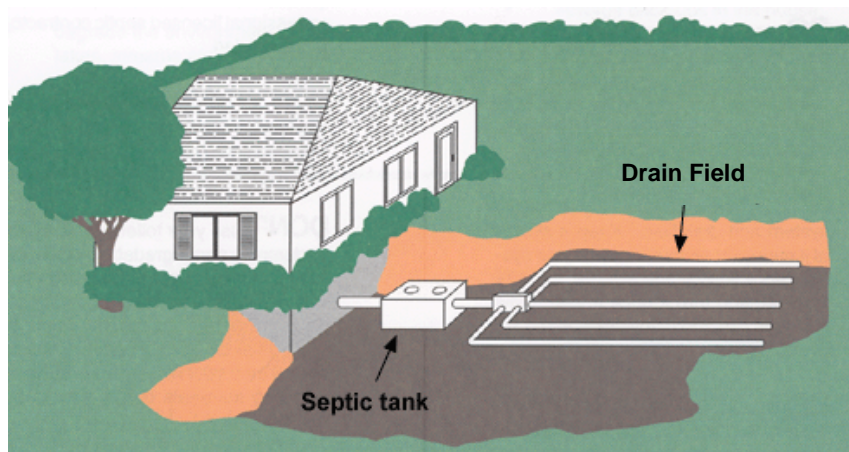


# How A Septic System Works

## HOUSING DEPARTMENT

A septic tank is a concrete structure and is the first stop for all waste. The solid waste will settle on the bottom of the tank while liquid waste will flow out to the drain field; a network of plastic pipes perforated with small holes. The liquid waste will seep into the soil allowing bacteria and other microorganisms in the soil to treat pathogens and other contaminants in the liquid waste. The end product, after filtered through the soil, should pose no threat to human health. All of this happens underground, as shown in the picture below.



Maintenance is generally not required for a drain field but it is required to pump the septic tank when it becomes full. Our engineer with Indian Health Services suggested a system be pumped every 3-5 years, although several variables affect this estimate such as the number of people within the house and water usage. The following table takes into account the variables mentioned above and provides a way to gauge how often you tank should be pumped based on the number of people in the household.

Estimated Septic Tank Inspection and Pump Frequency in Years						
		Number of People Using the System				
		1	2	4	6	8
Tank Size (Gallons)	900	11	5	2	1	<1
	1,000	12	6	3	2	1
	1,250	16	8	3	2	1
	1,500	19	9	4	3	2

Source: Adapted from "Estimated Septic Tank Pumping Frequency," by Karen Mancl, 1984. *Journal of Environmental Engineering*. Volume 110.

### Indian Health Services (IHS) Sanitation Program

The IHS Sanitation Program provides members with sanitation facilities including wells, septic systems and costs associated with connecting to community water supplies. Members who are building a new home are eligible to utilize services. **Services are not available for day to day operation or maintenance of facilities.** Eligibility is limited to the five county service area unless you live in another Tribe's service area and they are willing to complete the work. If you would like an application or live outside the five county service area and would like to be considered by another Tribe, please contact Housing Director, Melissa Brown at 616.681.9510.