



Inuit Women's Summit



Inuit Women's Summit Declaration

Inuit Arnartaasa Ataatsimeersuarnerannit Nalunaarut

Sisimiut, Kalaallit Nunaat | 29 October 2025

Preamble

Recalling that ICC Delegates, at the 2022 ICC General Assembly, through the *Inuit Circumpolar Council 2022 Ilulissat Declaration*,

Confirmed that ICC is a safe and inclusive space, where Inuit of all ages, gender, sexual orientation, and degree of cultural knowledge and language are welcome,

Declared and asserted the urgent need for basic public safety services across Inuit Nunaat and the unacceptable conditions in our communities. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own communities, safe and free from domestic violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, and violent crimes. Safe communities mean healthy communities, and healthy communities serve as the foundation for a thriving Inuit society,

Expressed Concern for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons crisis as well as other misdeeds by colonial powers, and the need for continued attention and action to ensure policies prioritize addressing these issues and their underlying causes,

Considered that Inuit have experienced injustices from colonizers. The impacts of colonization are profound, and we are still learning to understand the diverse layers of trauma inflicted on us, and in our resilience, we find strength and healing,

Directed the ICC Executive Council to identify best practices for the healing, health, and wellness of our communities, and to raise awareness about and support efforts to overcome the systemic discrimination of Inuit where it is known to exist.

The delegates of the first Inuit Women's Summit hereby:

Welcome and celebrate, the report of the first Inuit Circumpolar Council Counsellor's Gathering held in Ottawa March 25-28, 2024, which affirmed the importance of gatherings to build networks and connect Inuit across Inuit homelands, learning from each other and building a sense of togetherness and mutual support.

Recall ICC's 2024 Position Paper on Safeguarding and Strengthening the Arctic Council, which included a call for expanding, strategizing, and further developing the work of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) to include issues within social, cultural, and justice systems as deemed relevant by Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

Welcome the ICC Chair's initiative to hold the first Inuit Women's Summit, thanking ICC Kalaallit Nunaat and the Chair's Office for organizing the event, and Qeqqata Kommunia for hosting the Summit held October 27-29, 2025, in Sisimiut, Kalaallit Nunaat to share knowledge and good practices in the promotion and protection of the rights of Inuit women and girls, develop recommendations for Inuit-specific actions and initiatives, and ensure long-term cooperation across Inuit homelands to ensure strong Inuit-led support across state borders.

Celebrate that 42 Inuit women from Alaska, Inuit Nunangat in Canada, and Kalaallit Nunaat gathered in person in Sisimiut, and that four Inuit women from Chukotka participated virtually for a Chukotka specific session during the Summit.

Amplify the voice and the role of Inuit women in Chukotka as expressed in the following four paragraphs.

Celebrate the continued cross-border connection between Inuit women across and beyond Inuit homelands, emphasizing the importance of continued transboundary cooperation and communication with Inuit in Chukotka.

Welcome with gratitude the leadership of Inuit women of Chukotka in language revitalization, promotion of the utilization of the Inuit language and intergenerational teaching, as well as in upholding and further developing traditional arts and crafts. Recognizing the support Inuit women of Chukotka provide for the men who are hunters and providers for their families and communities, thereby upholding the ability to collectively exercise the right to food security and food sovereignty, enabling sustainable households through flexibility and adaptability.

Celebrate the role of Inuit women in Chukotka for publishing books, including textbooks for teachers and students, documenting and strengthening the intergenerational transmission of Inuit languages.

Celebrate the leadership of Inuit women in Chukotka in both official governance and in non-governmental organizations,

Further declaring that all in-person delegates collectively are:

Determined to continue and strengthen the cross-border cooperation, support and consultation between Inuit women, including between and within each region and beyond Inuit homelands.

Expressing our shared pride in the work and leadership of Inuit women across and beyond Inuit homelands.

Amplifying with gratitude the voluntary work that is the heart work of many courageous women, who are simultaneously caring for families while often working full time jobs and living out cultural values and traditional lifeways every day.

Expressing love and gratitude to all Inuit women elders who joined the Inuit Women's Summit in person, and to our Chukotka relatives who joined virtually sharing powerful stories of the many elders of their region that have tended the languages, traditions, and cultural practices of their ancestors for future generations, and especially to Ausuittuq (Grise Fiord) elder, Liza Ningiuq, for her story and words of empowerment: "we are the portal to our communities, we have to be strong."

