

# TARRALIK

SERVING NUNAVIK INUIT SINCE 1974



JBNQA 50<sup>th</sup> Commemoration  
Inuit Women's Summit  
China Trade Mission

Spring 2026 138



#### **Makivvik**

Makivvik is the ethnic organization mandated to represent and promote the interests of Nunavik. Its membership is composed of the Inuit beneficiaries of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)*. Makivvik's responsibility is to ensure the proper implementation of the political, social, and cultural benefits of the Agreement, and to manage and invest the monetary compensation so as to enable the Inuit to become an integral part of the Northern economy.

#### **Tarralik**

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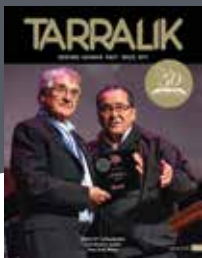
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Cover: Former *JBNQA* chief negotiator Charlie Watt with Makivvik President Pita Aatami on stage in Kuujuaq during the *JBNQA* 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration last fall.  
Photo by Edson Maruyama/Makivvik



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A mock office set up as part of the JBNQA 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration in Kuujuaq. Shown are photos, a signed agreement, as well as debris reflecting the long hours and late nights spent negotiating. For more on the event, see page 14.

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# Gathering Strength:

## Inside the First Inuit Women's Summit

In October 2025, in the coastal town of Sisimiut, Greenland, something unprecedented took place. Inuit women from across the circumpolar world gathered for the first summit dedicated entirely to their voices, rights, and futures.

Organized by the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), the Inuit Women's Summit brought together 42 participants from across Inuit Nunaat, including Canada, Alaska, and Greenland, with additional representation from Chukotka joining virtually. By the end of the three days, the group had produced the Inuit Women's Summit Declaration, a document many are already calling historic.

For Alicia Aragutak, Corporate Secretary of Makivvik, attending the summit wasn't something she initially planned.

"I actually wasn't supposed to go," she says. When ICC reached out to Makivvik for participant suggestions, Aragutak responded by thinking through who, across Nunavik, would be best suited to attend. "I went through all of Nunavik in my head," she explains. "Childcare, politics, domestic violence...I was matching people to what I thought the summit would focus on."

She put forward a list of other women. In the end, though, she was chosen to attend alongside Nunavimmi Ilagiit Papatauvunga Executive Director Mina Beaulne. Another delegate had been expected but couldn't make the trip.





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Once there, Aragutak found herself surrounded by an unusually diverse group of Inuit women. There were professionals from many different fields, including leaders, advocates, midwives, lawyers, and community builders, but what stood out most was how easily their experiences connected.

"There were so many relatable topics," she says. "We were just immersed in advocates and leaders."

The conversations often returned to the same core idea: when you talk about women, you're also talking about children, and when you talk about children, you're talking about the future. That connection gave the discussions a strong sense of purpose.

Some of the most difficult conversations focused on violence and the lack of safety in many communities. Participants spoke openly about how limited options can make it nearly impossible for women and families to leave harmful situations.

"In some places, there are no safe spaces," Aragutak says. "No real options. Sometimes people feel like they have to pretend nothing happened."

Those realities aren't isolated. A lack of safety affects everything from housing to education to food security. Overcrowded housing, in particular, came up repeatedly as a factor that increases vulnerability and stress within families.

"Accountability is very, very hard," she says referring to how to ensure perpetrators take responsibility for their actions. "We need to find a way to make accountability normal."

At the same time, the summit wasn't only about challenges. It was also about learning from one another. Aragutak describes it as a constant exchange, with women sharing what's working, listening to what isn't, and recognizing that each region is at a different stage in its evolution.

"In Nunavik, we know our truth," she says, referring to the impacts of colonial systems. "We're starting to move into reconciliation with creating programs, having those conversations."

In other regions, she observed, people are still uncovering those truths. One of the most striking discussions for her involved Greenland, where participants spoke about past reproductive interventions (forced sterilizations) that are still being understood today. The long-term effects, including declining population numbers and ongoing health concerns, are still unfolding.

Moments like that reinforced how important it is to understand Indigenous rights frameworks, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

"We hear about it, but we don't always use it," Aragutak says. "We should be learning it the same way we know our land claims and using it to push things forward."

Aragutak also took part in a panel on mental health and well-being, where she spoke about changes she has seen in Nunavik over the past two decades. Drawing on her experience with initiatives connected to the Isuarsivik Regional Recovery Centre, she described a growing focus on grassroots approaches to healing.

"There's been a real shift toward individual and community well-being," she says. "But it's not coming from one idea or one person. It comes from the people themselves, what they want, what they need."

She also spoke about cultural practices that continue to support Inuit families, including naming traditions that create immediate networks of care for children. These systems, she says, are a strength that communities continue to build on.

Alongside these conversations, there was a sense of pride in what Inuit communities have already accomplished. Aragutak points to Nunavik as an example of a region that has made progress in reclaiming authority and building its own approaches, while still recognizing that there is more work to do.

The summit ended with the adoption of the Inuit Women's Summit Declaration, which outlines priorities and recommendations for advancing the rights of Inuit women and girls. The document is expected to be presented at a future ICC gathering in Iqaluit and used as a tool for advocacy at multiple levels.

There is talk of holding another summit, although organizing something of that scale takes time and resources. The Inuit Women's Summit directed ICC leadership to organize a second Inuit Women's Summit to take place during the term 2026-2030 and called upon future ICC leadership to convene Inuit Women's Summits in each term.

For Aragutak, though, the most important outcome isn't just the declaration or future plans. It's the connections that were built and the shared understanding that came out of those three days.

"It was inspiring," she says. "We're learning from each other. In some ways we're ahead, in others we're catching up. It was really give and take." •



Makivik Treasurer  
George Berthe  
addresses the  
HR conference in  
Kuujuaq.

