CINUK

CANADA – INUIT NUNANGAT – UNITED KINGDOM
ARCTIC RESEARCH PROGRAMME

CINUK IMPACT STUDY

2021–2025

Anirniq

Project images courtesy of CINUK Project Teams

The 13 CINUK projects seek to address key themes connected to climate-driven changes to the terrestrial, coastal and near-shore marine environments in Inuit Nunangat, as well as the impacts on Inuit and community health and well-being.

ArcticEID

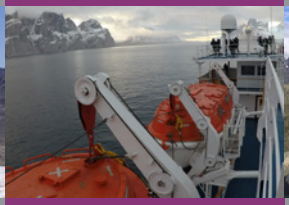
BARIN

CCT

IFSNu

IMAGINE

IQP-ASR



NGPlastics

NNSAR

NUNA

Nunamit Takunnatut

REMIROCaN

Sikuttiaq

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INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

UK Research and Innovation

Canada

Québec
Fonds de recherche – Nature et technologies
Fonds de recherche – Santé
Fonds de recherche – Société et culture

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OPENING STATEMENT

The Canada–Inuit Nunangat–United Kingdom Arctic Research Programme (CINUK) was established as a landmark collaboration between six partners: Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, UK Research and Innovation, Polar Knowledge Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, Parks Canada, and the Fonds de recherche du Québec. Together, these funders set out to create a new model for Arctic research: one rooted in equitable partnership, shared governance, and a sustained commitment to Inuit leadership. From its inception, the programme aimed to support high quality, community grounded science that responds directly to priorities identified by communities across Inuit Nunangat.

This report introduces the results of that collective effort. The CINUK portfolio encompasses a wide range of research themes: wildlife and ecosystem health, country foods, environmental change, safe travel, shipping, search and rescue, renewable energy, coastal resilience, plastics and pollution, and community well-being. These themes reflect the breadth of interconnected challenges and aspirations articulated by Inuit partners. Across these areas, CINUK has generated new knowledge about the terrestrial, coastal, and near shore marine environments of Inuit Nunangat, while also strengthening research practices through the meaningful integration of Inuit knowledge, values, and lived experience.

The thirteen projects presented here demonstrate how interdisciplinary research can support informed decision making, build local capacity, and contribute to community resilience in the face of rapid change. Above all, these projects highlight the leadership, insight, and dedication of communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. Together, they represent a new framework for international research partnerships that are guided by Inuit priorities and grounded in respect.

WORKING TOGETHER TO:
ACHIEVE BETTER HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

ANIRNIQ

Summary:

Named after the Inuktitut word for "breath of life", this project evaluated and addressed biomedical, social and housing-related determinants of lung health in Nunavik.

Kuujjuaq. Photo courtesy of Anirniq project team.

Why it matters:

Due to longstanding social, economic, and environmental pressures, many Inuit communities continue to face significant challenges in accessing adequate, safe, and uncrowded housing. A major issue is the prevalence of mold, reported in a significant portion of Nunavik households, which could get worse as the climate continues to change.

To address this community concern, this project was co-developed with Nunavik partners whose expertise and knowledge helped to supply the local authority with ways to rapidly and accurately assess and tackle poor indoor air quality.

What did the team do?

The project team assessed 75 homes with a multi-technique method for mold and captured an extensive set of indoor environmental quality indicators. These relied on residents' reported problems, challenges and perceptions of their homes.

The research identified links between measured parameters and physical and occupancy-related characteristics of the tested homes, as well as the best techniques and metrics to capture homes at risk. Tested homes were classified within different risk assessment categories from low to high. All the results were shared with the Nunavik Housing Bureau.

This research allowed the team to better understand the drivers of poor air quality and mold in Nunavik homes and develop solutions to address these. These included best practice tools to guide the maintenance of housing, mechanical rooms and ventilation systems. And it developed performance models to examine expected changes inside homes under future climate conditions.

Separately, a team working under an Inuit steering committee and with Inuit research team members sought to identify how Inuit envision receiving respiratory care services in a manner more aligned with their lives and preferences. The 24 qualitative interviews (14 conducted in Inuktitut) explored the importance of language considerations and evaluations on the impact of respiratory symptoms on people's lives.

The project team created culturally relevant, visually enhanced patient education materials, using analogies grounded in Inuit daily life. These materials provide information on sleep apnea, asthma, bronchiectasis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and medication use – practical, culturally-informed outputs with direct and tangible clinical use. The project team also interviewed Nunavik health care workers and administrators about the barriers and facilitators they experience in the delivery of effective respiratory care.

The project also considered how E-health technologies could address location-related barriers to providing health services. More than half of rural residents lack access to critical health care, and many must travel long distances to reach it.

Impacts:

The results of this project showed ways to improve respiratory health assessments in Nunavik that are grounded and built on Inuit world views, showcasing the benefits of working together to provide culturally relevant and accessible health care services.

The project is among the most comprehensive studies to document mold and indoor air quality in Nunavik homes, along with a wide set of contextual information. In addition, it has improved communication and support of patients – through the provision of culturally and linguistically tailored, evidence informed, Nunavik-specific patient information materials related to lung health. The project has successfully identified mold-related risks in housing with the potential to improve health, widening the horizons for their effective mitigation.

CCT

Summary:

Using a community-engaged and story-based approach, the "*Carving out Climate Testimony: Inuit Youth Wellness and Environmental Stewardship in Tuktoyaktuk NWT*" project investigated how climate change impacts Inuvialuit youth. It also identified ways to enhance mental health and well-being.

Photo courtesy of CCT project team.

Why it matters:

Climate change relocation and displacement is an issue faced by many people in Canada. Communities in the Inuvialuit of Tuktoyaktuk have experienced this in intensified ways, with receding shorelines, changes to hunting seasons, thawing permafrost, increased coastal erosion, and threats to homes and cultural sites that are central to community life. Estimates suggest the entire townsite of Tuktoyaktuk could be uninhabitable by 2050, given the projected rates of coastal erosion, sea level rise, and permafrost thaw. The potential mental health impacts on youth could be significant. Young people, however, are not passive to these changes – they are actively engaging in community-led adaptation efforts, cultural revitalization projects, and advocacy for climate justice.

