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# Alaskan Inuit Arctic Strategy

*A STATEMENT TO THE WORLD  
FOR THE ARCTIC WE WANT*

## ABOUT THE INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL ALASKA

Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Alaska is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that exists as the unified voice and collective spirit of Alaskan Inuit, to promote, protect, and advance Inuit culture and society. ICC Alaska represents Inupiat, Central Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Saint Lawrence Island Yupik in the North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Bering Strait, and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta regions.

Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an international Indigenous Peoples' Organization, founded in 1977 by the late Eben Hopson, Sr. from Barrow, Alaska, to strengthen unity among Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka; promote Inuit rights and interests at the international level; develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and seek full and effective participation and meaningful engagement in the political, economic, and social development of the Arctic region.

## PHOTO CREDITS

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## CITATION

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## Executive Summary

The Arctic is our home. Inuit are the common denominator in the Arctic where we have survived and thrived for thousands of years. The Arctic is not a place to be secured, developed, or managed from those outside our region. Recognizing the need for Alaskan Inuit to define our own future for the Arctic and assert our leadership in Arctic policy, ICC Alaska convened a Leadership Summit as the first step in developing this Alaskan Inuit Arctic Strategy. The Summit, held March 27-28, 2025, in Anchorage, Alaska, brought together Inuit leadership from across the North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Bering Strait, and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta regions.

For far too long, decisions about the Arctic, our people, and communities have been made without us, failing to reflect Inuit priorities and lived realities.

We call for the future of the Arctic to be led by Inuit, one that respects our inherent rights, reflects our values, and centers Inuit in all decisions that affect our people, communities, lands, waters, safety, and sovereignty.

Alaskan Inuit are proud to present our Strategy, asserting a bold and unified vision for the Arctic We Want. This vision is defined and governed by Inuit and founded in our cultural values, lived experiences, and Indigenous Knowledge.

When we refer to Inuit leadership in this Strategy, we are referring to elected and appointed officials who represent Inuit-led and community driven governments and organizations.

When we refer to meaningful engagement, it must be understood that it is not merely consultation or a procedural formality. Meaningful engagement and consultation are essential obligations rooted in international Indigenous and human rights standards, United States law and Alaska-specific legal frameworks.

# Inuit Sovereignty and Self-Determination

Our people have the right and the responsibility to decide what happens in the Arctic. Leadership has repeated countless times, “Nothing about us, without us,” which reflects the true nature of Inuit sovereignty and self-determination.

Inuit sovereignty and self-determination were the foundation of the discussions held at the Summit. Our Leaders and Elders have built a strong foundation of sovereignty and self-determination for us to stand on today, and we continue to exercise our right to sovereignty and self-determination in everything we do to protect our culture, identity and way of life.

We not only expect to have a seat at the table; the table is ours. We must be meaningfully engaged in every step of decision-making through processes that uphold our right to self-determination.

Inuit sovereignty and self-determination are the foundation by which our shared priorities and guiding principles are built upon. Through this Strategy, we honor our Elders’ and Leaders’ legacy of strong leadership and advocacy for our people.

The Arctic is our homeland. For thousands of years, we have and continue to be the true stewards of our Arctic homelands and waters. We call for policies and actions that uphold our rights, Indigenous Knowledge, and priorities. This strategy is a reminder that Alaskan Inuit will not be spoken for; we speak for ourselves.

## The Arctic We Want

We envision an Arctic that is Inuit-led and centered on our communities, where our lands and waters are protected, Indigenous Knowledge guides decision-making, and our systems of governance and sovereignty are respected and upheld. Our vision is driven by our culture and who we are as Inuit, guided by our values, and carried forward with unity and strength across all regions.

Through this Strategy we affirm our rights, our self-determination, and the value of our Indigenous Knowledge. These must be recognized, upheld, and respected. This is our statement to the world, for the Arctic we want.





**OUR PRIORITIES ARE:**

## **Inuit-led Development and Conservation**

All development and conservation efforts on our homelands must be guided by Inuit values and led by Inuit. Projects and initiatives must reflect the perspectives and needs of impacted Inuit communities and deliver direct benefits to those communities, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental benefits. Our priorities focus on addressing critical needs, including infrastructure, adequate and affordable housing, energy, transportation, safe drinking water, sanitation, public safety, and broadband telecommunications.

