

NWT Environmental Research Bulletin (NERB)



NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (NWT CIMP)

A source of environmental monitoring and research in the NWT. The program coordinates, conducts and funds the collection, analysis and reporting of information related to environmental conditions in the NWT.

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A series of brief plain language summaries of various environmental research findings in the Northwest Territories. If you're conducting environmental research in the NWT, consider sharing your information with northern residents in a bulletin. These research summaries are also of use to northern resource decision-makers.

'Watching the Land': Knowing the Impacts of Change

Living in a healthy environment and being able to engage in traditional activities is important to community wellbeing. It is critical that information is available to help inform environmental management decisions. The K'atl'odeeche First Nation (KFN) established a community-based monitoring program called Watching the Land, focused on the collection and analysis of Indigenous environmental knowledge, to inform decisions. Watching the Land tracks the health of and changes to the environment over time by establishing a set of parameters and conducting field-based monitoring.

Why is this research important?

There is growing concern among KFN members about changes to the environment and impacts to their traditional way of life. To help protect their traditional territory, KFN and its members recognize the need to track and understand the impacts of these changes.



Monitoring jackfish health harvested from the Hay River. (Credit: P. Riley)

What did we do?

The KFN developed a community-based monitoring program that assesses environmental trends and changes over time using Indigenous Knowledge (IK). This was done by determining the appropriate IK parameters to focus on. Data collection systems were designed and field monitoring programs were established for each parameter. Local KFN harvesters were trained to use technical equipment and youth members were engaged to encourage the transmission of IK values and skills.

What did we find?

- Six parameters were selected based on their importance to KFN members: berry picking, moose harvesting, fish harvesting, caribou harvesting, winter trapping, and migratory spring bird hunting.
- Monitoring revealed that:
 - Moose, caribou and furbearing populations in areas with minimal human activity, though not thriving, appear to be maintaining their health and abundance.
 - Whitefish and pike populations in the Hay River area appear to be maintaining their health and abundance.



Flying into Buffalo Lake for the moose hunt. (Credit: P. Riley)

What does this mean?

The information gathered through this program is a useful resource for decision-making by governments and conservation organizations. In particular, the knowledge gathered from the large game studies will help inform the understanding of population dynamics of moose and caribou.

What's next?

This project is ongoing. Data gathering will continue using the established methods to allow comparisons with the information obtained during the first three years.

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