"The relocation is making our community smaller as the houses are moved farther out of town. People who don't have cars or can't afford gas will not able to walk into the community," said Brian Kowikchuk, a Creative Lead on the project and member of the Inuvialuit Young Leaders' Advisory.

What did the team do?

Inuvialuit young leaders felt it was important to share with each other, other Indigenous communities, as well as with government scientists and academics, what life is like living with the impacts of climate change and climate displacement. Drawing on Inuit Unikkausivut (storytelling), the project uses intergenerational verbal and artistic expressions to convey climate realities.

The project team included Inuvialuit artists and youth community members, Elders and researchers from academics from Canada and the UK and across the social and physical sciences. They worked together to understand how a changing climate is perceived by Inuvialuit youth by applying aspects of Inuvialuit oral traditions. The advisory group of young leaders produced films and community art projects, presenting their work to public audiences and policy makers and scientists at organisations such as Environment Canada.

The team negotiated with Elders in Tuktoyaktuk to create a mural that demonstrates how mindsets can shift from loss and grief to resilience and hope, showcasing their love for the land, community, and culture.

Taking leadership from youth, the project prioritized inter-Indigenous exchange. The advisory group shared their knowledge through land-based and cultural gatherings with communities in the eastern Arctic and southern British Columbia. These exchanges fostered new relationships and solidarities for climate justice, grounded in the diversity of Indigenous experiences and place-based knowledge.

Inuvialuit young leaders spoke up on how local members experience climate change and how the drastic changes impact their culture and traditions. The project team made it possible for Unikkait storytelling to be seen as viable knowledge, equally as profound as scientific knowledge.

Inuvialuit youth also expressed that climate change disruption is not just about what is being lost. "We are seeing whales and salmon, which we never saw before. And new bugs," said Kowikchuk.

Dwayne Drescher adds: "Two decades ago, there were no beavers around. Today, there are tons of them. We drink water around our cabins, and the beavers bring fears of 'beaver fever' and water sickness. It's an ongoing challenge to adapt our traditional lifestyle."

"We want to bring awareness to what our communities need," said Carmen Kuptana, of the Inuvialuit Young Leaders' Advisory.

Impacts:

For the first time, Inuvialuit youth voices and artistic expressions will be included in a federal science assessment report. This work contributes to shaping future climate policy by engaging unique Inuvialuit knowledge based on oral traditions applying full-bodied sensing – a holistic integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. This project provides a forum and promotes the principle that there must be a commitment to centering Inuit voices in climate research and reports moving forward. Inuit young leaders are changing the climate conversation.It emphasizes the need for long-term commitments to building research capacity in the North, directing resources to Inuit-led initiatives, and supporting cultural revitalization as a foundation for climate resilience. Inuit youth and emerging leaders are at the forefront of this transformation: reshaping the climate conversation with innovation, cultural strength, and community-based knowledge.

"Our ancestral voices are coming through our youth," said Inuk researcher Dr. Karla Jessen Williamson.

REMIROCaN

Summary:

Inuit communities are exploring pathways to energy sovereignty by transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources. In Nunavut, residents use 79% more petroleum than the Canadian average. Inuit communities are interested in alternative solutions that provide energy security and reduce environmental impacts, such as fuel spills and emissions, while supporting community priorities including energy resilience and independence.

The REMIROCaN project is an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs through the management of dwelling energy loads and the implementation of renewable energy technologies. The project assesses this potential by investigating building and energy conversion technologies that could work in Inuit Nunangat.

Representative family cabin near Iqaluit. Photo courtesy of REMIROCaN project team.

Why it matters:

Communities are increasingly interested in solutions that improve energy security, reduce environmental impacts, and align with priorities such as resilience, affordability, and independence. Renewable energy offers promising opportunities.

"Nunavummiut pay some of the highest electricity prices in the country and continue to rely almost entirely on diesel fuel for electricity generation. The potential for renewable energy to significantly reduce costs, increase resiliency in Nunavut, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Territory is immense," says Heather Shilton, a project co-leader who works with Nunavut Nukkiksautiit Corporation.

What did the team do?

The project carried out technical, environmental, and socioeconomic analysis to identify feasible and community-driven renewable energy pathways. Key activities included:

- **Assessing renewable technologies:** The team evaluated small-scale renewable energy systems suitable for off-grid and community dwellings, including solar photovoltaics, wind, and hydrokinetic turbines.
- **Modelling energy-efficient dwellings:** New building designs were modelled to achieve at least a 50% emissions reduction and up to 60% lower energy use compared to current practices. "Passive House" designs showed potential for energy reductions up to 90%.
- **Wind and hydro resource assessments:** Detailed wind resource studies were completed for 13 Qikiqtaaluk communities, identifying eight high potential sites. Hydrokinetic modelling of the Iqaluit Kuunga River showed that a single 10 m^2 turbine could generate about 75 MWh annually – enough electricity for roughly 13 homes.
- **Energy production and demand modelling:** The project generated synthetic climate and energy use datasets to support long-term planning and developed a multiobjective optimization framework for hybrid household-scale systems.
- **Identifying barriers and solutions:** The team documented policy, regulatory, financial, and infrastructure barriers to renewable energy adoption and proposed practical, community-centred remedies.

Supporting socioeconomic advancement: Inuit approaches to employment, training, and community capacity-building in renewable energy were developed, helping ensure local benefits from future projects.

Impacts:

The project identified which communities would benefit most from small-scale renewable initiatives. Inuit community members now have access to data on suitable technologies, energy yields, and demand profiles to inform decision-making for a community demonstration project.

One of the major challenges to implementing renewable energy projects in Arctic Canada is the lack of programmes that equip people with the necessary understanding and skills sets. Future work includes exploring the development of a short training course for local residents in collaboration with Arctic College.

No single technology can meet annual energy needs, and an approach combining wind, solar, hydrokinetic, and energy efficiency can deliver a reliable and sustainable energy solutions.

IFSNu

Summary:

Inuit country foods connect people to their culture and environment. The Inuksiutit: Food Sovereignty in Nunavut and the Co-production of Country Food Knowledge (IFSNu) Project digitally documents Inuit knowledge about country foods, supporting health, climate change resilience, and cultural sharing across generations.

Photo courtesy of the IFSNu project team.

Why it matters:

Food connects us to each other, to our cultural heritage, and to our environment. This project explored these connections by examining how Inuit food stories renew social bonds with ancestors, uphold community customs, and foster healthy eating practices that support community health. It assessed how current and future Inuit food choices could be affected by climate change. The project also asks how Inuit knowledge and food stories can contribute to a fuller societal understanding of equity, justice, and sustainability in Inuit Nunangat.

The project was guided by three core objectives:

1. Strengthening intergenerational transmission of country food knowledge.
2. Fostering community well-being by building capacity among Inuit youth.
3. Advancing local, regional, national, and international understanding of Inuit food insecurity and its ties to climate change.

What did the team do?

The IFSNu team brought together Inuit community leaders, Knowledge Holders, scholars, Elders, youth, artists, and health and social science researchers. Working collaboratively, Inuit and non-Inuit partners examined the cultural, environmental, and health dimensions of food in Inuit Nunangat.

- **Documenting Inuit food knowledge:** We examined how Inuit food stories renew social bonds with ancestors, uphold community values such as environmental stewardship and sharing, and promote healthy eating practices.
- **Understanding the impact of climate change on Inuit food choices:** We explored how shifting environmental conditions are influencing traditional food systems and dietary habits.
- **Celebrating Inuit country food traditions and advocating for food sovereignty:** We considered how these efforts can contribute to broader movements for equity, justice, and sustainability across Inuit Nunangat.

Through this work, the team created a substantial digital archive – over 200 hours of video, photographs, and audio recordings. Many teachings were captured in Inuktitut, with Elders demonstrating harvesting, butchering, and preparation techniques and sharing traditional vocabulary related to food.

"Food sovereignty, for me, it is to assert a culture. It is to practice culture, to use culture, to use it every day. It is, deciding what is our right for Inuit," says Sheila Katsak. "By focusing on the connections between food, health, and climate, Inuit communities can plan for a stronger, healthier future."

Project outputs include films, recipe books, social media content, research toolkits, and community-curated exhibitions in Kinngait, Mittimatalik, and Iqaluit. These materials reflect Inuit perspectives on food systems, environmental change, wildlife health, nutrition, and well-being. Seven Inuit youth were trained in digital storytelling methods, working alongside Elders to document knowledge using mobile tools. The co-developed Food Sovereignty Research Toolkits will support future Inuit-led research across the region.

Impacts:

The project responded directly to challenges identified in the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) Food Security Strategy, the ITK Climate Change Strategy, and the National Inuit Strategy on Research. It aligns itself with calls for the creation of climate-resilient infrastructure to support the harvesting economy by (i) ensuring the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and practices about country food systems; (ii) fostering community well-being through capacity-building in younger generations of Inuit; and (iii) advancing local, regional, national, and international understanding of the drivers of food insecurity among Inuit and their connections to climate change.

The project has helped to ensure the intergenerational transmission of knowledge about country food, as well as fostering future community well-being through capacity building in younger generations of Inuit. It has built a platform that will continue to advance local, regional, national and international understandings of the drivers of food insecurity among Inuit and their connections to global climate change.

WORKING TOGETHER TO:

UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO MARINE AND COASTAL RISKS

IQP-ASR

Summary:

The Inuit Qaujisarnirmut Pilirijjutit on Arctic Shipping Risks in Inuit Nunangat (IQP-ASR) project examines how increasing marine shipping affects Inuit communities, the environment, and regional governance across Inuit Nunangat. As climate change reduces sea ice and opens Arctic waters for longer periods, vessel traffic is increasing and bringing both new opportunities and new risks. The project brings together Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Western science to understand shipping-related impacts and to support Inuit-led approaches to marine management.

Why it matters:

The Arctic Ocean is changing rapidly as sea ice declines, leading to a significant rise in vessel traffic. Shipping across Inuit Nunangat has more than doubled over the past decade, driven by resource development, resupply needs, tourism, and renewed interest in the Northwest Passage. While this activity supports local and regional economies, it also raises concerns for Inuit communities that rely on healthy ecosystems, safe travel routes, and marine wildlife for cultural and food security.

Communities have voiced concerns about underwater noise affecting marine mammals, along with pollution from vessel emissions, microplastics, fuel residues, and antifouling paints. There is also a growing risk that ships could introduce non-indigenous species, which may disrupt ecosystems and threaten local livelihoods. Given these pressures, decision-makers need clear, community-grounded data to guide future marine traffic management and ensure Inuit knowledge informs governance as the Arctic becomes more accessible.

IQP-ASR was created to respond to these needs by integrating community priorities, Inuit knowledge systems, and scientific research to better understand shipping risks and identify culturally grounded mitigation options.

eDNA smapling.
Photo: Lana Dolgova,
IQP-ASR project team.

What did the team do?

The project focused on four major areas of analysis.

- **Understanding shipping patterns:** Researchers compiled detailed historical datasets on vessel traffic across Inuit Nunangat from 1990 to 2022, including focused studies in Arviat and Pond Inlet. These analyses helped identify when, where, and how shipping has increased, as well as the main drivers of traffic growth.
- **Modelling underwater noise:** Using ship traffic data, the team modelled underwater noise from different vessel classes and speeds. These sound maps highlight areas where noise is concentrated and where marine mammals and hunters may be most affected.
- **Monitoring pollution and environmental change:** Working with Inuit youth, hunters, and Elders, the project undertook field sampling of water, sediment, and sea ice to detect microplastics and other ship-related contaminants. Environmental DNA sampling was also used to establish biodiversity baselines and detect early signs of non-indigenous species.
- **Assessing risk and supporting decision-making:** The team produced risk maps and tested mitigation tools that can support Inuit organizations, communities, and governments. The project used the Aajiiqatigiingniq Research Methodology, which ensures decisions are guided by Inuit-led, consensus-based processes. Community engagement was central throughout the project, with results shared through local radio, translated materials, social media updates, and community open houses.

Impacts:

The project showed that shipping has increased substantially since 2013, with Pond Inlet experiencing the highest activity in Nunavut due largely to mine-related bulk carriers. Despite warming temperatures, multi year ice continues to create choke points that shorten the effective shipping season. Field sampling detected low levels of ship-derived microplastics, with higher concentrations near hightraffic areas such as Pond Inlet. Environmental DNA work led to the first documented detection of the invasive bay barnacle in Inuit Nunangat, underscoring the importance of continued monitoring.

IQP-ASR outputs are now supporting local and regional efforts to understand and manage environmental and cultural risks tied to vessel traffic. Underwater noise modelling is informing wildlife management discussions, and communities are using project findings to better understand existing shipping regulations and mitigation measures. Training initiatives have strengthened community capacity in environmental monitoring, and Inuit participation has ensured the research reflects local priorities.

The project has deepened partnerships among Inuit organizations, universities, and government agencies, creating strong foundations for future collaboration. Findings have been shared with national and international bodies, including the Arctic Council, the International Maritime Organization, and Transport Canada, helping ensure Inuit knowledge guides the development of Arctic shipping policy.

NNSAR

Summary:

The project worked to strengthen the search and rescue response and prevention in Nunavut and Nunavik through capacity and skill building.

Nunavut SAR Roundtable 2024. Photo courtesy of the NNSAR project team.

Why it matters:

Search and rescue (SAR) services delivered by community, territorial, and federal responders provide a safety net that allows Inuit to live, travel, harvest, and work on the land, contributing to individual and community health and well-being. But it is a challenging task.

As one experienced community SAR volunteer says: "In my community, and probably in all the communities, searchers have to cover a lot of ground. There's a lot of space up here. And all the machines – the boats, the snowmobiles, even the quads – are so powerful now, it makes it easier to go further out. You've got the big area, you've got the weather, the ice, and it's all changing. It isn't easy."

The region's vast size and tough environment combine to make time the enemy of all responders. Limited local resources, infrastructure, equipment, and training gaps, jurisdictional issues, and the distance from outside help all add to the challenges.

In Nunavut and Nunavik, SAR often means brothers searching for brothers, parents for children, and children for parents. Nearly every responder has experienced the heartbreak of finding a loved one deceased.

What did the team do?

The interdisciplinary project team was made up of experienced Inuit responders and experts in search and rescue and emergency management, engineering, modelling, health and safety, risk analysis, and emergency alerting technology. It worked to identify and understand the challenges and areas for improvement. To do this the team collected and assessed best practices, and co-developed solutions rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

As part of this work, the team held seven regional roundtables across Nunavut and Nunavik with over 200 participants, including Nunavummiut, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG), and other agencies.

And it facilitated SAR exchanges between Arctic responders and their government partners at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Ontario (2023) and Canadian Forces Bases Halifax and Greenwood, Nova Scotia (2025).

It also conducted four after-action debriefs with SAR responders after challenging incidents, held community SAR exercises in Cambridge Bay and Arviat, Nunavut, and collected information on unreported SAR cases in all fourteen of Nunavik's communities.

"The regional search and rescue roundtables were at the core of this project," says Peter Kikkert, co-leader on the project and a public policy expert at St. Francis Xavier University. "Participants shared their knowledge with and learned from practitioners in other communities, exchanged lessons learned and best practices, discussed issues with federal and territorial partners, and built the relationships that allow SAR operations to succeed."

Impacts:

The project developed a deeper understanding of the core challenges facing Inuit responders, particularly around training, equipment, coordination, and critical incident stress. It also identified barriers that have impeded community responders and their government partners from collaborating during SAR operations. Together, we worked to develop best practices, practical solutions, and new approaches to SAR to address these challenges.

The project team also developed a novel probabilistic risk model to represent responders' understanding of the overall Arctic SAR system, and cause-effect relationships between the various elements of that system. The model, developed through extensive community engagement and grounded in the narratives of local volunteers, highlights the interdependencies between environmental conditions, preparedness, information quality, resource availability, and SAR outcomes. By incorporating local knowledge and addressing systemic risks, the model offers a quantitative framework for SAR decision-making and policy development.

The research team worked with more than two hundred Inuit community responders from all 39 communities in Nunavut and Nunavik and dozens of their government partners to create, strengthen, and sustain Arctic SAR. This work involved Inuit responders, local researchers, and Elders, and emphasized equity, gender-based analysis, and the inclusion of community voices.

The NNSAR Project developed new knowledge on Arctic SAR governance, local capacity, and culturally informed emergency response models.

These efforts have led to important changes in the way that government partners, such as Nunavut Emergency Management, the Coast Guard, police, and Joint Coordination Centres, engage with and support Inuit responders. The team worked with responders to co-develop the practitioner-oriented training, tools, and decision-support mechanisms required to effectively undertake SAR operations in some of the most difficult conditions on earth.

Through its recommendations to policymakers, the team has informed decision-making on SAR capabilities and infrastructure required in the Arctic. Finally, and most importantly, the project has improved safety, raised mental health awareness, and strengthened resilience among frontline community responders.

NUNA

Summary:

As climate change increases erosion and melts permafrost across the Inuvialuit region, this project worked with local people to plan the best ways to respond.

Storm erosion exposing ground ice in Tuktoyaktuk. Photo: Michael Lim, Nuna project team.

Why it matters:

Communities in the Inuvialuit region already experience the impacts of climate change. Erosion, subsidence, and flooding threaten the physical, cultural, and social landscape, and disrupt coastal ecosystems that support traditional livelihoods, food security, and biodiversity.

The Nuna project, which takes its name from the Inuvialuktun word for 'land,' 'country,' and 'soil,' brought together a diverse and interdisciplinary team that worked with coastal communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) to develop regionally appropriate tools and solutions to mitigate and adapt to the wide-ranging impacts of thawing ground.

These communities developed Inuit-led ways to address climate change impacts on coastal environments. The project directly addressed community concerns on coastal erosion, ground movements as the permafrost melts, changes in air quality (particularly dust), and coastal navigation routes and contaminants.

While the physical impacts of these changes on Inuit communities are increasingly evident, the extent and timing of future trends remain uncertain due to the limited availability of targeted, appropriate, and sustained data. The broader effects on mental health, as well as on social, economic, and cultural well-being, are also not well understood.

What did the team do?

