

## VI Arctic Leaders' Summit Declaration

Roavvenjárga (Rovaniemi, Finland) November 13 – 15, 2019

We, the representatives of Indigenous Peoples' organizations of the Arctic, Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council, have gathered on 13 - 15 November 2019 in Roavvenjárga to identify our priorities and discuss the future of our Arctic homelands, including cooperation, language and culture, environmental changes, living conditions, economies and sustainable development.

**We celebrate and honour** the enduring cultures, societies and communities of all Arctic Indigenous peoples and recognize that we continue to rely upon the ingenuity of our ancestors and applaud the promise of our future generations.

**We welcome** the Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders (AIYL) and commend them for the successful first ever Arctic Youth Leaders' Summit 12 - 13 November 2019.

**We acknowledge** the attendance of several Arctic Council Observers at an Arctic Leaders' Summit and their participation in a formal Arctic Council Permanent Participant and Arctic Council Observer dialogue.

**Evoking** the interrelated, interdependent and indivisible human rights affirmed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)* in 2007.

**Recognizing** that the rights affirmed in the *UN Declaration* are equally guaranteed to all Indigenous individuals that attention must also be paid to the rights and special needs of Arctic Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

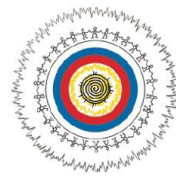
**Recalling** UN member states' ratification of the *Paris Agreement* on climate change, which entered into force on 4 November 2016.

**Reaffirming** the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)* and the need for their realization by 2030 and embracing the SDGs as guidance for the future we want, while leaving no one behind.

**Celebrating** the 2019 *International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL2019)* by the UN and the responsibility of the UNESCO to carry out concrete actions to highlight the status and conditions of the world's Indigenous Peoples' Languages.

**Noting with concern** the rate of warming in the Arctic occurring at the highest rate of any region of the world.

**Recognizing** that our environment continues to undergo profound, rapid and unpredictable change and that our communities witness and are impacted by the effects of these changes.



**Concerned** that Indigenous Peoples' voices are not being heard while our responsibility is to our lands and waters, while current State-led responses to climate change around the world are not sufficiently responsive to the dire circumstances.

**Recognizing** the adverse implications for the health of animal and fish populations, our food security, as well as the harmful impacts upon our emotional, cultural, spiritual, and physical well-being, which are already being experienced by our peoples.

**Affirming** that Arctic Indigenous Peoples have vast and unique knowledge systems – known as both Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge – practices and technologies for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change as environmentally conscious Arctic inhabitants as reflected in our cultures, values and traditions, and derived from the lands and waters themselves.

**Recognizing** that Arctic regions are disproportionately more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of the changing climate, and the people, flora and fauna are the first to experience them directly.

**Asserting** that it is crucial for our knowledge, the adaptation of our communities, and our work to reduce or eliminate the causes of these changes must be recognized and respected by all, ranging from international bodies, governments, regional and local policymakers, scientists, researchers, industries, third parties, and others. Our knowledge is intimately linked to the lands and the waters that sustain our cultures and provides insights not otherwise accessible.

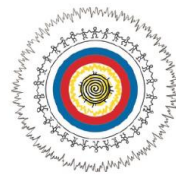
**Affirming** that our Languages are the foundation of our cultures and identities. Indigenous Peoples' Languages and education support our cultures. Arctic Indigenous Peoples' hunting, gathering, fishing, reindeer herding, and food practices are a way in which our cultures are taught. Legally protecting and revitalizing our Languages is urgent and paramount. For our Languages to remain strong, Indigenous Peoples' language schools and learning institutions need to be established and supported.

**We recognize** that the Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages hold unique and valuable knowledge about our cultures and the environment with which we live, our Languages and terminologies connect nature and culture and are therefore closely related to biodiversity and climate change resilience and adaptation.

**We further recognize** that our Knowledge is uniquely expressed and transmitted through Indigenous Peoples' Languages and oral traditions, thus our Knowledge systems, the environments in which they are developed, and Indigenous Peoples' Languages are inextricably linked.

**We express our deepest concern** that the impacts of rapid and dramatic Arctic environmental change puts the Indigenous Peoples' Languages under threat, and in turn threatens the identity and culture of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

**We note** the important role of traditional economies of Indigenous Peoples in preserving Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages and further recognize that culture encompasses this way of life.



