

WATER CONFIDENTIAL:

Witnessing Justice Denied—The Fight for Safe Drinking Water in Indigenous and Rural Communities in Canada

BY SUSAN BLACKLIN

The shocking truth about Canada's ongoing water crisis and the government's failure to provide safe drinking water to First Nations communities.

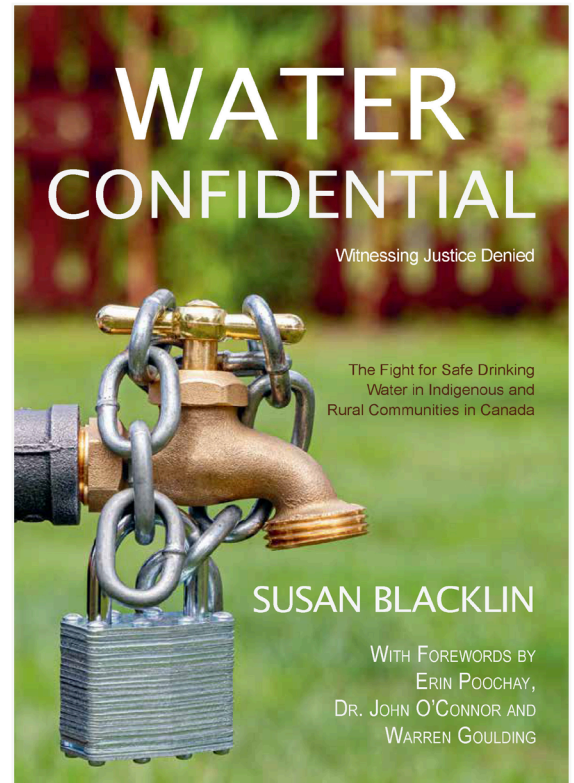
In “Water Confidential,” Susan Blacklin, formerly Sue Peterson, recounts the impactful legacy of her late ex-husband, Dr. Hans Peterson. Driven by a pivotal visit to Yellow Quill First Nation in 1996, where he witnessed the dire need for safe drinking water, Peterson developed groundbreaking biological technology for water treatment. Together with Blacklin, they founded the Safe Drinking Water Foundation (SDWF), pioneering education programs nationwide and advocating for equitable access to clean water.

Despite their efforts, three decades later, many First Nations communities in Canada still grapple with health crises due to contaminated water. Blacklin, now retired, laments governmental apathy and corruption, stressing the urgent need for federal water regulations and scientific integrity in addressing water quality issues.

Through her memoir, Blacklin shares the challenges of fundraising, activism, and navigating bureaucratic hurdles. She underscores the importance of prioritizing safe water for Indigenous communities as a cornerstone of reconciliation efforts in Canada, highlighting the intricate dynamics between cultures and governments.

“It is time to start seriously teaching biology at engineering schools.”

—Hans Peterson



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Susan Blacklin was born near London, UK, and later moved to Canada. While living in Saskatchewan, she supported her now late ex-husband, Dr. Hans Peterson, in founding the Safe Drinking Water Foundation; together, they devoted fifteen years of their lives to bringing safe drinking water to First Nations and rural communities. Susan retired to Vancouver Island, where she now pursues her writing, painting, and gardening. “Water Confidential” is her first book.



MORE PRAISE FOR WATER CONFIDENTIAL

“Susan Blacklin’s memoir, “Water Confidential,” should be required reading for all Canadians. With an inside look at how the system snuffs out innovation, this fine, thought-provoking book speaks the generally unknown truths about long-standing water injustices. Canadians should be very concerned—particularly those of us committed to real reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Her concerns and critical analysis also apply to many other Canadian communities—as she shows, many of the water quality problems that trouble Indigenous communities haunt many other rural water supplies without public awareness or appropriate treatment. In “Water Confidential,” Susan documents how the SDWF [Safe Drinking Water Foundation] was built with grit and great effort, with personal and family sacrifice. With great honesty, she shows how various levels of government and other vested interests kept it from achieving widespread acceptance. This is a grand contribution to ecological and Indigenous justice.”

—Harvey Scott, PhD, Professor Emeritus U of Alberta, Elders Council, Keepers of the Water

“An incredible story of courage, commitment, passion and adventure. Susan Blacklin and her late partner Hans Peterson shone a light on the appalling drinking water and sanitation crisis in First Nations communities and set out to right this wrong. They did not do this from some lofty high rise office tower in Ottawa or Edmonton but on the ground in the communities where people were suffering. I highly recommend this exciting and moving book.”

—Maude Barlow, social justice author and activist

“Sue has written a hard-hitting, from-the-heart description of the lengths taken, obstacles overcome, and sacrifices made, along what was an extraordinary, meandering path to establish access to the source of life in the setting of gross neglect and overt discrimination. That Hans and Sue had to undertake what they did is an indictment of Canada’s attitude to Indigenous communities, even when it comes to basic human rights. Unfortunately, the story and struggle are far from over. . . I (and we all should) welcome the publication of this important and very timely book, providing such a unique perspective on the true Herculean effort it has taken so far to get to where we are in safe water provision in Canada.”

—Dr. John O’Connor, family physician, and passionate health advocate, Northern Alberta

“Dr. Hans Peterson was an ally to the nation. Our message to other First Nations Leaders is to search for those allies, not just consultants, but experts that care because they will go the distance for your people. Our message to Canadians is to be those allies because if First Nations communities thrive, so does Canada.”

— Chief John Machiskinic, Yellow Quill First Nation

