

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE IPY INUIT HEALTH SURVEY SHIP TEAM: PARTICIPANTS VISITING THE CCGS AMUNDSEN

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The IPY Inuit Health Survey was developed to better understand the factors contributing to Inuit health and spirit of thriving in the face of changes. Because of the vast distances involved, the CCGS Amundsen was used to visit the 33 coastal communities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunatsiavut, and Nunavut Territory in 2007 and 2008. Members of the ship survey team included interviewers, nurses, laboratory technicians, and specialists. A greeter welcomed participants onboard and Coast Guard personnel ensured safe transportation to and from the ship. Once participants were on board, nurses took fasting blood samples, administered a glucose tolerance test, measured blood pressure and pulse, and took body composition measurements. Participants over 40 years of age underwent specialty tests.

Participants also met with bilingual interviewers to answer questions about diet, general health and well-being, tobacco use, mental health, alcohol and drug use, physical activity and social support. Lab technicians prepared all blood samples on board the Amundsen. Participants received some of their results (height, weight, waist circumference, blood pressure and hemoglobin readings) while on board the ship. The fieldwork took place over 2 years. A total of 2,100 participants, ranging in age from 18 to 90 years from 33 coastal and 3 non-coastal communities in Inuvialuit Settlement Region, Nunavut, and Nunatsiavut participated.

The Inuit Health Survey will provide Inuit specific information that will aid Inuit in making informed choices about their health. It also provides an analytically rich database for researchers exploring determinants of health, and for those developing health policies and interventions. Nearly all participants agreed to a 7-year follow-up forming the International Inuit Cohort Study in collaboration with plans for a Nunavik, Quebec and Greenlandic follow-up evaluation. The successful work onboard the Amundsen is a testimony to capable individuals working together for a common goal.

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