



## **Press Release: Alaskan Inuit Stand in Solidarity to Assert Food Sovereignty**

**September 12, 2019 – Nome, Alaska-** Unity, Access, Adaptation, Our Values, Our Identity, Respect, Our Laws and Practices are a few of the key words and topics stressed over the past three days at the Inuit-led Food Sovereignty Summit – Our Food Forever.

Recognizing the connection between food security and food sovereignty, the need for greater Inuit involvement in decision-making and management, and the need for true co-management in partnership with state and federal governments, the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Alaska organized an Alaskan Inuit Food Sovereignty Summit, which was held in Nome this week. The Summit is part of a three-year Initiative, which aims to unify and organize ourselves collectively to determine how best to directly and meaningfully engage in the management of our traditional food resources. The Summit brought together Inuit from across the North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Bering Strait, and Yukon-Kuskokwim regions of Alaska to discuss and find solutions for advancing food sovereignty.

The participants represented the strengths of our communities, including youth, elders, hunters, gatherers, and cultural bearers. Throughout the discussions, participants stressed the importance of our knowledge and traditional laws, recognizing that we have been here for thousands of years, have survived, and that the animals have remained healthy. This is because we manage from our cultural values, which includes a great understanding of the animals. Participants also called for harmonization of the regulatory framework and approaches to the management of our traditional food resources in order to have adaptive, holistic management. ICC Alaska President, James Stotts stressed that, “Our approach is holistic, with an understanding that everything is related, and that we are part of the environment.”

These points were further highlighted during a youth panel. The youth shared and discussed the importance of sharing, the respect for all of life and each other, of learning from the animals and elders, and the importance of our traditional foods to our identity. Jakylou Olemaun, one of the youth panelists from Utqiagvik, shared “Our values come from our hunting traditions and how we learn from our experiences, from our elders...to know how to respect nature - to know when to take, how to take, and how much to take.”

Participants further underscored the importance of our food to our identity, health and well-being, and overall cultural sustainability. The Summit concluded with participants reaffirming that together, we are one people and will move forward as one to protect and secure our food sovereignty.

Following the Summit, the Initiative Steering Committee, with representatives from ICC Alaska member organizations and co-management organizations, will meet in Kotzebue early next year and build upon the results of the Summit to draft an Alaskan Inuit Food Sovereignty Management Action Plan.

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Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Alaska is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization that exists to be the unified voice and collective spirit of Alaskan Inuit, to promote, protect, and advance Inuit culture and society. ICC Alaska membership includes regional organizations that represent Inupiat, Central Yup'ik, Cup'ik



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and Saint Lawrence Island Yupik in the North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Bering Strait and Southwest regions in Alaska.

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