

Backgrounder (1) First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study (FNFNES)

Canada is one of the global leaders in conducting Total Diet Studies, which began in 1969. However, diets of First Nations people living on reserve were not a part of these studies. Therefore, there is a gap in the existing knowledge of First Nation peoples' diets, including the contribution to nutrition as well as the environmental safety of foods that comprise them, and how these diets are changing over time.

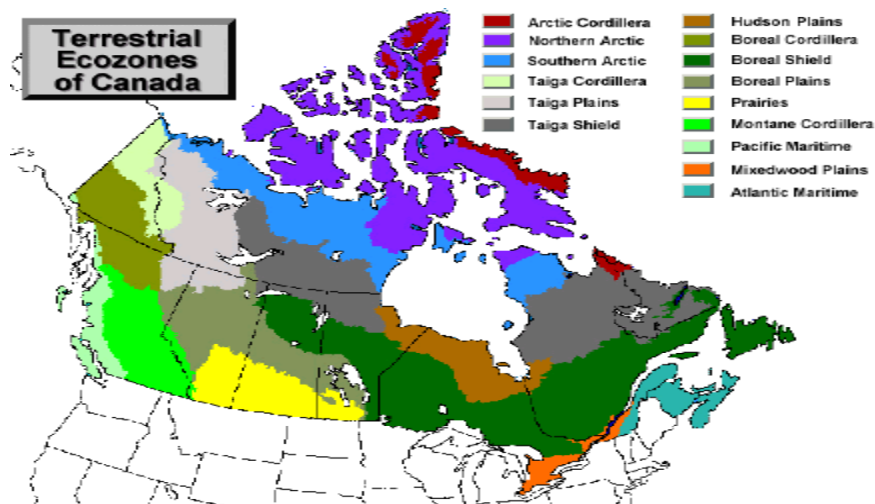
The FNFNES is aimed primarily at addressing this gap by assessing the diets of First Nations people living on reserves south of the 60th parallel across Canada, who rely on a combination of traditionally-harvested and store-bought foods. It will document the nutritional benefits and environmental contaminants that are intrinsic to the modern diets of First Nations people living on reserves. Issues of particular significance and concern include:

- The conservation of traditional subsistence living, within sensitive environments
- Increasing contaminant levels in traditional food due to pollution
- Socio-economic forces affecting traditional lifestyles and access to traditional harvesting areas
- The potential relationship between increasing occurrences of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease and environmental contaminants

There are four general components to the study:

1. Household interview (one-year traditional food frequency questionnaire, 24-hour food recall, social, health and lifestyle questionnaire, and food security questionnaire);
2. Water sampling for metals and pharmaceuticals;
3. Hair sampling for mercury; and
4. Traditional food sampling for contaminants.

A sampling strategy has been developed to collect representative data for each of the 8 Assembly of First Nations regions. A total of approximately 10,000 participants from 100 randomly selected communities will be invited to participate in the study over its expected 10-year length. The project begins in 2008 in British Columbia.



Source: Environment Canada/CEAA. - Wiken E.B, Available on the Internet at:
<http://www.ccea.org/ecozones/index.html>

Information resulting from this study will increase knowledge on the benefits and possible risks of the diets of First Nations people and will have many uses including decision making at the individual level, and informing a wide range of activities related to food, nutrition and health at the community, regional and national levels. This study will also allow the development, for the first time, of a national baseline of nutrition as well as of levels of key environmental chemicals of concern in the diets of First Nations.

Partners:

University of Northern British Columbia

University of Montreal

Assembly of First Nations

Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch