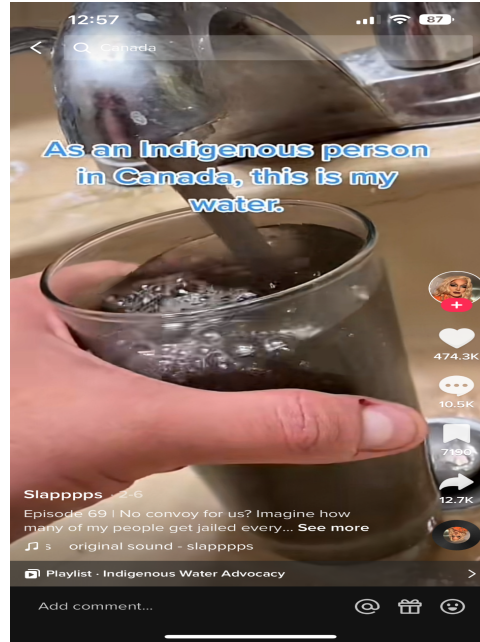


Madeleine Potter
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Anthropology 2140

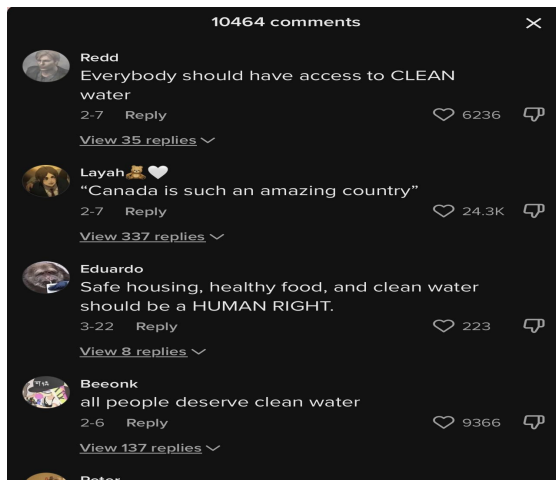
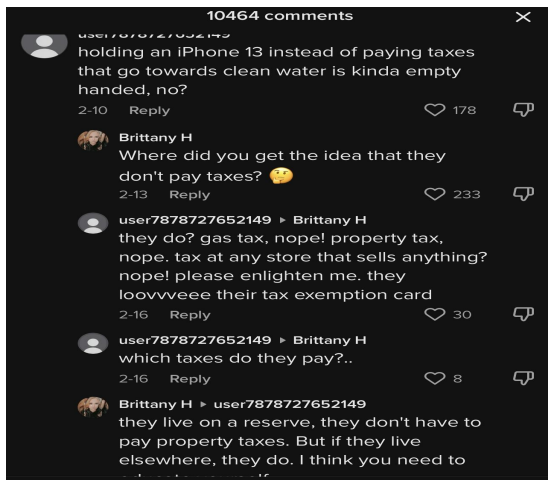
Clean drinking water on Indigenous Canadian reserves has been a major ongoing issue for many decades, even centuries. The lack of clean drinking water stems from colonization and major acts of racism. White people called themselves more important and more entitled to access to clean drinking water. The government makes many excuses: including lack of funds, geography, and past government policies. Justin Trudeau from the Liberal party was elected Prime Minister in 2015 and promised to fix all boil water advisories on Indigenous reserves by March of 2021. This promise has not yet been fulfilled. In most articles, I have found the attitude toward Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is very negative. An article came out in 2020 stating, “Why is there never enough money for boil water advisories on reserves to be lifted, but \$82 billion can appear almost instantaneously to support Canadians in crisis” (Pasternak and Houle, 2020). At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 everyone quarantined in their own homes for at least one month. Communities were worried about leaving their homes and only left for essentials. The lack of clean water and poor housing on Indigenous reserves all around the nation created a breeding ground for viruses, especially the Covid-19 virus. The Yellowhead Institute stated, “reports today signal 15 Indigenous communities have cases of the novel coronavirus and that number is likely to grow” (Pasternak and Houle, 2020). The water crisis in Indigenous communities does not get enough media attention at all. I first learned about the clean drinking water crisis on Indigenous reserves through a social media platform called TikTok.



