

2015 Nunavik Inuit Declaration

Proud, United and Determined

Preamble

We, the Inuit of Nunavik, have embarked on a journey to recapture our strength as a People. Parnasimautik is an unprecedented exercise in mobilization and unity at local and regional levels. Through it, we are determined to promote and protect our unique culture, language and way of life, to improve the socio-economic conditions of our families and communities, and to build a bright future for our children.

Acknowledging Nunavik is part of the arctic world, covering the territory of Québec north of the 55th parallel and an extensive offshore region, and is the homeland for more than 11,000 Inuit living in the 14 communities, Chisasibi and southern urban areas;

Recalling we have lived and thrived in Nunavik for thousands of years;

Remembering we have suffered from the grip of colonialism like many indigenous peoples in the world;

Recognizing our strengths are challenged in the modern world and that we must assert our pride and promote and protect our unique Inuit culture, language and identity.

Affirming we have Aboriginal and treaty rights protected by the *Constitution Act, 1982* and are recognized as an indigenous people in international instruments;

Mindful we have set a course to achieve a comprehensive, integrated, sustainable and equitable approach for improving our lives, our communities and our region;

Recalling we have agreed to build on the *Parnasimautik Consultation Report*, the *Plan Nunavik* and other foundational documents to identify our fundamental issues and priorities and determine the conditions under which development in Nunavik will be acceptable to us;

Insisting our relationship with governments and industrial developers be based on equality and mutual respect to ensure that development in the region is focused on improving our quality of living, supports local development and creates wealth in the region;

We confirm our commitment to address the fundamental issues and priorities set out in the *Parnasimautik Consultation Report* and the *Plan Nunavik*, and its preconditions as summarized below:

Who We Are

- We are Inuit. No effort must be spared to keep our culture and our language strong in every aspect of our lives, in our communities and in our region;
- Revisiting the existing lands regime with the intention of addressing current and future needs of the communities and the region as a whole is essential. The expansion of Category I and II lands, exploring options for subsurface rights for Nunavik Inuit on Category I, II and III lands, empowerment of landholding corporations, and the strengthening of land use and management powers exercised by regional and local authorities on Category III lands are all important elements for achieving greater autonomy, self-sufficiency and well-being;
- Combined, the priority of subsistence wildlife harvesting over all other uses, an expanded land base and the use of regional planning to mediate between competing interests represent effective tools to ensure that food security and quality can be addressed in a truly substantive manner;

Our Communities

- We must recapture our core family values and traditions. *Ilagiit* means being part of a family and this concept defines us. We need to clearly state these values and traditions, and apply them in our homes and communities;
- We must have sufficient, adequate, affordable and safe housing. The management of public housing must be reviewed and the severe housing shortage must be eliminated urgently, which is at the core of many social and health problems and, at the same time, health and social services adapted to the realities of Nunavik Inuit must be strengthened;
- Many of our families are living in poverty conditions. The high cost of living and of subsistence wildlife harvesting combined with severe unemployment must be addressed immediately;
- Strong investment in education will reinforce the capacity of Nunavik Inuit. An educated population is essential to empower us to take our rightful place in a rapidly changing world, in local and regional economies and to live healthier and full lives;
- The cycle of problems plaguing our families and communities can be broken through increased justice and social services adapted to the realities of Nunavik Inuit. Individuals, families, communities, regional organizations and governments all have important roles to play;
- Local organizations, committees, groups and individuals recognize they must pool their resources and work together towards the goals they set themselves.

Each community has vital resources that need to be coordinated. A local Parnasimautik approach, based on cooperation, empowerment and local governance, must drive decisions, craft solutions and define actions;

- Economic development and employment in the communities for Nunavik Inuit must be priorities;

Our Region

- There are job and business growth opportunities in the region's mining, tourism and public service sectors. Access to these opportunities by Nunavik Inuit will require a long-term, sustained training effort linking the education system, the employment and training system, and employers and businesses;
- Connection to the electrical power grid and new forms of energy production, transportation and telecommunications are strategic issues for future community and industrial development. They must be pursued while ensuring conservation, long-term wildlife harvesting and food security and quality in our communities;
- Today's challenges, including climate change, new development pressures, and a young, rapidly growing population call for focused planning. The skills and information of all partners must be harnessed to produce planning tools that will ensure wildlife harvesting will continue into the future and that development provides real and sustained benefits to Nunavik Inuit and the region;
- Integrated planning must ensure the regimes created by the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement* and the *Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement* work in unison to serve the purpose of protecting and promoting our rights and interests throughout our homeland.

We agree as follows:

- To diligently pursue all means for improving our well-being according to our culture, language and way of life;
- To continue to support and provide our youth with the skills they need to succeed in the modern world as proud Inuit;
- To secure an expanded and adequate land base for our wildlife harvesting activities and the development of our communities;
- To create a new governance structure in Nunavik that meets our needs as Nunavik Inuit, as citizens of Québec and Canada, and as an indigenous people in the global community;
- To support industrial development only if it is sustainable and equitable towards us, and respects all environmental and social protection regimes under our land claims agreements, laws and regulations;
- Our power is in unity. Parnasimautilirijit, comprised of the Makivik Corporation, the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services, the Kativik School

Board, the Kativik Regional Government, the Nunavik Landholding Corporations Association, the Avataq Cultural Institute and the Nunavik Youth Association, will be created to collaborate and develop solutions to our common challenges at the regional and community levels.

- The Makivik Corporation is mandated to develop a strategy for negotiations with Québec and Canada with the collaboration and advice of Parnasimautilirijiit to address our fundamental issues and priorities. Negotiations will be led by the Makivik Corporation, on behalf of Nunavik Inuit, with the participation of our organizations according to their respective mandates and responsibilities.
- The Makivik Corporation will keep Nunavik Inuit and our organizations regularly informed.
