# A PROFILE OF THE ENUK ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH MONITORING PROGRAM

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The eNuk Environment and Health Monitoring Program (eNuk) is being led by Inuit researchers from Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Labrador, in partnership with researchers at the University of Guelph, the Labrador Institute of Memorial University, the University of Alberta, and the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development. The study area consists of the area in and around the community of Rigolet, in the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area known as Nunatsiavut.

### Abstract

Impacts of climate change in Northern Canada present major challenges for the health of humans and the environment, with many of the most acute impacts experienced among Indigenous peoples such as Inuit, throughout Inuit Nunangat. Although research has identified associations of climatic and environmental change with human health outcomes, detecting and responding to these outcomes is a significant challenge. Comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, and locally appropriate monitoring systems have been identified as one potential strategy to meet this complex challenge. In this article, we present an example of this type of monitoring, the eNuk program, which is a participatory, Inuit-led environment and health monitoring program in Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, Labrador. An integral part of the program is a mobile application (the eNuk app), which Inuit can use to track, analyze, and respond to environmental and health changes related to climate change. To conceptualize and develop the eNuk app, a variety of methods were used: focus group discussions and semistructured interviews with community members and government representatives, two systematic literature reviews, an environmental scan of existing monitoring apps in the Circumpolar North, participatory development of the eNuk app through community open houses and consultations, and pilot testing of the eNuk app. Through these methods, the eNuk program has emerged as a comprehensive, Inuit-led monitoring system, which can be used to develop locally appropriate programming and policy in the region and provide management tools for decision makers and communities that are grounded in and guided by Inuit values, knowledge, and science.

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#### Résumé

Les répercussions des changements climatiques dans le Nord canadien présentent des défis importants pour la santé humaine et l'environnement, et bon nombre des répercussions les plus graves sont ressenties chez les peuples autochtones, comme les Inuits du Nord du Labrador. Bien que la recherche ait établi des liens entre les changements climatiques et environnementaux et les résultats pour la santé humaine, la détection de ces résultats et la réponse à ceux-ci constituent un défi important. Des systèmes de surveillance complets, intégrés, durables et appropriés à l'échelle locale ont été identifiés comme une stratégie possible pour relever ce défi complexe. Dans cet article, nous présentons un exemple de ce type de surveillance, le programme eNuk, qui est un programme participatif de surveillance de l'environnement et de la santé dirigé par les Inuits à Rigolet, au Nunatsiavut, au Labrador. Une partie intégrante du programme est une application mobile (l'application eNuk), que les Inuits peuvent utiliser pour suivre, analyser et réagir aux changements environnementaux et sanitaires liés aux changements climatiques. Pour conceptualiser et créer l'application eNuk, on a eu recours à diverses méthodes, notamment des discussions de groupe et des entrevues semi-structurées avec des membres de la collectivité et des représentants du gouvernement, deux examens systématiques de la documentation, une analyse contextuelle des applications de surveillance existantes dans le Nord circumpolaire, le développement participatif de l'application eNuk au moyen de journées portes ouvertes et de consultations communautaires, et la mise à l'essai pilote de l'application eNuk. Grâce à ces méthodes, le programme eNuk est devenu un système de surveillance complet dirigé par les Inuits, qui peut être utilisé pour élaborer des programmes et des politiques appropriés à l'échelle locale dans la région et fournir des outils de gestion aux décideurs et aux collectivités qui sont fondés sur les valeurs, les connaissances et la science inuites.

### Introduction

Impacts of climate change in Northern Canada present major challenges for the health of humans and the environment, with the most acute impacts experienced

among Indigenous peoples such as Inuit, throughout Inuit Nunangat (Cunsolo Willox et al. 2013; Furgal and

Seguin 2006). Research has uncovered many negative

associations of climatic and environmental change

with human health outcomes, including morbidity

and mortality due to rising temperatures and extreme

weather events (Ford et al. 2006; Furgal and Seguin

2006; Pearce et al. 2010); diminished food and water

security (Goldhar, Bell, and Wolf 2014; Harper et al.

2015a, 2015b; Organ et al. 2014); increased incidences

of food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne disease

(Harper et al. 2011, 2015a, 2015b; Martin et al. 2007);

and impacts on mental health and well-being due to

displacement of people, loss of livelihoods and cultural

identity, and changing relationships with the land and

culturally significant natural places (Cunsolo Willox et al.