<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZMFmrWwAR/M>.

This 12-second

clip shows an Indigenous person who lives on a reserve showing the water that comes out of their taps. The TikTok was posted on the 6th of February 2022 and has received over 4.5 million views. Despite the 4.5 million views the video only received 475 thousand likes. This is not a very even ratio between likes and views. This tells me that people are not happy seeing this and do not want this information to be viral even though the post has concrete evidence in their video of the horrible water quality on Indigenous reserves. This TikTok received all different kinds of comments, some supporting the user and others just sending unnecessary hate.



Above, I have two different screenshots of some comments from this TikTok. This video has sparked a great conversation but unfortunately, uneducated people are leaving very ignorant comments. @user6159245589069 commented, “So you mean to tell me, our tax dollars should be used to fix your water issue on the reserve, where you guys DONT pay taxes?”. Another user responded: “it was their land before Canada came in so why should they be paying taxes, either way, everyone should have clean water.” It is nice to see people responding and trying to help educate others however, it just goes to show how much more work we have to do and how more and more people need to be educated. After watching this TikTok for the first time I realized how bad this problem really is. I didn’t understand how this could even be possible in a rich country like Canada. Growing up I was so privileged with the thought of not ever having to wonder if the water coming from our taps is contaminated or not. In Kamloops especially, we are so blessed to have the water system that we do and be privileged enough to drink water straight from the tap. I have never had to worry about the water coming from the tap until I went to Princeton, BC to visit my boyfriends family. In November of 2021, the town of Princeton flooded and took out the water system they had. It is coming up to the one-year anniversary of this flood and they still are not able to drink the water from the tap. However, it is clean, clear-looking water that comes out and they are able to use it to shower. When visiting Princeton it always makes me feel grateful for having the privilege of clean drinking water available at every tap in my house. This also makes me think of all the Indigenous reserves that have been struggling with this problem for years and years and it makes me frustrated for them. It disappoints me that the Canadian government has broken promises to fix the water crisis on Indigenous reserves time and time again. Most people who are non-Indigenous have no idea about this crisis, not because they are uneducated but because it is not in the daily news we scroll through or read every day.

I was born in England and grew up there until I was around 8 years old, then we moved to Kamloops. I attended school starting at the age of 4 and we mostly learned about England's history, mainly the Royal family. I find English schools to be more on the religious side, I don't recall ever studying the bible but we did learn about Jesus Christ and the story of Adam and Eve etc. During Christmas time, I remember our school having a Christmas play where we reenacted the nativity scene and learned about the birth of Jesus Christ and how Christmas came to be. As a child, I honestly never thought anything about it because that was just how we were taught in primary school we all didn't know anything different. When we learned about how Canada became Canada, I was taught that Christopher Columbus founded North America and that he was the first ever person to be there. After moving to Canada in 2011, I was in grade three and started to learn more about Native Americans. I don't believe that students were taught real, dark Canadian history until the curriculum changed and only if we had a teacher who knew the subject. I think it also depended on your teacher and their knowledge. In high school, my grade 10 social studies teacher was Indigenous and she told us about her grandmother who had been sent to residential schools. I learned more about Indigenous culture and the truth about residential schools in that class than in all my other social studies classes in high school combined. She didn't use the textbook that all the other teachers used and she showed us movies and just told us about her own experiences. She got quite emotional with us when talking about her intergenerational trauma and this showed me how real this problem is and how it is still affecting every Indigenous person around us: our teachers, friends, coworkers, and family. I am incredibly grateful for her to share her raw emotions and talk about something so important because all she wanted was to teach us so that future generations can help lead Canada in the right direction. I will always remember her and that class. Indigenous issues are not being taught

