



## NEWS RELEASE

December 13, 2011

### **Inuit Housing Crisis is Ongoing and is Affecting a Whole Generation of Children**

OTTAWA, ON – The challenges presented by inadequate housing will have long-term effects on today’s youngest Inuit generation, depriving them of their ability to participate fully in the future of their Inuit homelands and Canada, according to a report released today by Inuit Tuttarvingat of the National Aboriginal Health Organization.

“Housing has been inadequate since Inuit began settling into permanent communities in the 1950s. The crisis is growing to the extent that many children will live their entire childhood in overcrowded houses that might have three, four or five generations living in a two or three bedroom house” according to Cathleen Knotsch, one of the authors of the study.

*If Not Now..., When? Addressing the Ongoing Inuit Housing Crisis in Canada* resulted from an extensive review of research literature and reports on the effects of poor housing. Some of the findings include:

- Crowding and reduced ventilation contributes to very high rates of respiratory infections among Inuit children. In the Baffin region of Nunavut, these result in 300 hospitalizations for every 1,000 infants each year.
- Crowded housing is linked to failing grades and to behavior problems among children.
- Inuit have the highest tuberculosis rate in Canada with 155.8 incidents per 100,000 individuals – a rate that is about 33 times higher than the incidence rate of 4.7 per 100,000 individuals for all Canadians.
- Crowded living conditions force Inuit to larger centres and might even prevent a return to home after receiving health care, therefore contributing to homelessness in urban areas.

Some indications of the persistent crisis are:

- One-half (49 per cent) of Inuit children under six residing in Inuit homelands, lived in crowded dwellings in 2006. In Nunavik, one-half (49 per cent) of all Inuit lived in crowded housing in 2006, and in Nunavut, overcrowding is expected to affect 70% of the population by 2016.
- In 2006, one-third (31 per cent) of Inuit in the Inuit homelands lived in a dwelling in need of major repair.

The 70 page report grew out of an Inuit Housing Forum meeting in 2008 where representatives of Inuit regional organizations and housing authorities identified a number of needs for knowledge. Inuit Tuttarvingat has produced a series of materials, which are available at [www.naho.ca/inuit/health-determinants-2/housing](http://www.naho.ca/inuit/health-determinants-2/housing).

While the authors set out to document the evidence for the linkages between housing and health, they were surprised to find large gaps in our research knowledge. Only a few studies were found that explored linkages between poor housing conditions / housing shortages and specific diseases and conditions. While new housing, repairs for existing structures and improved water and sewage systems are required immediately to alleviate the crisis, more research is also needed.

“We need to better understand the aspects of inadequate housing that are contributing the most harm to children and adults, and set priorities for scarce housing funds. We also need to monitor interventions and new approaches to see what works best” said Dianne Kinnon.

- 30 -

For more information:

Dianne Kinnon  
Director, Inuit Tuttarvingat – NAHO  
[dkinnon@naho.ca](mailto:dkinnon@naho.ca)  
613-760-3514  
1-877-602-4445, ext 237