Community climate monitors and local youth were equipped and trained to develop better predictions of future erosion rates using 3D processing techniques, advanced ground survey methods, and new low-cost monitoring technologies. These tools form the basis of critical baseline surveys and an early warning system, which established true rates of change to enable preventative action before damaging levels occur.

Community boats fitted with mapping sonar automatically uploaded data on changes in bathymetry and navigation routes to a comprehensive publicly accessible map used for safer travel, strategic planning, and modelling storm surges. Nuna also assessed the effectiveness of engineering and nature-based solutions to tackle ground thaw and erosion issues.

A core theme to Nuna was to capture community-wide voices on the impacts of climate change and potential adaptation and solution plans. Continuous engagement, interviews, photovoice and a questionnaire identified and prioritized the most pressing cultural, social, economic, and health impacts, and guided the co-production of effective and culturally appropriate mitigation strategies that support long-term resilience.

Impacts:

Nuna's new baseline surveys and monitoring datasets have identified similarities and differences between the priorities and concerns at the communities of Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour and Ulukhaktok, and between effective and appropriate solutions.

Nuna has helped quantify the impacts of storms on coastal erosion and water-based hazards such as driftwood and the release of contaminants. These contaminants, including heavy metals linked to specific legacy waste sites, prompted the co-development of a community-led water chemistry laboratory to support ongoing monitoring and responsive sampling for proactive community action.

The results showed navigation routes around the communities are shifting, particularly in response to storm events and changing the vulnerability of certain areas. Real-time health threats from air quality changes caused by dust sources in the shifting landscape have shown the effectiveness of different road treatment and spraying and provided an optimal frequency with which to limit community exposure to harmful conditions.

The project has underpinned the case for a timely new $53M investment in coastal defences. Ground surveys have helped to secure land transfers for development projects, while engineering solutions such as thermosyphons have been shown to restore some aspects of permafrost in disturbed ground. The datasets from ongoing air and water quality monitoring have provided more informed and effective responses to emerging threats such as wildfire smoke and more intense storm and flood events.

Sikuttiaq

Summary:

Sikuttiaq is the Inuktitut word for "safe ice to travel on". This Inuit-led project combined Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ – Inuit knowledge, values, and worldview), satellite data, drone technology, and on-ice measurements to map dangerous slush and rough ice conditions.

SmartICE sensor deployment near Qikiqtarjuaq. Photo courtesy of the Sikuttiaq project team.

Why it matters:

For Inuit, sea ice is a hunting platform, a travel highway, and a central part of their culture and identity. Changing global climate negatively affects sea ice, often resulting in more slush and increasingly rough ice. These ice conditions make sea ice travel more dangerous, contributing to an increase in search and rescue incidents, mental health stress, and food insecurity.

Through this project, these travel hazards are now being mapped using tools designed with and for communities. The combination of IQ, on-ice measurements, and high-resolution satellite imagery has been viewed by Inuit users as the right combination to ensure safe ice travel in Inuit Nunangat.

What did the team do?

Guided by Inuit co-principal investigators, the project team combined IQ with satellite imagery, in-situ sensors and ice measurements, and custom drone technology to co-develop new methods to characterize and map slush and roughness for SmartICE's Sikumik Qaujimajjuti mapping program.

The project team worked to develop satellite-derived community and seasonal specific roughness maps, visualized in accordance with categories defined by community needs. The team also tested drone systems for ice roughness mapping and for calibration of the satellite-derived maps.

The team used a multi-frequency (EM) induction sensor as a basis for community on-ice mapping of slush areas. The sensor was towed by snowmobile and, to allow it to be deployed over dangerous ice, a custom heavy-lift drone.

Community knowledge and seasonal observations helped to characterize slush, while synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellite signal returns from slush-covered sea ice were interpreted to generate maps of slush distribution for ice users. And training materials were co-developed for community operation of the drones, and the on-ice measurements, to support calibration of the satellite-derived maps.

Impacts:

This work directly addresses Inuit-identified safety risks by supporting the development of practical, community-guided maps of slush and rough ice.

"Helping to keep my community safe when they travel on the ice is very important to me and I am very proud that my community trusts me to provide the SmartICE ice monitoring and mapping service for them. They have been noticing that the ice is changing and becoming less predictable, with more rough ice and slush," - Andrew Arreak, co-principal investigator, SmartICE Sea-ice Monitoring & Information Inc.

This project contributes to a unique, Inuit-led method for mapping Arctic ice travel hazards by SmartICE that is grounded in both IQ and geophysical science. This Sikumik Qaujimajjuti (meaning in Inuktitut "a tool to know how the ice is") program disseminates regular Ice Travel Safety Maps in shared community spaces and on social media, allowing participating communities across Inuit Nunangat to access near real-time mapping of ice travel conditions.

The project team also produced low-cost, drone-based mapping tools and methods that specifically address deficiencies of commercially available drones that struggle to operate effectively in the Arctic.

Critically, to enable scalability and uptake across Inuit Nunangat, the team co-developed an Inuit training programme for ground and drone-based data-collection to support the calibration and quality control of the satellite-based maps that are being developed.

The work will continue as the principal members of the project team were awarded $1.5M from the New Frontiers in Research Fund – International (NFRFI) to refine and expand the community roughness and slush maps. An additional award of $200,000 from Polar Knowledge Canada to SmartICE will adapt the project tools and training programs to the needs of search-and-rescue responders. The work of this project and these awards will support increased community safety during ice travel and emergency management.

WORKING TOGETHER TO:

UNDERSTAND THE CHANGING ECOSYSTEM; WILDLIFE HEALTH AND THE IMPACT ON COUNTRY FOOD

ArcticEID

Summary:

This project investigated why two bacterial diseases (Brucellosis and Erysipelas) are on the rise in caribou and muskox populations, and how Inuit harvesters can ensure their meat is safe to eat.

Photo: McCaide Wooten, ArcticEID project team.

Why it matters:

Inuit have long recognized, and had methods to protect themselves from, zoonotic diseases in wildlife. However, new diseases, or changing patterns of known diseases, have led to concerns about the safety of country foods and the impacts on wildlife populations.Some diseases, such as Brucellosis and Erysipelas, caused by the bacteria *Brucella suis* biovar 4 and *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae*, are on the rise in parts of Inuit Nunangat.

