



INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR COUNCIL STATEMENT

IN MEMORIAM: Longtime Inuit Circumpolar Council Leader Jimmy Stotts Passes Away

May 28, 2026 – Anchorage, Alaska – It is with sincere sadness and respect that the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) announces the passing of our former ICC Chair, ICC Executive Council Vice Chair and ICC Alaska President, James “Jimmy” Stotts on Saturday, May 23, 2026. We offer our heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Karoline and his family.

Jimmy demonstrated an extraordinary, longstanding commitment to promoting Inuit rights and interests at the international level through more than four decades of leadership and service within the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). He has attended every ICC General Assembly, with the exception of the very first one in 1977.

He first represented Alaska on the first ICC Executive Council in 1980 and served three consecutive terms through 1989, helping shape the early direction of circumpolar Inuit governance during the foundational period of ICC. Working alongside Inuit leaders, Jimmy contributed to strengthening unity across Inuit Nunaat and advancing Inuit rights, interests, and self-determination in international policy and decision-making all on matters affecting Inuit. His leadership spanned pivotal moments in history where Inuit food sovereignty was under attack, Inuit land claims agreements were taking shape, Inuit language, history, culture, and identity faced growing pressures by colonial and Western systems, as Inuit were working to initiate and strengthen cross-border travel and communication.

He remained deeply committed to ensuring that Inuit speak with a unified voice on issues of common concern through ICC. Through his leadership, he emphasized that Inuit cooperation across ICC was essential to strengthening Inuit influence in international policy and decision-making. He worked to ensure balanced decision-making among all of ICC and provided strong leadership through periods of international geopolitical uncertainty, always advocating for the meaningful engagement of Inuit on all matters concerning the Arctic, our homeland.

Jimmy’s most significant international contributions came through his leadership at ICC, first as the Executive Director of ICC Alaska in 2007, then as ICC Chair from 2009–2010, and later as President of ICC Alaska from 2010 until his retirement in 2022. In these roles, he advocated for Inuit rights and interests on the international stage, worked collaboratively with Inuit leaders across ICC, and elevated Inuit voices and positions in policy discussions on issues ranging from Inuit food security and food sovereignty to Indigenous Knowledge and research, Inuit language,

identity, and culture, Inuit rights and self-determination, peace and security issues, environment, economic development, Inuit education, health and wellbeing, and so much more.

Throughout his leadership at ICC, Jimmy played a key role in advancing major Inuit-led initiatives that strengthened Inuit self-determination, Inuit food security and sovereignty, Inuit education, Inuit economic development, environmental stewardship, and more. As Head of Delegation for ICC at the Arctic Council, he worked across ICC to ensure a strong, unified voice to elevate Inuit priorities and perspectives in international Arctic policy and research discussions, ensuring Indigenous Knowledge and holistic approaches were taken to inform decisions about Inuit and the Arctic, our homeland.

Jimmy's strong, long-standing leadership in the international fora positioned him to represent Alaskan Inuit leadership alongside other Inuit leaders in the negotiations of the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement. Through these efforts, they successfully advocated for the inclusion of Arctic Indigenous Peoples (Inuit) and Indigenous Knowledge in the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement.

"As a long-time leader in ICC, and member of the first ICC Executive Council, Jimmy had an incredible impact on ICC and all Inuit. Jimmy was one of those leaders who understood the global importance of Arctic matters, and his leadership will forever echo among Inuit and in the Arctic. We honor the memory of Jimmy and offer our deepest condolences to his wife Karo, his family, and to all of ICC Alaska. Jimmy-p eqqaaneqarnera ataqqinartuuli - May we honor the memory of Jimmy," Sara Olsvig, ICC Chair.

"Jimmy's accomplishments over the years reflect his strong advocacy for Inuit well-being, sovereignty, and self-determination. As we have heard Jimmy stated many times, 'it's time for action' as we adapt to change without swaying away from unity, peace, and self-determination. He truly led Inuit to stay focused on our mission, and our hearts are filled with thankfulness," Marie Greene, ICC Vice Chair and ICC Alaska President.

"I have been working with Jimmy since the very beginning of the ICC and learned a lot from him, thank you Jimmy my friend. It was with sadness I heard about his passing. I have learned a lot from Jimmy, especially in relation to the importance of protecting the environment of the arctic as well as to a struggle for the rights of Inuit and other Indigenous Peoples of the world. His strong advocacy for Inuit well-being, sovereignty, and self-determination has always been center of his work. On behalf of the ICC Greenland, I am forwarding my condolences to Karo his wife and their family," Hjalmar Dahl, ICC Vice Chair and ICC Greenland President.

"Jimmy's leadership style was second to none, he was the glue that held ICC together, as we negotiate at the Arctic Council, United Nations and the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA). Jimmy also mentored many Inuit in the drive towards self-determination. His values exist in many of us who serve ICC. As a fellow Inuk, I am grateful to have been coached, guided, included, and a friend of Jimmy and his family. Quyanainni for your dedication to improving the quality of life for all Inuit!" Herb Nakimayak, ICC Vice Chair and ICC Canada President.

“It is very difficult to receive such messages. Of course, I and other members of our organization remember our Jimmy well. He was a smart man, always principled in ICC issues, very concerned for his people, Inuit of Alaska, and always had a balanced approach to solving issues. His humor, charm, benevolence are unforgettable. Very, very sorry! We express our deep condolences to Jimmy's family and friends, as well as to the ICC management! May his soul find peace. Please accept our condolences, it is very difficult to lose a loved one. We, your fellow Chukotka people, are with you in this grief!” Valentina Leonova, ICC Vice Chair and ICC Chukotka President.

CONTACT:

Sofia Geisler
ICC Greenland
299 34 22 25
sofia@inuit.org

Kelly Eningowuk
ICC Alaska
907-274-9058
kelly@iccalaska.org

Cassandra Elliott
ICC Canada
613-407-2642
celliot@inuitcircumpolar.com

Founded in 1977, Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) is an international Indigenous Peoples' Organization representing Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Kalaallit Nunaat, and Chukotka. ICC is dedicated to strengthening Inuit unity, advancing Inuit rights and interests internationally, and formulating long-term policies to protect the Arctic environment. It also strives for full and effective participation and meaningful engagement for Inuit in the political, economic, and social development of the Arctic.

ICC is a co-founder and a Permanent Participant of the Arctic Council and holds a range of international roles, including Consultative Status II at the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Observer status at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and holds Permanent Consultative Status at the International Maritime Organization, alongside other advisory and consultative roles across numerous international forums.