



PRESS RELEASE

Important Message from Arctic Indigenous Youth: “Look to the Future Not with Fear, But with Resolve”

August 08, 2023 – The International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples is observed each August 9th and this year’s theme is “Indigenous Youth as Agents of Change for Self-determination.” The Inuit Circumpolar Council celebrates all Inuit youth and their invaluable contributions to upholding a strong unity, advocacy, self-determination, and participation in international affairs.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), together with the Saami Council, hosted a 50th commemoration of the Arctic Peoples’ Conference in Ilulissat, Greenland, in July this year. Fifteen Arctic Indigenous youth delegates were among the 40 representatives, and they came with strong and important messages.

At the conclusion of the 2023 Arctic Peoples’ Conference, the five Arctic Indigenous Peoples’ Organizations in attendance issued a statement that concluded with the words: “Our youth are a massive force for hope in the Arctic, and now is the time for States, governmental authorities, corporations, research institutions and civil society to weigh heavily the messages, priorities, and perspectives of our youth and to empower them to leadership and success. Not least of all, we stand in unity for a future in which we will continue to thrive.”

ICC Chair, Sara Olsvig, says:

“The strong youth participation in the Arctic Peoples’ Conference, and their invaluable contributions to both the conference and the statement are tangible proof of the necessity and importance of including youth in any policy making. I was especially moved by the strong keynote speech the youth delegates collectively delivered, messaging that we should be able to “look to the future, not with fear but with resolve.”

Through their keynote speech, the youth delegates drew attention to the continued structural discrimination Indigenous youth face. They highlighted issues of health, education, and quality of life for all Indigenous youth and called out the lack of cultural sensitivity and understanding in the dominant systems.

Within their address, they also stated:

“We envision a future where we steer the direction of our health [so that it is] underpinned by the investment in culturally sensitive care services within our Indigenous communities. We see a future where infrastructure is developed focusing on addressing social issues and fostering healing within our communities. This is not just our challenge, but our opportunity to shape the narrative.”

ICC Chair Sara Olsvig says:

“The youth leaders of today are already shaping our tomorrow. By taking the lead, our youth are implementing our right of self-determination, thereby laying the path towards a safe and inclusive future for all. I am deeply heart-warmed by the many Indigenous youth who take part in advocacy for a better future and inform us on our common path forward. Their strong and candid statements give all of us hope for the future.”

Arctic Peoples’ Conference 2023 Youth delegates:

Piera Heaika Muotka (Saami Council), Petra Laiti (Saami Council), Enni Similä (Saami Council), Anja Márjá Nystø Keskitalo (Saami Council), Ellen-Sara Sparrok (Saami Council), Michael Bro (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Emma Lennert (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Joshua Vo (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Keryn Andersen (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Janice Parson (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Mary Angmalik (Inuit Circumpolar Council), Rebecca Veldstra (Aleut International Association), Nika Silverfox-Young (Arctic Athabaskan Council), Carissa Waugh (Arctic Athabaskan Council), Amber McSwain (Gwich’in Council International).

Arctic Peoples’ Conference 2023

Statement: <https://www.inuitcircumpolar.com/news/statement-of-the-arctic-peoples-conference-2023-inuiaat-issittormiut-ataatsimeersuarnerat-2023/>

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Contact:

Christina Fields
ICC (Alaska)
(907) 274-9058
christina@iccalaska.org

Betina Berthelsen
ICC (Greenland)
299 34 22 25
betina@inuit.org

Cassandra Elliott
ICC (Canada)
613-407-2642
celliott@inuitcircumpolar.com