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Are We Poisoning Our Own Seafood?

An interview with Professor Charlie Trick
Water Ecologist, Western University

What can we learn from the oceans?

The concept of ecosystem health has two aspects. One is, *What's the impact that humans are having on our present environment?* and the second is, *What future does that environment provide with regards to our health?* We're using our ecological services very fast. We are asking a lot of our environment and putting a lot of materials in our environment, and it's going to have an impact on our health. If it's not now, it will be certainly in the future. As an oceanographer, I'm quite interested in understanding how toxins move from the environment into our foods. Our seafoods in particular, our fish, our shellfish. We're changing the chemistry of the environment to such an extent that we're inducing some toxins to get into a food source that we're increasingly dependent upon, and it's getting smaller and smaller as the years progress.

What excites you about water research?

The really good aspect of my work is the fact that there is an enormous amount of new discovery that can occur on any single day. As a scientist, I've gone from looking at the true basic science of the marine environment, as an oceanographer, to looking at the relationship with humans. So I serve as a gatekeeper, as an individual that can take information and help shape communities and how communities make decisions about their environment. It's kind of a new opportunity for the type of science that we do. We are not collecting data so that we understand what the past looked like; we're trying to design our experiments and work in areas that we can use as a model for what can happen around the world.