

The Arctic We Want: Building Sustainable Economies

Introductory remarks

Thank you distinguished panelists, Elders, members of the Executive Committee, delegates, and youth for the opportunity to discuss building sustainable economies in the Arctic.

Atigaa Qaulluq, nalaqmichisigaa Elizabeth Cravalho. Kikitagrukminurunga. Akagaa Isritaaq, ahpagaa Egak, Anaga Apauraq. I have the privilege of serving as the vice president of external affairs at NANA and, for the past seven months, as the ICC Alaska representative to the Arctic Economic Council.

Not a Snow Globe

The Arctic is not a vast, empty space devoid of any human influence. As Inuit, we embrace the inherent connection between us and our environment our view of nature is that we are one with it. There is no separation between us and what sustains us. We are a part of the ecosystem, and our heritage, our culture, our ability to remain a distinct ethnic group – these are all tied to the land, water, air, and wildlife.

As the environment changed, we have had to adapt. We use available tools to survive on the resources of the Arctic. Some of our tools have served us well for millennia; others are relatively recent additions. Now our toolbox includes local, regional, national and international governance. In addition, corporate operations help to sustain our 21st century villages.

The **pace** of change, especially in the last 50 years, is staggering. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the Elders who helped us adapt to changing conditions and use these new tools that facilitate our survival in a rapidly changing world. An important part of this ongoing effort is developing local and regional economies. As we work to build sustainable economies, we must recognize that our economies are a part of a larger whole—just as we are a part of the land. The global economy impacts the Arctic, and the Arctic impacts the global economy. In this recognition, it is imperative to have a global perspective and look for opportunities that support our mutual advancement across each of the jurisdictions our Inuit family live in throughout the circumpolar Arctic.

It has been 40 years since the beginning of the Inuit Circumpolar Council. The power of it is clear to me. Regardless of where we live, Inuit people are one people—despite the difference in dialects, traditions, or location. For all of us, corporations, governments and other institutions are a means to an end. These are tools in our toolbox that we can use to continue to thrive and advance our self-sufficiency.

Sustainable Economies: Self-Sufficiency – A means to an end for self-determination

Greater Inuit economic, social and cultural self-sufficiency is an essential part of greater Inuit self-determination. Self-determination is our right to freely determine our political status, freely pursue our economic, social, cultural and linguistic development, and freely capitalize on our natural wealth and resources. This mandate comes from the Inuit Declarations on Sovereignty and Responsible Development.

Building sustainable economies in an ever-changing world is critical to remain a unique and distinct people. A changing environment poses challenges and economic opportunities. We must be positioned to weigh these challenges and opportunities in our quest for self-sufficiency and self-determination.

Interest in mineral, oil, gas, and wildlife resources are increasing. We know some non-Arctic countries are interested in the natural resources of the Arctic, as . As the marine shipping routes become increasingly ice-free the interest will grow. This poses risks for the resources we depend on to continue our culture and way of life.

To ensure that development in the Arctic occurs in ways that are synergistic with our culture, and benefit Inuit communities, we need to participate in the process. We need to be clear about what is important to us, what we are willing to invest in, and work with potential partners who are interested in investing in the Arctic.

The need— and the ability—to be prepared for opportunity, adapt when necessary, and respond to an opportunity when it presents itself is common across our areas. Finding opportunities with potential partners in a global context can bring significant resources to bear on local infrastructure gaps. In our communities, infrastructure needs to be built or improved to improve

basic services. Additionally, our communities are figuring out how to adapt to changes in the environment, and to the impacts these changes have on both existing and future infrastructure.

As opportunities to partner with Arctic and non-Arctic partners present themselves, it is incumbent upon us to be prepared to lead these partnerships towards the future we want. The declarations, values, and guidance that the Inuit Circumpolar Council has advocated for are anchors for harnessing and guiding potential partnerships.

Let me share an example with which some of you may be familiar.

Incumbent upon us not only to be at the table but to lead the table to a sustainable future, a future for the Arctic we want.