Brucellosis and Erysipelas threaten muskox and caribou populations, which are important culturally and as country foods for Inuit. The diseases also pose potential public health risks to those who handle or consume country foods.

"We're working to bring together Inuit Qaujimajatugangit and Western science to better understand these diseases, and how harvesters are making sure their meat is safe to eat and can continue to do so," says Susan Kutz, project co-leader and a wildlife veterinarian at the University of Calgary.

This project had three main objectives. The first was to understand why these diseases have increased in caribou and muskoxen. The second was to assess the risk these pathogens pose to people and animals. And the third was to develop mitigation strategies to protect Inuit health and conserve wildlife.

What did the team do?

Community-based wildlife health surveillance in Cambridge Bay, Ulukhaktok, and Kugluktuk directly addressed questions about caribou and muskox health and sustainability. The project showed that *Erysipelothrix* bacteria can persist in carcasses in the Arctic for over two years, and can infect multiple host species such as Arctic foxes, wolves, lemmings, and birds. *Erysipelothrix* transmission likely relies on multiple hosts and environmental reservoirs, including infected carcasses and contaminated soil.

Nearly 100 specimens collected through community-based sampling from apparently healthy harvested caribou and muskoxen were screened for the presence of Brucella bacteria. The pathogen was only found in two fecal samples, providing assurance to communities about the safety of country food.

Guided by community concerns, the team developed landscape genomic models to evaluate the influence of environmental factors and landscape features on *Erysipelothrix* transmission. These models provided valuable insights into the spatial patterns of genetic variation and pathogen transmission.

The project team supported community-led efforts to monitor and protect food safety with workshops and training camps. These emphasized reciprocal learning, where Inuit monitors and youth exchanged skills. A key highlight was a two-day wildlife disease workshop held at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut.

Impacts:

This project contributes to the translation and sharing of Inuit knowledge to guide future research, protect human health, and inform wildlife management decisions. Workshops on wildlife health, training in safe sample collection techniques, information bulletins on common diseases, sharing of traditional approaches to safe harvesting and butchering and a 3D-animated science communication video translated into Inuinnaqtun (in progress) have built on Inuit knowledge and enhanced community capacity to identify abnormalities in wildlife and understand and mitigate human health risks.

The knowledge-sharing elements of the project (including workshops and seminars) were designed to develop knowledge and expertise on food sample testing within communities, thereby shortening the time required to make decisions on meat consumption and concurrently helping to prevent avoidable cases of human illness.

Overall, this project has increased capacity at the community level to detect and respond to emerging wildlife diseases. In doing so, it has improved confidence in country foods and increased food security and safety. The community-based wildlife health surveillance component has been critical to generate data on wildlife population health and elevate the Inuit voice in wildlife management.

BARIN

Summary:

This project examined how increasing beaver populations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR) affect local ecosystems and how these ecological shifts influence Inuit communities and their well-being.

Inuvialuit team member, Camellia Gray, in front of the entrance to an abandoned beaver lodge exposed in a drained lake near Tuktoyaktuk. Photo: Kathryn Bennett.

Why it matters:

Inuit co-management organisations, Elders, and community members have voiced concerns that more beavers in the ISR are affecting fish and fish habitat through changes in water flow and water quality. Impacts of beavers can cascade down ecological systems, causing transformations known as regime shifts. This project examined links between beaver occupancy, stream and lake characteristics, impacts on fish populations, and local communities in collaboration with the Inuvialuit Fish Joint Management Committee (FJMC) and Imaryuk monitoring programme.

"There were eight dams in Hans Creek last year, and this year there were ten. Hans Creek feeds into the Husky Lakes, and it is one of the major fish-bearing streams in the area. With the amount of activity – whether that's humans fishing in Husky Lakes, and the beavers – that's going to really affect our ecosystem. Whales and seals also rely on fish in the Husky Lakes." - Herb Nakimayak Chair of the Inuvialuit Joint Secretariat, FJMC.

Inuvialuit have long adapted to environmental change, and beavers represent another shift requiring continued adaptation. The project highlighted the resilience of communities in the face of change alongside the disruptive nature of beavers.

What did the team do?

The project assessed how much the beaver population is growing, where expansion is occurring, and how this affects water systems, fish, and fish habitat. It also examined how these ecological changes influence surrounding communities.

Working with community monitors, researchers developed a method to map beaver occupancy using photo and video documentation, drones, and scientific measurements. The team gathered baseline data along the Inuvik–Tuktoyaktuk highway and at the Trail Valley Creek Research Watershed. Community-led photo surveys and drone imagery were paired with dendrochronology, hydrological monitoring, and remote sensing to build tools for assessing past and present beaver distribution and enabling long-term monitoring beyond the project.

Key findings included that beaver activity changed greenhouse gas emissions in small areas within lakes directly next to beaver dams. It also showed beaver activity in a lake does not change overall lake biogeochemical functioning, or how carbon and nitrogen move in and out of a lake. Beaver dams did result in large increases in lake levels and reduced streamflow below the dam immediately following dam construction.

Study of tree ring dating and satellite images developed tools to assess past beaver occupancy and beaver colonization via dam building. Meanwhile, community experts reported impacts of beavers on fishing creeks, travel over land in summer and winter, and expressed concerns about drinking water and slumping due to permafrost thaw.

Impacts:

In collaboration with communities, the project produced maps of beaver lodges and dams and compiled information on occupancy, creating long-term monitoring tools that support stewardship efforts as ecological changes accelerate. Partnerships were strengthened through close work with the Inuvialuit FJMC, the Imaryuk monitoring program, Inuvialuit Hunter and Trapper Committees, and the Inuvialuit Joint Secretariat.

The project strengthened partnerships through collaboration with Inuvialuit FJMC, the Imaryuk monitoring program, Inuvialuit Hunter and Trapper Committees and the Inuvialuit Joint Secretariat. This led to exploring co-development of an app to monitor beaver occupancy with the Hunter and Trapper Committees, as well as a filmed documentary as part of the Nature of Things series, with the Imaryuk monitors. This documentary is expected to be aired on CBC (Canada) and PBS (USA). Community partnerships also led to ongoing funding, including a successful grant for Kirt Ruben and the Imaryuk monitoring program and a partnered university–government research grant.