**We welcome** the outcomes of the IYIL2019 and **encourage** rapid implementation of its results.

**Acknowledging** that healthy families are essential to the sustainability of our communities and recognizing that empowered youth are essential to achieve the future we want.

**Recognizing** the lack of affordable housing, the need to assist the homeless, that relocation from our lands and traditional territories to settled communities has resulted in drastic shortage of housing, and that support is necessary to offset the extremely high cost of living in the North to provide for stability in our communities.

**Concerned** that Arctic Indigenous Peoples face severe health disparities, with unacceptable rates of cancer, diabetes, infectious diseases including tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, addiction, and suicide, which have serious, negative impacts on the future of our families and our communities.

**Recognizing** that for millennia, the Arctic's living resources and the ability of our communities to harvest and process the resources that we depend upon are fundamental to food security and is core to our identity, making the health and availability of Arctic wildlife and healthy waterways of utmost concern.

**Note with concern** that many Arctic Indigenous Peoples face food insecurity due to multiple, compounding threats to our environment, including climate change, changing ocean dynamics, shifts in biodiversity, marine pollution, ocean acidification, high costs, and other forces.

**We reaffirm** the right of Indigenous Peoples to give or withhold our free, prior, and informed consent in non-coercive negotiations prior to activities being established and developed on our customary lands and waters.

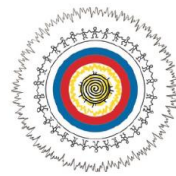
**We further recognize** the need for genuine co-production of knowledge and the crucial role of Indigenous Peoples in every field, including innovative technologies, conservation, and development and the need for others to demonstrate an increased ability to work within Arctic Indigenous frameworks and contexts.

**Therefore**, we the Arctic Indigenous Leaders gathered here today officially adopt this Declaration and make the following **Calls to Action**:

**Affirming** that climate change constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, animals and Peoples, and that we will accordingly utilize our local, national and international forums and partnerships to achieve meaningful progress towards the *Paris Agreement* targets;

**Encouraging** actions that promote full and meaningful participation and coordinated efforts with our relatives around the world to curb climate change and ensure the Indigenous Peoples' voices be heard in these dialogues;

**We call for** initiatives to protect and support Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages as part of the solution addressing these changes, and **call for** adoption of a *United Nations Decade on Indigenous Languages*;



**We call for** measures to legally protect and revitalize our Languages and that for them to remain strong, Indigenous Peoples' language schools and learning institutions must be financially and otherwise supported and established;

**We call for** international collaboration to identify best practices and best available technologies to support and develop strong language platforms to strengthen and promote Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages and culture;

**We support** the replication of language models that have been successful within other Indigenous Peoples' communities;

**We encourage** continued and expanded educational experiences in our schools and learning institutions that reflect our values, cultures, traditions and languages, including the need to ensure that our languages and cultural practices remain strong;

**We also encourage** pride, empowerment and strength within our communities through direct support for our youth and children while recognizing the sustainability of our youth through culture, language and our unique values, customs, practices and institutions;

**We stress** the need for sustainable resources, including but not limited to financial, educational and emotional support to end disparities and to provide community- and evidence-based responses to address risk factors;

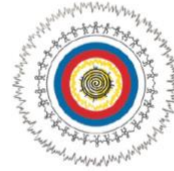
**We call for** concrete follow-up on the recommendations in the *Outcome Document of the high plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples* in 2014, in order to achieve the ends of the *UN Declaration*;

**We underscore** the need for informed and culturally specific suicide prevention strategies and initiatives to implement in our Arctic communities to reduce suicide;

**We confirm** the need for recognition of and respect for both our traditional and contemporary economies and the importance of the health of all Arctic living resources as well as the ability of our people to play a direct, definitive, authoritative role in the management and co-management of the resources upon which we depend and to maintain and improve our capacity to harvest and process these resources;

**We call for** the development of a mechanism to promote sustainable business behaviour in the Arctic to ensure that the rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples are protected; and

**We call upon** all UN member states, including those engaged in the Arctic Council, to recognize and honor their international commitments and obligations, including the interrelated human rights that are at the foundation of our Arctic future as Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, we call upon UN member states and agencies, Arctic Council members and working groups, third parties, and all others to respect this Declaration and to actively respond to these Calls to Action.