2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). Detecting and responding

to these outcomes to support human health is a serious

To monitor and respond to these shifts in Inuit health

and environment, government representatives,

health practitioners, and academics are calling for

comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, and locally

appropriate monitoring programs (Jay and Marmot

2009; Haines et al. 2006; Ford 2012). To meet this call,

a team of Inuit and non-Inuit researchers have been

working with the Inuit community of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut

(Fig. 1), to conceptualize, develop, and implement

the eNuk program (Harper et al. 2016; Sawatzky et al.

2017a). The eNuk program is an Inuit-led participatory

environment and health monitoring program intended

to support Inuit efforts to track, analyze, and respond to

the environmental and health impacts of climate change

in Rigolet (Harper et al. 2016; Sawatzky et al. 2017a).

The program involves supporting and extending existing

research capacity in the community, as well as developing

innovative monitoring tools. A foundational component

of the eNuk program is the eNuk mobile application

(eNuk app), a tool which will provide an opportunity

for community members to record and share their

observations of environmental and health indicators of

climate change through a variety of multimedia while

in the community and on the land (Harper et al. 2016;

Sawatzky et al. 2017a, 2017b).

challenge.

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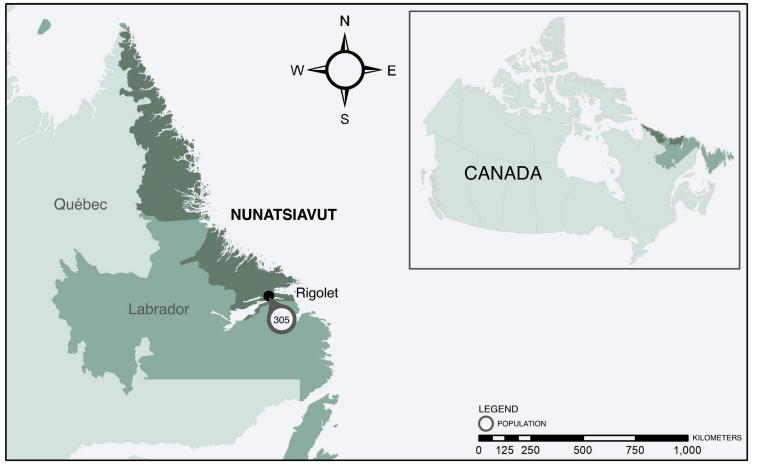


Figure 1: Map of Nunatsiavut, indicating location and population of Rigolet.

The eNuk program was developed using a communityled and participatory design research approach, For a decade, the community of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut involving collaboration with community research leads (population 305; 95% identifying as Inuit), has been in Rigolet, the Rigolet Inuit Community Government, a leader in climate change and health research in the the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social North. With research ranging from climate change Development, and academic researchers at the impacts on food security (Harper et al. 2015c; Cunsolo University of Guelph, the Labrador Institute of Memorial Willox 2013b), the incidence of water-borne disease and University,<sup>1</sup> and the University of Alberta (Harper et al. acute gastrointestinal illness (Harper et al. 2011, 2015a, 2016; Sawatzky et al. 2017a, 2017b). This paper provides 2015b; Wright et al. 2017), mental health (Cunsolo a summary of the eNuk program, detailing the methods Willox 2012, 2013a, 2013b), and cultural continuity used to co-create and develop the monitoring program (Cunsolo et al. 2017; Petrasek MacDonald et al. 2013a, and the eNuk app more specifically (Fig. 2), as well as 2013b). Rigolet has been actively leading and initiating identifying emergent themes. This research highlights research to understand the varying ways that warming the need for (1) integrated environmental and health temperatures, changing weather patterns, decreasing monitoring and (2) community participation in all aspects ice coverage and extent, and shifting plant and animal of monitoring programs. Moreover, this profile paper patterns are impacting Inuit health. Beyond the emphasizes the potential benefits of such monitoring importance and usefulness of this research to supporting for community and regional adaptation strategies and Inuit health, it was identified that in order to provide policy decision-making in the face of rapidly changing more timely and usable information, research on climate climatic conditions in the North. change and health in the community needed to move from climate-health documentation to response. 1 The Labrador Institute is a division of Memorial University.

