Livelihoods

Livelihoods are an important social determinant of Inuit health and encompasses a wide range of social factors beyond employment in order to include all ways in which families are generating income and supporting themselves including ‘informal’ work harvesting country food, producing goods, handicap and artwork, and providing voluntary services in their communities.

Inuit in Canada

The roughly 59,500 Inuit in Canada live in the four Inuit regions (Inuit Nunangat): Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Nunatsiavut (Northern Labrador), Nunavut, and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region of the Northwest Territories (NWT), as well as outside Inuit Nunangat in city centres such as St. Johns, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Yellowknife. Overall, the Inuit population is relatively young and rapidly growing.
What is a Social Determinant of Health?

Social determinants of health are “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels, which are themselves influenced by policy choices.”

Other Key Information

- Between 2001 and 2006, the employment rate for Inuit adults aged 25 to 54 rose from 60.3% to 61.2%. Over the same period, employment rose from 80.3% to 81.6% for the non-Aboriginal population of core working age (Gionet, 2008).
- “Consuming country foods is important to Inuvialuit identity, and the culmination of a series of cooperative activities – harvesting, processing, distributing and preparing – that require behaving in ways that emphasize Inuvialuit values of cooperation, sharing and generosity” (Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, 2007).
- Participation in traditional harvesting practices has a positive impact on Inuit health outcomes. Not only does the consumption of traditional food (e.g. seal, caribou and fish) act as a benefit since it is highly nutritious (Lawn and Harvey, 2003).

What is Being Done?

- Harvesting activities are being supported by regions through Harvester Support Programs such as the Atugaksait Program in Nunavut, which provides financial assistance to harvesters who need hunting equipment and sewing supplies.
- The use of Impact and Benefit Agreements (IBAs) for major development projects in Inuit Land Claims areas has increased employment prospects for Inuit.

For more information on the Social Determinants of Health, contact the Department of Health and Social Development at Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami at 75 Albert Street, Suite 1101, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1P 5E7, Phone: 1 (613) 238-8181, toll-free (Canada) 1 (866) 262-8181.

References