

1. Introduction

Climate change has become an issue of global concern, and this is especially the case in Arctic and sub-Arctic regions. Research on the current and potential impacts of a warming climate in the Canadian North have focused mainly on ecosystems, resources, and Aboriginal communities in the High Arctic above the tree line. One of the key findings by scientists and communities conducting this research has been the identification of health related impacts directly and indirectly related with climate change and the need to develop mitigation strategies, and more importantly adaptation strategies, to prevent and minimize health risks and other impacts associated with climate change.

With comparatively less research regarding climate change impacts on Aboriginal communities and ecosystems above 60°N, but below the tree line in northern Canada, the Jean Marie River First Nation (JMRFN) in the Northwest Territories is concerned with this issue and the necessity to assess the JMRFN's vulnerability to health related impacts associated with climate change, and what adaptation strategies are available to the community of Jean Marie River (JMR) to respond to these impacts, has become increasingly important.

Prior to starting this project JMR's key concerns regarding climate change are identified in the proposal to Health Canada included:

- Food security/safety;
- Access to Safe Drinking Water and Traditional Medicines;
- Travel Safety;
- Extreme Weather Events;
- Increased exposure to UV-B rays and diseases associated with environmental changes, and;
- Negative impacts to the health of plants and animals.

In order to collect baseline data about observations and experiences of climate change impacts, and to assess some initial affects on the health of individuals, the community, and the environment the JMRFN applied for and received funding from Health Canada's Climate Change and Health Adaptation in Northern First Nations and Inuit Communities Program to conduct the project: *Impacts to the Health and Wellness of the Jean Marie River First Nation in the Face of a Changing Climate*.