



January 2020 Update

About GCI

Gwich'in Council International (GCI) represents 9,000 Gwich'in in the Northwest Territories (NWT), Yukon, and Alaska as a Permanent Participant in the Arctic Council; the only international organization to give Indigenous peoples a seat at the decision-making table alongside national governments. The Arctic Council is a forum for cooperation, collaboration, and interaction, and has six working groups advancing projects, partnerships, and networks.

There are eight Board seats assigned to the three membership organizations. The vacant seats are being filled by the respective organizations, with processes currently underway.

GTC	VGFN	CATG
Jordan Peterson Sharla Greenland	Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm 1 vacant	Edward Alexander Sam Alexander Evon Peter 1 vacant

GCI's Board provides leadership, governance, and oversight to the staff and activities of the organization. Board members also participate in meeting, Arctic Council events, and are a link to the other Nations, Permanent Participants, and Observer organizations. GCI's recent Board meetings include:

- October 10th 2019
- November 8th 2019
- January 9th 2020

Agendas and minutes are available on request.

GCI will be creating a new strategic plan in 2020 and look forward to opportunities to share and gather feedback as it gets underway.

Key Engagements and Activities

GCI participates in various working groups, Arctic Council events, and activities to advance our mission and work. We also lead projects, and see our work taken up by others. Highlights from some of the meetings attended by GCI are below, and we are happy to provide any additional information on request.

Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG), September 2019

- GCI received support for co-leading the ARENA-II project, and supported other projects as presented, including the Local2Global project, a follow up to Project CREATEs, addressing youth suicide and support for mental health resources in communities
- Canada committed to establishing a permanent Secretariat for the SDWG in Canada. GCI provided feedback that the Secretariat should be established in the north and support project

management functions as well as education and coordination between Arctic Council projects and communities.

Indigenous Clean Energy (ICE) Gathering, Ottawa 2019

- Presented the Arctic Community Energy Planning & Implementation Toolkit and heard that it is being used and well received in communities not only in the north but across the country
- Strong desire for more copies to be made available, and for it be supported for use

Arctic Council Advisory Committee, November 2019

- Terms of Reference drafted and shared with federal government departments, territorial and provincial governments, and Permanent Participants
- Will be engaged in providing strategic advice to Canada around the future of Canadian engagement in the Arctic, and implementation of the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework

Arctic Leaders' Youth Summit, November 2019

- Attended by one Gwich'in Youth, Geraldine Blake
- Youth Declaration (attached) shared at the Arctic Leaders Summit and Senior Arctic Officials meeting and received commendation and desire to further engage youth in ways that they want to be involved

Arctic Leaders Summit, November 2019

- GCI was scheduled to deliver a keynote address and speak on a panel, but unfortunately needed to cancel because of a death in Vuntut Gwichin. Contributions were given to the Arctic Leaders Summit Declaration, which was supported by all six Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council. It is attached.

Senior Arctic Officials (SAO) Meeting, November 2019

- GCI made two interventions, and the SAO recommended a Strategy Retreat in January 2020. GCI spoke with support to the importance and inclusion of youth, and heralded the ALS Declaration recognizing a Climate Crisis

Emergency Prevention & Preparedness Response Working Group (EPPR), December 2019

- GCI proposed a project on Circumpolar Fire cooperation that could result in increased benefits to citizens from greater opportunities to put fire fighting training and experience to use across the Arctic
- If successful, this project will result in landmark agreements for international cooperation

Sustainable Development Working Group Intersessional Meeting, December 2019

- Seven new projects were proposed, and they will be evaluated in the coming months to assess whether and what type of engagement and support is appropriate.



Projects & Opportunities

The Arctic Renewable Energy Networks Academy (ARENA)

In 2017, the Arctic Remote Energy Networks Academy (ARENA) pilot program brought together 17 individuals from three Arctic states and three Arctic Permanent Participant organizations for a combination of training, mentoring and site visits. There was great feedback and learning from the program, and we are excited to deliver another one. ARENA-II was approved at the September 2019 SDWG meeting to support a second cohort focused on sustainable energy solutions for remote Arctic communities. For 2020, we are seeking 2 to 3 participants from each Permanent Participant in addition to nominations from Arctic Council Member States and Observer Nations.