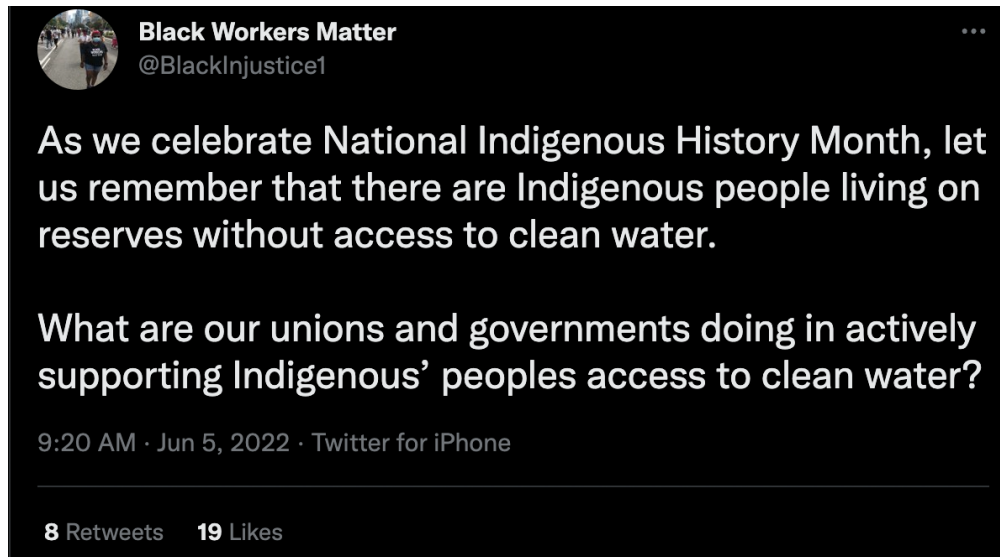
enough in schools, teachers can be so biased while teaching their students and just brush over very important topics that children need to be learning in school. However, not a lot of teachers were taught about Indigenous problems so how are they supposed to teach students when they never received that knowledge from when they were in high school or university? Change can start with what children are taught in schools and how their parents, teachers, and guardians talk to them about these issues.

Indigenous problems just are simply not being discussed in any kind of media and it is so frustrating that these issues aren't getting the attention they deserve just because of the hidden racism that is involved in primary news sources.



The screenshot above shows a response that someone retweeted to Justin Trudeau's tweet. These tweets are very common when searching, 'clean drinking water on Indigenous reserves.' This tweet is two years old but Canadians are still holding this kind of anger toward Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as he has consistently let the Indigenous community down. It just seems he is not making Indigenous problems all across Canada the main priority, as it should be. People are not feeling heard by their government and it is incredibly frustrating because it seems to Canadians

that the most important people in Canada are not caring how they feel and just brush over very major topics instead of addressing them.



The question that Twitter user, @BlackInjustice1 asked was: “What are our unions and governments doing in actively supporting Indigenous’ peoples access to clean water?”, this question is important to think about and to pay attention to the Canadian government’s actions and ask what they are actively doing to fix these issues. This tweet only received 8 retweets and 19 likes so unfortunately did not reach a lot of people. The use of hashtags is important in the world of media to reach more users. This topic of conversation is not very common among social media platforms unless we go in and search for this topic. This type of news is never on the front page of any newspaper or a breaking news article. Conversations about clean drinking water on Canadian Indigenous reserves will only be a major topic of conversation when the Prime Minister or Canadian government speak out about how they are going to fix this problem and then they receive significant backlash.



In 2016, Tragically Hip had the final show of their tour. During this show, between sets, lead singer, Gord Downie called out Justin Trudeau while he was in the audience about all of the Indigenous problems across Canada that he has promised to fix. Gord Downie said from the stage, “Well, you know, Prime Minister Trudeau’s got me, his work with First Nations. He’s going to take us where we need to go, it’s going to take 100 years to figure out what the hell went on up there, but it isn’t cool and everybody knows that. It’s really, really bad, but we’re going to figure it out, you’re going”. He finished his speech by saying, “Thank you to the Prime Minister for coming to our show, it really means a lot to all of us”. When celebrities use their large platforms and speak out about issues that don’t already receive media attention it can cause a conversation and inspire people to help make a change. When going to a Tragically Hip concert or any concert we usually don’t expect the band to address issues or call out our Prime Minister but it is so important because it sparks that conversation.

