

Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources

Mi'kmaq and Water A Sacred Trust

Laurie Suitor

Intergovernmental Relations & Partnership Advisor
Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources





.....the water, the air, the land, everything is so interconnected that whatever we do to the water will affect the land, will affect the air. And in our traditional governance system our chiefs had the immense responsibility for taking care of everything, including the water, the land and the air....Chief Judith Sayers



Current Water Management

- Shared responsibility between chiefs/councils, INAC, Health Canada
- Provincial municipal regulations do not apply
- No current regulations, only protocols
- Lack of funding and community based planning



Issues in Water Management

- Lack of shared planning with municipal units
- Provincial Environmental Assessment process does not yet include Mi'kmaq water rights
- Those rights extend beyond water and wastewater
- Require planning which is inclusive of cultural and historical relationships to water
- KMK – Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative
- No ceding of land or water in Nova Scotia
- Off reserve development, including mining, hydro electric development, subdivision and industrial development



Unama'ki Case Studies

- Chapel Island & Chapel island mission
- Eskasoni
- Membertou
- Wagmatcook
- Waycomah
- Malagawatch



Historical Crisis

- Grassy Narrows
- Aamjiwaang
- Kashechewan



Common Challenges

- Declining land based and rising populations
- Open source water supplies
- Inadequate funding
- Operator capacity
- Short lifespan of systems due to rapid population growth
- Climate change
- Lack of joint planning
- Lack of enforcement capacity on issues that affect water such as illegal dumping
- No treatment systems in some communities



Current Process

- Expert Panel Report
- Response by Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal People and CIER
- Engagement Sessions
- Impact Analysis
- Regulatory Regime



Requirements

- Joint mandatory planning with municipal units
- Increase capacity both technical/operator to community identified standard
- Community based planning and by-laws
- Enshrinement of First Nation water rights
- Modification of Provincial policies to accurately reflect rights and consultation process
- Adequate funding
- Resolution of liability