ARENA is a unique circumpolar knowledge sharing program about isolated power systems integration held in partnership with Canada, Gwich'in Council International, the U.S. and Iceland and endorsed by the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG) of the Arctic Council.

Combining visits to communities and participant knowledge exchanges with presentations and laboratory demonstrations, ARENA connects current and emerging energy professionals with hands-on learning experiences, mentors, and project development leaders from throughout the circumpolar north.

ARENA seeks to provide participants with the necessary knowledge-base, skills and collaboration networks to develop clean energy projects in their own communities or regions with a view of effectively achieving balance between economic viability, energy security, environmental and public health concerns in the circumpolar Arctic region.

More information found can be found here: <http://arena.alaska.edu/> and we hope that Gwich'in members will apply.

Arctic Community Energy Planning & Implementation Toolkit

Led by GCI and released Summer 2019 by the Sustainable Development Working Group, this project supports Arctic, rural, and remote communities to advance their Community Energy Plans with local knowledge and leadership. The Toolkit was featured in a webinar by the Indigenous Clean Energy Network September 24, 2019, and presented at the ICE Gathering in Ottawa in October 2019. We will be printing more copies in 2020; please contact us if you would like one. It is also available online here:

<https://gwichincouncil.com/arctic-sustainable-energy-toolkit>





One Health, One Future

GCI has been asked to coordinate participation from members of Canadian Permanent Participants to attend the One Health, One Future conference. The aim of the conference is to bring together scientists, healthcare professionals, educators, students, policy makers, and community stakeholders to learn about the latest advances in One Health research. The conference will take place on March 11-14, 2020, at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The One Health, One Future Conference consists of presentations, workshops and cultural exchanges discussing circumpolar North issues in a One Health context. We will be posting opportunities on the GCI Facebook page and encourage anyone interested to get in touch. More information can be found here:

<https://www.uarctic.org/news/2019/9/one-health-one-future-conference-2020/>

Arctic Indigenous People's Food Congress

Issues of food security and food sovereignty are of increasing importance, and there have been activities through the Sustainable Development Working Group showcasing Gwich'in and other Arctic foods and practices. In March 2020, the first Arctic Indigenous People's Food Congress will occur in Guovdageaidnu/ Kautokeino, Norway, hosted by the Association of World Reindeer Herders, the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry, and the University of the Arctic EALÁT Institute at ICR. We will be posting opportunities for a Gwich'in member to participate.

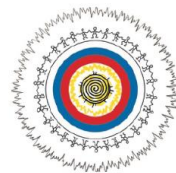
We are exploring opportunities for students to get more engaged in GCI's work, and encourage teachers to contact us for links to classroom resources, or students in graduate programs to be in touch about summer placements and opportunities.

Contact Us

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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GwichinCouncil/>



VI Arctic Leaders' Summit Declaration

Roavvenjárga (Rovaniemi, Finland) November 13 – 15, 2019

We, the representatives of Indigenous Peoples' organizations of the Arctic, Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council, have gathered on 13 - 15 November 2019 in Roavvenjárga to identify our priorities and discuss the future of our Arctic homelands, including cooperation, language and culture, environmental changes, living conditions, economies and sustainable development.

We celebrate and honour the enduring cultures, societies and communities of all Arctic Indigenous Peoples and recognize that we continue to rely upon the ingenuity of our ancestors and applaud the promise of our future generations.

We welcome the Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders (AIYL) and commend them for the successful first ever Arctic Youth Leaders' Summit 12 - 13 November 2019.

We acknowledge the attendance of several Arctic Council Observers at an Arctic Leaders' Summit and their participation in a formal Arctic Council Permanent Participant and Arctic Council Observer dialogue.

Evoking the interrelated, interdependent and indivisible human rights affirmed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)* in 2007.

