



Environmental Health Research Group

Newsletter

February 2020

Reminder of our Research!

This is a collaborative program between several communities in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and northern Ontario, and Professors Brian Laird and Kelly Skinner, with the aim of investigating the link between environment-food-contaminant-health in participating communities. This work provides knowledge on contaminant exposure in the communities, and promotes the use of country foods in order to improve nutrition. In parallel, we are now working on projects to answer concerns we have heard from community members and leaders during consultation meetings regarding initiatives to improve food security, water quality, and how climate change impacts these issues.



What did we do in the last few months?

- In January 2020, results of the biomonitoring project were returned and presented to **Old Crow (YK)**.
- We also returned participant result letters and community reports for perfluoroalkyl substances from the biomonitoring project in **the Dehcho communities (NWT)**.



What will we do in the next few months?

- We will be in **Fort Albany (ON)**, from March 23 to April 11, for the FISHNET project on Healthy Water, Healthy Fish, Healthy People, to invite people to complete a survey and give a hair sample for mercury testing.
- We are supporting the Sahtu Renewable Resources Board in **Tulit'a (NWT)** for a project on food security.
- We will plan a workshop on food security with the **Sahtu communities (NWT)** delegates in Waterloo for the summer.



What are the Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) ?

PFAS are man-made chemicals and are mainly used for their water and oil repellent properties. PFAS can be found in food packaging, and household products such as fabric and cookware. We are exposed to PFAS by contaminated drinking water and food. PFAS have the ability to accumulate in animals and humans (Environmental Protection Agency).

What are the outcomes?

- The majority of participants in **Old Crow (YK)** had exposure levels that fell below biomonitoring guidance values for lead, cadmium and mercury.
- Despite levels slightly elevated for two PFAS for older participants, the PFAS average levels in the **Dehcho communities (NWT)** were similar to other studies in Canada.
- The results of the biomonitoring project in the **NWT** and **YK** reinforce that the health benefits of country foods generally outweigh contaminant risks.