# HR Conference 2.0 Goes North!

By Stephen Hendrie

Makivik's second annual Human Resources (HR) Conference was a different beast than the first in so many ways. It went North for one thing, braving the November snow (and rain) in Kuujuaq, giving participants an authentic contemporary Arctic experience. Hello global warming! It was warmer in Kuujuaq than Montreal during the week of November 18-21, 2025.

"New logo, new theme, and new venue," said Makivvik Treasurer George Berthe. "Our logo features a three-person Inukshuk. Our theme is 'Empowering Inuit Culture and Integration in the Workplace,' and we're so pleased to be here in Kuujuaq at the Katittavik Town Hall Theatre."

The shift north was one of the first critical decisions made in holding Makivvik's second HR Conference. Lead by the Director of Human Resources and Payroll, Michael Iorio, the organizing committee composed of Makivvik staff north and south took an organic Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to creating a follow-up conference that decidedly pushed the envelope on an issue critical for Nunavik's future – one with self-determination on the horizon.

While over 100 people registered for the three-day event, mother nature kyboshed the travel plans of over a dozen participants, so that about 80 were in attendance as the conference began at 9:30am on Tuesday November 18.

Emcees for the day Lydia Etok – from Makivvik's Construction Division, and Taqralik Partridge, welcomed participants, officially, to Kuujuaq, and noted weather delays prevented the first speaker – Anthony Ittoshat, Chief Negotiator of the Makivvik Self-Determination Process from attending.

Elder Martha Greig provided a solid, supportive, spiritual, and humorous presence throughout the conference. She gave the opening prayer. This was followed by a glorious qulliq lighting ceremony by 10-year old Arianna Aitchison, assisted by her grandmother Mary Aitchison. "The lighting of the qulliq is done to honour and preserve the Inuit way of life," Mary said.

As he did during the first HR Conference, Makivvik President

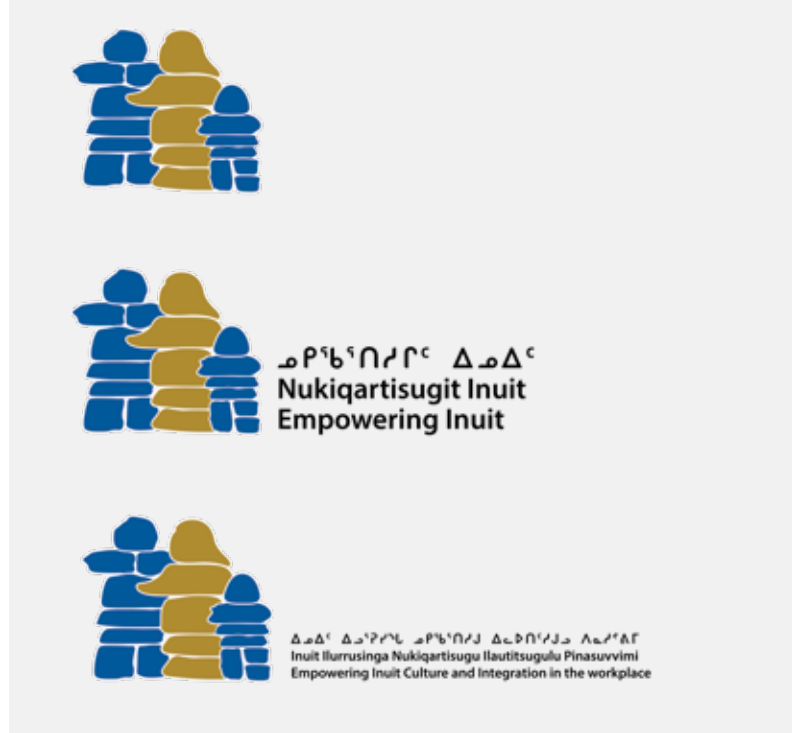
**"You are stewards of career building. Be positive, you are extremely valuable. Thank you from the bottom of my heart from Makivvik. Nakurmiik and Bon Voyage!"**

Pita Aatami spoke virtually. This time he appeared from a Makivvik executive meeting in St. Laurent, with fellow executives sitting beside him. "Inuit in Nunavik have been controlled by outsiders for too long. I want this to be recognized," said Pita. "Colonization has taken place. There are two different realities in Nunavik – Inuit and Qallunaat workers. Frequently the benefits are not the same for both. I hope this conference will help change that."

George Berthe then provided welcoming remarks. He commended all participants for attending, saying there would be difficult discussions at times. "You are heroes in my book for being here," he said.

George also commented on the issue of telework, with Nunavik employees working from all continents. He noted we shouldn't have workers 10,000 kilometers away working for us. He included statistics, stating the unemployment rate for Inuit is only 3 per cent in Greenland, while it is many times higher in Nunavik.

The first open discussion, asking the question, "What do organizations do to integrate culture in the workplace?" helped to set the tone for the rest of the week. "Geese and caribou don't follow a work schedule. When they come, our workers leave for a day or two," said Sarah Beaulne, Director of the Inuulitsivik Health Centre.



At the Qarjuut Youth Council, Vice-President Susie Ann Kudluk said, "We include Elders in our meetings. We have beautiful silapaks made for us. Inuit employees have additional benefits to go hunting."

Corrine Guala from Air Inuit spoke about an employee outing at the Pingualuit crater. "It's offered to Inuit and Non-Inuit at Air Inuit. Fishing, Inuit games, bannock. It was a great way to learn about Inuit culture."

Two participants from the Northern Village (NV) of Puvirnituq (POV) were in attendance to provide valuable insight from a different perspective. Town Manager Peter Napartuk started by saying "We're 100 per cent Inuit at the NV. We support the non-Inuit. POV takes culture and tradition very seriously. We keep it alive." His brother Paulossie Napartuk, the Assistant Town Manager added, "We try to have annual cultural days for our employees. That connects us to each other. We keep on supporting our youth."

George Kakayuk, Salluit Deputy Mayor and President of Taqramiut Nipingat Incorporated (TNI) spoke about what it's like to work at the NV recruiting workers, retaining staff, and losing employees. He spoke about Inuit being very capable workers, and fast learners. "My father never saw a ski-doo assembled, but he was able to fix a ski-doo track with a rope!"

Later that day, to echo Pita Aatami's opening comments, Inuit activist, lawyer, musician, and seamstress Aaju Peter presented the documentary "Twice Colonized," a graphic portrayal of what Aaju has lived through in the context of Greenland/Denmark, and Iqaluit/Canada colonialism. The trauma resulting from this manifested itself in various forms – such as suicide and spousal abuse.

The film was shown to illustrate the point that Inuit employees live with trauma on a day to day basis. Despite this, Aaju mentioned in her closing comments, "Just because you're going through a hard time you can still laugh." This wasn't to minimize anything, but more as a coping mechanism.

There was much to be positive about in the remainder of the conference. McGill University has carved out an Indigenous program called "Public Administration and Governance" that had 11 graduates from Makivvik earn degrees in the spring of 2025,



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Makivvik President Pita Aatami and VP DEWR Adamie Delisle Alaku speak virtually to the conference.

with 22 more on the way. Antoine Gagnon and Veldon Coburn included a photo of the 11 graduates – all women - during their presentation, greatly appreciated by attendees.

Glencore is hard core when it comes to increasing Inuit in the workforce at the nickel mine. They've created an Inuit HR Department called Tamatumani. They included their own all-women photo in response to McGill. Also, in the middle of the presentation, Samwillie Grey-Scott announced he is the first Inuk to be promoted to the Glencore Management team as Director of Community Engagement. There was huge applause to that achievement.



The dynamic youth duo – Elena Mesher and Anthony Kauki – presented the Nunami initiative as a means of addressing mental wellness. In the context of an HR conference, the benefits to employers of having a land-based outing covered by the program was received with enthusiasm.

Elsewhere, there was good news on the legal front with Makivvik's program Pisuqatigiittut, which means "walking together," blossoming in Inukjuak. Notary Eva Langlois described how their small and growing office is tackling issues such as estate settlement, wills, and name changes, having treated over 2,050 cases since 2018.

"Inuk & Me" is a project to create cultural training for Nunavik workers. It was presented by Karina Kesserwan and Laura Beth Beeston. They want a deliverable by 2027. During the comments, Sarah Beaulne said, "'Qallunaat & Me' should be created as well. We need something to learn how to work with our Qallunaat co-workers."

Multitasking Taqralik Partridge gave an inspired talk on the importance of art in the workplace. As a throat singer, poet, and museum curator, Taqralik used PowerPoint as her canvas to show historic and contemporary works of Inuit art – and their value – to literally answer the question on how to integrate culture in the workplace.

Speaking of canvasses, artist and throat singer Hannah Tooktoo was back to coax and cajole participants into picking up a paintbrush and adding a personal touch to this year's collective conference art on a unique round canvas. She told us all, "don't

be shy, I'll hold your hand if you want!" Emcee Lydia Etok never failed to remind attendees to "go and paint!"

William Tagoona, President of the Avataq Cultural Institute, provided an expansive oral history of modern Nunavik. As an ex-CBC Radio announcer, and documentary filmmaker, his summary of the last chunk of 50 years in Nunavik political, social, and economic development prompted Antoine from McGill to comment, "I learned more in 30 minutes from William than several hours of online courses."

William also spoke about Avataq, noting how Nunavik's cultural institute is shifting into high gear on language protection, archival preservation, archaeological digging, and "it's our soul," he stated.

On the final day, Lydia gamely told us, again, that Anthony's plane could not make it to Kuujuaq, and he's returned to Kuujuaaraapik, along with Elder Louisa Cookie-Brown. It meant that Tunu Napartuk would present the Self-Determination file, and Martha Greig would present solo.

Tunu is the Deputy Chair of Nunavik Self-Determination. He spoke uniquely in Inuktitut, providing an update on the work he and Anthony are doing, with the support of Makivvik. He said, "So, working on this self-government, and ensuring we keep our cultural identity we deem this to be very important. The HR professionals in this room - you are part of the self-government process."

Elder Martha Greig had one slide. It was a yellowed newspaper article with the antiquated headline "'Lucky' Eskimo Gets Canada's Crumbs." It harkened back to a time of settling in fixed communities in the 1950s and 60s, when jobs for Inuit were scarce, pay was less than minimal, and the head on collision between Southern ways and traditional Inuit existence was playing itself out.



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Artist Hannah Tooktoo encourages participants to add their touch to a collective conference art piece.

Martha read the entire article, highlighting with appropriate derision some of the jobs, such as "clerk" Inuit might aspire to. Her commentary brought some much needed levity to a sometimes difficult topic. Because in other parts of her presentation, she didn't hold back on the ravages the colonial experience brought to her – such as her sexual abuse at residential schools resulting in an unwanted pregnancy.

George Berthe had the last word. "Thank you to everyone who attended this week. Thank you to our sponsors. We'll set up a working group, and share action items. We look forward to holding the third HR Conference next year," he said. "You are stewards of career building. Be positive, you are extremely valuable. Thank you from the bottom of my heart from Makivvik. Nakurmiik and Bon Voyage!" •

Renowned Inuit artist and activist Aaju Peter presents the documentary *Twice Colonized*.



