



Press Release

INUIT NUNANGAT RESEARCH PROGRAM (INRP) FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

June 1, 2021 – Regional organizations from the four regions of Inuit Nunangat, with support from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Canada, and ArcticNet, are pleased to announce the first 11 projects funded under the newly-established Inuit Nunangat Research Program (INRP). The INRP advances Inuit self-determination in research by creating space for Inuit to design research projects, develop partnerships to build capacity, and strengthen the impact and effectiveness of Inuit Nunangat research for Inuit. Led by the Inuit land claims organizations from the four regions of Inuit Nunangat, this program is the first Inuit-led, directed, and governed research program in the world.

“Inuit-led research will benefit the community,” said Carla Pamak, Inuit Research Advisor for Nunatsiavut and Chair of the ArcticNet Inuit Advisory Committee (IAC), which recommended the projects for funding.

In Inuit Nunangat, Inuit are becoming more involved in the research process and undertaking research that is relevant to and prioritized by Inuit. The Inuit-led projects include subject matter that ranges from wildlife, language, health and more.

The IAC would like to congratulate all researchers involved in advancing the research interests of Inuit in Canada. This first Call for Proposals received many submissions for high-quality research of importance to Inuit and the IAC looks forward to extending this opportunity to future Inuit researchers.

“Congratulations to all funding recipients recognized in this round of proposals. Your work benefits us all by increasing the availability of Inuit-led research and contributing to better decision-making on issues that affect Inuit,” said ITK President Natan Obed.

Aligning with ITK’s National Inuit Strategy on Research (NISR), this program supports Inuit self-determination while building climate resilience in the Arctic. It advances Inuit governance in research, ensures Inuit inclusion and co-design, builds capacity through training and fellowships, and uses partnerships to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of Inuit Nunangat research for and led by Inuit.

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The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., Makivik Corporation, Kativik Regional Government, and the Nunatsiavut Government are proud that 11 projects have been funded in this first year of the Inuit Nunangat Research Program (INRP). This program is supported by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Canada, ArcticNet, the University of Ottawa, Université Laval, and Networks of Centres of Excellence Canada.



Project Summaries

Study of Arctic char catches and stock assessment and winter disappearance in Tasirjuarusik

Project Lead: Noah Eetook

Concerns have been raised by Kangirsuk hunters as arctic char stocks decrease. The catches are currently unmonitored, and the community does not know the fitness or number of fish caught. The first objective of the project is to implement a community monitoring program for catches to establish a baseline reference for the Arctic char population. At least one youth will be trained to conduct the survey and monitoring on the project. The second objective of the project is to tag a number of char to establish their overwintering location and analyze site characteristics. It is understood that the char overwinter in Tasirjuarusik (Virgin Lake). However, they cannot be located in the winter, and only reappear in late spring.

Walrus Health and Population Dynamics in the Context of Climate Change

Project Lead: Mathilde Lapointe St-Pierre

Walrus are a vital species for traditional Inuit hunting practice and are relied upon for subsistence purposes. However, this species is vulnerable to climate change and human disturbance. To protect this high-value mammal, it is crucial to better understand the threats that could impact the walrus population, including biological variables like trichinellosis. Using mapping, current data modeling, and traditional knowledge, this project aims to identify the higher risk region in Nunavik for trichinellosis. It also aims to indicate which walrus (sex, age, size, health status) are more infected by *Trichinella Nativa*. The research project will be led by the Wildlife Biologist of the Nunavik Research Centre in Kuujuaq, the team at the Nunavik Research Centre, and volunteer hunters. It will take place in six coastal communities of Nunavik. This information will support predictions about the long-term viability of the Inuit walrus hunt and support Inuit in the pursuit of this traditional activity.

Marralik estuary beluga project


Project Lead: James May

Marralik estuary is a traditional beluga hunting site and one of the only beluga sites that is close to Kangiqsualujuaq. It has been closed to harvesting by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) for many years because they claim it is a unique population of beluga and therefore must be protected. Inuit Knowledge (IK), on the other hand, says that these belugas are not a unique population, but come from those in the Hudson Strait. This research project involves sampling Marralik beluga using non-lethal methods to provide genetic samples to DFO. Results of this sampling may aid in re-evaluating the hunting ban and potentially improve food security in nearby villages.