In Hardings (2005) article, he stated, “not only did the media have difficulty dealing with the complexity of Aboriginal issues but there is also evidence to suggest that some media organizations were too close to government sources to be objective about the events at Oka” (Harding, p.313). I agree with this quote and I think that the media has trouble writing about the water crisis on Indigenous reserves because it is just the same story over again and has no change

to the story over and over again. There's no change in the story because the government has made no change or effort to fix this problem. The way that the media represents this story is making it feel like Indigenous people are putting this directly on white people however all they want is clean drinking water on reserves: "Predominantly, Aboriginal people are portrayed as being in conflict with non-Aboriginal society and institutions." (Harding, p.323). Yes, it is the Canadian government's problem and they should have to fix it. The articles I have found on the clean drinking water on Indigenous reserves have mostly been negative towards the Canadian government and Justin Trudeau, however, I am adding this quote from Harding's article, "Stereotyping of Aboriginal people in the news, far from being a thing of the past, is alive and well in the new millennium. Old stereotyping are routinely employed in news stories about Aboriginal issues and new patterns of stereotyping are emerging" (Harding, p.331).

In Matika Wilbur's Ted Talk, she talks about how she visits every Indigenous nation in the United States. She had driven 50,000 miles when she did this Ted Talk. She is a photographer and interviews each Indigenous person she has photographed and listens to their story while they tell her how they got to where they are today. During the TedTalk, Matika points out that society paints Indigenous people as weaker and less than others and that they are unable to be successful people. She also said that Indigenous people are "considered lesser citizens". This relates to the clean water crisis on reserves because it seems that it is not a very important priority to the government. This makes Indigenous people living on reserves feel that they are not important enough to have the basic human right to access clean drinking water. One of the Indigenous people that Matika spoke to made a point of saying, "every native alive today is a result of our ancestors surviving." This statement really stood out to me because Indigenous people are so strong and have survived years and years of colonization that is still ongoing. Matika made a

great point of saying that Indigenous people need to work together to keep the tribe alive and practice their sustainable ways of living to not become their colonizers. In our week 2 lecture, we talked about us being settlers in Canada. Colonialism is an ongoing issue and won't end until we stop blaming the past and take action now. Unfortunately, we cannot change the past, however, we can change the future but it is going to take work and dedication from not only the government but also all people living in any province across Canada. "Colonialism is the cultural domination of one group by another". We have to think of colonialism as ongoing and no matter the amount of 'apologies' put into the media there are they are not genuine apologies and they are only to be put into the media. These apology speeches that big political figures give are just showing "the lazy separations between, past, present, and future". Colonialism is an ongoing activity and the effects of colonialism are still affecting Indigenous people today.

The lack of clean water on Indigenous reserves in Canada is disappointing and unsettling. There are changes to be made and as a nation, we can work together to build a better future for all people in Canada. The messages being transmitted between the lines of the story are that the Canadian government is not showing any support for Indigenous reserves by giving them access to clean drinking water. This analysis tells us that the government treats Indigenous people as if they are not as important as other, (white) Canadians. The potential impact of the media completely disregarding important Indigenous news will possibly lead to more and more Indigenous suicides. The lack of clean water on reserves will cause diseases, sickness, and other viruses' around faster. More Indigenous people will get sick faster and this will cause an increase in deaths each year. An analysis of this makes it look like the Canadian government is attempting a very lowkey but almost very obvious genocide of the Indigenous race. Indigenous people are constantly being silenced from this conversation. As well as the advocates who are fighting for

change. This feels like a never-ending battle with the government but we will overcome this and we will win. Clean drinking water is a basic human need and we need to fight for our Indigenous people in Canada and make a change in the system. We should always be further educating ourselves and our future generations as well. There are changes to be made and as a country, we can work together to build a better future for all people in Canada.

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