

Poor Water Quality in First Nation Communities in Canada: Is Source Water Protection Planning a Solution?

Date: Thursday 6 April 2017

Time: 2pm – 3pm

Location: Room 208, Level 2, Te Ao Marama Building

Presenter: **Chris D. Metcalfe**, *Trent University, Peterborough, ON, Canada*

Abstract

In Canada, it is common for Indigenous communities to be under drinking water advisories, which may range from a few days to several years. At the end of 2016, 130 drinking water advisories were in effect in more than 80 First Nation communities in Canada. In addition, First Nation communities record 26 times more cases of water-related illnesses than their non-First Nation neighbors. The solutions to this situation require a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary approach. I will present a case-history for the First Nation community of Kasheshewan in northern Ontario, Canada that illustrates the challenges faced by remote Indigenous communities in accessing safe drinking water. In a government inquiry following a case in 2000 of lethal exposure to pathogenic E. coli in the small community of Walkerton, Ontario, Canada, Justice O'Connor recommended the use of a multi-barrier approach to guard against exposure to microbial and chemical contaminants in drinking water. Since the Walkerton tragedy, most Canadian provinces have instituted programs for source water protection as the most important barrier in the multi-barrier approach to protecting the quality of drinking water. I will describe our experience with source water protection planning in a First Nation community in Ontario as an illustration of the hope that this approach may be an important tool for improving access to safe drinking water in Indigenous communities.

RSVP for this event by contacting: kirsty.ameriks@canterbury.ac.nz