# From Ungava Bay to the World Stage: EDD's Trade Mission to China

By Jason Annahatak

All photos © Jason Annahatak/Makivvik

**On October 23, Makivvik's Economic Development Department's Vice President Andy Moorhouse, then Director Jason Annahatak, and Fisheries Manager Tony Wright departed for China to participate in the country's massive seafood market and to support the sales of Nunavik's *Pandalus montagui* shrimp.**



Some of the Makivvik team at the Business to Business Canada China Business Council group meeting in Beijing.

Makivvik's representatives travelled with their partners NewFound Resources Ltd. (NRL), a St. John's, Newfoundland-based operator that is commissioned by Makivvik use its shrimp licenses.

Collectively, Makivvik's and NRL's objectives were threefold. First was to strengthen relationships with existing buyers and find potential new customers. Second, was to gain a deeper, first-hand understanding of how China's shrimp industry works to help Makivvik become more involved in fisheries. Thirdly, to express opposition to the introduction of tariffs on seafood, which were imposed by China on all Canadian seafood exports in March 2025.

What followed was a variety of meetings with importers, factory tours, trade show attendance, and conversations with potential clients that shed light on how Nunavik shrimp fits into the largest seafood market in the world.

### Why China Matters

Given its huge population, and its status as the top cold-water shrimp market, China shapes global demand and pricing for the product in a way that no other country can. On average, clients from China account for half of all NRL and Makivvik's shrimp sales, which are sold only in container-sized format. As competition from several arctic counties remains strong and supply of wild shrimp fluctuates over the course of time, building strong relationships in this commodity market is tremendously important for NRL and for the long-term value of Nunavik's shrimp fisheries. NRL and Makivvik have the single largest harvesting-capacity vessel in the Canadian industry dedicated to shrimp fishing.

### Three Cities, Three Perspectives

Throughout the visit, the delegation spent time in Jinan, Qingdao, and Beijing. Each offered a different look into China's shrimp distribution networks, processing capabilities, and business culture.

### Jinan: Meeting the Market Movers

In Jinan, representatives first met with Makivvik's major partner Grand Oceans (GO), a massive importer of many types of seafood from around the world. Grand Oceans is a significant force in the region's seafood industry, distributing 40,000 metric tonnes of NRL and Makivvik's shrimp annually.

A guided tour of Grand Ocean's cold storage facility provided a rare look at where Nunavik shrimp ends up after arriving in China. Inside, huge stacks of frozen seafood—floor to ceiling—filled a warehouse kept at frigid temperatures. Boxes of NRL's shrimp sat among products from Europe, Asia, and the Americas, underscoring how globalized and competitive this market is.

### Jinan's Unexpected Lesson: Social Media Sells Seafood

One of the most surprising insights came from an evening visit to Grand Ocean's offices. There, the team watched Grand Ocean's in-house livestream influencer sell seafood, including Canadian shrimp, on TikTok, drawing live audiences of 10,000–15,000 viewers.

Makivvik's VP of Economic Development Andy Moorhouse participating in a livestream TikTok advertisement for Nunavik seafood. The audience at times was up to 15,000 people.



Andy Moorhouse, Makivvik's former Director of Business Development Jason Annahatak, and Tony Wright in the cold storage warehouse of Makivvik's largest client distributor.





Supper at a round table - how the Chinese make deals.

Grand Oceans employs three full-time livestream hosts, with dedicated studio rooms and support staff. Their broadcasts are polished, rapid, and persuasive, featuring high-energy sales driven by consumer engagement in real time.

#### **Qingdao: The Processing Powerhouse**

From Jinan, the delegation travelled by bullet train to Qingdao, a major coastal city and a global centre for seafood trade.

#### **Inside Schooner: A Key Partner for Raw Shrimp**

One unique visit of the trip was to Schooner, a seafood processing company located on the outskirts of Qingdao. Schooner is unique in the NRL network because it is run by a Japanese CEO, Nobutaka Higuchi, and his management team. Schooner purchases raw, unpeeled, uncooked shrimp, which Japan demands in relation to its culinary culture of sushi and raw seafood.

Higuchi expressed strong interest in purchasing even more raw products, but NRL's supply limitations again became clear. Expanding this product category would require additional harvesting capacity, something that Makiwik is actively exploring with Newfoundland Resources, considering upgrading to a higher capacity vessel or investing in a second one.

#### **The China Fisheries & Seafood Expo**

For three days, the team then participated in the China Fisheries & Seafood Expo, a major international event drawing thousands of buyers, distributors, and industry specialists.

Throughout the event livestream influencers marketed seafood directly on the trade-show floor. Companies from Greenland, Iceland, Russia, and Canada displayed competing shrimp products as well as other species.

During the trade show the group also met with Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Heath MacDonald.

Group photo of the team outside the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo.





Makivik's VP of Economic Development Andy Moorhouse meeting with Honourable Heath MacDonald, Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food.



### Beijing: Diplomacy and New Leads

The final leg of the trip brought the delegation to Beijing for meetings hosted by the Canada China Business Council.

Part of the CCBC event involved Business to Business sessions where the delegation met new potential buyers through a speed-dating style event. Three Chinese companies expressed interest in cold-water shrimp and engaged in detailed discussions about price, volumes, and shipping methods.

### A Trip To build upon

EDD's mission to China was more than a trade visit. It was an opportunity to witness firsthand how Nunavik's shrimp fits into the global seafood economy. The team returned with strengthened partnerships, new potential clients, and a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for our collaboration with NRL to grow.

For Nunavik's communities, whose livelihoods are tied to sustainable fisheries, such insights matter. As NRL continues to market *Pandalus montagui* in an increasingly competitive world, the lessons from Jinan, Qingdao, and Beijing will help guide decisions that shape the future of both the fishery and the region. ♦

Makivik seafood products on display at the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo in Qingdao last fall.

