

**6** CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



**Toward Clean Water  
and Sanitation  
in Nogojiwanong /  
Peterborough**

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Gchi miigwetch/many thanks to the Indigenous Leadership Action Team, the project’s Coordinating Committee, David Bradley (Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation, and Parks), Julie Ingram (Peterborough Public Health), Patrick Devlin (Peterborough Utilities Group), and the Masters of Sustainability Studies students (Trent University) for their additional guidance and support.

This project is funded by the Government of Canada’s Sustainable Development Funding Program.

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC) and GreenUP are located on Treaty 20 Michi Saagiig territory and in the traditional territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa First Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties First Nations, which include Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations.

KWIC and GreenUP respectfully acknowledge that the Williams Treaties First Nations are the stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity, and that they continue to maintain this responsibility to ensure their health and integrity for generations to come.

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SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS

What are the UN Sustainable Development Goals?

The 2030 Agenda was adopted by the United Nations general assembly in 2015. It is a framework of seventeen interconnected goals, referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs focus on economic, social and environmental themes including sustainable development, poverty, and climate change. At the heart of the 2030 Agenda is the idea of equity, or ‘Leaving No One Behind.’ For more information about leaving no one behind and the Sustainable Development Goals Framework, please visit the [UN SDGs website](#).

About this project

In March 2019, Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC), GreenUP, Fleming College, and Trent University hosted a Community Forum called Understanding the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Canada’s Commitment and the Local Connections. Later that year, KWIC applied for Sustainable Development Goals Program Funding, in partnership with GreenUP, to build upon the foundation established at this forum. The grant was awarded in March 2020, which coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances created unique challenges, constraints and opportunities for the project, which was reorganized to become fully virtual.

Advancing the 2030 Agenda Peterborough / Nogojiwanong has four main objectives:

- 1. Raise awareness of and support for the 2030 Agenda;
- 2. Enhance multi-stakeholder efforts toward the Agenda by building partnerships and bridging efforts across sectors;
- 3. Ensure that progress on the 2030 Agenda leaves no one behind, including vulnerable and marginalized groups; and,
- 4. Foster and integrate Indigenous knowledge into approaches and efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

**Five Action Teams** were established to further these objectives, based on priorities identified at the 2019 forum. Four of the teams focused on specific SDGs: No Poverty (SDG 1), Quality Education (SDG 4), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), and Climate Action (SDG 13). The fifth group, called the Indigenous Leadership Action Team (ILAT), guided and supported the work of the other four teams. The Action Teams each met remotely as a group three times, and worked toward the results shared at the 2021 Community Forum and in this report. Each Action Team made remarkable contributions, particularly given the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are extremely grateful for their expertise, experience, and generosity.

**The SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation Action Team** reflects the importance that participants at the 2019 Community Forum placed on protecting sources of drinking water. Protecting the sources of our drinking water honours the integrity and well-being of nibi (water) and our local watersheds, and ensures clean, safe, and sustainable drinking water now and for future generations.

This report summarizes the work of the SDG 6 Action Team and outlines strategies for achieving Clean Water and Sanitation in Nogojiwanong / Peterborough while leaving no one behind and centering Indigenous knowledge and leadership.



Nibi is the word for ‘water’ in Anishinaabemowin. Nibi is more than a resource or commodity; it is a sacred, living being. Nibi is central to Anishinaabeg knowledge, culture, and society. Anishinaabekwewag (women) are the keepers of water and its teachings.





### WHAT IS SDG 6 AND WHERE DO WE STAND?

Sustainable Development Goal 6 seeks to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The scope of SDG 6 is very broad and includes the following:

- equitable access to clean water for drinking, sanitation, and hygiene;
- greater freshwater conservation and improved wastewater treatment;
- transboundary cooperation and water resource management; and
- the well-being of water-related ecosystems such as wetlands, rivers, forests, and more.

Canada is widely considered to be a global leader in water access and sanitation due to its abundant supply of freshwater and high performance on the SDG 6 targets (BCCIC, 2018). However, access to clean water is not universal. Dozens of Indigenous communities continue to experience long and short-term boil advisories, including Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations.

