Substandard housing, overcrowding, poor indoor air quality, lack of indoor plumbing, and other environmental factors contribute to significant health problems in some indigenous communities. In parts of Alaska, one in four Native infants is hospitalized each year with acute respiratory infections and hospitalization rates for acute and chronic respiratory diseases in infants of these communities are among the highest ever documented. Adequate emergency care for these cases is not always available in remote communities, and transport and hospitalization costs can be in excess of US$50,000 per child. Bronchiectasis, a severe type of chronic pneumonia that has nearly disappeared from the developed world, is still common among Alaskan Native infants.

This project aims to demonstrate that education, along with no-cost/low-cost home modifications such as replacing wood-burning stoves and improving home ventilation, can reduce the need for respiratory medical care in Alaskan Native populations by reducing exposure to airborne contaminants in homes.

The fact that similar environmental conditions and health problems are found in indigenous communities elsewhere in North America makes the CEC an ideal party to be involved in such an effort.
Related CEC Initiatives
Improving Indoor Air Quality to Reduce Exposure to Airborne Contaminants, Including Fine Particulates and Chemical Compounds, in Alaskan Native Populations and Other Indigenous Communities in North America will contribute to information and tools to be developed under the Capacity Building to Improve the Environmental Health of Vulnerable Communities in North America project.

Partners
This project will be implemented through the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. The Consortium provides comprehensive healthcare and public health services for over 220 Alaska Native Tribes and is the largest tribally managed health organization in the United States. Other potential partners include Tribal and First Nations and indigenous peoples and communities in each of the three countries in North America.

About the CEC
The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) was established by the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States through the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, the environmental side agreement to NAFTA. An intergovernmental organization, the CEC is composed of a Council of cabinet-level environmental officials from the three countries, a Joint Public Advisory Committee and a Secretariat that provides operational support for cooperative work between the three countries. The organization brings together citizens and experts from governments, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, researchers and businesses to seek solutions to protect North America’s shared environment while supporting sustainable economic development.

For more information about this project, contact:
Orlando Cabrera, Program Manager, at ocabrera@cec.org, 514-350-4323.

For the complete project descriptions, see: www.cec.org/projects.