



## ARCTIC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ASSESSMENT SYMPOSIUM

Ullukkut.

Inuit, Aleut, Athabaskan, Gwich'in, Saami and indigenous representatives from Russia recently met in Ottawa on 10-12 February 2015 to conduct the *ARCTIC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ASSESSMENT SYMPOSIUM*. Linguists, policy specialists, and other indigenous languages experts also attended to contribute to the work.

This event was part of a major Arctic Council initiative called the *Arctic Indigenous Languages Vitality Initiative* sponsored by the Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. It was generously supported by several Arctic Council states including Canada, the USA and Sweden, as well as the USA's National Science Foundation and the Gordon Foundation.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) was a key organizer and host of this important 3-day symposium which provided a platform for both the indigenous groups and researchers to review pan-Arctic assessments of indigenous languages, and to share experiences and tools in promoting the vitality of indigenous languages spoken across the Arctic.

It was a proud moment for me when I was able to give opening comments to the symposium and to welcome participants on behalf of the Inuit Circumpolar Council. Although we examined academic research findings during the symposium, this is mainly an indigenous-driven project that focuses on issues important to our indigenous communities.

Our languages reflect who we are – our culture, our heritage and our future. We use our languages to interpret our unique world and to translate what our environment is telling us. Language is a legacy we hand down to our children, and they to their children. The symposium had a strong youth presence from across the Arctic and youth participated actively in the discussions with presentations, questions and comments.

The symposium reminded me of the diversity of the language situations for all of us whether we are Inuit, Saami, Gwich'in, Aleut, Athabaskan or one of the indigenous peoples of Russia. This diversity is reflected in all the ways in which we acquire and keep our indigenous languages whether it is through our families, our communities, through schools, technology, supporting policies or even the Internet.

Much work has been done to preserve and strengthen our Arctic languages but the symposium also gave us a deeper understanding of the challenges we face. I am confident these challenges will reinforce our determination, especially among youth.

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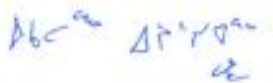
We are looking to build on what we have achieved. The recommendations put forward during the symposium will be shared with our communities so we can shape our future work in a way that responds to our communities' needs and aspirations. We will then pass them on to the Arctic Council before the Ministers meet in April 2015 in Iqaluit.

I am very pleased that the USA has indicated it will continue this initiative when it takes on the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in April. ICC looks forward to working with the USA as it provides strong leadership for the Council over the next 2 years.

The Nunavut-driven languages symposium, held the following week in Iqaluit, reinforced what had been shared at the international event. Indicative of our common language, culture, and vision.

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For additional information see [www.arcticlanguages.com](http://www.arcticlanguages.com).



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