Recognizing that the rights affirmed in the *UN Declaration* are equally guaranteed to all Indigenous individuals that attention must also be paid to the rights and special needs of Arctic Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

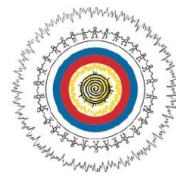
Recalling UN member states' ratification of the *Paris Agreement* on climate change, which entered into force on 4 November 2016.

Reaffirming the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)* and the need for their realization by 2030 and embracing the SDGs as guidance for the future we want, while leaving no one behind.

Celebrating the 2019 *International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL2019)* by the UN and the responsibility of the UNESCO to carry out concrete actions to highlight the status and conditions of the world's Indigenous Peoples' Languages.

Noting with concern the rate of warming in the Arctic occurring at the highest rate of any region of the world.

Recognizing that our environment continues to undergo profound, rapid and unpredictable change and that our communities witness and are impacted by the effects of these changes.



Concerned that Indigenous Peoples' voices are not being heard while our responsibility is to our lands and waters, while current State-led responses to climate change around the world are not sufficiently responsive to the dire circumstances.

Recognizing the adverse implications for the health of animal and fish populations, our food security, as well as the harmful impacts upon our emotional, cultural, spiritual, and physical well-being, which are already being experienced by our peoples.

Affirming that Arctic Indigenous Peoples have vast and unique knowledge systems – known as both Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous Knowledge – practices and technologies for mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change as environmentally conscious Arctic inhabitants as reflected in our cultures, values and traditions, and derived from the lands and waters themselves.

Recognizing that Arctic regions are disproportionately more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of the changing climate, and the people, flora and fauna are the first to experience them directly.

Asserting that it is crucial for our knowledge, the adaptation of our communities, and our work to reduce or eliminate the causes of these changes must be recognized and respected by all, ranging from international bodies, governments, regional and local policymakers, scientists, researchers, industries, third parties, and others. Our knowledge is intimately linked to the lands and the waters that sustain our cultures and provides insights not otherwise accessible.

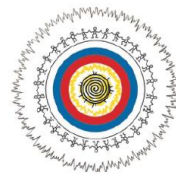
Affirming that our Languages are the foundation of our cultures and identities. Indigenous Peoples' Languages and education support our cultures. Arctic Indigenous Peoples' hunting, gathering, fishing, reindeer herding, and food practices are a way in which our cultures are taught. Legally protecting and revitalizing our Languages is urgent and paramount. For our Languages to remain strong, Indigenous Peoples' language schools and learning institutions need to be established and supported.

We recognize that the Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages hold unique and valuable knowledge about our cultures and the environment with which we live, our Languages and terminologies connect nature and culture and are therefore closely related to biodiversity and climate change resilience and adaptation.

We further recognize that our Knowledge is uniquely expressed and transmitted through Indigenous Peoples' Languages and oral traditions, thus our Knowledge systems, the environments in which they are developed, and Indigenous Peoples' Languages are inextricably linked.

We express our deepest concern that the impacts of rapid and dramatic Arctic environmental change puts the Indigenous Peoples' Languages under threat, and in turn threatens the identity and culture of Arctic Indigenous Peoples.

We note the important role of traditional economies of Indigenous Peoples in preserving Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages and further recognize that culture encompasses this way of life.



We welcome the outcomes of the IYIL2019 and **encourage** rapid implementation of its results.

Acknowledging that healthy families are essential to the sustainability of our communities and recognizing that empowered youth are essential to achieve the future we want.

Recognizing the lack of affordable housing, the need to assist the homeless, that relocation from our lands and traditional territories to settled communities has resulted in drastic shortage of housing, and that support is necessary to offset the extremely high cost of living in the North to provide for stability in our communities.

Concerned that Arctic Indigenous Peoples face severe health disparities, with unacceptable rates of cancer, diabetes, infectious diseases including tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, addiction, and suicide, which have serious, negative impacts on the future of our families and our communities.

