



# Research and Research Ethics FACT SHEET SERIES

Fact Sheet #1 – March 2009



## Research and Researchers

### What is Research?

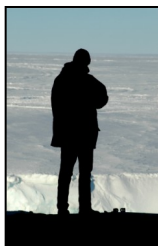
Research is a planned, organized, careful search for information to answer a question. There are many kinds of research going on all the time in the world.

There are a few kinds of research that happen often in the Arctic:

- ▶ Physical research – studying the air, land, water, etc.
- ▶ Biological research – studying animals, plants, fish, etc.
- ▶ Social research – studying people, how they behave, how they live, etc.
- ▶ Health research – studying what makes people sick, how people stay well, etc.

The fact sheets in this series focus on research ethics and research that directly involves individuals in our communities.

### Research in the Arctic



Inuit communities in Canada have seen many researchers come and go. In the past, Inuit have been at times subject to bad research practices and have often wondered what happened to the information they provided to researchers.

Since the late 1990s, several Canadian research organizations and programs have been created. Some have a focus on the Arctic, including *ArcticNet*, the *Northern Contaminants Program (NCP)* and the *Network Environments for Aboriginal Health Research (NEAHR)*.

Many researchers and organizations worked on identifying how the negative experiences from the past can be avoided. They also looked at how researchers can be best guided so that research practices respect people's dignity as understood by both participants and researchers.

*Today, researchers follow guidelines to make sure their work is honourable and respectful (ethical).*

Guidelines and rules for researchers are part of the solution. Understanding research, researchers and the rights of research participants is a very good way to make sure research works for individuals and the community.

### Researchers – Who are They?

Research and its results can be important and valuable both to communities and to researchers.

Many organizations and people conduct research for many different reasons. Research is done to build knowledge about a particular question and learn what problems might be affecting peoples' health, for example. Once the problem has been identified, researchers often test solutions.

People doing research can be researchers with years of experience. They can also be students who are learning under the guidance of professors and experienced researchers. Researchers can come from:

- ▶ **Universities** (for example: studying environmental contaminants in people)
- ▶ **Governments** (for example: monitoring people with diabetes)
- ▶ **Inuit organizations** (for example: a survey of community wellness)
- ▶ **Industry** (for example: a mining company that has to study impacts of a development)
- ▶ **Inuit communities** (for example: a Hamlet or community group studying the health effects of overcrowded housing or traditional knowledge about healing)
- ▶ **Research institutes or organizations.**

## Research Starts with a Question and a Plan

Designing a research project takes a lot of planning. It's during the planning stage that researchers make decisions like:



- ▶ How to work with the community
- ▶ How to collect information (for health research, this could mean anything from

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*Taking part in research can be a great experience. The results can help us and our communities. We stay informed about research trends, ethics and participation to make sure research and research results work for us.*

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interviewing or using questionnaires to taking blood or hair samples)

- ▶ How to report findings to the community and the people taking part in the project.

## Who is Involved in Making a Research Plan?

The planning stage of research is a very important chance for communities to work with researchers and to help shape a research project right from the beginning. It is during the planning stage that researchers must seek permission from communities and territorial or regional licensing agencies and community authorities. The researcher will submit a proposal that describes what the research intends to study and how the researcher will go about finding answers to the questions posed.

Many researchers are already in contact with communities before they submit their application for a research license. In some cases, individuals or community organizations have discussed and helped formulate the proposal to make sure that the research question is important to the community and the ways suggested to find the answers (by conducting interviews, for example) are appropriate to Inuit.

Research and research ethics are the key focus of the **Inuit Nipingit – National Inuit Committee on Ethics and Research**. Inuit Nipingit is co-ordinated jointly by Inuit Tuttarvingat of the National Aboriginal Health Organization and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Fact Sheet #1: "Research and Researchers" can be retrieved from [www.naho.ca/inuit/e/ethics](http://www.naho.ca/inuit/e/ethics).

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