Conservation must be Inuit-led to meaningfully benefit our communities, advance our priorities, and strengthen rather than marginalize, Inuit voices in Arctic governance. Our people will not bear the burden of conservation imposed by others. Efforts that align with our interests and values uphold Inuit sovereignty across our ancestral homelands. Our values, lands, waters, cultural resources, and Indigenous Knowledge must never be used by outside interest groups for profit or to override Inuit interests.

All development, including infrastructure and military projects on our ancestral homelands, must be carried out in partnership with Inuit to enhance our social, cultural, and economic needs and ensure the health, safety and security of our people and communities. Military infrastructure or presence in the Arctic must provide tangible benefits to the community, just as it would advance military interests and national security. Military presence in the Arctic, including support roles such as search and rescue, must not override or marginalize Inuit governance and must be informed by our Indigenous Knowledge.

Responsible resource development must be carried out in partnership with Inuit to ensure it is balanced, supports Inuit food security, and contributes to stronger economic, social, and cultural development.

## OUR CALL TO ACTION

- **Respect Inuit governments, organizational structures, and processes by meaningfully engaging with elected Inuit leadership on all discussions and decisions about our ancestral homelands.**
- **Ensure decisions and policies about our ancestral homelands and waters reflect the perspectives and needs of elected Inuit leadership from those communities.**
- **Implement Inuit-led standards for development and conservation aligned with Inuit traditional management practices.**
- **Accept and utilize Inuit-defined requirements for responsible development and conservation projects and initiatives.**
- **Increase access to workforce development programs that align with our initiatives and support Inuit community needs.**
- **Ensure development and conservation align with our values, enhance community resilience, and uphold Inuit self-determination and our right of self-governance.**
- **Recognize, accept, and uphold Inuit rights to natural resources in and on our ancestral homelands and waters, including our traditional food resources.**
- **Ensure that military investments align with Inuit priorities, enhance community resilience, and uphold our self-determination and our right of self-governance.**



# Climate Change Impacts on Our Communities

Our communities are experiencing impacts as a result of climate change, including shifts in fish and wildlife migration patterns, disruptions to the timing of our traditional hunting and fishing seasons, loss of sea ice, erosion, permafrost melt and more that impact our way of life and community infrastructure. For example, rising ocean temperatures are causing fish stocks to move northward, which could result in greater competition for resources and added regulatory pressures. These changes demand urgent, respectful, and Inuit-led responses that prioritize adaptation and mitigation strategies, and policies that are co-produced with Indigenous Knowledge at the center of all decision-making.

Climate change decisions and responses require early and meaningful engagement of Inuit and must reflect our needs and priorities.





## **OUR CALL TO ACTION:**

- **Co-produce and implement community-based monitoring, assessment, and adaptation and mitigation strategies with Indigenous Knowledge holders.**
- **Ensure that climate change adaptation planning and response efforts, including erosion and community relocation, are carried out in full partnership with Inuit, informed by community priorities and Indigenous Knowledge.**
- **Fund Inuit-led climate responses that prioritize direct investment in Inuit communities.**
- **Partner with Inuit communities to co-develop baseline data and community-based monitoring programs, informed by Indigenous Knowledge, to track cumulative impacts and inform decision-making to ensure healthy Arctic ecosystems.**
- **Co-develop climate adaptation policies that prioritize Inuit food security and recognize that Inuit are a part of the Arctic ecosystem and must be included in all decision-making processes.**

# Inuit-led Marine Governance

We assert Inuit leadership in all aspects of marine governance. When we say marine governance, this includes all interconnected water systems, including coastal, marine, and fresh water, that sustains our culture and way of life. With regard to issues impacting the marine environment, including but not limited to offshore development, fisheries, and transpolar shipping, we assert our rights and responsibility to be a part of decision-making on all matters that impact our people and our communities.

Exercising our right to self-determination means securing a meaningful role in shaping the future of Arctic marine governance, including research, management, decision-making, and policy setting. Any marine governance decision-making must include Inuit from the beginning, throughout the entire process, and must prioritize our food security.



