



FAX COVER

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Message :

We would like to introduce you to another member of the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team (AAWTT), Bob Pratt and the First Nation community that supports him. Please feel free to contact us at info@safewater.org or (306) 934-0389 if you have any questions or comments.

Bob Pratt

Bob Pratt has been the Water keeper at George Gordon First Nation for over 18 years. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is quick to offer its recognition that George Gordon First Nation is one of the best run reservations in all of Canada. When INAC wants to draw on statistics, design new schools, or provide an example of a well operated water treatment plant, they can count on George Gordon every time!

Yet, for years, the engineers repeatedly made Bob feel that he was the reason why George Gordon residents did not have safe drinking water. Bob watched as three different engineering companies during 15 years tried to “improve” the quality of drinking water to the community. This proved very difficult until the Safe Drinking Water Foundation (SDWF) started to work with Bob and showed that the engineers were trying to do what SDWF showed to be chemically impossible. This was a relief for Bob to know as he was feeling that it was his fault that the treatment system was not working well. INAC had no way of judging the engineering companies’ efforts and, indeed, for the entire time the engineers applied the same treatment technique, manganese greensand, with different twists. The only people that were profiting from this were the engineers as they were able to charge for literally doing the same thing over and over again. Few professionals get paid for repeatedly implementing problems rather than solutions!

In 2002 Bob and the leadership of George Gordon First Nation became aware of the Integrated Biological and Reverse Osmosis Membrane (IBROM) water treatment process being developed at nearby Yellow Quill First Nation. Bob made several visits to Yellow Quill and met Dr. Hans Peterson of the SDWF who was heading up the Yellow Quill pilot.

It soon became evident to Dr. Hans that Bob knew exactly what he was talking about! He had extensive knowledge and understanding of the water treatment process and its inability to effectively produce safe drinking water. After studying the analytical data available, it was obvious to SDWF scientists that no matter what Bob did, as the Water Keeper, the process at George Gordon was incapable of producing safe drinking water! By using science George Gordon leaders were able to negotiate with INAC to implement an IBROM system at significantly reduced costs from the implementation at Yellow Quill.

Bob and his Public Works Manager, Derek Morris, became two of the founding members of the SDWF Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team (AAWTT). Both Bob and Derek are eager to share both their political and scientific experiences to help other First Nation communities achieve safe drinking water for their people.

Bob was promoted to be the Circuit Rider for the Touchwood Tribal Council in 2007, and also that year he presented to the graduating students of the Engineering faculty at the University of Saskatchewan in the hope that up and coming engineers would consider using science when designing water treatment processes. Bob has been interviewed by different media, and, has given presentations across the country. Bob organized the first workshop on ground water held at George Gordon in 2008 and had previously organized a much larger workshop in Saskatoon in December 2007 with a follow-up workshop to be held in Saskatoon in February 2009.

Bob is a shining example of how Water Keepers are often blamed for ineffective water treatment systems, and how his persistence to find solutions paid off. Leadership at George Gordon has supported Bob in his efforts to help other communities achieve that same goal. Bob is happy to mentor and offer advice to anyone experiencing similar problems, and is especially willing to help other communities with ground water.

As INAC and many engineers continue to implement water treatment processes identical to the ones that did not work at George Gordon's, Bob is especially happy to show how a community can test its own water, do a few calculations, and then determine if there is any hope for the treatment process to work. Many times, there is not even a faint hope that the process will work and the First Nation community is a direct victim of INAC's ill-advised policy "all we need is an engineering stamp". That policy has encouraged poor engineering across Canada and, until INAC decides to make technically competent assessments of water treatment plants, many unsuspecting people will suffer.

The SDWF has tried to make all First Nation leaders aware that through their contribution agreements Chiefs and Councils have now accepted responsibility and liability for their community's drinking water. In order to protect the health of their people, the leaders must make sure their water treatment plant can produce truly safe drinking water. Unfortunately, the majority of First Nations cannot meet the full extent of the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines - which was probably the driving factor for the federal government to transfer responsibility (and liability) for water directly to the community!

CALL TO ACTION FOR First Nations Drinking Water

Name of community: _____

I wish to remain anonymous Yes **or**

Contact person: _____

Water Treatment Plant Phone #: _____ Fax #: _____

What time would be best to call the contact person ? _____

Position: _____ Email: _____

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our research scientist who will be starting work in our lab on Monday, January 12th, 2009.

Date: _____

1) Do you treat ground or surface water? _____

2) What treatment process do you use, can you describe it?

3) How much water do you treat per day? _____

4) Do you have support when problems arise? Yes or No please explain

5) Who do you answer to when there are problems? eg. a committee or Chief & Council

6) How many people do you service with water? _____

7) Do you have an adequate supply amount of water for your community? Yes or No

8) What are the total and free chlorine levels in your distributed water?

a) Does it vary within the same close range? _____

b) Free chlorine: _____

c) Total chlorine: _____

9) What are the chlorine residuals in the distribution system?

10) Have you had any boil water advisories? Yes or No

a) If yes why was it called? _____

b) How was it resolved? _____

c) How long did it last? _____

11) Do you measure turbidity? Yes or No

a) What are the average levels? _____

12) Do you drink your water? Yes or No

a) If so how does it taste? _____

b) Does it carry an odor? Explain if it does. _____

13) Does the raw water have any smell? _____

14) Do you have raw water data?

15) Do you have treated water data?

16) Are you willing to share some of the data with SDWF's Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team (AAWTT)? _____

17) Do you want a scientist to have a look at the data and get back to you with his/her interpretation?
Circle Yes or No

18) Do you have any health concerns for your community when it comes to the water?

19) Is there anyone from outside the community that tests your water? Circle Yes or No
If so who? For example EHO, or water quality monitor.

Do you test your water on all the water quality parameters yearly? ie: iron, arsenic, etc.
Circle Yes or No

If so are you willing to share your results with SDWF's AAWTT?
Circle Yes or No

20) Do you know what your annual bill is for chemicals for your water treatment process
\$ _____

21) How long has it been since INAC allocated any funding to improve or replace your water treatment plant? Please Circle
Less than 5 years 5 – 10 years over 10 years

22) How much did INAC spend on your community water treatment? \$ _____

Any comments:

I have forwarded the information you have sent regarding First Nations Call to Action for Safe Drinking Water to our Chief and Council Yes or No