

WAABNOONG BEMJIWAANG ASSOCIATION OF FIRST NATIONS

WATER FIRST INTERNSHIP



Interns during Enviro Week collecting YSI measurements on Georgian Bay

Quarterly Activity Report June 1 to September 30, 2021

Quarterly Activity Report

Project Name :
Waabnoong Bemjiwaang Association of First Nations Water First Internship
Period Covered
Project year: 1 Quarter (Select the appropriate quarter): <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Q1 – June 1 st to September 30 th <input type="checkbox"/> Q2 – October 1 st to December 31 st <input type="checkbox"/> Q3 – January 1 st to March 31 st

1. Describe the progress of Program Activities achieved for this period.

The following program activities were achieved for this period

Program Kick-off Meetings
 Kick-off meetings were held at each First Nation where representatives from Water First and WBAFN met with band managers, water treatment plant operators, and other community representatives. After the kick-off meetings, job postings for each First Nation were developed in accordance with the individual First Nation hiring policy. Wahnapiatae First Nation do not have a Water Treatment Plant but many potential jobs in environmental water sampling and community health.

Call for Applications
 Job ads were developed for each community and included any specific community requirements (e.g. ability to speak Anishinaabemowin or willing to learn, previous knowledge or work experience in the water field). Job ads were posted in each community, on job board, at the band office and also on social media (community facebook pages). Job ads were also posted in the local newspaper and on the radio. We also contacted education coordinators, economic development officers and other community members and asked them to encourage candidates to apply. The ads were posted for approximately 6 weeks.

During the internship job posting period, Water First and WBAFN held a virtual event with guest speakers from traditional knowledge to water treatment operators, to answer questions to potential candidates. The virtual event was pre-recorded and put on social media.

Interviews and Applicant Selection
 There were 2 to 4 applications received in each community with the exception of Magnetawan First Nation and Henvey Inlet First Nation both of which received zero applications. Each job application received was reviewed by WBAFN, Water First, a representative from the First Nation, and Gezhtoojig Employment and Training Centre and an application screening form was completed. Potential candidates were selected for interviews based on the screening forms.

During the interviews, a series of questions were asked, and the potential candidates were scored by a representative from WBAFN, Water First, and most of the time the First Nation. The parties then selected the two successful applicants from each community. Due to Magnetawan First Nation and Henvey Inlet First Nation not having any candidates the parties decided to hire on extra interns to fill these positions. One intern from Wahnapiatae placed in Henvey Inlet First Nation, 3 interns in Shawanaga First Nation and 3 interns in Wausaksing First Nation.

Virtual Introduction Workshop
 16 interns started their positions June 22nd, and attended a few weeks of focused training workshops regarding water science, chemistry, math, water sampling techniques and related analytical equipment. In addition to western science perspectives on water, local elders gave presentations at the workshops to explore traditional knowledge and perspectives related to water.

Interns took a virtual tour of the Nipissing First Nation water treatment plant by Brittany Lariviere, the local operator, she also gave a presentation related to professional development, on-the-job experiences, and current operator responsibilities.

Attendance at the workshops was very strong, with all 16 interns attending every hour of instruction. Participant feedback was also strong, with 67% of participants rating the workshop as very good or excellent and the remainder rating it as good. The workshops were designed and led by Water First staff



Terence from Temagami First Nation



Harmony from Dokis First Nation

Small Systems Workshop

All interns completed and passed the Small Systems Certification during the last week of virtual introduction week. The small systems course was the perfect start for our interns to get introduced to their roles as future water operators and water quality analysts.

The small systems course is geared to be an outline to what is expected for future examinations.

It's a great start for our interns to learn best practices and theory on what it is like in a day to day typical water treatment system.

Upon successfully passing the examination the interns were considered a 'trained person' and were able to assist in the daily routine testing that their respected water plant operator does to ensure clean drinking water is being distributed to the public.

Working with the interns on an online capacity has its limitations. But with the help of our water first team we were able to administer a week-long session and breakdown the course into 4 days.

During these 4 days the interns and I were able to discuss and summarize the chapters as well as review some topics that we found interesting, found challenging and any other questions that we may have had throughout each of the chapters.

I feel confident that as we discussed and conversed after each chapter it really helped ensure that the interns retained the main topics of each section.

Upon successful completion of the exam, the interns were able to spend the following week getting introduced to their own community's water treatment systems.

Internship Work Experience

The interns started their first day at their local water treatment plant on July 19 after 4 weeks of online training. Since that time, they have worked on various tasks including: daily recording of activities and log books, bacteriological sampling and analysis, curb stop locations and repair, fire hydrant flushing, maintenance and calibration of in-line meters, plant maintenance, chlorine residual testing, recreational and community water testing.

