



News Release

Nunavut Leaders Agree to Work Together to Protect and Promote the Inuit Language

ARCTIC BAY, Nunavut (April 21, 2009) - Nunavut leaders emerged from a two-day weekend meeting in Arctic Bay, united by a strong, shared commitment to implement the *Inuit Language Protection Act*.

Measures will include a series of regional roundtables to consult Nunavummiut on their needs and concerns, followed by a Nunavut Language Summit to be held later in 2009.

Nunavut Premier Eva Aariak hailed the session as a great success and an important step forward. “Today we too begin a Nunavut Quest,” she said, a reference to the launch of the popular dog team Nunavut Quest Race. “It’s going to be challenging, rewarding journey – one that will advance and protect our beautiful language in every aspect of our society. Let’s all work together, and provide a strong, inspiring vision for all Nunavummiut to follow us on this new voyage.”

“Inuit negotiated the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement to give our people, language and culture a home”, said Raymond Ningeocheak, the Vice President of Finance, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. “We have worked hard with the Government of Nunavut to produce the *Inuit Language Protection Act* and now is the time to implement it. We will continue to collaborate to ensure that Inuit language rights are respected in Nunavut.”

The Government of Nunavut will work together with Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., regional Inuit associations and Nunavut’s Languages Commissioner to identify implementation priorities, to promote and protect the Inuit Language, and to ensure its development in new and expanded domains.

“As this leadership retreat showed, we have many dialects, but only one Inuit language”, said Jose Kusugak, President of the Kivalliq Inuit Association. “We all agree that Nunavut’s new language legislation must be successful in protecting and preserving our unique culture. This will take efforts from us all – parents, teachers, students, preachers, language professionals, businesses, Inuit organizations and governments. We must all get involved in the upcoming roundtables, and start preparing now. I know I will.”

“It is urgent that as leaders we take action now to ensure that our children have Inuktitut language material that is interesting and relevant to them”, said Joe Attagataluk, Secretary Treasurer of Qikiqtani Inuit Association. “We urgently need more Inuit teachers in our classrooms. This is where sustainability for the Inuit language will begin.”

Speaking on behalf of Charlie Evalik, President of the Kitikmeot Inuit Association, Julia Ogina indicated that KIA will work with all local, regional and territorial partners to revitalize and strengthen Inuinnaqtun and Inuktitut in our homes, our communities and our schools.

The Nunavut Languages Commissioner, Alexina Kublu indicated “My hopes for the implementation are that the plan we build together will be timely, and that we will give due consideration to realistic and manageable goals.”

The Honourable Louis Tapardjuk, Minister of Languages, expressed optimism following the meeting. “What I heard over the last couple of days confirms for me that we’re all on the same page, and we’re on the right track,” said the Minister. “We all believe that we now have strong legislative tools to keep our language healthy and vibrant for generations to come. By working together, we can make it work!”


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