



## Press Release

### Inuit led Pikialasorsuaq Commission Completes Hearings in Grise Fiord and Pond Inlet

May 2, 2016 – **Pond Inlet** – The Pikialasorsuaq Commission completed the initial community hearings in Grise Fiord and Pond Inlet, Nunavut. The hearings spanned 5 days in the two communities with additional participation from community members from Clyde River, Arctic Bay and Resolute Bay.

In addition to Commissioner Kuupik V. Kleist, the commission was accompanied by Bjarne Lyberth, Association of Fishers and Hunters (KNAPK) and Alfred Jakobsen (Oceans North Greenland) on the trip to the Canadian High Arctic to assist the Commission, share knowledge and observe the proceedings.

“We are extremely pleased so many people attended the hearings in both communities to share their knowledge and perspectives with us. Participation was lively and included a broad cross section of voices” said Commissioner Eva Aariak. “We are humbled by the warmth and generosity we received.”

“Many community members appreciated the timing of the hearings, as outside interest and use of the Pikialasorsuaq (North Water Polynya) has increased significantly” said Commissioner Kuupik Kleist. “I am especially heartened hearing community members speak of earlier times when Inuit on both sides of Pikialasorsuaq visited each other and of the desire to renew these connections.”

“Community members expressed a clear desire to work together and want to be directly involved in monitoring and management decisions that impact our food sources and our environment.” adds Commissioner Chair Okalik Egeesiak. “We are one people with a shared history and heritage and a common vision for the Pikialasorsuaq.”

The Commission heads to Greenland in August for the next phase of hearings in communities connected with Pikialasorsuaq.

Following the completion of the Greenland hearings, the Commission will bring its findings and recommendations back to the communities before a final report is released to the public and to decision makers.

## Commissioners:

Okalik Egeesiak  
[chair@inuitcircumpolar.com](mailto:chair@inuitcircumpolar.com)  
613-563-2642

Kuupik Kleist  
[kvk@ggnuuk.gl](mailto:kvk@ggnuuk.gl)  
+299 54 78 58

Eva Aariak  
[eva.aariak@gmail.com](mailto:eva.aariak@gmail.com)  
867-222-8355

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## For more information:

Carole Simon  
ICC Canada  
[csimon@inuitcircumpolar.com](mailto:csimon@inuitcircumpolar.com)  
613-563-2642

Alfred Jakobsen  
Oceans North  
[aerj58@gmail.com](mailto:aerj58@gmail.com)

### *ABOUT THE PIKIALASORSUAQ COMMISSION*

The Inuit-led Pikialasorsuaq Commission is led by three Commissioners. The Commissioners are: ICC Chair, Okalik Egeesiak is the International Commissioner; former Nunavut Premier, Eva Aariak has been appointed as the Canadian Commissioner; and, former Greenland Premier, Kuupik Kleist will be the Greenland Commissioner.

The North Water polynya is an area of open water surrounded by sea ice. It is the largest one in the Northern Hemisphere and the most biologically productive ecosystem north of the Arctic Circle. It lies in northern Baffin Bay between Greenland and Canada's Ellesmere Island near Smith Sound and Nares Strait and is an important marine area for Inuit and the species upon which high Arctic communities rely.

The North Water is an area vulnerable to climate change. Inuit in the region have expressed a desire to explore locally-driven management options in advance of increased shipping, tourism, fishing, and non-renewable resource exploration/development. The Commission's mandate will be to listen to Inuit community members and knowledge holders who use and depend on this region about their vision for the North Water's future use and cooperation.

Current support for the Commission has been provided by Oceans North Canada, the Oak Foundation and World Wildlife Fund Canada, while additional funds are being sought.