

Assignment 4

For a lot of first nations people in Canada, they have issues with their water quality. About 20% of 100 of 600 reserves in Canada are on drinking water advisory, which means they have to boil their water before they drink it. In some places they've been on "boil" alert for 10 years or more. The problem is that the government puts native communities under different laws than other Canadians.

Aboriginal history with the Canadian government explains a lot of how this relationship works, and how most of these communities are disadvantaged and don't have a lot of power to determine what happens to their land. Since the government has control over all of the development in the territories surrounding the reserves, it means that sometimes they set up resource extraction projects that have bad health consequences, and they can't do anything about it. The government can spend a lot of money on water treatment plants, but it's very expensive for such a small amount of people as are usually on reserves and they don't have the training to operate the treatment plants. So instead the government tries to be cost efficient by protecting the water sources, the watershed and ground water, before the water comes into the aboriginal community settlements. This is difficult to actually do though and it's mostly because the government sections don't coordinate efficiently with each other. In B.C. The Local Water Operator or the Health Officer can make a claim to the government so they analyze the local watershed to see if it needs treatment, but it's usually more interesting for the government to make a money making resource extraction project than help these people have access to clean drinking water, because for some reason they assume that these small communities have access to the resources that cities have, (which they don't). In the end all the waste from the extraction goes back to the settlements and their local food gets poisoned and so the people get sick and it also makes everyone poor because the pollution makes everything that they own lose its value. Investment in the water authorities could help it though, because they can help the different government sections communicate with each other.

Patrick, R.J.(2011) Uneven access to safe drinking water for first nations in Canada: Connecting health and place through source water protection. Health and Place 17:386-389

FNHA, 2016. Drinking Water Safety Program, First Nations Health Authority. <http://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/environmental-health/drinking-water-safety-program> last accessed October 9, 2018

Canada, H., 2016. Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities. Health Canada, Ottawa, Ontario <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/public-publique/water-dwa-eau-aqep-eng.php#more> last accessed October 9, 2018