Inuit Women's Rights Frameworks, Tools & Strategies

Affirming that the human rights of Inuit women and girls are intrinsically tied to our cultural context and relationships within our communities.

Emphasizing that the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reformulates and codifies universal human rights, as enshrined in numerous legally binding human rights instruments, contextualizing them to the specific circumstances of Indigenous Peoples.

Reaffirming our interdependent, interrelated, interconnected, indivisible and inherent rights as affirmed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including our right to self-determination, which is the pre-requisite for the exercise and enjoyment of all of our human rights as Indigenous Peoples.

Calling for the full recognition by all governments, that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a remedial instrument, aimed at ensuring Indigenous Peoples can fully enjoy the range of universal human rights to which they are equally entitled. The obligation of states to recognize Indigenous Peoples and their rights, therefore, has

its basis in international human rights conventions, which are binding on states regardless of recognition within domestic laws, as stated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples in his report on the Recognition of Indigenous Peoples (A/HRC/60/29).

Reaffirming and **calling** for all governments to recognize the rights of Indigenous women and girls, including all Inuit women and girls, as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), affirming that CEDAW General Recommendation no. 39 sets a foundation for a holistic understanding of the individual and collective rights of Indigenous women and girls.

Calling for the protection of life, safety and dignity of all Inuit women and girls, committing to further exploring the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the provisions therein on peace and security in relation to sexual violence.

Recalling that states, according to the International Labor Organization Convention no. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO Convention 169) article 33, are obliged to ensure appropriate mechanisms, equitable funding, and all necessary means for Inuit to fully and effectively participate in the planning, coordination, execution and evaluation of all proposed measures affecting Inuit, including programs, policies, and law-making

Recognizing that the consequences of the violations of these rights extend far beyond individual suffering. The intersection of gender and racial discrimination disrupts every aspect of family relationships, wellbeing, mental health, cultural identity, community cohesion, and ties to land and territory.

Calling, therefore, on all our governments to exercise a comprehensive and intersectional approach is essential to fully addressing the root causes of this violence.

Celebrating the foresight of Inuit women to uphold unity amongst Inuit women in our families, communities, nations and across Inuit homelands, including Inuit living outside Inuit homelands, and above all, the inherent right of all Inuit to self-determination as distinct Peoples.

Recognizing all forms of violence and marginalization facing Inuit women today are not accidental. They are the continuing consequences of colonial policies, racial superiority ideologies, and systemic exclusion. Even though such ideologies have been widely denounced, their legacy persists in the structures of law, governance, and public services.

Recalling and **reaffirming** that the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples establishes the *minimum standards* for the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples, stressing that states and institutions must interpret and implement these rights in a manner that advances, rather than limits, those standards.

Acknowledging that systemic human rights violations against Inuit women, communities, and Peoples constitute violations of life itself, underscoring the principle of proportionality in human rights obligations.

Recognizing that denying even basic personal security has a cascading effect, impacting other fundamental rights like access to food, education, and cultural survival. Thus, the violation to the right of life represents the ultimate failure to uphold human dignity and government responsibility.

Recognizing Inuit women pursue education in systems where our culture is often underrepresented, and that we must navigate between our own cultural frameworks and those of dominant societies in order to assert our rights and participate fully.

Recognizing that Inuit women and girls are strong agents of change and betterment for the local, regional, and global society. Inuit women are carriers of life, of knowledge and through their work they uphold and promote the individual and collective rights of all Inuit.

Violence Prevention & Safety for Inuit Women, Children and Gender-Diverse Individuals

Expressing concern that Inuit women, like Indigenous women around the world, are at high risk of intersectional gender-based and racial discrimination, including Inuit with diverse gender identities, systemic discrimination, and high rates of violence and abuse, and of being missing or murdered. The consequences of these violations affect not only the individual woman, girl or gender diverse person but our collective Peoples across Inuit homelands and beyond Inuit homelands. Further noting that the housing crisis exacerbates vulnerability to violence, displacement, and family separation, and must be addressed as an integral part of ensuring the safety, dignity, and human rights of Inuit women and families.

Acknowledging the intersectionality of issues such as cases of legally fatherless, adoption, and reproductive health, recognizing that the status of legally fatherless individuals constitutes not only a child's rights issue but also a women's rights issue, impacting mothers and families across generations¹.

