

Bad bacteria in Yukon, too?

Helicobacter pylori, linked to stomach cancer in the NWT, may also be circulating in Old Crow, Yukon.

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Researchers who have identified a possible bacterial link to a high number of stomach cancer cases in Aklavik, N.W.T., are setting up shop in Old Crow, Yukon, to find out if residents there have the same infection, CBC News reports.

Scientists from the University of Alberta and the Arctic Health Research Network are set to arrive in Old Crow later this week, as they continue work on research that found 55 per cent of Aklavik's adult population has *Helicobacter pylori* in their stomachs.

H. pylori causes no serious symptoms in most people, but in others the bacterium is linked to ulcers and stomach cancer.

"Most [infected] people have sort of a low level of chronic inflammation in the stomach, but they won't feel sick from it," project leader Janis Huntington of the University of Alberta told CBC News.

The Aklavik research supported residents' theories that a high incidence of *H. pylori* infection has resulted in many local people dying from stomach cancer.

The findings got people in Old Crow, 220 kilometres to the southwest over the Richardson Mountains, worried that *H. pylori* may also be prevalent in their settlement.

Huntington said the scientists will be testing Old Crow residents for the bacterium, as well as assessing other factors such as diet and hygiene.

"I think they just want to know — is *H. pylori* a cause for a lot of stomach problems in Old Crow? And if so, what can we do to reduce the health risks that people are facing?" she said.

The initial round of testing is expected to wrap up in February, CBC said.