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# **Conceptualizing the eNuk program**

DESIGNING THE ENUK PROGRAM Initial Systematic literature Workshop Focus group Environmenta concept ጆጶ discussions discussions scan discussed reviews Developing Semi-6g Piloting the Community Engagement app structured open houses activities eNuk app prototype interviews DEVELOPING THE ENUK APP

*Figure 2: Methods used to design the eNuk program and develop eNuk the app, 2014–2018.* 

In 2013, the initial concept of the eNuk program emerged from discussions with various members of the Rigolet Inuit Community Government, the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development, and researchers across different academic institutions about how to monitor and respond to the environmental and health impacts of climate change. From these initial discussions, the team wrote grant applications to fund the development of a community-based monitoring program, including an Inuit-specific app to enhance monitoring of changes in the land, waters, weather, plants, and animals (e.g., changes to ice thickness, warmer temperatures, increased prevalence of extreme weather events, changes to the presence and condition of flora and fauna), and associated impacts to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being (e.g., feelings of anxiety associated with unpredictable weather patterns, injury due to entrapment in unseasonably thin ice conditions).

To begin the design phase of the eNuk program, based on Inuit perspectives on environmental and health monitoring, and to situate this work within existing activities related to integrated and community-based monitoring in the North, several methods were used to engage people, seek input, understand needs and priorities, and support/enhance local capacity for research; herein, we outline examples of these activities.

Beginning in 2015, 31 interviews were conducted with individuals in and around Rigolet and Happy Valley -Goose Bay, Labrador, with community members (n=13), local and regional government representatives (n=14), and healthcare professionals (n=4), as well as several focus group discussions. Open-ended questions focused on what environmental and health conditions

were important to monitor in Rigolet, why they were important to monitor, and how monitoring should be done, thereby supporting continued Inuit leadership and guidance.

To contextualize the eNuk program within the broader research literature on integrated environment-health monitoring in the Circumpolar North, a systematic realist review was conducted. MEDLINE<sup>®</sup> and Web of Science<sup>™</sup> databases were systematically searched to identify relevant articles. Following a realist approach, guestions were asked regarding how, why, and in what contexts integrated monitoring systems were discussed (Pawson et al. 2005; Braun and Clarke 2006). Key components of integrated environment and health monitoring systems were identified and characterized.

An environmental scan (Arksey et al. 2005; Mew et al. 2017; Pham et al. 2014) of community-based monitoring programs in the Circumpolar North was conducted to further contextualize and situate the eNuk program within already ongoing monitoring programs. Several methods, including academic consultation, participation in two workshops on community-based participatory monitoring in the North, searches of grey and peerreviewed literature, and searches of an online database of monitoring programs,<sup>2</sup> were used to identify initiatives working with Indigenous communities and using webbased technology (e.g., smartphone apps or web-based databases). Information about these programs was organized based on characteristics of the program and indicators they monitored.

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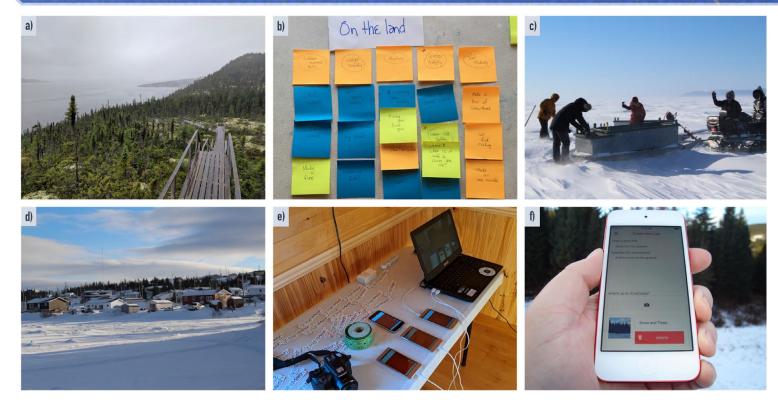


Figure 3: Images of Rigolet and the different stages of the eNuk program: (a) view from the boardwalk stretching from Rigolet to key historic and archaeological sites in the region, (b) participatory post-it-note method used when consulting community members about app design, (c) the eNuk research team testing out technical equipment with community partners on English River in -40°C conditions, (d) view of houses in the community of Rigolet during wintertime, (e) booth for the eNuk app at a community open house, and (f) the pilot version of the eNuk app.