## **OUR CALL TO ACTION:**

- **Ensure meaningful engagement of Inuit in marine governance and the management of maritime activities, including offshore exploration and development, commercial fishing, shipping, maritime safety, defense, and homeland security.**
- **Meaningfully engage Inuit leadership and Indigenous Knowledge in shaping new and existing maritime regulations to mitigate impacts to our food security, our people, culture, and way of life.**
- **Address, monitor, and mitigate the impacts of increasing ship traffic on our communities and hunting areas, including the disruption of the sea ice, underwater noise, pollution, grey water discharge, and invasive species that affect fish and marine mammal migration, feeding, wintering, and birthing grounds.**
- **Meaningfully engage Inuit in all Arctic fisheries policy, decision-making, research, and management.**
- **Ensure Inuit have access to vessel tracking and monitoring systems, including real-time communication tools, to prevent interference with hunting and to ensure hunter safety.**
- **Partner with us to develop and implement environmental assessments and community-based monitoring systems co-produced with Indigenous Knowledge to inform decision-making.**
- **Ensure all maritime activities and development benefits Inuit communities.**



## Inuit Food Security and Food Sovereignty

Inuit assert our rights to access and manage our traditional food resources. We must no longer be criminalized for living our hunting and fishing culture and way of life. Advancing Inuit food security and food sovereignty requires long-term institutional, legal, and policy reform that aligns with Inuit traditional management practices, values, and Indigenous Knowledge in order to achieve holistic, adaptive management. Inuit-led and co-produced research is required to ensure the best available information for decision-making that advances our food security.

Protecting Inuit food security is not only about our survival. It is about our wellbeing, asserting our sovereignty, sustaining our cultural and spiritual practices, and ensuring that our Knowledge system remains strong and intact for future generations.

Without food sovereignty, Inuit cannot have food security.



## OUR CALL TO ACTION:

- Align regulatory frameworks with Inuit traditional management practices to ensure decisions are informed by Indigenous Knowledge and commit to true co-management with Inuit.
- Invest in infrastructure and provide direct funding for Inuit-led initiatives that advance Inuit food security and cultural sustainability.
- Partner with Inuit to develop and fund Inuit-led research and community-based monitoring programs that address threats to Inuit food security (e.g., harmful algal blooms, diseased animals, and bycatch waste from commercial trawling activity).
- Recognize our right to data sovereignty and invest in Inuit-led data management systems.
- Invest in programs that provide opportunities for intergenerational transfer of Indigenous Knowledge, culture, language, and way of life, which are critical to advancing our food security, cultural sustainability, and overall wellbeing.



# Inuit Community Wellbeing

Our view of community wellbeing is holistic, encompassing our culture, values, health, housing, public safety, workforce development, and education that uplifts and affirms our Knowledge systems. We call for sustained investments that address the unique and critical challenges facing our communities. Inuit communities continue to experience significant challenges to community health and wellbeing, including a prevalent housing crisis, high cost of living and transportation, and limited access to services, all of which impact our mental, spiritual, and physical health. Solutions must be rooted in our values, cultural identity, language, and Knowledge to support the holistic wellbeing of our people. True wellbeing will only be achieved through Inuit self-determination, where Inuit define, design, and lead our own systems, programs, and services.

Where Inuit lead, Inuit thrive.



## OUR CALL TO ACTION:

- Recognize that social and economic factors significantly affect Inuit health and wellbeing and support Inuit-led programs and services that address health and wellbeing holistically.
- Fund Inuit-led health care systems that are centered on Inuit-defined models of care and expand access to critical services, including mental health and Elder care services.
- Work in partnership with Inuit to invest in affordable and adequate housing, and ensure access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
- Support and expand Inuit-led education systems that empower our people to thrive and succeed.
- Support and invest in the development of Inuit-led, community-based public safety, including law enforcement, judicial systems, and first responders to improve safety in our communities and directly address the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples.
- Support and expand culturally grounded mental health programs for Inuit youth, including mentorship opportunities.
- Create opportunities for knowledge exchange on successful health and well-being initiatives across Inuit Nunaat.
- Invest in Inuit-led research and uphold Inuit data sovereignty, to identify and address the distinct health and wellbeing challenges facing our communities.
- Prioritize and invest in Inuit language revitalization and implement long-term strategies to sustain our languages.

Our unified Alaskan Inuit Arctic Strategy must be respected, implemented, and supported. As Inuit, we are building the Arctic we want: sovereign, sustainable, and led by our own Knowledge and voices.



