security.
- This SWP process respects for treaty rights, traditional and treaty territories (UNDRIP etc.).
- Water comes in many forms and First Nations have an enriched understanding of water (it is not just a resource or commodity).
- This SWP process trusts the knowledge, vision, priorities of the First Nations



SWP Process Steps

| | Key components covered |
|---|---|
| Red Petal : Your Community and Water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a vision• Form an advisory/working group• Define your Community's Relationship with Water |
| Blue Petal: State of the Water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe and Characterize your Source Water Protection Area• Assess threats and strengths to your Source Water Protection Area• Values & Priority Setting• Risk Assessment |
| Green Petal: Protecting The Water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goals and Action Plan• Leadership and Community Confirmation• Implementation Plan• Review, Evaluate, Show Impact |



Role of Traditional and Community Knowledge

- Enables engagement with our own laws on our own terms using our own legal mechanisms
- Enables the assertion of our own jurisdiction over lands and territories based on our legal traditions and values
- Spiritually and culturally based legal relationships with water (strengthen identify and other co-benefits)



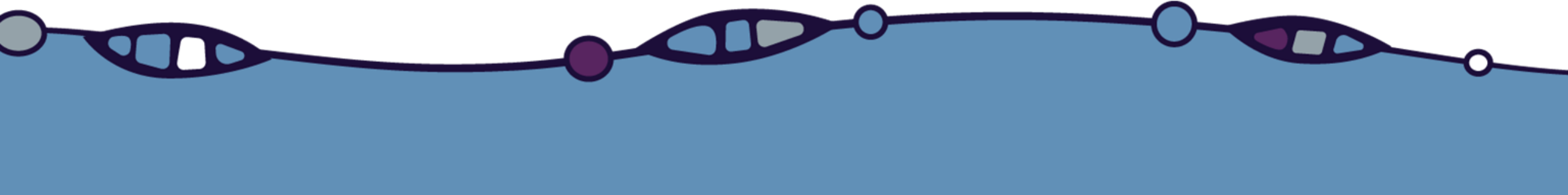
Planning Challenges

- Limitations (technical information that CAs have access to)
- Incorporation of SWP into existing community planning and development (capital planning, etc.)
- Actual Implementation of the SWP without a designated department responsible
- Lack of funding specific to SWP planning and actions
- Creating an advisory team with dedicated and available representatives



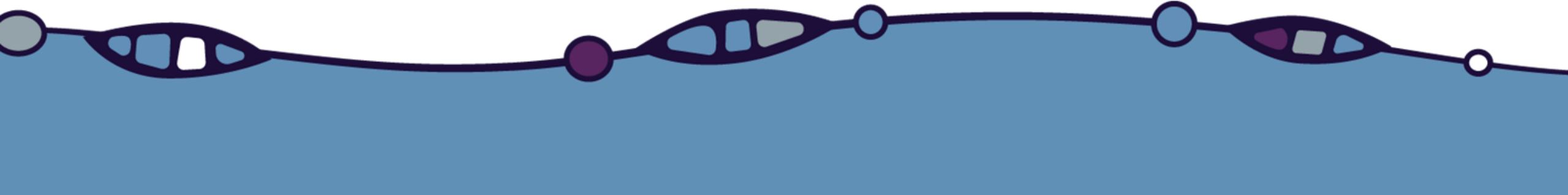


Insights

- Not a one size fits all process
 - First Nations are very different (north, south, technology)
 - Learning from each other (very helpful)
 - Holistic approach (e.g. ice and snow)
 - Strength-Based
- 



Key Messages

- First Nations already engage in elements of SWP
 - First Nations need to be in a position to *respond* not *react* to external developments (CWA)
 - There are other avenues to protect water (biodiversity, wetland protection/conservation, land based activities) and co-benefits
- 



First Nation-led Source Water Protection Planning Workshop: Northern Focus

Holiday Inn Express, 1041 Carrick Street, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7B 6L9

November 5 - 7, 2024

Who should attend? Preference is for representatives from Northern and Remote First Nations, however registration will be accepted from all First Nation communities upon request. Water and wastewater operators, members of Council, environmental department staff and public works staff from Ontario First Nations and tribal councils may register.

Contact Erica Tropea, OFNTSC: etropea@ofntsc.org



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Discussion & Feedback

How does your community protect source water? What actions are already being done?

How do you use Traditional and Community Knowledge in practice when protecting source water?

What have been your biggest challenges in the protection of source water?

For additional comments or questions, contact Erica Tropea, OFNTSC: etropea@ofntsc.org



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