

PRESS RELEASE

October 28, 2025

Yellowknives Dene First Nation Arsenic Study Sample Collection, Fall 2025

On October 5th, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN), in partnership with the Yellowknife Health Effects Monitoring Program (YKHEMP), launched a follow-up of the 2017-18 study to measure arsenic, lead, cadmium and other metals among YKDFN members. YKHEMP is a long-term study to determine whether participants' arsenic levels are affected by work at Giant Mine.

"This study is exciting for the YKDFN because we want to learn more about the levels of arsenic and other metals in our body, as we are so close to Giant Mine," said Melissa Sangris, the Health Coordinator and Acting Director of YKDFN Health and Wellness. "I'm especially curious to see the lead level results from this testing, considering the higher levels of lead that were found in the [YKHEMP research from 2023](#)."

All YKDFN members, 3 years of age and older, who have lived in Yellowknife, Ndilq, Dettah, or the surrounding area for the majority of the past year are invited to participate in the study until November 22nd, 2025. Participation involves a 15-minute interview, followed by providing samples of urine, toenails, and saliva. Participants receive up to \$75 in gift cards as a thank you for their participation in the study. In 2026, community gatherings will be hosted in Ndilq and Dettah to share findings, and participants will receive a letter with their personal results.

So far this fall, many YKDFN members have expressed interest in the follow-up study. The success of the data collection to date is driven by the leadership from the YKDFN Health and Wellness Department, close coordination with university staff, and the strong on-the-ground effort of the four Yellowknives Dene Research Assistants.

The YKHEMP program is led by Dr. Laurie Chan, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Toxicology and Environmental Health at the University of Ottawa, and Dr. Brian Laird, Associate Professor at the University of Waterloo. "The purpose of YKHEMP is to establish baseline levels of contaminant exposure, follow the levels over time, and examine possible health effects among the residents of Yellowknife, Ndilq, and Dettah," said Chan. "This project will help answer long-standing questions and concerns from the Yellowknives Dene about the health impacts of the Giant Mine." The results will be compared to results from

the 2017-18 study and to levels in the Canadian population to find out whether participants' arsenic levels are affected by remediation work being done at Giant Mine.

The next round of sampling for this ongoing study will be in 2028. All past participants and new participants living in Yellowknife, Ndilo, and Dettah will be invited to join. This data collected over time provides critical information about the long-term impacts of living near Giant Mine.

For further information, visit ykhemp.ca/ykdfn or contact: Melissa Sangris, YKDFN Wellness Office, 867-920-2925 | Email: msangris@ykdenes.com