# JBNQA at 50 – “I Wish You Strength”

By Stephen Hendrie

While researching this article, “Wish Song” from Elisapie Isaac’s 2009 album *There Will Be Stars* started playing on the stereo, late at night. It was a bit like a bolt of lightning, helping to shed light on a “mission impossible” situation faced by young Inuit leaders back in the early 1970s. They literally had to fight for Inuit rights against a colonial society bent on bulldozing land they thought they owned via historical acts, such as the Rupert’s Land Transfer in 1870, and the 1912 Quebec Boundaries Extension Act.



As the 2016 documentary film, *So That You Can Stand* showed, a young Charlie Watt read a newspaper clipping from the *Montreal Star* tacked onto a public bulletin board at the Kuujjuaq post office. It started a struggle that won back Inuit rights, and led to Canada’s so-called “first modern treaty.” It was the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)* officially signed on November 11, 1975, late at night in the amphitheatre of “Complexe G,” a government building in Quebec City.

“Still looking for freedom  
I seem to lose it all the time  
Always looking for excuses  
I lost track of time”

In fact, it was signed closer to 2 am in the early morning hours of November 12, following some late-night drama over words such as “ratification” or “confirmation” by the Inuit and Cree communities. There were also threats by the Cree that if it wasn’t



This historic photo captures the moment of the signing of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*. Charlie Watt can be seen sitting beside Zebedee Nungak. Further down the row Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa can be seen, and further still, Grand Cree Chief Billy Diamond can be seen signing the *JBNQA*.

signed that night, they'd immediately fly back to Eeyou Istchee and there would be no deal. Quebec checked and the Crees had two planes waiting at the airport. Finally, Canada's signatory, Indian Affairs Minister Judd Buchanan, hadn't arrived by midnight and was at the London, Ontario, airport.

The signing was captured by the media, some with vintage film cameras, making news across Canada over the following days. For the 11 Inuit signatories, it unleashed a torrent of emotions, after months of gruelling talks with officials in the Quebec and Canadian Governments, Hydro-Québec, and the Société d'énergie de la Baie James (SEBJ).

Getting to the *JBNQA* signing ceremony involved playing the "white man's" game in court to stop Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa's "project of the century" in its tracks. Young leaders from the Inuit and Cree communities collaborated in court proceedings against Hydro-Québec. Following months of testimony from Inuit and Cree hunters, youth and elders, brought to a very foreign Montreal courtroom environment, they won. Judge Albert Malouf, agreed with the Inuit and Cree that they had "aboriginal rights," completely opposite to what Quebec had argued - "you have no rights!"

"It was a big victory," said Charlie Watt from his home in Kuujuaq in October 2025. "It was so important for Inuit rights." The historic Malouf decision on November 15, 1973, was overturned in the Quebec Court of Appeals a week later, but Quebec had to acknowledge the key ruling, that Inuit and Cree had "aboriginal rights." They decided to make a deal and thus began the negotiations leading to an Agreement in Principle (AIP) a year later, November 15, 1974, and ultimately the JBNQA on November 11, 1975.

"If I never left at all  
What would I be now  
If I stayed for good  
Who would I be now"

The Inuit negotiating team lived in a three-bedroom apartment in Montreal and had a separate apartment for their small Northern Quebec Inuit Association (NQIA) office, created in 1971 to fight the James Bay project. Charlie Watt and Mark R. Gordon were the chief negotiators, along with Zebedee Nungak, and Greg Fisk, from Alaska. William Tagoona had been drafted from the feds by Charlie Watt to work on communications. Originally from Baker Lake, NWT, William readily agreed to the mission. "We lived in the same apartment, two beds in each room, just like a residential school, so we were used to that already. Mark R. was my roommate," said William from his home in Kuujuaq in early October 2025.

"They would take off at like eight in the morning, get into a cab, and we'd stay behind and take care of the office. After every

night, we'd do a debrief with the handful of staff, and they asked for our opinion, and that's why we felt we were a part of it, even though we were not in the actual negotiations, our thoughts mattered to them."

Decades later, following a career at CBC Northern Services Radio, William was an Executive Producer of the documentary film, *So That You Can Stand*. It does an excellent job of portraying the battle between Inuit negotiators and Quebec.

The final JBNQA included 31 chapters covering areas such as land ownership (Category I lands for exclusive use), shared management of other lands (Category II), substantial financial compensation, and exclusive hunting and fishing rights over vast areas. It established new governance structures such as the Kativik Regional Government (KRG), and Makiwvik, giving Inuit control over health, education, social services, and environmental protection, and a partnership with government for resource management and development

Both the Inuit and Cree had lawyers. Max Bernard was an NQIA lawyer. He spoke about what Inuit went through to prove their rights in the film, *So That You Can Stand*.

"They came and they really poured their hearts out. That was the beauty of it. They told us about their lives, how the land was part of their culture, identity, and soul."

James O'Reilly was a lawyer for the Cree. Still active on Indigenous legal rights, he spoke about what was at stake more than 50 years ago from his office in Montreal in late October 2025. "For the Inuit it's the first treaty in which they were actually involved and where the federal government and the Quebec government recognized that they should be "Treatied" with, because they had rights, aboriginal rights," he said. "It was not a given

NQIA Board of Directors meeting in Great Whale River (now Kuujuaaraapik) working towards creation of Makivvik, and implementing the JBNQA, in the late '70s.





Ten of the JBNQA signatories. Missing is Tommy Cain. Back Row (L-R): Robbie Tooklook, Zebedee Nungak, George Koneak, Charlie Watt, Johnny Williams, Putulik Papigatuk. Front Row (L-R): Sarolie Weetaluktuk, Mark Annanack, Peter Inukpuk, Charlie Arngak.

more than 50 years ago. The attitude of Quebec was they didn't have any rights, they had 'privileges,' and Canada of course was taking the position that, in the White Paper, that all the aboriginal peoples should become like 'the white man.' This reverses all of that in a big way. But it's been a big fight from the very beginning. It just didn't come by snapping the fingers."