The water treatment plant operators are in regular contact with WBAFN and/or Water First staff and complete quarterly Operator Reports where they describe the interns' tasks and training as well as rate the interns' attendance, quality of work, dependability, etc. and relay any important information.

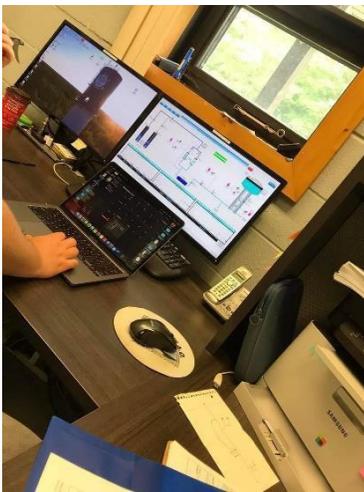
Pictures of intern work experience:



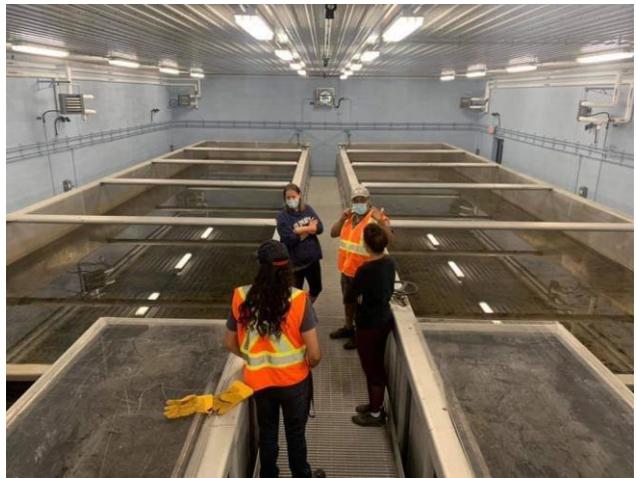
Completing daily sampling in Dokis Water Treatment Plant



Raw water sampling in Shawanaga First Nation



Learning about SCADA in Henvey Inlet First Nation



Interns touring different community plants

Operator-In-Training Workshop

The interns gathered in Sudbury, Ontario for their Operator in training preparation week (August 16th to 20th). Staff and interns started the week off with Grandmother Maryellen for opening prayer.

Water First instructors prepared a daily schedule for interns which included, safety and legislation, equipment basics, basic math, and science, drinking water treatment, water testing and equipment, drinking water distribution and mental health exam preparation. Interns completed and discussed the practice quizzes at the end of each day. There were also games throughout the week on topics that were covered which made a fun environment for interns. Multiple stations were set up for different types of water sampling for each water samples that were given (raw water, tap water, bottled water) and interns discussed their results. Kendra prepared a practice OIT exam with the interns and discussed their results before the real OIT exam on Friday. We had guest speakers such as Manitoulin Alumni, Maryellen (grandmother), and Manager of Water/Wastewater Department of Sudbury, Ontario. There were also evening activities throughout the week for interns and staff to participate in and get to know each other.

After receiving the results of the OIT exam, 12 out of 16 interns passed their exams which leaves 4 interns who will have to rewrite their OIT exam in the near future. Although, these 4 interns didn't pass the first OIT exam their marks were very close to a passing grade.

In between the OIT workshop and the Environmental Workshop, interns returned to their home plants to continue their work experience



Great start of opening prayer and teachings from Grandmother during OIT week



Interns in class prepping for the OIT exam



Group picture during OIT Week in Sudbury, Ontario

Introduction to Environmental Week

To introduce interns to the field of environmental water, to encourage interest in this field and relate what is happening in the environment affects drinking water. All 15 interns participated in a one-week intro to environmental week (September 13th to 17th) which took place in Killarney, Ontario. First day was an opening prayer and some history of Killarney presented by WBAFN and following was Water First who presented a mental health workshop, goal setting discussion, introduction to the daily schedule, field observations, data collection and an introduction to the environmental water sampling equipment.

The next day interns were split into two groups and participated in two workshops, explore a lake, and explore a stream. Interns were introduced how to properly use the equipment during a lake survey and a stream survey. Wednesday, we had a scavenger hunt where interns would learn how to use a GPS and to take way

points. Staff and interns spent the afternoon out on the lake to view historical sites along the Colins Inlet and received some teachings and stories from a grandmother of Birch Island, of the pictographs. The following day interns and staff had a tour of Killarney water and wastewater plants, including exploring the water intake and lagoons. On the final day, interns had a final discussion of the week with a closing prayer by Maryellen and a group fish fry before everyone headed home.