Recognizing the link between the housing crisis and the forced placement of Inuit children in foster care, noting that limited access to adequate housing often prevents children from remaining with their families and community.

¹ Until 1963 (1974 for North and East Greenland) the legislation for Greenland did not contain rules on paternity for children born out of wedlock. Thus, children born out of wedlock had no right to inheritance after their father. The term "legally fatherless" is used when referring to legally fatherless persons.

Affirming that Inuit children placed in foster care have the right to maintain their culture, language, and identity, and that their placement is prioritized to be with extended family or foster families from the same cultural and linguistic background.

Advancing Knowledge on Colonial Obstetric Violence

Recognizing that the individual and collective rights of all Inuit are affected by collective human rights violations, racism, systemic discrimination such as policies such as legally fatherless, forced sterilization, medical experimentation, obstetric violence and contraceptive programs, inflicted upon Inuit women and girls.

Honoring the knowledge and care that women, as mothers, aunties, grandmothers, and midwives provide in caring for babies, mothers, and homes. Honoring the birth workers that are doing this work in Inuit communities, providing critical infant and maternal care.

Affirming the right of Inuit women to comprehensive care by Inuit midwives, the right to give birth in their own communities, and to receive support from Inuit health care providers.

Recognizing the right to bodily autonomy and **condemning** the wide range of obstetric violence that Inuit women face, as violations of their individual and collective rights, such as placement of IUDs in over 4,000 Kalaallit women and girls, of which many were unconsensual; racial bias and discrimination against Inuit women in the birthing process; lack of access to services to give birth within their own communities; unnecessary and harmful medical procedures against their will, which all lead to high levels of maternal mortality, lifelong complications for women, trauma, and shame impacting women, their spouses and their families, correlating with higher levels of violence.

Recognizing the role of obstetric violence in denying collective rights, limiting the population, denying women and babies from the care of their families and communities when they most need it.

In conclusion, we, the in-person delegates at the first Inuit Women's Summit,

Remember and hold space in our hearts for the women who could not be with us, those who have passed on, and those who are enduring hardships, whether spoken or unspoken.

Celebrate Inuit women who are the cycle-breakers, confronting and transforming legacies of colonialism, where it is known to exist, violence, and inequality, ensuring opening new pathways for healing, dignity, and self-determination for future generations. Women are pillars of strength in their communities; safeguarding our

languages, traditions and transmitting the values that sustain Inuit societies and ways of life.

Express immense gratitude and appreciation to all Summit participants for their active contributions to the success of the Summit, and for taking time away from their families and communities to continue advocating for the rights of all Inuit.

Affirm that expression of Inuit identity is the essence of healing.

Hold dear the next generation of Inuit who have begun their own journeys towards healing and who will carry the healing process forward in new ways as they navigate their lived experiences. We dedicate this declaration to them and to our ancestors, who faced every challenge with bravery and strength.

We, the delegates at the Inuit Women's Summit therefore, agree to:

1. **Direct** ICC leadership to organize a second Inuit Women's Summit to take place during the term 2026-2030 and call upon future ICC leadership to convene Inuit Women's Summits in each term.
2. **Direct** ICC to strengthen the focus on Inuit women's rights within the work of the Arctic Council, including expanding, strategizing, and further developing the work of the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) to include issues within social, cultural and justice systems as deemed relevant by Arctic Indigenous Peoples.
3. **Call** on ICC, governments, governmental agencies, and organizations across Inuit homelands to fully entrench a human rights-based approach in all aspects of their policies, programs, and advocacy, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international human rights standards, **press** for inclusion of Inuit in all decision-making that affects Inuit and their rights.
4. **Call** for the establishment of Inuit-led education and training on the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
5. **Commit to** continuing and furthermore **call** on governments and leadership to strengthen the cross-border connection and support consultation between Inuit women, including between and within each region and with those living outside Inuit homelands.
6. **Call** on governments, governmental agencies, associations, and organizations to take responsibility and recognize their duty to uphold and protect our rights as Inuit women and girls, **demanding** from governments the support and resources necessary to uphold the rights and dignity of women and girls throughout all judicial and legal systems.

