



Press Release: ICC Alaska launches first ever Emerging Alaskan Inuit Leaders Initiative

October 25, 2019 – Anchorage, Alaska - At the 13th Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) General Assembly, the Utqiaġvik Declaration laid the foundation and roadmap for the next four years. One of the many initiatives contained in the Utqiaġvik Declaration is engaging Inuit youth as future emerging leaders. In Alaska, six Alaskan Inuit were selected out of 54 applicants for the Emerging Alaskan Inuit Leaders Initiative. Each emerging leader will be mentored by senior leadership, and have been assigned to assist in accomplishing the Utqiaġvik Declaration's 10 sections and 58 clauses.

This exciting Initiative intends to produce fresh perspective and insight for Inuit issues and concerns by collectively engaging Inuit youth. Allowing Inuit youth to becoming proactive through engagement strengthens Indigenous values: Lifting up and encouraging the young to become contributing members of the community and valued as the future caretakers of Inuit heritage, culture, tradition and values. Inuit youth have the responsibility to learn their traditional ways of life and envision the future of their communities. This initiative gives young Inupiaq and Yupik leaders the opportunity to bring their perspectives to the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

Benjamin Charles

Benjamin Qetun'aq Charles is from Bethel, AK. His parents are Sophie Chaliak of Nunapitchuk, and the late, Frank Charles of Bethel. Benjamin studied Biology at the University of Alaska Anchorage. He is currently the Museum Coordinator for the Association of Village Council President. He also carries on the Yup'ik Heritage of carving masks and has two apprentices learning this beautiful tradition.

Cameron Okbaok

Cameron "Umiaq-si" Okbaok is from Teller, Alaska. Cameron's parents are Jerry Okbaok and Freida Oquilluk of Teller. He studied Mechanical Engineering at the University of Alaska Anchorage. As of right now, Cameron is working at the James C. Isabell School in Teller as a substitute teacher, and the Community Education Coordinator. He is carrying his tradition by working with the students doing cultural activities such as dancing, singing, carving, and hunting. Cameron also works on qayaqs when he has time.

Frances "JakyLou" Olemaun

Frances JakyLou Olemaun is an Iñupiaq from Barrow, Alaska, and her parents are Thomas and Margaret Olemaun. JakyLou works at the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management as the Subsistence Research Specialist. She comes from a subsistence hunting and

whaling family and enjoys spending time with her family and being involved with her Iñupiat culture.

Joshua Vo

Joshua Vo's parents are Deborah Vo from St. Mary's and Cuong Vo from Anchorage. Joshua has his bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of Alaska Anchorage and is currently the General Manager of Kadiak, LLC, a Koniag federal contracting subsidiary. He enjoys outdoor activities, especially fly fishing.

Samantha Harrison

Samantha "Ahtaataruaq" Harrison is from Juneau, Alaska. Her parents are Magdalena and Kyle Eyre from Fairbanks. Samantha received a Bachelors of Science in Nursing and a minor in Sociology from Montana State University: Bozeman. She began her career in Nursing in the Intensive Care Unit at Alaska Native Medical Center. She enjoys moose hunting with her family, and sewing atikluks with her aana.

Teresa "Tessa" Baldwin

Teresa Unaliin Baldwin is from Kotzebue, AK. Her parents are Sarah Randall of Ambler, and Clyde Baldwin Jr. of Kiana. Teresa recently graduated from Columbia University, where she earned her Master's in Social Work. She is currently serving the Inupiaq people as an Itinerant Therapist for Maniilaq Association. Tessa enjoys harvesting plants throughout the summer and fall seasons for traditional medicines and teas.

This group of emerging leaders is very excited to get started in working with their perspective ICC mentor and exploring the issues within their individual tracks. These young leaders look forward to engaging with other Inuit youth within the Circumpolar regions.

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