Recognizing that for millennia, the Arctic's living resources and the ability of our communities to harvest and process the resources that we depend upon are fundamental to food security and is core to our identity, making the health and availability of Arctic wildlife and healthy waterways of utmost concern.

Note with concern that many Arctic Indigenous Peoples face food insecurity due to multiple, compounding threats to our environment, including climate change, changing ocean dynamics, shifts in biodiversity, marine pollution, ocean acidification, high costs, and other forces.

We reaffirm the right of Indigenous Peoples to give or withhold our free, prior, and informed consent in non-coercive negotiations prior to activities being established and developed on our customary lands and waters.

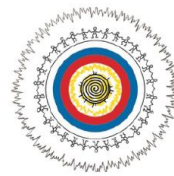
We further recognize the need for genuine co-production of knowledge and the crucial role of Indigenous Peoples in every field, including innovative technologies, conservation, and development and the need for others to demonstrate an increased ability to work within Arctic Indigenous frameworks and contexts.

Therefore, we the Arctic Indigenous Leaders gathered here today officially adopt this Declaration and make the following **Calls to Action**:

Affirming that climate change constitutes a state of emergency for our lands, waters, animals and Peoples, and that we will accordingly utilize our local, national and international forums and partnerships to achieve meaningful progress towards the *Paris Agreement* targets;

Encouraging actions that promote full and meaningful participation and coordinated efforts with our relatives around the world to curb climate change and ensure the Indigenous Peoples' voices be heard in these dialogues;

We call for initiatives to protect and support Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages as part of the solution addressing these changes, and **call for** adoption of a *United Nations Decade on Indigenous Languages*;



We call for measures to legally protect and revitalize our Languages and that for them to remain strong, Indigenous Peoples' language schools and learning institutions must be financially and otherwise supported and established;

We call for international collaboration to identify best practices and best available technologies to support and develop strong language platforms to strengthen and promote Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Languages and culture;

We support the replication of language models that have been successful within other Indigenous Peoples' communities;

We encourage continued and expanded educational experiences in our schools and learning institutions that reflect our values, cultures, traditions and languages, including the need to ensure that our languages and cultural practices remain strong;

We also encourage pride, empowerment and strength within our communities through direct support for our youth and children while recognizing the sustainability of our youth through culture, language and our unique values, customs, practices and institutions;

We stress the need for sustainable resources, including but not limited to financial, educational and emotional support to end disparities and to provide community- and evidence-based responses to address risk factors;

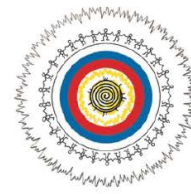
We call for concrete follow-up on the recommendations in the *Outcome Document of the high plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples* in 2014, in order to achieve the ends of the *UN Declaration*;

We underscore the need for informed and culturally specific suicide prevention strategies and initiatives to implement in our Arctic communities to reduce suicide;

We confirm the need for recognition of and respect for both our traditional and contemporary economies and the importance of the health of all Arctic living resources as well as the ability of our people to play a direct, definitive, authoritative role in the management and co-management of the resources upon which we depend and to maintain and improve our capacity to harvest and process these resources;

We call for the development of a mechanism to promote sustainable business behaviour in the Arctic to ensure that the rights of Arctic Indigenous Peoples are protected; and

We call upon all UN member states, including those engaged in the Arctic Council, to recognize and honor their international commitments and obligations, including the interrelated human rights that are at the foundation of our Arctic future as Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, we call upon UN member states and agencies, Arctic Council members and working groups, third parties, and all others to respect this Declaration and to actively respond to these Calls to Action.



**Adopted this
15 day of November 2019
within the traditional Sámi homelands
and
community of Roavvenjárga**

Aleut International Association

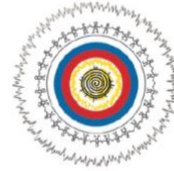
Arctic Athabaskan Council

Gwich'in Council International

Inuit Circumpolar Council

Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North

The Saami Council



Declaration of the First Arctic Youth Leaders' Summit November 12, 2019

Dear Relatives and Invited Guests,

Yesterday was an historical day, since we, the Arctic Indigenous Youth Leaders, had our first official gathering.