There is an abundance of water in the local area, including many lakes, rivers, creeks, streams and wetlands. These water resources support a wide variety of uses including recreation, navigation, power generation, drinking water, domestic, industrial, and agricultural use, and habitat for a variety of aquatic and terrestrial species. The City of Peterborough includes the Otonabee River, many creeks, streams and tributaries, public beaches on Little Lake and access to nature in the many municipal parks and open spaces.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Wetlands provide important ecological benefits and provide habitat for a variety of species, including fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and other wildlife. Wetlands act as natural sponges and help reduce flooding by storing water and releasing it slowly during dry periods. Wetland plants also act as filters and can help remove contaminants from water.

For more information about water within and beyond our region, see the Resources List on page 5.

### OUR APPROACH

The Clean Water and Sanitation Action Team met three times between October 2020 and January 2021. Together, we discussed how local efforts around and for nibi (water) can be centred around Indigenous knowledge and leadership and ensure that no one is left behind. We also began localizing or adapting the SDG Framework to better reflect needs and priorities within our communities. We ended each meeting by singing the Nibi Song, to remind ourselves of the importance of water.

### Who gets left behind?

- Water itself, as a living being;
- Non-human beings that depend on water;
- The next seven generations;
- Youth, who have few opportunities to meaningfully shape policy and action;
- People without secure housing and reliable access to washrooms or clean drinking water (which was amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic);
- Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations;
- Anishinaabe community members who lack access to water-related ecosystems for fishing, harvesting, boating, ceremony, and other inherent and treaty-protected rights;
- People without access to water for recreation (those who lack access to air conditioning, private pools or cottages, or the ability to access public waterfront for recreation);
- Primary caregivers, often women, whose responsibilities make participating in water policy and protection more difficult.
- All local communities when it comes to having decision-making authority around water.

### Overarching themes

The following themes emerged from the Action Team’s conversations. These themes cut across individual sub-targets, and thus, are critical for advancing SDG 6 in a way that leaves no one behind.

- Establish, deepen, and repair partnerships between local Indigenous and non-Indigenous institutions regarding water management and governance.
- Increase access to cross-cultural water education.
- Support community driven water protection and/or restoration efforts.
- Strengthen and support local policies and best practices to protect water.
- Recognize the spirit and agency of water.

# LOCALIZING THE SDG FRAMEWORK

Each SDG consists of a series of global sub-targets and associated indicators that are meant to guide implementation. National governments are encouraged to localize each goal to better align with their national context.

The Clean Water and Sanitation Action Team began evaluating the framework for its relevance to Peterborough and the Kawarthas. A summary of the Team’s assessment and discussion for each sub target is presented in the following table:

Legend:

Green = High priority locally

Yellow = Medium priority locally

Red = Low priority locally

United Nations Sub-target	Canadian Framework Equivalent	Summary of Action Team Discussion
6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.	By March 31st 2021, all long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve are to be resolved.	▶ Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations do not have universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water.
6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.	N/A	People without secure housing do not always have adequate and equitable access to water for sanitation and hygiene, which was amplified by the closure of public spaces due to COVID-19.
6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.	N/A	There are concerns about the impact of flushing medicines and other hazardous items (such as microplastics), particularly for communities that are downstream from Lakefield and the City of Peterborough, such as Hiawatha First Nation.
6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.	Promote the conservation and wise use of water to achieve a 30% reduction or increased efficiency in water use in various sectors by 2025.	▶ We need to see improvements in water use efficiency, and also local protections and greater transparency related to withdrawals for commercial bottled water.

United Nations Sub-target	Canadian Framework Equivalent	Summary of Action Team Discussion
6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.	N/A	▶ Management of water levels disproportionately affects First Nations (e.g. impact on minoomin (wild rice) recovery)
6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.	N/A	▶ In our region, wetlands are especially critical. Urbanization puts pressure on the extent and health of local wetlands.
6.a By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.	N/A	
6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management	N/A	▶ The participation of local communities is important for maintaining watershed health. Everyone has a role to play in improving water and sanitation management. At the same time, the ability of local communities to shape water and sanitation policy is limited.



