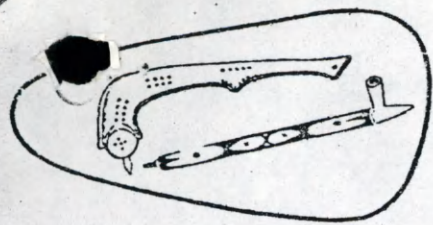


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NATIONAL INDIAN BROTHERHOOD

1ST FLOOR, BANKAL BUILDING, 102 BANK STREET, OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1P 5N4 (613) 236-0673
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31 January 1977

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INFORMATION		
WHEATLEY B.		
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The Editor
THE EDMONTON JOURNAL
10006 - 101st Street
EDMONTON, Alberta
T5J 2S6

Dear Sir:

It is important in controversial situations that all sides be heard, and in Jon Ferry's article on arsenic in Yellowknife an excellent presentation was made of the government's and goldmining companies' case. Mr. Ferry failed, however, to point out why the National Indian Brotherhood became involved in the arsenic controversy.

We first conducted a separate hair survey of Indian children in June, 1975 when it became clear that many Indian children had been missed in the government's voluntary hair survey of Yellowknife. Our survey at that time was small but nevertheless found that one-third of the children tested had arsenic hair levels above the World Health Organization's recommended standard. These children were missed in the government's survey.

We turned the names of the children over to the Department of Health and Welfare. The Department retested the hair of these children and found higher levels than we claimed. Ottawa did not carry out further hair surveys in Yellowknife.

The National Indian Brotherhood became concerned that other children with higher than normal arsenic levels had been missed in the government's voluntary survey. We questioned whether an arsenic survey that missed finding people with high arsenic levels was valid. We always assumed that the purpose of an arsenic survey was to find exposed people and warn them of their danger.

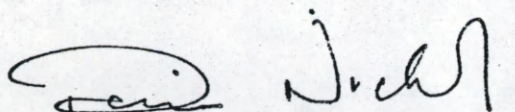
As a result we contacted the United Steel Workers and put in motion plans to sample all mill workers at Giant Mines, all Indian children living across the Bay from Giant's smelting operations and compare our arsenic hair findings to samples obtained from Indian children and Steel Workers in Whitehorse. (The government survey did not use a control group). The government found no Indian children with elevated arsenic levels. We again found children with abnormal arsenic levels.

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Last week in Toronto at the Convention of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, Dr. J. T. Hindmarsh of Dalhousie University drove home the seriousness of our findings. Dr. Hindmarsh and the Nova Scotia Department of Health had examined people exposed to arsenic contamination from abandoned gold mines. He reported that nerve damage begins to occur in people with arsenic concentrations in their hair of slightly above one part per million. He concluded that "One part per million appears to be a satisfactory upper limit of acceptability for hair arsenic. When hair levels climb above this value, toxicity soon develops." Over 90 per cent of the children we tested had arsenic levels above one part per million. None of the children in our control sample of Indian children from Whitehorse had arsenic hair levels above one part per million.

Mr. Ferry and Marc Lalonde suggest that arsenic levels in Yellowknife are fine and that we were more concerned with hype and politics than facts. But in light of the Halifax study and numerous other studies linking arsenic exposure with a host of illnesses, the National Indian Brotherhood will not be content until the Indian children of Yellowknife have as low arsenic levels as the Indian children in Whitehorse.

Yours sincerely,

 Vice-President

per: Noel V. Starblanket,
President.

cc: Dr. L. M. Black
Director General
Medical Services
Health & Welfare Canada