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## Department of Atmospheric Sciences Seminar Announcement

Department of Atmospheric Sciences, S.O.E.S.T., University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
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# Chemical Exposure and Democratic Dilution: Moving Citizens Beyond the Margins through Sensing Policy

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**Date:** Wednesday, January 29, 2020  
**Refreshments:** 3:00pm at MSB courtyard  
Cookies, Coffee & Tea Provided  
**Seminar Time:** 3:30pm  
**Location:** Marine Sciences Building, MSB 100

### Abstract:

Issues of toxic exposure in our atmospheres are profoundly political and thus require interdisciplinary responses to address them. From a political ecology lens, this seminar discusses the Aamjiwnaang First Nation's participation in a community health study and the representation of their environmental and reproductive health concerns when confronted with living in the densest concentration of petrochemical and polymer refineries in Canada, an area known as "Chemical Valley". By participating in a local health study, Indigenous citizens of Aamjiwnaang encountered a paradox of engagement: while included in the health study deliberations, their small-scale, situated corporeal concerns became marginalized. Informed by scholarship in environmental justice, critical Indigenous studies and political ecology, this presentation elaborates a *sensing policy* orientation to public engagement for environmental justice, which builds from my research as explained in *Everyday Exposure* (UBC Press, 2016). As an interpretive and intersectional lens, sensing policy focuses on practices of meaning-making and enhances scientific communication through the meaningful inclusion of citizen stories and lived-experiences in policy decisions that affect their everyday lives. This multilayered lens aims to improve public engagement processes on matters of environmental and reproductive health by providing some insight into how public officials can interpret and incorporate lived-experience, situated bodies of knowledge and geopolitical context into decision-making. In response to the central question: "how can public deliberation processes create spaces that are conducive to meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities experiencing environmental injustice in their everyday lives", this work draws upon findings from document analysis and media coverage as well as extensive field-work in Lambton County, including participant observation at townhall meetings, and arts-based community-engaged, participatory action research within Aamjiwnaang. Contributing to the distributive, procedural and discursive dimensions of environmental justice scholarship, this presentation suggests that a critical examination of Aamjiwnaang's inclusion in the health study reveals the need for creative and interpretive approaches to public engagement with affected communities while making space for citizen stories.

In case anyone is interested, they can also listen to this podcast before the talk: <https://newbooksnetwork.com/sarah-marie-wiebe-everyday-exposure-indigenous-mobilization-and-environmental-justice-in-canadas-chemical-valley-ubc-press-2016>