Overall, the project provides a model for Arctic-focused, Inuit-led, and interdisciplinary science that could be adapted internationally in regions experiencing ecological transformation due to species migration or climate change.

IMAGINE

Summary:

This project explores how climate change is reshaping the cryosphere (frozen water) and hydrosphere (liquid water) in northern Nunatsiavut, particularly within Tongait KakKasuangita SilakKijapvinga (Torngat Mountains National Park), a region of deep cultural significance to Nunatsiavut and Nunavik Inuit.

Photo: Nick Barrand, IMAGINE project team.

Why it matters:

Northern Nunatsiavut is experiencing rapid warming, ice melt, and ecological transformation. Yet, there is little data on how these changes affect ecosystems, wildlife, vegetation, and Inuit livelihoods. This project was launched to address that gap by tracking changes in glaciers, snow, ice, and permafrost, allowing us to understand how these shifts influence water resources and wildlife habitats.

This project set out to fill that gap by documenting:

- How glaciers, snow, and permafrost are changing
- How those changes affect water systems
- How shifting ecosystems influence key wildlife species
- How Inuit communities experience and respond to these changes

For example, diminishing seasonal and perennial ice affects caribou habitat and migration routes, which leads to direct impacts on food security, cultural practices, and community well-being.

By building this knowledge base, the project will not only deepen scientific understanding of a rapidly changing Arctic but also strengthen the resilience of local communities. The findings will support Inuit-led efforts to adapt and to safeguard the ecosystems that sustain life in northern Nunatsiavut.

What did the team do?

- Delivered Inuit youth training and workshops focused on science skills and interpreting environmental information
- Mapped caribou and ptarmigan habitat across northern landscapes
- Documented Inuit knowledge and community perspectives on environmental change
- Conducted glacier fieldwork, including mass-balance measurements and installation of temperature loggers
- Established vegetation monitoring sites across a range of ecological conditions

What we learned:

- Caribou experience greater forage limitations in winter than in summer, a finding that can inform recovery and management strategies across Nunatsiavut.
- Climate impacts on vegetation, snow cover, and habitat quality have significant implications for caribou health and population trends.
- Inuit knowledge, environmental governance, and Inuit sovereignty are essential for sustainable wildlife management and long-term ecosystem stewardship.

A central achievement of the project is the Inuit Youth Group Research Training Program, which provided hands-on learning opportunities and mentorship for Nunatsiavummiut youth. This initiative helped establish a network of more than 20 Inuit-led and Inuit co-developed researchers, practitioners, and community members, all working together on environmental change and adaptation in northern Nunatsiavut.

This growing network represents a meaningful shift toward Inuit-led research and community-driven scientific capacity. It strengthens socioeconomic and cultural resilience by empowering Inuit researchers and ensuring research questions, methods, and outcomes reflect community priorities.

Impacts

This project fills a critical gap in understanding how climate change affects ecosystems, wildlife, and Inuit livelihoods in northern Nunatsiavut. The information gathered supports:

- Community-driven adaptation
- Improved wildlife and habitat management
- Stronger socioeconomic and cultural resilience
- Broader scientific understanding of Arctic climate change
- Inuit-led decision-making grounded in both science and Inuit knowledge

Ultimately, these findings help protect food security, sustain traditional practices, and ensure that Inuit communities remain connected to their land and cultural heritage. The project has laid the groundwork for long-term environmental observation in Nunatsiavut. Newly installed monitoring equipment (including glacier loggers, landscape sensors, and hydrology instruments) will support ongoing data collection and future adaptation planning.

This project helped train early-career researchers, from youth to postdoctoral scholars, strengthening Inuit leadership in environmental science. This work will continue to support community-driven adaptation and ensure that climate research remains culturally relevant, locally meaningful, and Inuit-led.

NGPlastics

Summary:

The NGPlastics project in Nunatsiavut is an Inuit-led, community-based environmental monitoring program grounded in capacity sharing. Rather than assuming that Western science is the primary knowledge system, the project brings Inuit and Western expertise together as equal and mutually reinforcing. Led by Inuk researcher Liz Pijogge of the Nunatsiavut Government, with support from partners at Memorial University, the National Research Council, the Natural History Museum in the UK, and new Inuit hires in Labrador, the project examined plastic pollution and contaminant trends in local food species and the environment. Research focused on birds, fish, and marine mammals harvested for food, as well as shoreline macroplastics and museum specimens, to build a 100year timeline of pollution in Nunatsiavut.

Elizabeth Tuglavina looks in a quadrat for plastics on the shore of Hopedale, 2024. Photo: Max Liboiron.

Why it matters:

This work responds to community concerns about plastic pollution and its potential impacts on wild foods central to Inuit foodways, health, and culture. Community members expressed uncertainty about whether seals, fish, birds, and other harvested species might ingest plastics that could make them unsafe to eat.

Equally important, the project challenges dominant research models by centering Inuit governance and expertise. Traditional presentations or oneway "knowledge translation" reinforce power imbalances. In contrast, this project uses On the Land workshops and participatory analysis to ensure that research is shaped by local priorities, grounded in lived experience, and accountable to Nunatsiavummiut. The approach advances Indigenous Data Sovereignty, strengthens recognition of Inuit skill and labour, and helps reshape how communities want to be acknowledged in research (including expectations for authorship and attribution).

What did the team do?

Through community workshops across Nain, Makkovik, Hopedale, and Rigolet, Inuit researchers defined which species to sample, where to collect specimens, and how to align sampling with seasonal harvesting. The team examined Arctic char, Greenland cod, ringed seals, ptarmigan, ducks, seabirds, shoreline plastics, and marine surface water.

Laboratory analysis included microscopy and spectrometry, complemented by community-driven methods such as participatory statistics, collaborative plastic identification, and On the Land workshops. Facilitated discussions on authorship led to a community consensus that all participants (including youth, bear guards, and camp managers) should be recognized as authors because their labour and presence make the research possible. A blog post produced through this model lists 46 authors, most of them Inuit. The Inuk-led Community Attribution and Authorship Working Group will continue to guide and expand these practices.

