



News Release

Nunavut calls for substantive equality for the Inuit Language at the United Nations

New York (May 21, 2009) – During the 8th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues devoted to the arctic, Minister Louis Tapardjuk today addressed Inuit language, Nunavut’s opportunities and challenges in a presentation to Indigenous peoples from around the world, international government officials and NGO representatives.

“Preserving and promoting a culture and language that intimately, intrinsically understand this environment is essential to preserving the Arctic itself and human rights, which is key to our survival and our future as an Arctic people,” said Tapardjuk. “During the session, people have stated that in the same way people around the world must cooperate on climate change, Inuit, international and national bodies must cooperate to prevent any further erosion of our Inuit Language and culture.”

Nunavut’s language legislation was put in place to protect and promote Inuit language, which has faced obstacles such as a decline in usage at home, existing language barriers, and the challenge of providing services and access in Inuktitut.

Minister Tapardjuk called on Inuit populated Member States to assist in raising awareness and national prestige to promote and recognize Inuit Language and its speakers.

“The Inuit Language must be treated as a key element of any nation-building strategy in the Arctic and ensure Inuit have equal access to services in their first and preferred language within the boundaries of their homeland,” said Tapardjuk. “To achieve all of this, states must engage in real partnerships with Inuit, and dedicate the much needed resources to realize substantive equality between Inuit speakers and those using national languages.”

- ## -

For more information contact:

Eileen Kilabuk-Weber
Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth
Government of Nunavut
(867) 222-0112 ekilabuk@bell.blackberry.net

☎ To get a copy of Minister’s presentation: <http://www.gov.nu.ca/cley>

☎ For more information on the 8th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>