Human Perceptions, Comprehension and Awareness of Contaminants in Sanikiluaq.

Jadie Clifford-Peña\(^1\), Chris Furgal\(^2\), Gary Stern\(^3\) & Jill Oakes\(^4\)

Project 3.6 People and Environmental Change

Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources

Purpose
To determine the levels of awareness, local perceptions and comprehension of contaminants in the Sanikiluaq Area.

Rationale
- Contaminants are becoming a community concern; particularly in the consumption of traditional foods;
- To aid in future communication strategies regarding contaminants; and
- No similar studies have been conducted in Sanikiluaq.

Objectives
- To assess the levels of awareness in the local community
- To gain an understanding of community perceptions
- To determine the impacts of contaminants on community lifestyles
- To assess how the community weighs the risks and benefits associated with traditional food
- To determine linkages between traditional and scientific knowledge on the topic of contaminants in the Arctic environment.

Methods
- Community consultation and approval
- Interviews and Questionnaires:
  - Sanikiluaq Environmental Committee
  - Hunters and Trappers Association
  - Local community members
- Summarizing and interpretation of results
- Community approval and follow-up
- Community presentation

Results
Though the results for this study are not yet available, a similar study conducted by Furgal et al. (2003) in 2 Baffin and 2 Labrador communities concluded:
- A low level of general awareness of contaminants issues exists.
- The concept of "contaminants" includes a wide spectrum of related items (many of which are outside the definition of “chemical contaminants”).

Integrations
- Project 1.3 Contaminant Cycling in the Coastal Environment – this project would provide information on the nature and magnitude of contaminants that exist in the area.
- Project 1.5 Changes in Dietary Patterns and Impacts on Chronic Disease Emergence – this project helps address the effects of changes in traditional diet on human health.
- Project 3.5 Persistent Organic Pollutants and Human Health – provides information on the effects of contaminants on human health.

References

Acknowledgements
University of Manitoba, Centre for Earth Observation Science; Arcticnet Canadian Centre for Excellence; Project 3.6 People and Environmental Change; as well as the following people for their invaluable contribution to this project: Chris Furgal, Gary Stern, and Jill Oakes.

The Inuit retain close ties to the environment and therefore consideration of their knowledge is extremely important.

Contaminants from external sources are becoming a major concern in many northern communities.

Contaminants pose a threat to wildlife animals such as caribou, which are a food source for the Inuit.

Fishing and hunting are an important part of Inuit tradition, which may also be affected by contaminants.

Fishing and hunting are an important part of Inuit tradition, which may also be affected by contaminants.

Photographs:
- Photo: Laem Chabang
- Photo: Richard Effland
- Photo: Tom Avril
- Photo: Richard Effland
- Photo: Laem Chabang