



Press Release

ICC Commends the Polar Range States Recognition of Traditional Knowledge in Polar Bear Management

September 4, 2015 – **Ilulissat, Greenland** – The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) commends the representatives of the Polar Bear Range States (Canada, United States of America, Kingdom of Denmark (Greenland), Russian Federation, Norway) for the establishment of a Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) working group. This working group will establish guidelines for the inclusion of TEK in polar bear management decisions. The Range States also agreed upon a 10 year Circumpolar Action Plan which will work with Inuit knowledge holders to conserve polar bears across their range and ensure responsible harvest management systems are developed that will sustain polar bear sub populations and that Inuit subsistence users may continue to sustainably harvest polar bears into the future to meet cultural and subsistence resources needs.

Duane Smith, President of ICC Canada, joined representatives from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) and the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC), as well as representatives from Greenland's KNAPK in Ilulissat this week to work with the Range States on polar bear management options. Range States representatives heard the concerns of Inuit with regards to any management of polar bears populations that Inuit have fiduciary rights to harvest as agreed to under the land claims agreements in Canada and Homerule Government in Greenland.

Smith stated from Ilulissat, "Inuit have a wealth of knowledge about polar bears, not only where they are and their numbers, but how the bears are adapting to the pressures from changing climate, mineral and energy exploration, development, tourism, contaminants and shipping". Smith said "We have to invest in the research to understand the threats to polar bears and work with Inuit. It is only by using all the knowledge we have about polar bears that we will be able conserve this important Arctic species and to make the decisions required to maintain healthy polar bear populations and maintain our sustainable subsistence harvest".

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