

In 1974, the Laclu Campers Association undertook an ambitious project, attempting to visit each camp or residence on the lake to determine what waste disposal systems were in place. Facilities ranged from the basic “biffy out the back and a dishpan emptied outside the door”, through “Flushomatics” and grey water pits to full septic systems. This survey was done following tests for water quality around the lake that showed varying amounts of coliform contamination in the water.

Total coliforms are a group of bacteria found in the intestines of humans, mammals and birds or soil and vegetation. *E. coli* is the only member of the total coliform group of bacteria that is found solely in the intestines of mammals, including humans. While coliform bacteria are not likely to cause illness on their own, they are like the canaries used in mines to warn of bad air. They indicate recent fecal contamination (poop) in the water and warn that the water may be vulnerable to contamination by more harmful bacteria such as salmonella, shigella or campylobacter or other disease causing pathogens or even parasites such as giardia or cryptosporidium.

The testing done in the 1970’s by the LCA, and independent testing continued through the 1990’s, indicates the on-going presence of *E. coli* in our lake, suggesting that our waste disposal systems need attention.

The North West Health Unit, in Kenora, will test household water for a minimal fee. Samples need to be delivered on Tuesdays before 2:30 pm to be forwarded to a lab in Thunder Bay for testing.

In 1972, the highest coliform count was well below that considered unsafe for swimming, waterskiing, etc. We would hope the same is true now. Further testing is needed to determine that.

Your present Laclu environmental committee is going to do some water testing this summer and would welcome the results of any other tests that are run on the water.

A number of things can be done to ensure that we are not fouling our own piece of paradise.

- Have septic tanks and holding tanks pumped out regularly
- Have septic systems inspected at regular intervals to ensure they are functioning properly
- Replace failing systems or those too close to the lake
- For those without septic systems or holding tanks, ensure that all grey water (dish water, washing and shower water, laundry water) goes to a pit rather than onto the surface of the ground, where heavy rains or Spring run-off can carry contaminants to the lake
- Ensure that residue from composting toilets is disposed of safely and that outdoor biffies are an adequate distance from the lake

Natural vegetation along lakeshores is important, since it slows runoff and reduces the risk of contaminants reaching the lake.

Contact your Laclu Environmental Committee at lacluenvironment@gmail.com.