Makivik President Pita Aatami might agree with that attitude.

"Inuit basically were told, here's what's going to happen, and here's the lands that you're going to be getting. Here's how much money you're going to be receiving," he said in an interview from the Makivik head office in Kuujuaq. "It was a one-sided agreement in my opinion. It's stolen land from the Inuit, and the right thing to do is give it back."

**"Will he take care of you  
Will he protect you  
Don't ever settle for less  
And don't ever lose yourself"**

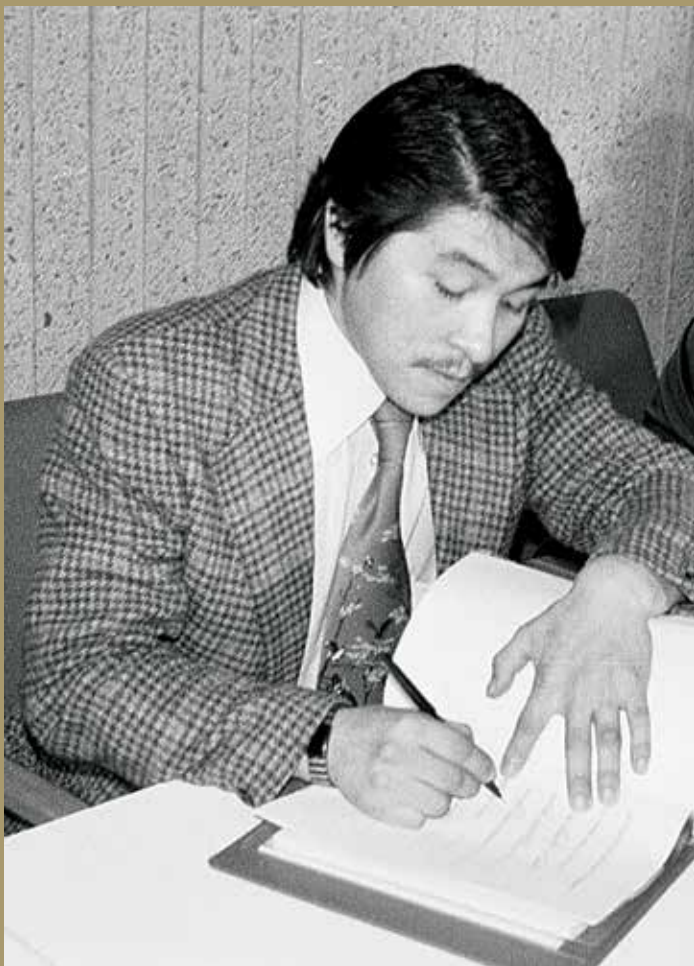
So, on November 12, 1975, Inuit and Cree negotiators flew back to Nunavik and Eeyou Istchee. Governments went back to

their offices following the signing. It was a new era in the landscape of comprehensive claims agreements, Indigenous rights, and the development of the regions. The "to-do" list was huge. In Nunavik major institutions needed to be created – the Kativik School Board (now Kativik Ilisarniliriniq), the Kativik Regional Government (KRG), and the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services (NRBHSS).

Don Allard who worked in the Makivik President's department as of the late 1970s under Charlie Watt remembers those days. "KRG started with two employees and a budget of \$100,000," he said. "You know it was the transfer of all the schools, the houses, the power stations, the administrative buildings, everything was being transferred to the government of Quebec, it was a huge job."

The task was more difficult because of politics. "There was a major change of government from the Liberals of Robert Bourassa to the PQ of René Lévesque," said Allard. "You remember in 1975-1976 the Bill 101 fiasco. And they were basically battling and fighting the PQ government right through to the 1980 referendum, and constitution, so it was a constant clash between the two groups."

For Inuit in other parts of Canada, the JBNQA was important in other ways. "I do believe, quietly behind the scenes, that the



Inuit negotiator Zebedee Nungak signs the JBNQA.

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NQIA President and chief negotiator Charlie Watt signs the JBNQA.

An historic victory celebration for Indigenous rights in Canada following the Malouf decision.  
Photo from the front page of *The Montreal Star* November 16, 1973.



Robert Litvack, lawyer for the Inuit in legal battle over James Bay project, serves beer from a keg at party in his home to celebrate court victory. At right of him is Indians' lawyer, James O'Reilly.

Staff Photo by Mac Jester

© NEWSPAPERS.COM

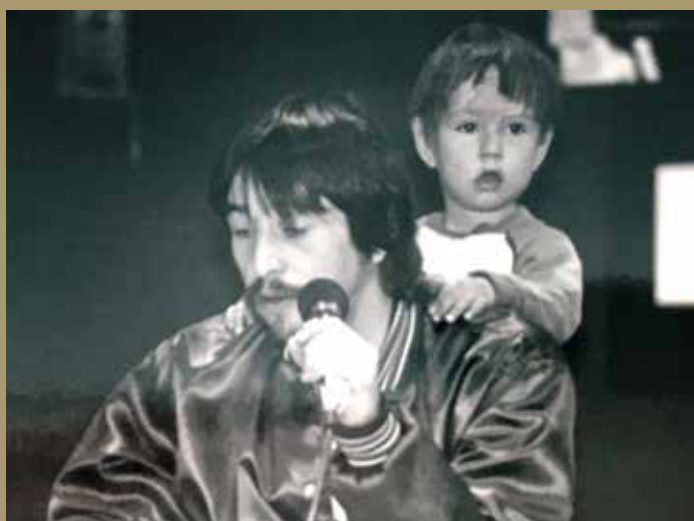


© ALEC GORDON COLLECTION X2

NQIA meeting in Salluit to discuss first draft of JBNQA. (L-R): Charlie Amgak, Pallee Illisituk, Putulik Papigatuk.

