Reviewer’s report

Title: Impacts of Country Food Consumption Advisories: Compliance, Changes in Diet and Loss of Confidence in Country Foods

Version: 1 Date: 23 March 2011

Reviewer: Barbara Harper

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory comments:

1. Generally, this article is written from a perspective of reducing exposure to food contaminants, but not at improving a more holistic definition of public and environmental health and quality of life. Could the authors acknowledge that reducing exposure is good, but perhaps not at the expense of heritage, culture, and identity? This is not to say that cultural benefits ‘cancel’ some of the contaminant health impacts, but just to recognize that this is a very complex issue.

2. There are times when risk communication that is aimed at (a deliberate choice of words) indigenous peoples has the flavor of “here is a health recommendation, so get used to it and change your habits,” or “why don’t you people stop feeding fish to your kids if you know it’s contaminated?” There needs to be equal communication to regulators: “This is our heritage, and you have a responsibility to make sure it’s safe.” Please add some commentary about more nuanced recommendations so that cultural aspects of traditional foods can be maintained until contamination is reduced, access is regained, and resources are restored (assuming that the authors agree that these are good long term goals).

3. The flavor of the article is that the primary goal of communication should be to increase First Nations’ compliance with advisories rather than cleaning the sources of contamination or repairing the causes of habitat/resource degradation. The reason that communication to policy makers is not mentioned seems to be an assumption that contamination is a fact of life and that regulations to reduce contamination or adverse impacts would be useless (in the Background section). Ultimately, some recommendations about policy changes so that country food remains safe or improves in quality might be helpful.

4. The authors do not seem to really understand the reasons for “resistance to change” from traditional diets. Traditions are not just stubborn preference or personal opinions; they are heart, soul, and identity of entire communities and nations. Country foods are sources of micronutrients, but supplying omega-3 pills does not substitute for the role of salmon in the life of, say, a salmon clan member. Thus, a clean, healthy, and secure source of city food that is not traditional could have just as much or more adverse impact on people than the contamination in traditional food does. There is only a brief reference to this in
the middle of page 10, or as a social focus (middle of page 11). The adverse consequences are mentioned in the text and in the conclusion, but are not given equal text space. Perhaps the authors could investigate what salmon means to a salmon clan, or what caribou means to a caribou clan.

5. Even the term “country food” (which may be customary in Canada) downplays the multifaceted role and stature that traditional foods and the associated activities have, and the ramifications that occur if traditional foods are diminished. In the US, the term country food would evoke images of county fairs or other nostalgic Americana that are quaint and colorful but not really needed.

Minor compulsory comment:

1. Please make sure that the descriptions of the decline in First Nations land and resource use (e.g., top of page 9) do not imply that this was voluntary.

Discretionary comment:

1. There are also references from the US, such as


**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.