Interns learning how to use kick nets to look for benthics



Looking for benthics



Learning to use Lake Survey equipment



Data collection with Jag and Jill



Benthic Identification under the microscope



Stream survey in two different locations





Interns on the boat learning to do a lake survey



GPS scavenger hunt



Group pic during the scavenger hunt hike



Group shot at the Killarney paddle



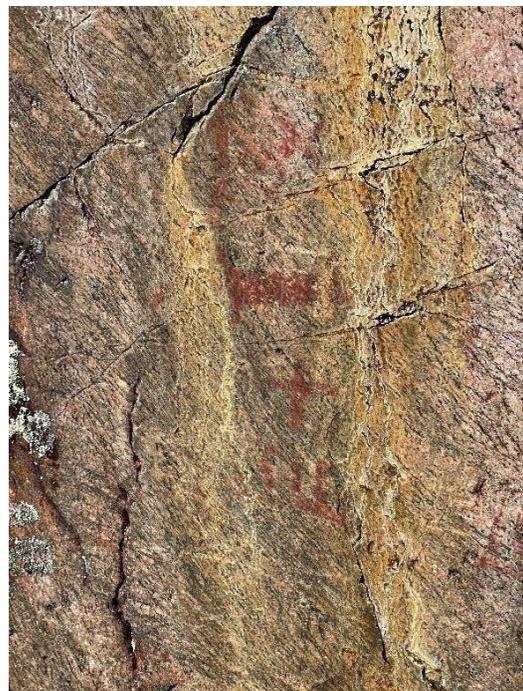
Group shot during the tour of the Killarney Water Treatment Plant



Tour of the Killarney lagoon



Interns in Colins Inlet looking for the pictographs





Closing prayer and teachings by Maryellen



Group shot at the Killarney lighthouse

2. Describe the progress of partnerships that have been developed or maintained this period.

Water First and WBAFN staff worked closely in the development of the job ads, recruiting, screening, interviewing, and selecting the interns. Water First and WBAFN staff also worked closely with Nipissing First Nation and Shawanaga First Nation staff in the selection of their interns.

Water First and WBAFN staff have also worked closely with the individual communities of Nipissing and Shawanaga, making sure the program is running smoothly. We have worked closely with the band managers, water treatment plant operators and other staff at the community level. Due to COVID restrictions, we've opted for more virtual meetings and have not travelled to the communities as much as we would have without restrictions.

3. What significant Achievements and Activities have occurred during this period

Significant Achievements and Activities:

- Selecting 16 qualified interns
- Conducting introduction workshop with all 16 interns attending every hour of instruction. Participant feedback was strong
- Completion of bi-weekly intern timesheets and activity reports.
- Interns' completed a variety of hands-on work experience, guided by their local water treatment plant operator. Some examples include: daily log keeping, raw and drinking water testing, plant maintenance, and distribution system maintenance.
- Interns' completing mission packs study questions all 15 interns attending individual tutoring sessions completed by Water First staff in each community.
- Weekly virtual tutorials

- 16 Small System Operator Certifications
- 12 Operator in Training Certifications
- Completion of Operator in training workshop and intro to environmental workshop with great results

4. What significant Challenges were encountered during this period

Number of Applicants

Some challenges were encountered when recruiting interns for the positions. Initially we were concerned that not enough applicants would apply. To combat this challenge, we worked with the communities to post the job ads around the communities and on social media. There were no qualified applicants from Magnetewan First Nation and Henvey Inlet First Nation, as a result we hired on three interns from Shawanaga First Nation and Wausaksing First Nation. We also have a Wahnapiatae band member working in Henvey Inlet First Nation.

Applicant Placements

Due to Wahnapiatae First Nation not having a Water Treatment Plant, they have elected to only keep one intern at the band office working on community related environmental projects. The other intern from Wahnapiatae is working on environmental water quality projects with the Nickel District Conservation Authority and will soon be starting her placement with the Greater Sudbury Water Treatment Plant.

Temagami First Nation, being small and remote on Bear Island, also elected to only have one intern at their plant. A second intern from Temagami but living in North Bay was also hired as a WBAFN intern. She has been working on GIS projects with WBAFN, school water workshops with Water First education team, and will soon be working with the WBAFN operator to gain some in the plant experience.

COVID Adaptations

All recruitment as well as the introduction workshop and small systems workshop were virtual due to COVID. Recruitment is generally easier when we can travel to the communities and see people face to face. Workshops in person are better received than online. Thankfully by August some restrictions were lifted and we are now able to host in-person workshops with safety protocols in place.

Retention

Retention has been good so far in the program. We lost one intern after the Operator-in-Training workshop but 3 months in still have 15/16 interns employed in the program. During pass projects, we expect a 2/3 retention rate (10 to 11 interns graduating), and most of the interns who do not complete the program leave within the first couple months.

5. Other comments or feedback

N/A