

Toxics in Baker Lake dump appall researcher

Waste leaking into water source, B.C. professor says

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CBC News



One of numerous photographs University of British Columbia researcher Frank Tester took at the landfill in Baker Lake, Nunavut, last month. (Submitted by Frank Tester)

Broken car batteries and leaking hazardous waste found at the dump in Baker Lake, Nunavut, have an Arctic researcher raising concern about potential toxicity in the local water supply.

Frank Tester, an associate professor of social work at the University of British Columbia, said he was disturbed by what he saw on a visit last month to Baker Lake's municipal landfill.

"There were containers, some of which were wide open and overflowing, which were actually labelled 'hazardous waste,' " Tester told CBC News in an interview that aired Wednesday.

"There were lead acid batteries, a whole shipping container full of them with the door wide open," he added. "All the batteries spilled out of it onto the ground. Many of them broken and smashed."

Tester took photographs of the toxic waste, including containers of antifreeze and chemical propellants used for spraying foam insulation. Another shot shows used oil filters surrounding a dark puddle of sludge.

"This stuff is toxic and it's not to be in a municipal dump that is leaching into a water course," he said.

Runoff enters drinking water source



A container marked 'hazardous waste' was found at the Baker Lake landfill. Tester said some of those containers were 'wide open and overflowing.' (Submitted by Frank Tester) Runoff from the landfill enters Finger Lake, ultimately emptying into Baker Lake, which provides drinking water in the hamlet of about 1,700 residents.

Civic officials in Baker Lake have not returned calls from CBC News.

Information the hamlet sent to the Nunavut Water Board in 2006 confirmed that runoff from the municipal dump does eventually enter Baker Lake.

Municipalities are in charge of their own landfills and are supposed to follow territorial and federal government guidelines, according to officials with the Nunavut government.

"There are standard contaminants that are put into our landfills, but they're supposed to be put in contained areas so that any kind of leaching cannot occur," said Tom Livingston, an official with the Department of Community and Government Services.

Cases of hazardous waste discharge at municipal landfills can be investigated by Nunavut's Environment Department, acting under the territory's Environmental Protection Act.

Pan-northern problem

The problem of hazardous materials in community dumps is prevalent in all three of Canada's northern territories, according to a report obtained by The Canadian Press earlier this month.



Car batteries on the ground at the Baker Lake landfill. (Submitted by Frank Tester) The report, prepared by Arktis Solutions for Environment

Canada this spring, found plenty of confusion over who does what when it comes to managing solid waste in Canada's three territories.

Heavy-duty industrial waste from mines was spotted at community garbage dumps across the North, as were hazardous household items such as car batteries, paint cans and propane tanks.

"There are challenges associated with the use of community waste facilities for industrial waste (hazardous and non-hazardous) generated outside community boundaries," the report says.

"Community waste facilities may not be equipped to manage waste of this nature or quantity. An understanding of the flow of industrial waste and impacts to communities could be completed."

But the federal government apparently knew about this before Arktis Solutions submitted its report in March. Inspection records kept by at least one department and correspondence between northern players detail the dumping.

"Evidence of this activity in the Northwest Territories has been reported within Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's land-use inspections reports," the Arktis Solutions study says.

A spokeswoman for Indian and Northern Affairs said the department tells communities they're not allowed to accept industrial waste, but the territory is responsible for enforcement.

The study is based on findings from six communities across the North: the capital cities Iqaluit, Yellowknife and Whitehorse, as well as the smaller towns of Resolute, Nunavut; Hay River, N.W.T.; and Teslin, Yukon.

With files from The Canadian Press

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HereHere wrote:Posted 2010/09/22

at 5:19 PM ETIt just reminds me how unsustainable our modern lifestyle is. Even here in the South.

- [3](#)
- [0](#)

[3Agree](#) [0Disagree](#)[Policy Report abuse](#)

misfit wrote:Posted 2010/09/22

at 5:06 PM ETThogged wrote:Posted 2010/09/22

at 4:46 PM ETSince all things bad originate in the Oil Sands, how did all this stuff get from the Oil Sands to Baker Lake?

Fail.

There's at least 4 oilsands stories up at all times on the CBC, if you're burning to post a zinger on the issue, then do it there.

I'm still waiting for:

the "if Harper would just" post.
some name calling about leftist eco-terrorists
and the usual drivel

- 4
- 2

4Agree 2DisagreePolicy Report abuse

Nicolas, wrote:Posted 2010/09/22

at 4:59 PM ETYou can be assured that people living in Northern Canada are well aware of what's going on in their landfills. You can also be assured that they are very much opposed to it, as well.

Try living in a community where they burn everything (and I mean everything) in an open-pit and the smoke drifts over town.

People in the North are not quiet about this. Obviously the Government of Canada is aware of it. Yet nothing is done.

Where are they supposed to put hazardous waste in a land of permafrost?

It can be guaranteed, this will be a huge lawsuit one day. Just wait till they start putting these reports together with the other reports of drastically higher incidences of cancer and other immune-weakening diseases.

- 6
- 5

6Agree 5DisagreePolicy Report abuse

wake up wrote:Posted 2010/09/22

at 4:58 PM ETwith global warming as the north opens up we are going to see the true nature of people and governments

land grab greed, government agencies vying for control, corporations scanning for opportunities to funnel money out of the communities, and basic human greed soiling more than just the water supply.

unfortunately humans can't seem to think about the future when fear or greed is a motivating force.

if we leave the oil in the ground in the north now, in the future when oil is extremely valuable we will have a nest egg for our future generations.

plus technology will have hopefully advanced enough to the point where it won't be a constant threat to our and our children's health.

but people are motivated by greed...get it while you can mentality, which is why we do have so many problems.

for some reason people think quantity is better than quality.

and of course the corporations are in the latter group, they want more and more and more, and because they have no consciences they don't care if they ruin the water supply or the children's future...they only care if they are caught and made to pay fines.

and people have been turned into sheep by mindless television and a life time of debt-slavery.

they can't see past the bars in their velvet cages.

give them a few made in china trinkets and they think everything is great.

baa baa baa

what about your children ? and children's children ?

how are they going to remember you ?

are they going to curse your name ? or speak well of you for trying your best ?

you did try didn't you ?

you are either part of the solution or part of the problem

it is your choice.

how are you going to be remembered ?

- 3
- 6

3Agree 6DisagreePolicy Report abuse

Modern Kids wrote:Posted 2010/09/22

at 4:52 PM ETAll in the name of arctic sovereignty BS. it will come out one day, just wait.

- 10
- 2

10Agree 2DisagreePolicy Report abuse

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