## **Declaration of the First Arctic Youth Leaders' Summit November 12, 2019**

*Dear Relatives and Invited Guests,*

Yesterday was a historical day, since we, the Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders', had our first official gathering.

During our meeting, we have come to an understanding that though we are separated by language, cultures, and by borders, we are all facing the same issues. All our traditional areas have been colonized by the Arctic States and with that, our identities, knowledge, language and health has been put to the test. It is important to recognize that these issues are not separated, but are interconnected. The neglect of one issue is the neglect of all these issues. We would therefore like to present the following statements to ensure our prosperity in the present and future:

### **Environment**

As Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, the climate crisis is being felt in our everyday lives. We are the first impacted by rising tides, eroding coasts, warming waters, and increased variability in weather, temperatures and climate.

We recognize the need for a transition away from fossil fuel energy to come into a more balanced relationship with our environment. We can be leaders in this movement if and when our rights to self-determine our lands are upheld.

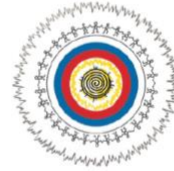
Thorough evaluations of the impacts of solar, wind, hydro and other green energies must be conducted and consulted with the local Indigenous people prioritized before any development happens.

We recognize the interest and curiosity in our lands by the world outside the circumpolar north resulting in increased tourism in our traditional lands.

We will encourage our communities to aspire to energy solutions that are aligned with the health and wellbeing of our people, lands, waters, and animals and look forward to the support of the international community in these efforts.

### **Economic Development and Infrastructure**





Indigenous people have lived nomadic lifestyles for immemorial. Indigenous people must be the first to consult, manage and be involved in the decision making when new development is being discussed and decided. Development of new railways, roads/highways and deep sea ports would not only impact Indigenous people, it would also impact the wildlife and livelihoods that are so important to us, which must be considered.

We, the Arctic Peoples are fish people. Our fisheries, whether sourced from the ocean or from our rivers, have sustained us since time immemorial. We look forward to the control of our fisheries because we are the best suited to adapt and manage this resource as we face rising temperatures, the migration of fishery, and have an understanding of how much fish can be taken from the waters to ensure for the next generation of fish and peoples'.

As the Arctic becomes and increased sight of attraction, tourism within our region will be directed by the wishes of local Indigenous communities. We have the right to say who travels within our traditional territories and what activities they partake in from cruise ship operations, to on the land activities.

**Business Development:** Indigenous Peoples have every right to develop businesses in their communities and have access to funding that supports start-ups, expansions or projects that benefit the Indigenous-business and/or their communities. Non-Indigenous Peoples who are looking at business development on Indigenous Peoples land must consult and involve Indigenous Peoples that would be impacted by the development and approved by the People.

**Traditional livelihoods:** Indigenous peoples' should have more control over their traditional livelihoods e.g. reindeer herding, traditional hunting, fishing, gathering of natural resources and handicrafts, and decide how they are practised and developed

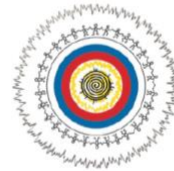
### **Food Sovereignty**

We uphold our sovereign right to continue our relationship with our environment and our traditional foods.

Our people know how to manage our consumption of traditional foods as we have done for time immemorial. We seek sovereignty over our food systems so that we can maintain our relationships to our food, land and water.

We demand that our harvesting of traditional foods is decriminalized.

We have first rights to harvest our traditional foods and will decide the regulations for who else gets to hunt, fish and harvest on our lands and in our waters and if our foods are sold, we determine for ourselves best practices.



## **Indigenous Knowledge**

Our elders are our very own traditional and cultural professors. We uphold their knowledge as it was passed on by our ancestors before us and are navigated by our collective relationship to the land, water, and non-human relatives.

Our Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge is expert knowledge. As we face climate change in the Arctic, we recognize the importance of collaboration between Indigenous knowledge holders and western trained scientists.

## **Consultation**

Any research and resource development being done in the Arctic will be done only after consulting the local Indigenous people's needs and wants regarding our traditional sacred lands. And will be done with continuous cooperation with us and led by us.

