

**Press Release**  
**June 25, 2007**

## **Planning for largest Inuit health survey under way in Nunavut**

(Iqaluit) – The largest Inuit health survey to be conducted in any circumpolar nation is in its final planning stages in Nunavut.

Coordinated by McGill University in Montreal and with the cooperation of six Nunavut organizations and government, the survey will try to capture the health status of more than 1,200 Inuit throughout 25 communities in the next two years.

Nineteen communities in the Baffin and Kivalliq regions will be surveyed this summer and fall and six Kitikmeot communities and the Kivalliq community of Baker Lake during 2008. Inuit participants will be tested with state of the art health equipment on board the Coast Guard ship Amundsen. The Amundsen will dock outside the communities and ferry participants by barge or helicopter to the ship for a few hours of tests. Meanwhile, a land crew will help participants get ready for their interviews on the ship. As well, a communications team will travel to most communities to hold public meetings and explain the survey.

About 40 bilingual Inuit personnel have been hired in the communities as translators, interpreters, community liaisons, nurses and assistants and interviewers for this year's voyage.

Mary Sheutiapik-Gidzinski and Blandina Tulugarjuk are two Inuit helping to coordinate the survey. "It's an important health test for Inuit," said Tulugarjuk. "We are conducting this to prevent future health problems for Inuit and we want to know how healthy you are."

Sheutiapik-Gidzinski has hired numerous community liaisons in each community and they will play a pivotal role towards the success of the health survey. "People in the community are very important. They are our eyes and ears and they know the community the best and they will help people understand how to participate in the survey and answer any questions they may have."

Public service announcements are now under way to all communities and will continue every week until the end of the survey. Posters are being sent to the communities outlining the schedule of the ship and the time it will be in each community to conduct the health survey. Brochures will be distributed and advertisements in local newspapers, text messages on cable-TV and a new website will be ready by next week to announce important information about the survey.

The health survey will test 12 per cent of all adults over 18 years of age on conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart and stroke possibility as well as asking participants questions about their diet, life stressors and coping, home crowding and other household questions. They will be randomly selected from lists of houses supplied by the hamlet or local housing authority and will be notified by their community liaison person to set up an appointment on the ship.

“These tests are important. They don’t replace your yearly physical. But it’s a chance to take a pro-active approach and prevent what has been happening in other native communities,” said Professor Grace Egeland, chief project investigator from McGill University. Professor Egeland says an epidemic of diabetes has hit many native communities but Nunavut and other Inuit populations may not face the same magnitude of a problem as others if it adopts preventive care. The study will also take place in the Inuvialuit land claim region next year and that of the territory of Nunatsaviut or Labrador. Those combined results will help medical professionals, health care researchers and scientists understand the prevalence of certain health problems and positive maintenance of health of Inuit in the North.

Further tests on children will take place after the adult tests. About 250 children, between the ages of 3 to 5 are expected to be tested for vitamin D to keep bones strong, vision, iron to see if a child has weak blood, diet, breastfeeding history and health history.

The health survey will begin in the Belcher Island community of Sanikiluaq on August 6<sup>th</sup> and end in Resolute Bay on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

The Nunavut Inuit health survey is coordinated by the Centre for Indigenous People’s Nutrition and Environment, McGill University and the University of Toronto with northern assistance by the Nunavut Association of Municipalities in Iqaluit, the Government of Nunavut and support from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, the Kivalliq Inuit Association, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Embrace Life and the Nunavut Status of Women’s Council.

**For further information, please call the following:**

Gary Gee  
Communications Coordinator  
Nunavut Inuit Health Survey  
Nunavut Association of Municipalities  
Ph: 979-3110 ext. 2  
Email: [namcom@qiniq.com](mailto:namcom@qiniq.com)

Professor Grace Egeland  
Principal Investigator  
Nunavut Inuit Health Survey  
McGill University  
Ph: (514) 398-8642

Email: [grace.egeland@mcgill.ca](mailto:grace.egeland@mcgill.ca)