

Water Well Told:

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Storytelling in source water protection

Affiliations

Drinking water is about our humanity as much as it is technology. These findings are critical in the decolonization of drinking water solutions for rural and Indigenous communities.

A Global Water Futures project
Theme: Prairie Water – Human Dimensions

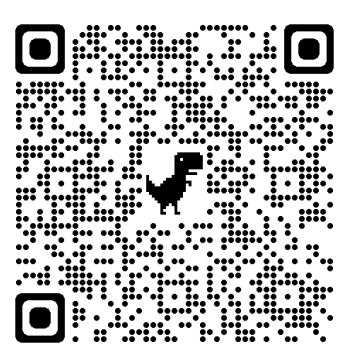


Figure 2.1 The conceptual structure of the Three Faucet Framework, p. 23.

INTRODUCTION	OBJECTIVE
Drinking water threats have been identified by local water champions in the North Saskatchewan River Basin (NSRB) through Source Water Protection (SWP) plans, mostly by Indigenous communities, in collaboration with the NSRB Council and multiple levels of government departments.	To explore the function(s) of storytelling within SWP in the NSRB, as it is a universally accessible communication tool. The interactions facilitating these SWP plans offer valuable insight into how diverse actors can collaborate for better water solutions.
METHODOLOGY	RESULTS
16 interviews were conducted with people involved directly or indirectly with these SWP plans. An integrative 3-pronged framework was developed to analyze themes, recollections, and value of storytelling in SWP of the NSRB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Three Faucet Framework (above) - 11 Functions of Storytelling: Place-Based Knowledge; Informal Settings - Encouraging Clumsy Solutions, multiple perspectives. - Storytelling for Enhancing Indigenous Involvement in Water Solutions

CONCLUSION

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The stories people tell about their lives and others reveal important things about the way we affect water quality. Networks of professionals and locals find value in discussions about facing their own water challenges to suggest solutions. As well, storytelling is a practice integral to Indigenous epistemologies and should be given more attention in the pursuit of reconciliation and drinking water solutions in Canada. Storytelling needs a space, a recognition in professional water decision making but especially during the causal moments, the talks 'in between' where stories knit together the views of people who see the world differently.

Special Thanks

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"... saying that since oil and gas drilling came into their area, the water has changed, people are sick. So that was really a strong message coming from an Elder." (Interview 9)

"When you talk about water because of people's perspectives and how they connect themselves to a certain risk or to a certain source, those connections and those stories are an important way of opening up into what other risks might be." (Interview 4)

"I used to laugh and they'd talk Cree and -it sounded more funny when they talked Cree- but I could just picture them trying to run out [of the water]. But yeah [dad] kept the water [clear]. There are beaver dams all along this creek and if it's not kept open we're going to have problems." (Interview 6)



Figure 4.2 Conceptual display of storytelling as a link between enhancing Indigenous involvement and water solutions, p. 94.