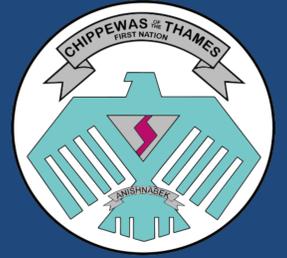




Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Water Security Planning



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Background

The Chippewas of the Thames First Nation (COTTFN), located in southwestern Ontario, face local-level water challenges common to many First Nations: a growing population, limited land base, aging water infrastructure, fear of threats to source water, and uncertainty around the health of aquatic ecosystems.

The COTTFN also has concerns over numerous external activities that may impact local water (e.g. underground pipelines, water withdrawals, surrounding land use, agricultural runoff, etc...). There is limited community involvement in watershed governance, and uncertainty around the health of natural waters within the treaty lands and territory.

In addition, projected regional growth and development, and increasing energy demands- all of which are heavily water dependent, and the uncertainty around climate change, makes planning for secure water future essential!



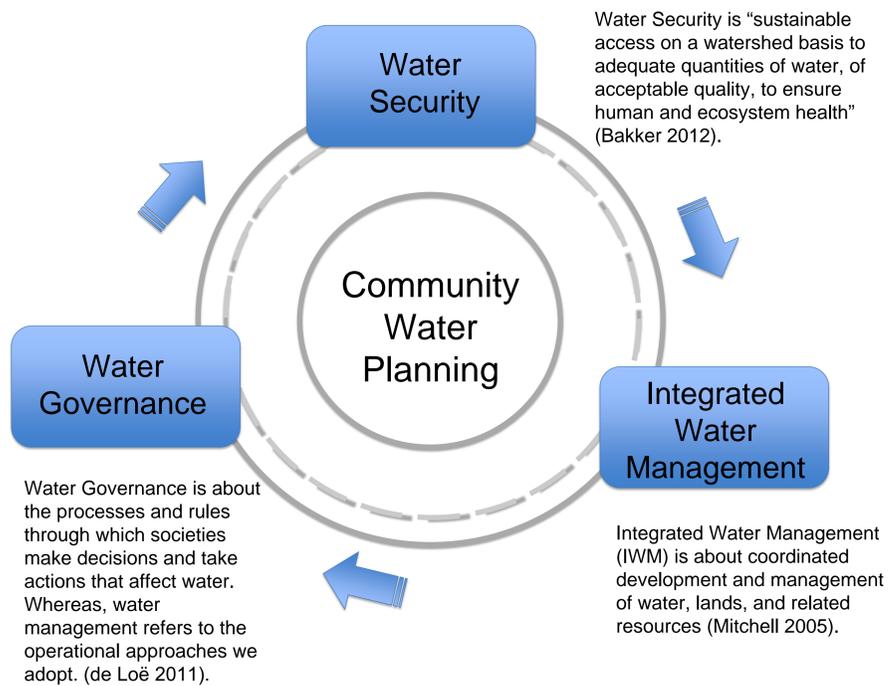
Community Goal

To enhance local water security and governance through a more integrated approach to water planning and management that includes land, environment, social and economic considerations, and is reflective of community goals, values, knowledge and beliefs.

Research Questions

1. What is water security for COTTFN?
2. How can COTTFN enhance community water security?
3. How can local water governance be enhanced to support local water security reflective of community values and beliefs?

Conceptual Framework



References

Chippewa of the Thames First Nations (COTTFN). (2018). Public Works. COTTFN Retrieved from <http://www.cottfn.com/public-works/>, Government of Canada. (2013). Chippewa of the Thames First Nations - Connectivity Profile. Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Retrieved from <https://www.aadnc.ca/eng/1357840942052/1360163733741>. London District Chiefs Council. Where Does My Water Come From? Drinking Water Source Protection. Retrieved from <http://www.sourcewaterprotection.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/FN-chippewas-of-the-thames.pdf>

Methodology – Qualitative Research

Grounded theory, co-engaged research design, and mixed-methods included document analysis, purposive sampling, and semi-structured interviews. In July/August 2018, Twenty-three (23) interviews completed with COTTFN water actors and decision-makers.

Audio transcriptions were reviewed by participants, and coding (NVivo12) identified emergent themes from which findings were generated. Results were presented to the COTTFN staff and managers, and a community Open House will provide opportunity for community input and feedback for inclusion into the Phase 1: Final Report.

Findings

1) Community water roles and uses



Water Uses and Perspectives:

- Ecosystems
- Mother Earth
- Future generations
- Household use
- Recreation
- Protection of rights
- Ceremony and teachings
- Culture, values and beliefs
- Deshkan Ziibing
- Residential school healing
- Scientific approaches
- Economic development

2) Threats to community water security

Threats are defined as **perceived, potential or actual harm or danger** to water. Primary threat categories as identified by participants, summarized with illustrative examples:

Water demand and availability: Unmonitored or unregulated local use; future community growth; economic development needs; emergency preparedness; and watershed scale withdrawals (Permits-To-Take-Water).

Source water and drinking quality: Agricultural run-off and leachate; decommissioned or abandoned wells; soil contamination from materials transported on-reserves; large rainfall events and untreated municipal wastewater from upstream; excess naturally occurring manganese and iron in groundwater; unknown pollutants; potential for failures in underground pipeline; regional growth and development (e.g. landfill and upstream activities).

Wetlands and ecosystem health: Draining of wetlands, changes to local water cycles, and effect on wildlife and species-at-risk; invasive species; runoff from bombing range; pharmaceuticals entering natural water systems; and soils brought on-reserve from unknown places.

3) Planning constraints



4) Themes for action

- ✓ Education and communication
- ✓ Policy and governance
- ✓ Financial sustainability
- ✓ Collaboration and coordination
- ✓ Engagement and empowerment

5) Next steps (2018-19):

- Broad community engagement
- Governance models review
- Integrated planning framework
- Validation & knowledge mobilization