Infrastructure Alone is Not Enough: Identifying Gaps in the Literature Regarding First Nations Water Governance

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Image source: Res’eau WaterNet
Indigenous Water Governance

- Chronic drinking water quality problems in First Nations communities across Canada
- The federal government has committed to ending drinking water advisories in First Nations communities by the year 2021.
- This commitment includes funding allocations to improve infrastructure, operator training and supporting source water protection.

Image Source: Government of Ontario
Indigenous Water Governance

- Indigenous peoples often view water as a living entity or relative, not a resource which can be owned (Wilson & Inkster, 2018)
- Indigenous peoples have their own laws, systems, practices and beliefs for managing their relationship with creation/water
- Conflicting views between mainstream or colonial ideas of water and constraints of the Indian Act that governs First Nations communities limit First Nations ability to govern water
- Despite Aboriginal and treaty rights, and international commitments (UNDRIP) – many water related
Gaps in Indigenous Water Governance

- Federal funding, and provincial involvement, is overdue and necessary, but does not adequately address systematic issues underlying water problems.
- Local water governance led by Indigenous communities can contribute to more effective, integrative and culturally appropriate water management.

Image Source: LCI Magazine
Research Goals

- This research aims to identify gaps in the literature related to Indigenous water governance.
- Specially this research aims to examine the impacts of policy and governance on current water problems.
- Will examine current water governance frameworks within Indigenous communities.
- Aims to add to the toolkit of solutions to address water insecurity within Indigenous communities.
Implications for Rural Ontario

❖ Many Indigenous communities are located within rural remote areas of Northern Ontario

❖ Indigenous water governance is a rural Ontario issue.

❖ Indigenous communities themselves have similar characteristics to rural areas of Ontario

❖ Lessons from Indigenous water governance can also apply to those outside the community
Key Take Aways

❖ While federal policies and commitments are a step in the right direction, they do not holistically address the issues and history behind water issues within Indigenous communities

❖ By conducting an extensive review of the Indigenous water governance literature and policy, this research will identify gaps and provide additional options toward enhancing local water governance
Thank you.

Questions?