

From Assessment to Vitality



Arctic Indigenous Languages Assessment Symposium Assessing, Monitoring and Promoting the Vitality of Arctic Indigenous Languages

10 - 12 February 2015 - Ottawa, Canada



MEDIA RELEASE

ARCTIC INDIGENEOUS PEOPLES WORKING TO PROMOTE THE VITALITY OF THEIR LANGUAGES

Ottawa, Canada – 10 February 2015 – Athabaskan, Inuit, Saami, Aleut, Gwich'in, along with indigenous representatives from Russia are meeting in Ottawa this week as part of a major Arctic Council effort to promote the vitality of the Arctic's indigenous languages. They are joined by linguists, policy specialists, and other indigenous languages experts.

Hosted by the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and five other indigenous peoples organizations with *permanent participant* status at the Arctic Council, the three-day Arctic Indigenous Languages Assessment Symposium is providing a key platform for both the indigenous groups and researchers to review pan-Arctic assessments of indigenous languages, and to share experiences and tools in promoting the vitality of indigenous languages spoken across the Arctic.

"Our languages reflect who we are – our culture, our heritage and our future," said J. Okalik Egeesiak, ICC's chair in her opening comments. "They are the legacy we hand down to our children, and they to their children."

Gunn Britt Retter of the Saami Council said "this symposium will be a basis from which we hope a better assessment of our Saami languages in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia will be undertaken, which in turn will help focus our resources on enhancing their vitality".

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Canada's Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, stated in the Symposium's Opening Address that: "During Canada's two-year term as Arctic Council Chair, we have put the well-being and prosperity of Northerners first with a focus on Development for the People of the North. The Arctic Council's indigenous languages project supports our efforts to empower Northern communities."

The symposium also has a strong youth presence. Youth representatives from across the Arctic met this morning, and will be addressing the plenary later today.

Recommendations coming out of the symposium will help shape the way forward for this initiative which is expected to have continued Arctic Council support, after USA Secretary of State, John Kerry, takes over its chairmanship.

For additional information and registration details, see www.arcticlanguages.com

Media enquiries, please contact:



Carole Simon, ICC Canada: csimon@inuitcircumpolar.com



Saami Council: gbr@saamicouncil.net



Aleut International Association: aia@alaska.net



Gwich'in Council International: gsullivan_gci@northwestel.net



Arctic Athabaskan Council: cdickson@mac.com



Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North: raipon@raipon.info