Leaders in our region established the Red Dog Mine in our backyard. This would not have happened without the support of leaders from the North Slope. Leaders in our region like John Schaeffer, Robert Aqqaluk Newlin and others—spent a lot of time in our communities, talking and listening with Elders and residents about the risks and opportunities of mineral development.

If our people were going to risk developing these resources, there needed to be a return on that investment for generations to come. What our communities wanted at that time was more access to quality education and good jobs. As a region, our people pulled together to shape what they wanted. They saw Red Dog as a way to assert self-governance and grow greater self-sufficiency.

NANA had to choose the right global partner who shared the goal of responsible mineral development and environmental stewardship. As owners of the land and its resources, NANA led the negotiation with Teck, the mine's operator, to establish a unique mine operating agreement that continues today.

The effort to ensure that development contributed to the education system needed to bring people in to work at the mine began with the formation of the Borough. This led to the opportunity to have a regional board of education and use the stream of revenue from the mine to the borough invest in building

schools and improving other infrastructure in our communities. Leaders, including Senator Frank Ferguson, worked to establish an adult vocational training center to prepare workers for jobs at the mine.

Today, the Alaska Technical Center continues to offer training opportunities to adults. It also operates a magnet school that prepares students in grades 11 to 14 for jobs in resource development, healthcare, education, and food services.

NANA has utilized the royalties retained from resource development on Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands to provide dividends to shareholders, diversify NANA's portfolio of businesses and, through our businesses, offer job opportunities and other benefits to shareholders.

Today, Red Dog accounts for over 70 percent of U.S. zinc exports, making the U.S. the 5th largest producer of zinc in the world. The ore from the deposit travels to Europe, Asia, and North America and is used in cars, batteries, electrical equipment and other products that we use every day. A management committee comprised of NANA's Inuit board members and staff along with Teck leaders oversee the mine's operations. A Subsistence Committee and an Employment and Training Committee also provide oversight ensuring that our subsistence resources are not affected by operations and that Red Dog will one day achieve 100 percent shareholder hire. Other Alaska Native Corporations have benefitted to the tune of \$1 billion in revenue sharing from NANA. The state of Alaska and the local borough, as I mentioned, benefit from the mine.

What I want to emphasize, from the example of Red Dog, is that the changing Arctic presents both risks and opportunities. And, like the leaders in the NANA region who began to see how all our people could benefit prior to the mine's development, it is incumbent upon us to not just to be at the table, but to lead the discussion about the Arctic and what we want for future generations. To protect our right to self-determination and self-sufficiency in ways that align with our values.

Arctic economic council – what you are observing

Businesses in Alaska, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia have joined together to create the Arctic Economic Council. In my short time with the Council, I see that they are grappling with similar challenges and

opportunities as our Inuit community. They are utilizing their business connections to broaden priorities in each nation, as well as informal connections to network and bring business opportunities to light. We Inuit must continue to do the same. We must recognize our role in the broader global economy and how the global economy impacts us.

Our corporations are one tool to greater self-sufficiency and self-determination. They can be vehicles to push for greater educational opportunities, and to negotiate agreements that reflect our values and priorities.

We have an opportunity to come together as Inuit businesses to find the opportunities to work together, invest in each other, and take a hold of our role in the global economy and lead.

Concluding Remarks/Call to action/commitment

I look back at the work of ICC, of the leaders in this room and those in your countries who have been a part of ICC. Your leadership has set the stage for solidifying our rights. You've done this through your work on the ICC Arctic Policy, the food security framework, and the Responsible Resource Development Declaration, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. So much of what has been done and articulated needs our continued attention and action today. It is time for us to look at how our businesses can play a greater role in promoting sustainable economies. We must be ready for the opportunities between our Inuit companies and other Arctic and non-Arctic partners.

Let's be clear about what we want. Let's seek out the partners who understand and carry similar values. Let's take it into our own hands to build sustainable economies that align who we are with our goals for greater self-determination and self-sufficiency. Let's find ways to promote our large, small, and individual Inuit businesses while encouraging innovation. If we want more sustainable economies, we must lead the development of these economies through our businesses, our communities, and our governments.

Qayanukpak.

****Find clear areas of emphasis and pause.**