

## **Water in deserts of sand and snow: The parallels of Iqaluit and Dune**

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Iqaluit, my former hometown, has been without clean drinking water for nearly two months. Fuel contaminated the water supply, so residents couldn't even boil it. Bottled water was brought in, but the city has no way of recycling that much plastic waste.

The hospital I was born had to shut down. Patients are being flown to other communities across the country in order to receive medical care. The cost of a roundtrip from Iqaluit to Toronto is currently over \$2000.

The underground water and sewage systems of Nunavut's capital crack constantly. Iqaluit's leadership believed the permafrost would keep their underground piping in place, but global warming thwarted that plan.

My family's home in Apex, a suburb of Iqaluit, had tanks outside that water was delivered to and waste was collected from. We couldn't have water and sewage systems like they had "down south" because of the permafrost. Homes in Iqaluit don't have basements and sit on stilts.

Even as a child I knew I lived in a desert, just one covered in snow rather than sand. Now there is less precipitation and more evaporation due to higher temperatures and there isn't endless ground water to tap into to replenish resources. A water crisis has been simmering for years.

In 2018 Iqaluit opened their very first Brewery. Iqaluit had a daily delivery cap of 2,000 litres of water for all local businesses. The brewery needed more than the cap for the entire city in order to operate.

Despite protests from residents and warnings from scientists that Iqaluit is on the brink of a massive water shortage the municipal government gave the brewery the go ahead.

The forces of colonialism and capitalism are collapsing under their own weight. Decades of imposing systems and structures that were never in harmony with the Arctic's delicate balance of nature now risk the future of Iqaluit.

Denis Villeneuve's screen adaptation of Dune brings author Frank Herbert's critical commentary on colonialism and capitalism into far sharper focus than previous screen adaptations. On the desert planet of Dune, Royal Houses invade Indigenous Lands plundering their natural resource, Spice, in order to travel across outer space.

The Indigenous peoples of Dune knew how to live in harmony with their harsh desert environment and how to preserve the valued commodity of water. There is a scene in Villeneuve's film where the son of the Royal Family discovers that non-native palm trees were planted in front of their Palace which require litres of water daily in order to survive. He asks if they should be removed as they are a waste of water and is informed that they are a powerful symbol that are to be admired.

This year's United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow inspired thousands of people from across the globe to take to the streets in protest against the lack of action from political leaders when it comes to protecting our planet and its resources.

I'm reminded of Greta Thunberg's words to the UN in 2019 while I watch in horror as events unfold in Iqaluit.

"You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words and yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning

of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!"

The source of Iqaluit's water contamination seems to be an underground fuel tank that was installed in the 1960's. Residents were asked to stock up on water supplies in advance of a major storm this week that saw wind gusts of up to 100 km/h. The emergency water stations set up by the Canadian Military collapsed and froze during the storm.

Iqaluit's water crisis is one canary in a myriad of coalmines across our planet. No more words. No more studies. We need action. Revolutionary action. Now. The next generation doesn't see a future for themselves or for their children. We must give them hope, not through rhetoric and platitudes but through fundamental and life altering systemic change.

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