During our meeting, we have come to an understanding that though we are separated by language, cultures, and by borders, we are all facing the same issues. All our traditional areas have been colonized by the Arctic States and with that, our identities, knowledge, language and health have been put to the test. It is important to recognize that these issues are not separated, but are interconnected. The neglect of one issue is the neglect of all these issues. We would therefore like to present the following statements to ensure our prosperity in the present and future:

Environment

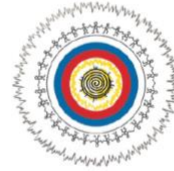
As Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, the climate crisis is being felt in our everyday lives. We are the first impacted by rising tides, eroding coasts, warming waters, and increased variability in weather, temperatures and climate.

We recognize the need for a transition away from fossil fuel energy to come into a more balanced relationship with our environment. We can be leaders in this movement if and when our rights to self-determine our lands are upheld.

Thorough evaluations of the impacts of solar, wind, hydro and other green energies must be conducted and consulted with the local Indigenous people prioritized before any development happens.

We recognize the interest and curiosity in our lands by the world outside the circumpolar north results in increased tourism in our traditional lands.

We will encourage our communities to aspire to energy solutions that are aligned with the health and wellbeing of our people, lands, waters, and animals and look forward to the support of the international community in these efforts.



Economic Development and Infrastructure

Indigenous people have lived nomadic lifestyles for time immemorial. Indigenous people must be the first to consult, manage and be involved in the decision making when new development is being discussed and decided. Development of new railways, roads/highways and deep sea ports would not only impact Indigenous people, it would also impact the wildlife and livelihoods that are so important to us, which must be considered.

We, the Arctic Peoples, are fish people. Our fisheries, whether sourced from the ocean or from our rivers, have sustained us since time immemorial. We look forward to the control of our fisheries because we are the best suited to adapt and manage this resource as we face rising temperatures, the migration of fisheries, and have an understanding of how much fish can be taken from the waters to ensure for the next generation of fish and peoples.

As the Arctic becomes an increased sight of attraction, tourism within our region will be directed by the wishes of local Indigenous communities. We have the right to say who travels within our traditional territories and what activities they partake in from cruise ship operations, to on the land activities.

Business Development: Indigenous Peoples have every right to develop businesses in their communities and have access to funding that supports start-ups, expansions or projects that benefit the Indigenous-business and/or their communities. Non-Indigenous Peoples who are looking at business development on Indigenous Peoples' land must consult and involve Indigenous Peoples that would be impacted by the development and approved by the People.

Traditional livelihoods: Indigenous Peoples should have more control over their traditional livelihoods e.g. reindeer herding, traditional hunting, fishing, gathering of natural resources and handicrafts, and decide how they are practiced and developed

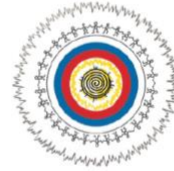
Food Sovereignty

We uphold our sovereign right to continue our relationship with our environment and our traditional foods.

Our people know how to manage our consumption of traditional foods as we have done for time immemorial. We seek sovereignty over our food systems so that we can maintain our relationships to our food, land and water.

We demand that our harvesting of traditional foods is decriminalized.

We have first rights to harvest our traditional foods and will decide the regulations for who else gets to hunt, fish and harvest on our lands and in our waters and if our foods are sold, we determine for ourselves best practices.



Indigenous Knowledge

Our elders are our very own traditional and cultural professors. We uphold their knowledge as it was passed on by our ancestors before us and are navigated by our collective relationship to the land, water, and non-human relatives.

Our Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge is expert knowledge. As we face climate change in the Arctic, we recognize the importance of collaboration between Indigenous knowledge holders and western trained scientists.

Consultation

Any research and resource development being done in the Arctic will be done only after consulting the local Indigenous People's needs and wants regarding our traditional sacred lands. This will be done with continuous cooperation with us and led by us.

