

Water in Nunavut



Nunavut's Water Resources

Nunavut represents one-fifth of Canada's land mass and one-fifth of Nunavut is covered by freshwater. It is important to make sure that this water is safe for plants, for animals and for us. Measuring water quality is how we know whether water is safe or not.

What determines water quality?

Water, even from the cleanest river, lake or glacier contains many natural components such as salts, metals and minerals. For example, in Nunavut you may see rust stains on rocks – that's iron. These substances come from:

- rocks and soil
- rain, snow and runoff from the surrounding land
- people working and living nearby

(for example: camping, communities, and exploration sites)



How do we measure water quality?

There are lots of different people who collect water samples such as scientists, community workers and Water Resource Officers. The water is collected in special bottles and sent to a lab where it is looked at with special instruments and procedures. This determines the quality of the water, including the level of salts, metals and minerals. Other measurements such as temperature and turbidity (how clear the water is) are measured when the water samples are collected.

The results from the samples are then compared to water quality guidelines that are designed to protect life in the water. These guidelines are set by scientists who know how much of a substance can be found in the water without harming animals or humans. Changing water quality is often seen much sooner in aquatic life than in humans, so these guidelines help to detect any problems early. Water of poor quality can affect or destroy aquatic life and eventually threaten human health and possibly country food supply and/or its quality. These national guidelines are called the Canadian Water Quality Guidelines and serve as the targets for environmental protection.

Fun Facts

- 70 per cent of your body is made of water
- all life on earth depends on water
- more than half of the world's animals and plants live in water
- the northern tip of Ellesmere Island receives the least amount of snow and rain per year in Canada (6.4 cm)
- the three biggest lakes in Nunavut are Nettilling, Dubawnt and Amadjuak
- people use water for many reasons: drinking, fisheries, transportation, waste disposal and industrial purposes like mining and processing plants

It is up to all of us to protect both the quality and quantity of water. There are many easy steps that each of us can do. For example:

- Get rid of garbage and waste properly at home and on the land
- Turn the tap off while brushing your teeth
- Wash only full loads of laundry
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap for each glass of water
- Clean up any spilled material like oil and gas

INAC helps manage and support Nunavut's natural resources – this includes water. For more information contact:

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