



For Immediate Release **Update**

March 26, 2018

Contamination Questions on 2 hazardous sites: Swan Hills and Faust's Toxic Park

First Nations, residents, businesses, and municipalities want to know – does contamination from the Swan Hills (hazardous waste) Treatment Centre (SHTC) reach us around the Lesser Slave Lake area? It appears to – the Persistent Organic Pollutant section of the Technical Update to the State of the Watershed Report (Lesser Slave Watershed Council 2015) states; “A short-term peak in the late 1990s in PCBs, dioxins and furans, possibly due to the accidental release from the Swan Hills hazardous waste facility”. There have been at least six fires, explosions, and other confirmed ‘unplanned releases’ from SHTC since they opened in 1987, aside from their ongoing allowable releases. **Keepers of the Athabasca** successfully challenged the Alberta Environment Approval for this facility in 2015, resubmitting objections from Lesser Slave Lake Indian Regional Council members, as they are still relevant and held by those who submitted them.

SHTC is located at the top of the Swan Hills, 70 kilometres as the crow flies from the Town of Slave Lake, about 160 km due west from the Town of Athabasca, and 65 km NE from Fort Assiniboine. SHTC is operated by SUEZ Environmental, in a contract with the Government of Alberta. When our concerns were recognized by Alberta Environment and Parks, we were eager to get questions answered. Now, almost three years and two meetings later, **Keepers of the Athabasca** participated in removing lake sediment core samples from Lesser Slave Lake, near the mouth of the Swan River on March 12, 2018, assisted by a guide from Swan River First Nation, and environmental consultant Theo Charette for SUEZ.

Keepers of the Athabasca had originally asked for three locations to be tested. Despite letters of support for sampling all three sites from the Town of Athabasca, Woodland County, Driftpile First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, Swan River first Nation, and many more individuals and groups, Narrow Lake near Athabasca, and Goose Lake near Fort Assiniboine were not included in this year’s testing. Alberta Environment has informed us that they are ‘monitoring’ our negotiations with SUEZ. We hope they note these unanswered requests for testing. With the prevailing westerly/northwesterly winds in this region, there are also concerns about airborne PCB and dioxin particulates near Athabasca, and in the Fort Assiniboine area.

In addition to samples at the mouth of the Swan River, we also took core samples north of the Faust Osmose Site, a toxic site of great concern to local residents. The Environment and Health assessment for this site was due on February 28, in preparation for an ‘exposure control plan’, and working toward a proposed ‘**Toxic Park**’, but this assessment is still being held hostage by Alberta Environment with no indication of a timeline or approval date! Exposure control is imperative for this site, as there are highly toxic dioxin hotspots outside the fenced area of this site, these toxic hotspots are as yet unmarked. This hazard is serious and urgent, as tree removal or other work is currently going on at the site. The workers’ safety cannot be guaranteed when they are working amongst these unmarked hotspots.

Special thanks to **Swan River First Nation** for your collaboration and guidance and **CARO Analytical** for in-kind lab work.

For more information, please contact:

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