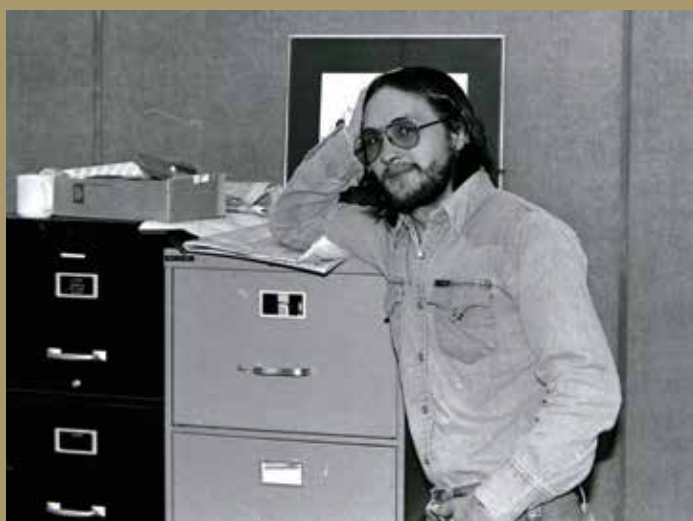


Central to the Malouf court proceedings, JBNQA negotiations, and subsequent implementation was Zebedee Nungak, seen here at a meeting in Quaqtaq.



© ALEC GORDON COLLECTION X2

NQIA Negotiator Mark R. Gordon with his son Ronnie in Kuujuaq.



Alec Gordon in the Makivik communications office in Kuujuaq in the late '70s. Thank you Alec for sharing photos from your collection and helping identify people and places.



© MAKIVIK ARCHIVES X2

Robbie Tookalook signs the JBNQA while Peter Inukpuk looks on to his left, and Tommy Cain smokes a cigarette at right.



Seven of the 11 JBNQA signatories – Mark Annack, Peter Inukpuk, Robbie Tookalook, Tommy Cain, Putulik Papigatuk, Zebedee Nungak, George Koneak.



Elisapie Isaac performs at the Katittavik Town Hall in Kuujjuaq on November 11, 2025, during the JBNQA 50th commemoration event.

© EDSON MARUYANIA MAKIVIK

*James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*, the text itself, is fully utilized by those groups that have entered into an agreement after us, such as the Inuvialuit for example, and Nunavut, and including Labrador,” said Charlie Watt.

There’s also an argument to be made the *JBNQA* unleashed tremendous political progress in Indigenous rights. It’s a long list, including the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution with section 35 on Aboriginal Rights in 1982, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the 1990s, the Ottawa Declaration creating the Arctic Council in 1996, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, Canada’s Apology to Victims of Residential Schools in 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) from 2008-2015, the Pope’s apology to victims of residential school in 2022, Canada’s 2024 apology to Nunavik

Inuit for the dog slaughters in the 1950s and 60s, and the first Indigenous Governor General in Canadian history – her Excellency the Honourable Mary Simon, from Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik.

As a “development tool” the *JBNQA* had a major influence. “It dealt with a new constitutional regime for northern Quebec, which nobody can ignore now,” said James O’Reilly. “In effect it’s a particular constitutional regime.”

Nunavik signed a second Agreement called the “Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement” (NILCA) on December 1, 2006, with the Government of Canada. Lorraine Brooke worked on the agreement, assisting Chief Negotiator Johnny Peters, Makivik’s Vice-President of Renewable Resources at the time. Peters said in November 2025 in Kuujjuaq, “We got those subsurface rights this time.”



© EDSON MARUYANAMAKIVIK X4



Respected Elder Johnny Peters speaks to the crowd, and right, Makivik President Pita Aatami presents a recognition plaque to signatory Tommy Cain's son, Johnny Cain.



Respected Elder Johnny Akpahatak, and right, Kuujjuaq Makivik BOD member George Kauki presents a recognition plaque to signatory George Koneak's son, Jackie Koneak.



Meanwhile Lorraine Brooke said together, the *JBNQA* and *NILCA* does a lot for Nunavik. "One of the big shortcomings of the *JBNQA* is that it didn't deal with the offshore, which for Inuit is one of the key areas of culture and livelihood. So together it basically provides a significant degree of protection and respect for what can be described as the entirety of the Inuit homeland."

Inuit received \$85.6 million from that agreement after repayment of loan funding. *NILCA* also set a precedent in that Inuit in Nunavik and Nunavut share some offshore islands 50-50. "They are shared areas, and both treaties apply," said Lorraine.

Today in 2025, 50 years after signing the *JBNQA*, Makivik has been very successful. The organization is worth over \$1 billion, and \$173 million has been contributed to Nunavik communities since 1978.

"We've been able to accomplish a lot with the compensation dollars we received," said President Pita Aatami. "We created our own airlines. We created our own shipping company; we've got our shrimp fishery. I mean there are good things that came out of the agreement, if you look at what we've been able to do as Inuit in control of our own economic development in the region."

"I hear it's not the same  
So many choices  
I hear you can get lost  
In so many places"



© EDSON MARUYAMA/MAKIVIK X2



Makivik Treasurer George Berthe presents a recognition plaque to signatory Zebedee Nungak, and right, Makivik VP Economic Development Andy Moorhouse presents a recognition plaque to Jackie Williams, son of signatory Johnny Williams.



© PIERRE MARC LALIBERTE / MAKIVIK

Group photo of Makivik representatives in Quebec City at the National Assembly along with government officials, gathered on November 13, 2025, to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the JBNQA.