7. **Call** on ICC to advocate for governments, governmental agencies, associations, and organizations to provide mandatory education on historical harms, trauma awareness, the historical discrimination and rebalance the leadership for all communities in Inuit homelands and Inuit living outside Inuit homelands.
8. **Call** for all governments to **recognize** that the responsibility to uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples exists under the United Nations Charter and other legally binding human rights instruments, irrespective of formal endorsement of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
9. **Call** on all governments to fully implement the ILO Convention no. 169 and UNDRIP in full partnership with Inuit, including Inuit-led organizations.
10. **Call** on all governments, governmental agencies, Inuit leadership to recognize and address the collective trauma inflicted upon Inuit from colonization, where it is known to exist.
11. **Call** for addressing lateral violence through campaigns and increased information about what lateral violence entails and causes, and for addressing the root causes of lateral violence, including trauma and shame, in order to support each other in these processes and never leave anyone alone in working with collective and individual trauma.
12. **Call** on all governments and governmental agencies to further improve and share Inuit-developed and Inuit-led methodologies and tools to address and support persons with suicide ideation, building on and further developing existing programs across Inuit homelands, also for Inuit living outside Inuit homelands.
13. **Press** for the immediate recognition and implementation by states, research funders, and researchers of Indigenous data sovereignty through Indigenous-led governance of data and co-creation of research, to ensure that data collection and disaggregation illuminates the realities of all Inuit, in particular affecting Inuit women and children (A/HRC/EMRIP/2025/2), thereby enabling Inuit women and leadership to make informed decisions regarding the prioritization of issues relevant to their lives and develop solutions they feel appropriately address those issues.
14. **Encourage** Inuit-led data collection by Inuit organizations and partner agencies, respecting Inuit Knowledge in its own right, and advancing Inuit data justice.
15. **Urge** ICC, governments, governmental agencies, and organizations across Inuit homelands and Inuit living outside Inuit homelands to support and invest in culturally grounded healing initiatives for Inuit men, women, and families. Healing approaches must reflect Inuit values, languages, and ways of knowing, and be guided by Inuit Elders, healers, and communities.

16. **Assert** the urgent need for states to fund the establishment and resourcing of local, Inuit-led treatment and wellness centers and shelters that provide culturally relevant care for those affected by domestic violence, substance misuse, and other traumas.
17. **Call** on ICC to advocate that governments, governmental agencies, associations and organizations dedicate funding toward tailored community strategies for healing, substance use treatment, mental health accessibility, which is a community wide trauma-informed and engaged approach and culturally relevant.
18. **Call** on states and Inuit-serving organizations to recognize the roots and impacts of colonial violence that have emerged and that continue to emerge from a long history of the imposition of colonial systems and policies, and to help foster spaces of reconciliation, accountability, and collective healing within our communities.
19. **Call** upon ICC, governments, governmental agencies, and organizations across Inuit homelands to uphold and invest in the revitalization of Inuit languages, traditional knowledge, education systems, and cultural practices as vital protective factors that ground us in what it means to live as good, relational human beings. Revitalization strengthens identity, belonging, and community cohesion, forming the foundation for collective healing and resilience across generations.
20. **Call** on ICC to hold future gatherings and summits to understand better and respond to the various kinds of obstetric violence, including forced removal for giving birth, faced by Inuit women, in recognition of the scale and scope of colonial obstetric violence that is finally coming out into the open.
21. **Call** for the documentation and safe sharing of experiences and testimonies related to the systemic violations of individual and collective rights, including the cases of those that are legally fatherless, reproductive rights, gender rights, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons², obstetric violence, and identity rights, ensuring that Inuit communities across all regions have access to culturally grounded support, including therapy and healing services.
22. **Call** on all governments for legal aid and inclusion of the legal and human rights aspects in the examinations of all past and future cases of any issues which may be of concern to Inuit communities and regions, and for Inuit within and beyond our homelands.
23. **Encourage** the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the CEDAW General Recommendation no. 39 through

² Acknowledging the diverse terms and abbreviations used, including MMIW, MMIWG, MMIWG2S, MMIWG2S+.

national legislation and systemic measures, recognizing such frameworks as essential to advancing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and ensuring accountability of states.