For example, several interactive activities at each open **Developing the eNuk app** house allowed community members to contribute to To ensure the eNuk app was developed to meet the co-design of the eNuk app through such activities community needs, and was both useful and timely, as participatory mapping, paper prototyping of the a participatory design approach was central to its app interface, and ranking priorities. Several classroom development.<sup>3</sup> This approach, which used a variety of workshops were hosted at the Northern Lights Academy methods, allowed for community members and the to further engage youth in co-development of the app research team to co-develop and co-design app features (Robertson and Simosen 2018). and functionality (Sanoff 2008; Simonsen et al. 2012; Racadio et al. 2014). In 2016, a prototype of the eNuk app was complete,

and it was piloted in five Rigolet households. The pilot In October 2015 and February 2016, a series of inhouseholds had been identified by the community depth, semi-structured, conversational interviews were research leads and reflected a diversity in gender, age, conducted with community members to assess the livelihood, and land experience. Through the technology technological resources available in Rigolet, identify and community leads, evaluation of the prototype what technical components community members was ongoing, and the experiences of these pilot-users wished to see incorporated into the app, and determine contributed to an updated version of the eNuk app, to who was interested in having an active role in app be released in the summer of 2018. design and evaluation. Additionally, throughout the app design process, a series of eight well-attended open At the time this paper was written (March 2018), another houses were held between 2015 and 2017 to encourage series of semi-structured interviews were being led by community input, participation, and engagement. community research leads (n=8). These interviews were designed to provide Rigolet Inuit with the opportunity 3 For more information on participatory design, see Sanoff 2008; Simonsen et to identify and characterize specific environment and

<sup>2</sup> The Atlas of Community-Based Monitoring and Indigenous Knowledge in a Changing Arctic is an online atlas developed to highlight and compile community-based monitoring throughout the Circumpolar North.

al. 2012: and Racadio et al. 2014.

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health indicators that should be monitored by the eNuk app (e.g., indicators related to ice, snow, rain, wind, tide, temperature, wildlife, vegetation, drinking water, and mental wellness) and to describe how the app could best capture data related to these indicators. Initial analysis of the interviews found that Inuit described environmental information that is used for decisionmaking on the land and in the community, the sources and the sharing of this environmental information, and connections between changes in certain environmental conditions and community health. Inuit insights from these interviews will contribute to the development of updates for the app.

## **Integrated environment** and health monitoring

During the eNuk program and app co-development, several themes emerged. Through the semi-structured interviews, a variety of specific environment and health indicators were categorized by Inuit, including freshwater conditions; sea ice and trail conditions; trends in plants, animals, and wildlife; changing weather, temperature, and climate patterns; and increased anxiety and depression among community members (Sawatzky et al. 2017a). Beyond these indicators, Inuit discussed community priorities for the eNuk program, including the promotion of environmental stewardship, cultural knowledge, and evidence-based decision-making (Sawatzky et al. 2017a). These priorities highlight the importance of land for Inuit conceptualizations of wellbeing, and the need to develop the eNuk program in a holistic way, led by Inuit ways of knowing (Harper et al. 2016; Sawatzky et al. 2017a). An integrated approach to an environment-health monitoring program is therefore in line with Inuit understandings of the health impacts of climate change in Rigolet (Sawatzky, et al. 2017b).

Furthermore, we found that to respond to environmental change, programs need to consider numerous sources of information, multiple stressors, wide geographic coverage, and different knowledge systems (Sawatzky et al. 2017c). The importance of community codesigned and co-developed technology has also become increasingly clear. Community-led and communitydesigned monitoring ensures community needs are met, and enables robust and authentic environmental and health data collection that can inform research, policy, programming, and decision-making (Sawatzky et al. 2017c).

A community-led approach used throughout the eNuk program, including the co-development of the app, has ensured Inuit knowledge, values, and expertise are reflected in the monitoring program. Indeed, through the participatory methods highlighted herein, the eNuk program has been and continues to be developed as culturally relevant and useful for community members (Sawatzky et al. 2017a, 2017b).

#### Conclusion

Through community-led research and participatory co-design, the eNuk program is facilitating locally appropriate, integrated environment-health monitoring. The process of conceptualizing and co-developing the eNuk program has highlighted several potential lessons for researchers as well as policy and decision makers in Northern Canada, including

- the importance of Inuit-led and co-designed programs;
- the power of using Inuit-identified indicators and incorporating Indigenous understandings of wellness in monitoring programs;
- the need for integrated monitoring programs that are context-specific and culturally relevant; and
- the usefulness of innovative technology (e.g., apps) that is designed by and for Inuit as a tool for monitoring programs.

The eNuk program is an example of an Inuit-led monitoring system that could inform locally appropriate programming in Rigolet, as well as the region, providing management tools for decision makers and communities that are grounded in and guided by Inuit values, knowledge, and science. This type of monitoring program has the potential to strengthen resilience to environmental change while directing future adaptation responses in the region and across the North.

### **Community considerations**

The eNuk program is premised on community participation and leadership. Through the eNuk app, community members in Rigolet, Nunatsiavut, will be able to monitor the health and environmental impacts

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