

INTERNATIONAL POLAR YEAR ARCTIC HUMAN HEALTH INITIATIVE  
INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

October 25, 2005

Quebec City, Quebec

Report by Denise Kurszewski, Regional Wellness Manager, Gwich'in Tribal  
Council

In the capacity of Regional Wellness Manager for the Gwich'in Tribal Council and my personal interest in research, I attended the International Polar Year (IPY) Arctic Human Health Initiative International Advisory Committee Meeting on October 25, 2005 in Quebec City. The Gwich'in Tribal Council is actively involved with the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council has recognized that the International Polar Year (2007-2008) as a unique opportunity to stimulate cooperation and coordination on Arctic Research and to increase the awareness and visibility of the Arctic region. Current Arctic Council Human Health initiatives include monitoring the human health impact of anthropogenic pollutants, climate variability, infectious diseases, and the expansion and assessment of tele-health innovations in Arctic regions. An anticipated outcome of Arctic Human Health Initiative will be the development of an organizational infrastructure for the coordination of human health research activities in Arctic regions.

The meeting was attended by several committee members from the US and Canada. The meeting discussion was facilitated on the basis of a pre-set agenda (attached). Progress to date was presented, this gave background information on the Advisory Committee. A report on a past meeting held in Russian Federation October 14-16 was summarized. Much of the discussion focused on research in the Arctic and ways to access funding for future projects. Another focus was on climate change and why this is so important to the Arctic; it directly affects the health of the Aboriginal people. There was discussion on the feasibility of a new Ministry of Northern Circumpolar Affairs creation of a Ministry of Research. Further discussions included Health of Northern Children and living conditions in the north.

A particularly interesting point of discussion was that of Intellectual Property Rights. Who owns the research and findings once it is completed? It was a common understanding that the communities should benefit, therefore the information needs to be shared with the community members. However, it was also noted that some of the information shared was not to be for general public knowledge. This topic of discussion was continuing over the course of the next few days.

I found the overall discussions helpful, as I now have some idea of how research regarding health is currently conducted and some of the gaps that need to be focused upon. I will access the websites in preparation for presentations and reporting to communities. I also shared some of my personal experiences and made suggestions as to networking with a possible northern public policy research organization.