Kaujivalliajut nillikulunnik | Getting to know little geese

Project Lead: Meredith Purcell

This project aims to 'get to know' a new arrival to Nunatsiavut- a medium-bodied goose. These geese are smaller than the usual Canada geese that summer in Labrador each year. They also have a distinct call, behavior, and migration timing that can easily distinguish these newcomers from other similar birds in the area. Community members throughout Nunatsiavut have raised



questions about these geese, primarily because it is not understood where they are coming from or what threats they may face elsewhere across their annual range. The project focuses on capacity building within Nunatsiavut through various training opportunities so that communities and community members may take an active and valuable role in conducting scientific research using a variety of methods. Genetic, stable isotope, camera trapping, and spatial tracking methods are all commonly used in monitoring wildlife and will be combined to determine where medium-bodied geese come from.

Assessment of the viability of goose harvesting as a response to food sovereignty in Arviat

Project Lead: Kukik Baker

A significant study took place in Arviat in 2016-17 to assess the impacts of overpopulation of snow geese in the area. During this collaborative study, co-management options were discussed by the community. From that time, the Aqqiumavvik Society in Arviat has continued to discuss the concerns with the Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) about increased goose populations and the potential it might have for food security in the area. Aqqiumavvik has been working on alleviating community food insecurity since 2012. The focus has been on animal health and the promotion of full use of harvested animals to feed families. This work has been carried out for caribou, fish, seal and beluga. In this project, Aqqiumavvik will explore the promising options for promoting increased consumption of geese and eggs.

Hilap Aulaaniit Qanuq Atayut (The World and its Connections)

Project Lead: Pamela Hakgonak Gross


Hilap Aulaaniit Qanuq Atayut (The World and its Connections) is an Inuit-driven project, coordinated by Elders and Inuinnaqtun experts in Cambridge Bay to document environmental terms and knowledge to build an environmental lexicon for the Inuinnaqtun language. This team will work with community members and partners to host land-based workshops documenting detailed Inuinnaqtun knowledge of the natural world and create new access points to this knowledge through print and digital resources.

English has become the *lingua franca* of environmental sciences in the North. The disappearance of Inuinnaqtun concepts and terminology is causing the loss of culturally unique knowledge and relationships with the Arctic environment. The Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society (PI / KHS) will work with this language-focused team to plan, coordinate, execute, and evaluate an Inuinnaqtun approach to documenting Inuinnaqtun environmental knowledge.

Health of Arctic Char near Kugluktuk, Nunavut

Project Lead: Eric Hitkolok

The project lead has been fishing for char the majority of his life. In recent years, sickness has plagued the char near Kugluktuk. Many fish have been observed with crooked spines, cysts and/or lumps with pus. Externally, many will look healthy, but when filleted by community members will exude a putrid smell. This project will examine the effects on char health, measuring water quality, contaminants and snagging practices, and the quality of fish in lakes and rivers fished by Kugluktummiut. Results of this project will be shared with and used by the



Kugluktuk Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO) and the community to improve and maintain char population health.

Acoustic monitoring for community empowerment at Clyde River, Nunavut

Project Lead: Malcolm Ranta

The community of Clyde River has deep knowledge of the marine environment, a deep respect for the ocean and all that lives there, and a long history of protecting marine resources. The culture, language, food, and livelihoods in Clyde River depend on this environment. Kangiqtugaapingmiut have always had a great appreciation for the ocean. As the marine environment faces increasing changes and impacts from development, shipping, climate change, and more, the community has a great interest in monitoring the ocean and underwater noise. In this project, Clyde River seeks to start an acoustic monitoring program, to gain a baseline understanding of the ocean soundscape in order to track changes over time. Combined with Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit, data from acoustic monitoring can provide the community and community leadership with important information and evidence to ensure that the environment stays healthy and flag when there are changes to be concerned about. This information will not only be important and useful to Clyde River, but to neighbouring communities in the region, researchers, and others. The new acoustic monitoring program will empower the community not only through its data and results, but also through training in new technology, access to new information, and ability to draw on evidence to support local engagement in environmental observation/assessment activities and decision-making.

Water sampling to establish environmental baseline conditions for rivers supporting Arctic char near Naujaat

Project Lead: Johnny Tagornak


Naujaat fishers have observed that when Arctic char travel down the river systems from the lakes where they overwinter to the coastal marine waters for the summer, the timing of their run is unique to each river. The locations char gather along the coast also vary. To have a better understanding of why this happens, we will investigate the environmental conditions in the rivers, lakes, and coastal environment in relation to the migration patterns of anadromous Arctic char throughout the winter, spring, and summer.