24. **Call** upon governments and relevant authorities to understand and address the interconnections between housing insecurity, food insecurity, and lack of employment opportunities as root causes of the displacement of Inuit children, including as a reason for both forced removal of children by governments and as intertwined with the shortage of Inuit foster homes.
25. **Affirm** that Inuit children and families affected by forced removal have the right to a timely, fair, and culturally appropriate process, and call upon authorities to prevent unnecessary delays in Inuit child welfare cases.
26. **Call** on governments to establish a working group on Inuit children who have been forcibly removed from their families and communities, ensuring that all case materials and procedures are thoroughly reviewed before decisions are made by relevant child welfare authorities, particularly in cases involving newborns or adoptions.
27. **Call** on governments, governmental agencies and organizations across Inuit homelands and Inuit living outside Inuit homelands for ICC to advocate to develop and implement measures for recourse, redress, healing, and rehabilitation, including for male perpetrators of domestic violence, in genuine collaboration with Inuit, and in ways consistent with Inuit values, customs, practices, and institutions.
28. **Call** on states and Inuit-serving organizations to recognize the importance of accessible, community-based mental health services that strengthens resilience, wellbeing, and the capacity for collective healing.
29. **Urge** Inuit to build collective understanding of and to combat lateral violence within Inuit communities by addressing its root causes, including the intergenerational impacts of colonization, inequality, and internalized oppression, through culturally grounded education, dialogue, and healing initiatives.
30. **Urge** and call for action from Inuit men to recognize the rights of Inuit women and girls, and support individual and collective healing and accountability measures across communities and governments.
31. **Call** on all Inuit and non-Inuit to create safe spaces and to protect Inuit women leaders at all levels and in all forms, including supporting Inuit women legal professionals, behavioral health specialists, educators, midwives, advocates, and the many other professions that Inuit women occupy, to be heard and respected as they battle every day for our collective rights.

32. **Call** upon the documentation and sharing of experiences and testimonies related to reproductive rights, ensuring that Inuit communities across all regions have access to culturally-grounded support, including therapy and healing services.
33. **Seek** governmental and organizational accountability for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons responses and the implementation of national action plans.
34. **Appeal** to organizations and associations that receive and have funding intended for housing to be accountable for recognizing the impact the current housing crisis has on Inuit women affected by violence in seeking safe, affordable, adequate, and transitional housing.
35. **Call** upon employers to recognize the secondary (vicarious) trauma Inuit face within the workplace and take mandatory training on trauma-informed and engaged approaches to protecting Inuit and their identity beyond Inuit homelands.
36. **Mandate** cultural sensitivity, coupled with trauma-informed and engaged approaches, be enacted across all frontline agencies, judicial systems, educational institutions, and healthcare systems with regard to the provision of services to Inuit, strengthening Inuit representation and capacity-building, and implement continued training in being culturally-informed and trauma-engaged among health care, social, government, and justice workers, and the many other professions that Inuit occupy.
37. **Urge** government law enforcement agencies to develop pathways for Inuit to enter the profession and provide accessible, free legal services and aid, regarding questions about domestic law and human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
38. **Call** on all governments and states to support Inuit-led and defined reconciliation and decolonization processes where they are needed, acknowledging harms that have occurred in our past, assigning accountability for violations, ensuring non-recurrence and ending practices that reproduce colonial systems in new forms, supporting Inuit leadership in writing our own narrative and history and creating programs and curricula to ensure Inuit children both within and beyond Inuit homelands are taught their history from an Inuit perspective.
39. **Request** the development of culturally-grounded and relevant toolkits and resources developed by Inuit for individuals who are not trained mental health specialists or professionals to provide support to those experiencing suicidal ideation.
40. **Uproot** and **eliminate** lateral violence in all forms, recognizing the innate ability, and responsibility, to heal and grow individually from our own traumas in order to promote collective healing.

41. **Recognize** that we all carry a responsibility to defend the defenders and the defenseless, to protect their personal and professional integrity and security, and to acknowledge that Inuit defenders, lawyers, and rights advocates are at the frontlines of discriminatory practices and systemic inequities. They experience marginalization and exclusion, and they bear the burden of being systemically and strategically questioned.
42. **Call** on all governments for legal aid and inclusion of the legal and human rights aspects in the examinations of all past and future cases of any issues which may be of concern to Inuit communities and regions, and for Inuit within and beyond Inuit homelands.

- END -

On behalf of the delegates at the first Inuit Women's Summit, October 2025

Sara Olsvig
Chair of Inuit Circumpolar Council