Any nation-states, corporations, companies, or other entities that want to develop projects on our lands and in our waters will be bound to the legal binding contracts developed by local indigenous review boards within the communities that the project will impact.

## **Culture**

We as Arctic Indigenous Peoples' have a distinct ways of life that have allowed us to live in the circumpolar north since time immemorial. We have the right to maintain and adapt to the future in a way that is culturally relevant to our Arctic way of life inclusive of fishing, hunting, reindeer herding, craftsmanship, art, songs, and dance.

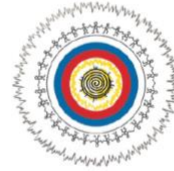
## **Languages**

Indigenous languages play an important role in our cultures and identities and they contain an enormous amount of traditional knowledge. We see that if we lose our Indigenous languages, our culture is also lost. To strengthen our identity as Indigenous Peoples' of the Arctic, Indigenous languages shall become official languages in countries they are resided in and have the same value as the other official languages.

It is also important we strengthen our Indigenous languages because it brings Indigenous peoples' together and reinforces our communities. Through that we should encourage our youth to speak, learn and use our languages in everyday life. By the means of Indigenous language teachers.

## **Education**

We recognize that education in all forms is the foundation in improving the overall well-being of Indigenous communities. A healthy well-being plays a pivotal role in advancing westernize knowledge in today's society. However, we also know the importance of



practicing traditional knowledge within the education system supports Indigenous students to succeed in a culturally-sensitive, linguistic and traditional environment. Education in all forms should be readily accessible to all Indigenous communities with Indigenous teachers that deliver curriculum and activities relevant to their culture, traditions, history and language with adequate support for neurodivergent students and inclusive of LGBTQ+. The curriculum must be developed by Indigenous educators, knowledge-holders and Elders that best reflect the true history and language.

The educational system must support Indigenous Peoples to become trained in specialized fields (e.g. healthcare professions, social work, and Indigenous medicine models), and provide the necessary resources that best supports them throughout their training.

### **Mental Health**

As Indigenous youth, we recognize the alarming rates of mental health issues, violence and suicides within our communities. The effects of climate change, intergenerational trauma, and colonialism make treating the root cause of Indigenous peoples' mental health issues infinitely complex.

We should support initiatives to train our own people to become the healthcare professional our communities need.

We are the experts in identifying solutions to these issues and caring for our own people. Further, specialization for Indigenous mental health care should be accessible for nonIndigenous professionals.

As Indigenous people we want to utilize holistic Indigenous health care when providing care for our mental health and well-being. We value mental health to the same degree as physical health, so accessibility to mental health services should be proportionally accessible as compared to physical illnesses.

It should be obvious that these services are provided in our native language.

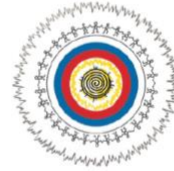
We encourage the arctic states to properly address these issues via reasonable funding to properly provide access for mental health treatment.

### **Communication**

As nation-states look to develop the north, we expect access to information at all stages of the proposed development. This means we need high speed broadband internet and cellphone access across all rural communities so that we can be provided information in a timely manner and thoroughly evaluate all information.

### **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women**





We recognize that the epidemic of our missing and murdered indigenous sisters and nonbinary relatives across the Arctic is directly related to the continued colonization and rape of our lands and waters by the fossil fuel, mining industries and green colonialism. The liberation of our lands and bodies are inseparable.

## **In Conclusion**

- We encourage the change of mind-set from western to Indigenous for all peoples' and encourage hegemonic nation states to educate themselves on our lifeways.
- Nothing about us in the Arctic will happen without us as the Indigenous Peoples' of the Arctic.
- Laws, policies and regulations will be made in the Indigenous territories that will be affected by those laws, policies, and regulations (Access and Inclusion)
- Decisions regarding our lands, waters, air and animals will be made with our Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

In addition to this Declaration, we Arctic Youth Leaders, have decided to establish an Indigenous Youth of the Arctic Council.

We, the Arctic Indigenous youth leaders of today, stand in unity all your support, attention, collaboration and action regarding these issues.

*Giitu, Haii' Choo! Dogidihn', Qujanaq, Qujannamiik, Thank you!*