Over the next two years, Naujaat research coordinator and lead field technician Johnny Tagornak, will work with the Arviq HTO (Dolly Mablik, Manager), other community field assistants (particularly Laurent Kringayark), and scientists from the University of Manitoba study the physical and chemical properties of the rivers that drain into Repulse Bay. They will also study the coastal marine environment to better understand the relationship between char and their winter and summer habitat.

Bringing back the beluga whale harvest in Aklavik

Project Lead: Michelle Gruben

Inuvialuit in Aklavik have a long history of harvesting beluga whale (qilalukkat) on the coast of the Mackenzie Estuary. Since the 1990s, the hamlet's harvest numbers have declined dramatically due to a combination of environmental change and social challenges. After interviews and discussions with many harvesters about the changes they are facing, the project has identified ways this harvest can be revived. For future generations to confidently harvest



whales, Elders and hunters need to pass on their knowledge through shared, lived experiences. This can happen at on-the-land camps on the coast during the summer. This needs to be immersive: three weeks long, open to any who are interested to learn, and taught by both Elders and experienced harvesters. By bringing together the generations on the land to transfer knowledge, the Aklavik beluga harvest can continue in a safe way.

Understanding Patterns of Social Interactions in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region to Support Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases

Project Lead: Jenn Parrott

COVID-19 and other infectious diseases spread when people are in contact with one another, but the understanding is currently very limited of who is in contact with whom, and how often, in Inuvialuit communities. To accurately predict how a disease will spread and respond with appropriate public health measures (e.g., school closures, targeted vaccination, etc.), good data on interpersonal contact rates is needed. At present, the contact rate data used by Canadian epidemiologists are almost exclusively from large European cities. These data are unlikely to capture the realities of interpersonal contact patterns in Inuit communities where housing is limited and often overcrowded, harsh climates restrict where and how people can spend time, and traditional lifeways still structure many interactions. Inuvialuit Regional Corporation will use simple diary-based survey methods to fill this gap. The project will simply ask people to record, for one day, who they are in contact with and how often. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, this will provide a foundation for Inuvialuit and other remote Indigenous communities to access evidence-based, epidemiological insights on par with other Canadians.



Supporting Organizations

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Established in 1984 to manage the settlement outlined in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) represents the collective Inuvialuit interests in dealings with governments and the world at large. IRC's goal is to continually improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of the Inuvialuit through implementation of the IFA and by all other available means.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI) ensures that promises made under the Nunavut Agreement are carried out. NTI coordinates and manages Inuit responsibilities set out in the Nunavut Agreement and ensures that the federal and territorial governments fulfill their obligations.

Makivik Corporation

Makivik Corporation protects the rights, interests and financial compensation provided by the 1975 James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the first comprehensive Inuit land claim in Canada, and the more recent offshore Nunavik Inuit Land Claim Agreement that came into effect in 2008.

Kativik Regional Government

The Kativik Regional Government (KRG) was created in 1978 pursuant to the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement to deliver public services to Nunavimmiut. Many of the KRG's responsibilities are stipulated in the Act respecting Northern Villages and the Kativik Regional Government (Kativik Act). Other mandates have been delegated to the KRG by the region's municipalities and the Québec government.

Nunatsiavut Government

The Nunatsiavut Government is an Inuit regional government. Although Nunatsiavut remains part of Newfoundland and Labrador, the government has authority over many central governance areas including health, education, culture and language, justice, and community matters.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is the national representational organization protecting and advancing the rights and interests of Inuit in Canada.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Canada

ICC is the body that represents all Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka on matters of international importance. The ICC in Canada is a non-profit organization led by a board of directors comprising the elected leaders of the four land-claims settlement regions: Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut.

ArcticNet

ArcticNet is a Network of Centres of Excellence of Canada that brings together scientists, engineers, and managers in the natural, human health and social sciences with their partners from Inuit organizations, northern communities, federal and provincial agencies and the private sector to study the impacts of climate change in the Canadian North.



The University of Ottawa

The University of Ottawa is the largest bilingual (English-French) university in the world. Located at the heart of Canada's capital. The University of Ottawa provided financial and administrative support for this program.

Université Laval

Université Laval is a public research university in Quebec City, Quebec, Canada. The ArcticNet Administrative Centre is hosted at Université Laval, Quebec City, Canada.

Networks of Centres of Excellence Canada

Canada's global economic competitiveness depends on making new discoveries and transforming them into products, services and processes that improve the lives of Canadians. To meet this challenge, the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) offers a suite of programs that mobilize Canada's best research, development and entrepreneurial expertise and focus it on specific issues and strategic areas.