The Clean Water and Sanitation Action Team undertook a collaborative brainstorming activity, which generated a list of more than two dozen initiatives, organizations, community projects, and policies that exist to support nibi/water in our communities. The following initiatives exemplify the overarching themes identified above, and connect with multiple SDG 6 sub-targets.



**Sacred Water Circle**

Inspired by Indigenous teachings and spiritual courage, the Sacred Water Circle seeks to restore a relationship between human communities and water. Sacred Water Circle seeks to create spiritually-based dialogue around environmental issues, and to motivate communities and governments to act to set policy that will protect our water, by leading with prayer and walking together.



Photo credit: Sacred Water Circle

**Connected themes:** Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships; cross-cultural education; sacredness and spirit of water; strengthen and support local policies; community-driven protection and restoration  
**Linkages to sub-targets:** 6.1, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, and 6.b.

**Our Watershed, Our Blueprint (City of Peterborough)**

Our Watershed, Our Blueprint is a Watershed Planning Study that will provide a framework for the protection and management of water resources. This study will assess the cumulative impacts of activities across the watershed and ultimately help the City make decisions relating to planning for growth and land use within the watershed. By using the watershed as a unit of analysis, this project is addressing watershed health and policy in a unique and holistic way.

**Connected themes:** Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships; strengthen and support local policies  
**Linkages to sub-targets:** 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.b



Photo credit: Otonabee Conservation (L to R: A tributary in City of Peterborough, Thompson Creek, and the Otonabee River)



**Peterborough Children’s Water Festival**

The Peterborough Children’s Water Festival (PCWF) is a community event that provides students with the opportunity to discover the importance and diversity of water. The PCWF works in partnership with educators, water quality and quantity specialists, community volunteers, conservation groups, industry and government to create a festival full of activities that are educational and fun for children in grades 2 to 5.



Photo credit: Peterborough Children’s Water Festival

**Connected themes:** Cross-cultural water education; Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships; community-driven water protection and restoration  
**Linkages to sub-targets:** 6.3, 6.4, 6.6, 6.b



**Water Walkers**

Nibi Emosaawdamajig are a group of community members from Peterborough and the Kawarthas. The historic Kawartha Lakes waterways are the traditional home and territory of the Mississauga Ojibwe Nation.

“We Anishinaabeg believe all Creation is interconnected. The Elders teach us that our actions today will affect the next seven generations to come. So we have come together to braid ceremony, spirit, and community to awaken stakeholders to the urgency of maintaining clean water for us now in the present time and for our children in the future.”



Photo credit: Water Walkers

The Kawartha Water Walks are the vision of Elder Shirley Williams and Liz Osawamick. Mother’s Day weekend in May is the symbolic date for the Water Walks. As we pay homage to our mothers and grandmothers, we also remember and honor our Earth Mother and her life-giving water that nourishes and sustains all Creation.

**Connected themes:** Sacredness and spirit of water; Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships; cross-cultural water education; community-driven water protection and restoration  
**Linkages to sub-targets:** 6.1, 6.3, 6.6, 6.b





## WHAT'S NEXT?

There is excellent work happening in our communities related to water and watershed health. However, much remains to be done if we're to reach SDG 6 by 2030. It is critical that no one is left behind, which means matters of equity, including a central role for Indigenous knowledge and leadership, should be at the core of community-wide partnerships and initiatives to advance Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6).

At the Action Team meetings and the 2021 Community Forum, many suggestions and ideas were raised about how to continue this work. While it is not the purpose of this report to outline a robust action plan, next steps could include:

- Develop or build upon existing collaboratives, partnerships, and networks (including this Action Team), to ensure there is space for diverse stakeholders to advocate for clean water;
- Synthesize existing data about water and watershed health, in order to identify baselines and, where necessary, specific quantitative and qualitative targets for goals 6.1 through 6.b.;
- Continue identifying areas of overlap between multiple SDGs, and especially No Poverty (SDG 1), Quality Education (SDG 4), and Climate Action (SDG 13), in recognition of their interconnectedness.

For more information about this project, including the Indigenous Leadership Action Team's perspectives on water, and how to continue working toward Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), please visit the [Kawartha World Issues Centre](#) and [GreenUP](#) websites.



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Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada

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