

Summary of SSHRC Research Development Project

Qanuittumik takuvit? (What do you see?)

In recent years, increasing attention has been focused on Canada's northern regions, particularly the **influences of climatic changes** being observed and experienced, by scientists and hunters alike, in the Canadian Arctic (e.g. drastically diminished summer sea ice extent, later freeze-up and earlier break-up timing, unpredictable winds and storm events, and related changes in wildlife behaviour and health). There is a **pressing need** to better understand not only the environmental influences of such changes, but also the effects these changes have on the livelihoods, social networks, safety, and sustainability of northern communities and residents. The most recent changes have also coincided with the **International Polar Year (IPY, 2007/2008)** investments in, and publicity of, northern research. Concurrently, Canada is strengthening its **political interest** in asserting northern sovereignty to enhance environmental protection and economic development. Despite strong calls from **Inuit organizations** to ensure that Inuit leaders, land claims organizations, and territorial governments are integrally involved in decision-making regarding northern strategies, policies, and development, there remains more emphasis and investment in northern science, non-renewable resource development, and military than on community services, infrastructure, education, and sustainable economies. As the Inuit organizations argue, **investing in communities** is the most effective means of asserting sovereignty, and listening to - and learning from - **northern experts** who have spent their whole lives in this unique environment is an essential part of understanding the challenges and opportunities facing northern communities today.

Qanuittumik takuvit? (what do you see?) was commonly asked of Inuit youth by their parents and grandparents as daily encouragement for them to observe and understand early morning weather, and what the day might hold. Thus, we use this as both a title and a guiding question, in our efforts to address some of the **complexity of issues** highlighted above from Inuit and scientific perspectives. Our proposed project follows directly from previous community-based, collaborative sea ice research in the **Qikiqtaaluk** (Baffin) Region of Nunavut. As part of this past work, a workshop was held in Iqaluit, Nunavut, in March, 2007. It brought together local Inuit experts from three Qikiqtaaluk communities, and one from each of the other two regions of Nunavut (**Kivalliq** and **Kitikmeot**), to discuss local sea ice and weather forecasting that might help improve Environment Canada weather and ice services. Learning from the invited Kivalliq and Kitikmeot elders about the distinct environmental, cultural, and socio-economic conditions in their regions, along with their invitations to expand similar research efforts into their communities, thus form the **rationale** for this research. Therefore, as an essential first step in developing new projects with the communities of **Gjoa Haven** (Kitikmeot Region) and **Rankin Inlet** (Kivalliq Region), we are collaborating with the regional Inuit associations to organize and facilitate a **research development workshop** in each community.

These workshops will enable us to bring together a committee of local experts in order to address our project **objectives**, which are to:

- 1) **gain a better understanding** of local and regional land/sea ice/lake ice uses;
- 2) **gain insight** into the implications of climatic and related environmental changes for local livelihoods, health, infrastructure, personal safety, cultural pursuits, and wildlife related to changes or shifts in sea ice regimes and conditions;
- 3) **identify local support** for, or concerns with, the potential for increased shipping, economic development, and influx of people (tourists, developers, government workers, etc.) that may accompany a declining ice extent;
- 4) **identify local research priorities** and interests for longer-term collaborative project development and begin to negotiate research relationships around these themes; and,
- 5) **begin preliminary documentation** of local observations, and available research, to support the development of a future collaborative SSHRC standard grant proposal.

It is only through **fostering strong and respectful partnerships** from the outset of the research process that we can expand our collaborative efforts to effectively lead to new and innovative ways of designing, conducting, analyzing, integrating, and translating/applying knowledge in response to northern interests regarding social and economic prosperity, in the face of environmental and other forms of change.