The team found that plastics were largely absent from shorelines and food species. When plastics were present, they were small enough to pass harmlessly through animals' digestive systems, confirming that wild food is safe to eat. While most plastics were local, community members also identified items from Greenland and Italy, as well as oil jugs from the 1960s and salmon tags from the 1980s, reflecting historical activity and long-range pollution pathways.

Impacts:

The project's most significant contribution is its Inuit-led methodology, which shifts how research is governed, conducted, and credited in Nunatsiavut. It strengthens local capacity not by "training Inuit in Western methods," but by building research processes that treat Inuit expertise as foundational. This model is influencing how institutions approach Indigenous partnerships, attribution, and ownership of knowledge.

Scientifically, the project supports ongoing monitoring of plastics and heavy metals in food species and establishes a foundation for long-term contaminants research using both contemporary samples and archival museum collections. The next stage will extend the 100-year pollutant timeline by examining heavy metals and isotopic markers in museum specimens, while continuing to track plastics and metals in birds harvested for food. The team will also deepen work on Indigenous Data Sovereignty, expand co-authorship standards, and further develop community-led collaborative analysis.

Nunamit Takunnatut

Summary:

As climate change introduces new wildlife pathogens to the Arctic, Nunavimmiut communities are leading the development of an integrated wildlife health monitoring program. This initiative builds local capacity to observe, detect, and respond to changes in wildlife and their environment, including tracking pathogens and other climate-related impacts. By centering Inuit leadership and knowledge, the project supports proactive stewardship and long-term adaptation, ensuring that communities are equipped to safeguard both human and ecological health in a rapidly changing Arctic.

Photo: Géraldine Gouin, Nunamit Takunnatut project team.

Why it matters:

Wildlife underpins food security, culture, and community health throughout Nunavik. Species such as fish, birds, and terrestrial mammals (including caribou) form essential parts of Inuit diets, knowledge systems, and seasonal practices. Climate change, industrial development, and shifting species distributions all introduce new pressures on these animals and their habitats. Communities expressed a clear need for a monitoring approach that could track changes in wildlife health, detect new pathogens, and respond proactively as environmental conditions evolve.

What did the team do?

- **Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Sharing**
  Knowledge exchange and capacity sharing between researchers and Nunavimmiut around wildlife health was a central focus of this project. Inuit and southern researchers collaborated to strengthen skills in animal sample collection and testing. The project also provided summer internships for Inuit students, offering hands-on laboratory experience, opportunities to attend national conferences, and participation in traditional harvesting activities. The project team aimed to empower Inuit communities and local organizations to detect and respond to environmental change—including those affecting wildlife, land, and human health, by integrating traditional knowledge as well as scientific methods, such as environmental DNA (eDNA).
- **Advancing Monitoring Methods**
  The project team advanced eDNA/eRNA-based techniques for wildlife pathogen detection and expanded their application to include vertebrate wildlife monitoring. While the project was initially designed to focus solely on pathogen surveillance, community input led to the integration of vertebrate species detection into the workflow. This shift created a more comprehensive approach to ecosystem health assessment, providing valuable insights into both disease presence and wildlife distribution.

By documenting Inuit observations of changes in wildlife health and behavior, the project established a robust foundation for informed advocacy and proactive wildlife management in Nunavik.

What did we learn?

The eDNA sequencing revealed a rich range of Arctic wildlife. Water samples contained genetic traces of fish such as Arctic char and whitefish; semiaquatic birds and mammals including beaver, seals, and eider ducks; and terrestrial species such as ptarmigan and caribou. Many matched species widely known through Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, demonstrating strong alignment between genomic detection and community observations.

Beyond species detection, metagenomic sequencing identified microorganisms and potential pathogens related to fish and wildlife health – for example, *Aeromonas salmonicida*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Saprolegnia parasitica*, and several novel viral groups such as seadornaviruses and circoviruses. These findings provide one of the first genomic baselines for northern aquatic environments and establish a reference point for monitoring future ecological and climatedriven changes.

Importantly, the project demonstrated that community-led eDNA collection is both practical and highly effective in Arctic settings, offering a powerful new tool to complement Inuit knowledge.

Impacts:

A hybrid wildlife monitoring system was developed in partnership with Nunavimmiut, integrating Inuit knowledge to ensure cultural relevance and long-term sustainability. The project implemented a fully community-driven research approach that enhances programme effectiveness while fostering local ownership and empowerment, contributing to its lasting impact. Key recommendations were produced to serve as a blueprint for future monitoring initiatives in Nunavik. Detailed, long-term datasets on key wildlife species were generated, creating data resources that will directly inform wildlife management decisions, support effective advocacy for policy change, and enable early detection of climate-driven shifts in wildlife health and migration patterns. Ultimately, the project established a vital, locally controlled tool for understanding and responding to the complex impacts of climate change on Nunavik's ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

ENDING STATEMENT

As this Impact Study concludes, it is fitting to reflect on the remarkable achievements that have defined the Canada – Inuit Nunangat – United Kingdom Arctic Research Programme (CINUK). Over the course of the programme, communities, researchers, and partners have worked together with purpose and determination, demonstrating what is possible when research is grounded in respect, shared governance, and Inuit leadership. The projects showcased throughout this report exemplify a collective commitment to advancing knowledge in ways that are not only scientifically robust but also directly responsive to community priorities across Inuit Nunangat.

Looking back, the programme has achieved far more than the generation of new data or analyses. It has strengthened relationships, revitalised knowledge exchange, and built lasting capacity across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, Nunavik, and Nunatsiavut. It has supported emerging leaders, elevated Inuit knowledge systems, and demonstrated in practical and enduring ways how equitable collaboration can reshape research culture for the better. The breadth of outcomes documented here reflect the diversity of challenges facing the Arctic, yet together they point to a shared story: one of resilience, innovation, and collective stewardship.

As CINUK comes to a close, it leaves a legacy defined not only by scientific impact but by new technologies, permanent employment opportunities, youth engagement, and a renewed commitment to Inuit-led research. The partnerships forged through this programme will continue to influence how research is imagined and undertaken in the North. Above all, the accomplishments celebrated in these pages stand as a testament to what can be achieved when communities and researchers walk forward together with respect, curiosity, and shared purpose.

This report was supported by contributions from the UK's Science and Technology Network

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