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# Troubled waters



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Bloodworms, such as the one above, have infiltrated Gjoa Haven's sickening water supply. A pencil provides a sense of scale.

Monte Robit/Handout photo

## Gjoa Haven system desperately needs overhaul

by Kerry McCluskey  
Northern News Services  
Gjoa Haven

The recent increase in Gjoa Haven's population has made a bad water situation worse, according to Michael Angaittaurug, Sr., the Kik-met hamlet's mayor.

He said that because of the territorial government's repeated delay in overhauling the hamlet's water system, the daily water supply used by community residents is in appallingly bad shape.

As well as being forced to put up with makeshift solutions to the ailing system, Angaittaurug said residents had to deal with drinking water that was contaminated by a species of larvae called bloodworms.

Apparently causing no physical harm to humans, the strain of bloodworms found in the water supply can survive the chlorine used to purify the water in the hamlet's holding tank, and are actually large enough to be seen in the drinking

water. "We're trying our best not to make it a big issue in the community because of the screaming and shouting that would happen," said Angaittaurug.

"We tell people we're trying to get the government's attention, but we've been trying to get their attention since the 1980s. They still haven't responded to us," he said.

A former MLA and the mayor of Gjoa Haven for the last three years, Angaittaurug explained that engineers hired by the former GNWT recommended in the 1980s that the hamlet receive an entirely new water supply system.

Because of one expenditure or another, however, Gjoa Haven was constantly knocked off the top of the GNWT's priority list.

Eventually, the number of people using the hamlet's current water lake exceeded its capacity and the reservoir's water supply began to eb.

The government eventually solved the problem by building a dam around the existing reservoir and extending a pipeline to an outlying lake four miles away. "Water was pumped into the brimmed reservoir and from there it was pumped into a holding tank and then into the water trucks.

But, the steadily growing population continued to tax the system and the hamlet's holding tank was eventually unable to provide the water trucks with the amount of water they needed in the amount of time they needed it.

A larger pump was installed in the original water lake to meet the heightened demand and somewhere along the line over the past winter, the bloodworms entered the system.

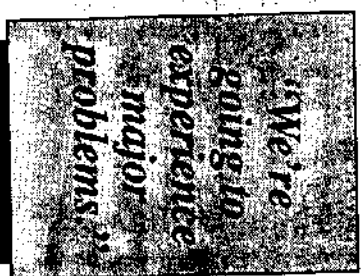
lake had already been identified, the priority, he said, was to convince the GN to give Gjoa Haven the \$500,000 to \$1 million in capital funding to get the new reservoir operational.

Angaittaurug said his patience was wearing thin, but that it was time for the government to do more than hire consultants and engineers to confirm what has been known for two decades.

He also noted that the situation was particularly urgent because Gjoa Haven had been identified as one of the communities that would receive decentralized jobs and was therefore on the verge of another population increase.

"As a person in office, I have to try to be calm, but they should put money into trying to solve the problem," he said. "But we're going to experience major problems if we don't find the money in this year's budget."

Nothing that a new water supply.



"We're going to experience major problems."