

## Indigenous Water Project Annual Report 2020

*“When we started it was a drop in the bucket, just one small community. Now it is spreading. The support for the gift of water keeps spreading, helping more and more people.”*  
– Archbishop Mark MacDonald, Indigenous Anglican Church of Canada

Since 2013, Pimatisiwin Nipi (Living Waters) Group has partnered with the Northern Ontario community of Pikangikum, Ontario and with The Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) to install safe drinking water and indoor plumbing in the homes that need it the most.

The generous gifts and training of past years made it possible for the community of Pikangikum to implement the next phase. Leveraging some government funds, more homes were fitted with piping infrastructure to access clean water. Two community evacuations in 2019 due to wildfires and then the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 have caused some delay, but we were encouraged by the proposal that was developed in the fall of 2020 to equip more homes with clean, running water and make good use of financial resources raised in past years.

In 2020, Pikangikum was able to institute early and consistent public health safety measures, which have allowed the community to stay mostly COVID-free, as well as to continue important offerings of church and other meetings in a safe way. Suicides have been significantly reduced this year as well in the community. The school remains closed at this time, and so we pray for its safe reopening in 2021, as well as for the leadership of all of those who are keeping the young people connected and cared for at this time.

That being said, COVID has certainly posed significant challenges in Indigenous communities across Canada. Increasing isolation and diminished community resources have been a tragic cost to trying to keep COVID-19 at bay. In 2020, our sense of the urgency of our work has been renewed, and the questions of *“What Can We Do?”* and *“What Is God Calling us to Next?”* have been spurred by news from across our Indigenous networks of youth suicides and overdoses happening on a daily basis.

In order to expand our work in response to these urgent and widespread needs, we were grateful to be able to pivot our fundraising in the fall of 2020 to a new partnership between PWRDF and Water First, an organization that addresses water challenges in Indigenous communities in Canada through education, training and meaningful collaboration.

### **Our goals:**

- Help Water First identify and support Indigenous youth (with a gender balance) to gain relevant skills and hands-on experience in the operation and maintenance of drinking water infrastructure in their local communities

- Create supportive mentoring networks for Indigenous youth through Water First's Alumni Network
- Work with Indigenous youth to help solve water challenges in their local communities, build confidence, and deepen their connection to the land and their community.

Each dollar donated goes toward training and supporting Water First's interns during 15 months of in-depth hands-on training. We are pleased to report that, as of mid-January, this year's Advent fundraising campaign raised almost \$19,000 toward this expanding work. Thank you for your generosity, which offers life-changing opportunities for young people and contributes to many Indigenous communities having access to safe, clean, living water.

*“You anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows” –Psalm 23*

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