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Petition to Auditor General about Athabasca River Pollution

By Carolyn Campbell

On January 7, 2008, Peter Cyprien of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations, a member of Keepers of the Athabasca Alliance, filed a petition with the federal Auditor General. The petition notes the high incidence of rare cancers and autoimmune diseases in Fort Chipewyan reported by physician Dr. John O'Connor and summarizes a recent scientific study on water and sediment quality in the Fort Chipewyan area by ecologist Dr. Kevin Timoney.

Based on this research, the petition calls on the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada to investigate whether the federal Fisheries Act has been contravened by the contamination of water, aquatic species, and sediments in the Athabasca River downstream from Fort McMurray and throughout Lake Athabasca. The petition also demands that Health Canada thoroughly research human exposure to contaminants from drinking surface water or consuming fish and wildlife in the vicinity of Lake Athabasca and the lower Athabasca River.

The mission of the Keepers of the Athabasca is to unite the peoples of the Athabasca River and Lake Watershed to secure and protect water and watershed lands for ecological, social, cultural, and community health and well-being. AWA supports the efforts of the Keepers and will keep our members informed of their activities.

