

Mutated fish alarms delegates at northern Alberta water gathering

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[CBC News](#)

<http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2008/08/18/chip-fish.html>



Residents in Fort Chipewyan, Alta., say they saw this fish, seen in this Aug. 15 photo, caught from Lake Athabasca last week. (Courtesy of Ling Wang) Days before a conference on water quality began in Fort Chipewyan, Alta., last week, residents say a strange fish with two mouths was found at the nearby lake.

The deformed fish, which residents say children had caught off the dock at Lake Athabasca, has since been turned over to park wardens at Wood Buffalo National Park. Some residents, including officials from the Mikisew Cree First Nation, took photographs of the fish over the weekend.

'That's one political fish! One blind eye to ignore the reality of the tar sands and two mouths to talk like politicians from Alberta when they defend the oil industry.'

It was found just days before the Keepers of the Water conference began Friday in Fort Chipewyan. The conference wrapped up on Sunday.

The event brought together western and northern Canadian aboriginal leaders and environmental activists, all of whom expressed concern with the quality of water in the Athabasca River, downstream from oilsands development in Fort McMurray.

"It's already mutating the animals, the pollution that they're causing. We need to do something quickly," Shaylene Wiley, a 16-year-old Mikisew Cree delegate, told CBC News during the weekend gathering.

"It's scary when you think about it," delegate Lionel Lepine added.

"For me, personally, it does piss me off, you know, knowing that it's not under my control right now. It's the Government of Canada that has the control over it; they have monopoly over our land. But industry ... somehow they got the licence to pollute."

Coalition considers legal challenges, demonstrations



Delegates set up a tent village near the water conference meeting site on the shores of Lake Athabasca. (Patti-Kay Hamilton/CBC) Residents from Fort Chipewyan, a remote First Nations community of roughly 1,200, spoke at the conference about the effects the oilsands have had downstream in their small community.

In June, Health Canada and the Alberta Cancer Board said they would launch a study into reports of high cancer incidences in Fort Chipewyan — cancers that residents have long claimed are tied to oilsands development polluting their drinking water.

Delegates agreed to form a coalition to fight governments and industry over any expansion of the oilsands.

"We're going to make changes by unity of the people," said Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation near Fort Chipewyan.

"We're going to come out with one message: protect the environment and the water at all costs."

The coalition proposes to hold civil demonstrations, launch legal challenges and start public information campaigns across Europe and North America to call for a moratorium on further oilsands development.

"When central Canadians realize what's being done in their name in Alberta, I think there's a strong possibility that we can bring pressure to bear," said Simon Dyer, a senior policy analyst with the Pembina Institute, said during the conference.