A recent health study commissioned by the Nunee Health Board Society of Fort Chipewyan has empirical evidence that the governments of Alberta and Canada are ignoring the toxic contamination of downstream Indigenous communities and their resultant deteriorating health. Peoples most at risk are those whose means of subsistence is based on their lands and water. Dene, Cree and Métis communities maintain a subsistence diet of fish and wild game.

Whitefish TOP: from the Athabasca Delta, collected by Robert Grandjambe Jr., May 2010;

BOTTOM: from Lake Athabasca, collected by Ray Ladouceur, Dec. 2009. Photo credit: John Ulan, EPIC

Note the tumour plainly visible on the bottom fish, and the lurid red color of the top fish which is supposed to be a healthy cream color. As stated in a recent report by the Green Party of Canada: "Deformed fish have been found in nearby Lake Athabasca and drinking water has been contaminated. Internationally renowned water expert Dr. David Schindler, University of Alberta, states, "6-7% of the fish

caught at Fort Chipewyan have skin or lip carcinomas." Timoney states, "Mercury levels in the fish present a serious concern for human consumption". The commercial fishery of Fort Chipewyan (located on the northwestern tip of Lake Athabasca) is effectively dead.[i]

The Fort Chipewyan community has an 80% subsistence diet. Its residents identify tar sands mining and water polluted by its toxins as the cause of the alarming increases in rates of death and chronic illnesses including previously unknown cancers. *"The river used to be blue. Now it's brown. Nobody can fish or drink from it. The air is bad. This has all happened so fast,"* says Elsie Fabian, 63, an elder in a Native Indian community along the Athabasca River.[ii]

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[i] The Green Party *A Comprehensive Guide to the Alberta Oil Sands*, ibid., at page 28.
[ii] Excerpted from an informational handout of the Indigenous Environmental Netowk Indigenous Tar Sands Campaign, 2008 and an article written by Clayton Thomas Muller IEN CITSC Campaigner.