Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1  Date: 13 April 2011

Reviewer: Constantine Tikhonov

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well thought out report/article from an established research team, who have extensive experience in working with First Nations communities.

The article is well-organised, and is addressing an important concern by examining impacts of food consumption advisories on the lifestyles and food choices of Aboriginal peoples.

The proposed method is a soft overview of some primary and grey literature and it is complemented by information obtained through personal communication with Aboriginal community members and the community-based research expertise of the authors.

The article starts with the statement that “industrial development can affect the quality and availability of traditional or country foods”, which to my mind is accurate but incomplete, because some of the environmental hazards affecting the quality of traditional foods are natural (e.g. mercury is a natural element in the environment and by the way it bioaccumulates and biomagnifies in the marine food chain it comes to present a clear hazard to high consumers of predatory fish, this hazard has increased in time as a result of industrial activities resulting in mercury emissions, but it existed prior to industrial development as well).

The authors highlight that “country food advisories can lead to cultural loss and have been linked to a certain amount of social, psychological, economic and lifestyle disruption.” In addition, one of the other important factors that need to be considered when discussing the importance of traditional/country food is the fact that the direct and indirect influences of contaminants on country food choice raise concerns because of the known nutritional (Kuhnlein and Dickson, 2001; Kuhnlein et al., 2001; 2004) benefits of traditional diet. I believe that the social, economic, and cultural benefits of country food use can be better referenced by authors (e.g. Wenzel, 1995; Collings et al., 1998; Donaldson et al., 2003; Donaldson et al., 2005; Myers et al., 2005; Van Oostdam et al., 2005).

On page 10 and 11, there is a repeated reference to the subsistence harvesting decline between 31 and 77% in 10 to 15 coastal Alaskan First Nations communities, - further editing might improve readability.

In general, this is an important topic that aims to address a complex issue that the bioaccumulation of environmental contaminants in country food and difficulty in accessing affordable and culturally acceptable substitutes for country food
among Aboriginal people across Canada raise complex issues for the public health field, specifically in regard to risk communication.

As Eric Loring describes, there are a number of potential negative impacts of poor contaminants communication:

• adverse impact on health and behaviour (physical, mental, and social);
• increased anxiety and stress;
• decreased hunting and fishing activity;
• decreased consumption of country foods;
• socio-economic impact of changes in consumption patterns; and
• increased exposure to new risks (Loring E. A review of Capacity Building in the NCP. Lake Louise, Alberta, Canada: Northern Contaminants Program Results Workshop; CACHAR: Human Health 2009, Northern Contaminants Program, INAC, 2009, p. 109).

I would like to recommend this article for publication with minor revisions.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no conflict of interest to declare in regard to this publication.