Any nation-states, corporations, companies, or other entities that want to develop projects on our lands and in our waters will be bound to the legal binding contracts developed by local Indigenous review boards within the communities that the project will impact.

Culture

We as Arctic Indigenous Peoples have distinct ways of life that have allowed us to live in the circumpolar North since time immemorial. We have the right to maintain and adapt to the future in a way that is culturally relevant to our Arctic way of life inclusive of fishing, hunting, reindeer herding, craftsmanship, art, songs, and dance.

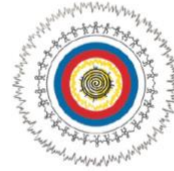
Languages

Indigenous languages play an important role in our cultures and identities and they contain an enormous amount of traditional knowledge. We see that if we lose our Indigenous languages, our culture is also lost. To strengthen our identity as Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic, Indigenous languages shall become official languages in countries in which they reside and have the same value as the other official languages.

It is also important we strengthen our Indigenous languages because it brings Indigenous Peoples together and reinforces our communities. Through that we should encourage our youth to speak, learn and use our languages in everyday life. By the means of Indigenous language teachers.

Education

We recognize that education in all forms is the foundation in improving the overall well-being of Indigenous communities. A healthy well-being plays a pivotal role in advancing western knowledge in today's society. However, we also know the importance of



practicing traditional knowledge within the education system supports Indigenous students to succeed in a culturally-sensitive, linguistic and traditional environment. Education in all forms should be readily accessible to all Indigenous communities with Indigenous teachers that deliver curriculum and activities relevant to their culture, traditions, history and language with adequate support for neurodivergent students and inclusive of LGBTQ+. The curriculum must be developed by Indigenous educators, knowledge-holders and Elders that best reflect the true history and language.

The educational system must support Indigenous Peoples to become trained in specialized fields (e.g. healthcare professions, social work, and Indigenous medicine models), and provide the necessary resources that best supports them throughout their training.

Mental Health

As Indigenous youth, we recognize the alarming rates of mental health issues, violence and suicides within our communities. The effects of climate change, intergenerational trauma, and colonialism make treating the root cause of Indigenous Peoples' mental health issues infinitely complex.

We should support initiatives to train our own people to become the healthcare professionals our communities need.

We are the experts in identifying solutions to these issues and caring for our own people. Further, specialization for Indigenous mental health care should be accessible for non-Indigenous professionals.

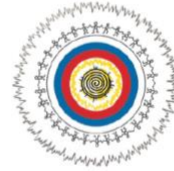
As Indigenous people we want to utilize holistic Indigenous health care when providing care for our mental health and well-being. We value mental health to the same degree as physical health, so accessibility to mental health services should be proportionally accessible as compared to physical illnesses.

It should be obvious that these services are provided in our native languages.

We encourage the Arctic states to properly address these issues via reasonable funding to properly provide access for mental health treatment.

Communication

As nation-states look to develop the north, we expect access to information at all stages of the proposed development. This means we need high speed broadband internet and cellphone access across all rural communities so that we can be provided information in a timely manner and thoroughly evaluate all information.



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

We recognize that the epidemic of our missing and murdered Indigenous sisters and nonbinary relatives across the Arctic is directly related to the continued colonization and rape of our lands and waters by the fossil fuel, mining industries and green colonialism. The liberation of our lands and bodies are inseparable.

In Conclusion

- We encourage the change of mindset from western to Indigenous for all peoples and encourage hegemonic nation states to educate themselves on our lifeways.
- Nothing about us in the Arctic will happen without us as the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic.
- Laws, policies and regulations will be made in the Indigenous territories that will be affected by those laws, policies, and regulations (Access and Inclusion).
- Decisions regarding our lands, waters, air and animals will be made with our Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

In addition to this Declaration, we Arctic Youth Leaders, have decided to establish an Indigenous Youth of the Arctic Council.

We, the Arctic Indigenous youth leaders of today, stand in unity all your support, attention, collaboration and action regarding these issues.

Giitu, Haii' Choo! Dogidihn', Qujanaq, Qujannamiik, Thank you!