Makivvik's Pita Aatami and Andy Moorhouse with Lucy Carrier, recognized for her contribution to the Northern Quebec Inuit Association. On the right, Makivvik's VP DEWR Adamie Delisle Alaku presents a recognition award to signatory Charlie Arngak.



Makivvik's Adamie Delisle Alaku presents a recognition award to Nakasuk Ezekiel, wife of the late signatory Putulik Papigatuk. On the right, Makivvik Corporate Secretary Alicia Aragutak presents a recognition award to signatory Sarolie Weetaluktuk.

Fireworks fill the sky in Kuujuaq on Nov. 11, 2025.



The requirement for “extinguishment” (cede, release, and surrender) of aboriginal right and title to lands in the *JBNQA* caused deep divisions in Nunavik. It led to the dissident movement, when Eliassie Sadlualuk quit NQIA and helped create Inuit Tungavingat Nunamini (ITN) in opposition to the James Bay Agreement. “Three communities didn’t agree with the *JBNQA*, so it divided Inuit at that time,” said Pita Aatami. “It was very hard on families that had members from those communities.”

“There’s a sensitivity to this whole issue,” said William Tagoona. “We will never forget it, but we don’t really talk about it. And I think both sides were right. If you really look at it, both sides were right.”

“I think that both sides have to come to realize that this is an issue that is beyond our own control, on account of the fact that we were under the extinguishment,” said Charlie Watt. “Inuit as a whole, should not go through what we have went through, that should have never happened. How can you actually extinguish a person that has been living here since before anybody else? So, I don’t think the government has the right to extinguish people.”

In the new documentary, *Nunavik at 50 – A Nation in the North*, former Makivik Constitutional Advisor Gary Yabsley said, “Extinguishment has no place in the current era of reconciliation. It should be seen as offensive to governments.”

This is partly why when the time came to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *JBNQA*, Makivik carefully chose the word to use to describe the event. “We’ve been using ‘commemoration’ instead of ‘celebration,’” said Pita Aatami.

So, at the Katittavik Town Hall in Kuujuaq on November 11, 2025, a remarkable ceremony took place, mostly in Inuktitut, bringing together the living signatories of the *JBNQA* – Charlie Watt, Zebedee Nungak, Sarolie Weetaluktuk, Peter Inukpuk, and Charlie Arngak.

Family representatives of the signatories who have passed away – Johnny Williams, George Koneak, Putulik Papigatuk, Tommy Cain, Robbie Tookalook, and Mark Annanack – were on hand to receive posthumous awards.

The film, *Nunavik at 50 – A Nation in the North*, was shown, and then Elisapie and her band took to the stage to vividly illustrate the road forward for Nunavik – one with creativity, innovation, positivity, and so much promise. Self-Government is on the horizon. Last words to Elisapie:

“I wish you, I wish you hope,  
I wish you love and tenderness  
I wish you strength,  
I wish you dreams and happiness.”

“Wish Song” lyrics, from Elisapie Isaac’s 2009 album  
There Will Be Stars, used with permission.  
Nakurmiik Elisapie!

## Further browsing:

*So That You Can Stand* is online here:  
<https://vimeo.com/167871953>

*Nunavik at 50 – A Nation in the North* is online here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRXSe1B9dj8>

The 50<sup>th</sup> Makivik *JBNQA* commemoration at the Katittavik Town Hall is here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/jKhre5yD-qw>

The 1973 Malouf Decision is online here:  
<https://www.cngov.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/1973-11-15-malouf-judgment-kanatewat-v-jbdc-et-al.pdf>

The *JBNQA* is online here:  
<https://caid.ca/AgrJamBayNorQueA1975.pdf>

The Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (NILCA) is online here:  
[https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-CIRNAC-RCAANC/DAM-TAG/STAGING/texte-text/ldc\\_ccl\\_fagr\\_nk\\_lca\\_1309284365020\\_eng.pdf](https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-CIRNAC-RCAANC/DAM-TAG/STAGING/texte-text/ldc_ccl_fagr_nk_lca_1309284365020_eng.pdf)

## Inuit Signatories to the *JBNQA*

Charlie Watt  
Zebedee Nungak  
Peter Inukpuk  
Sarollie Weetaluktuk  
Charlie Arngak  
George Koneak  
Johnny Williams  
Putulik Papigatuk  
Tommy Cain  
Robbie Tookalook  
Mark Annanack

# Leading Together: How Collective Leadership Shapes Nunavik's Future

**In Nunavik, leadership rarely belongs to one person. It moves across organizations and between communities where everyone is, in some way, connected. In a region of roughly 13,000 people spread across 15 villages, the idea of standing alone as a leader is not only unrealistic, but it runs counter to a deeper, long-standing way of doing things.**

What is now often described as “collective leadership” is, for many in the region, simply continuity.

For Makiivik Corporate Secretary Alicia Aragutak, that reality is grounded first in numbers. “It’s not about what I want it to be,” she says. “It’s about how many people we are, and there’s not a lot of us.” In Nunavik, the same individuals are often called upon to lead in multiple spaces: municipal councils, school boards,

regional bodies, committees. Every file, whether it concerns housing, education, or mental health, draws from the same limited pool of people.

That overlap forces a kind of shared responsibility. Leadership becomes less about authority and more about coordination about how people step in for one another, fill gaps, and carry work collectively when human resources are stretched thin.

*Makiivik Executives, from left to right:  
Andy Moorhouse, George Berthe, Pita Aatami,  
Alicia Aragutak, and Adamie Delisle Alaku.*



Aragutak sees this not as a modern invention, but as something rooted in Inuit practice. She recalls an Elder describing annual gatherings in Kuujuaapik (Great Whale River), where families would come together for baptisms, marriages, and community check-ins. People assessed each other's wellbeing, identified needs, and offered support. A family struggling one year might find help from another, with the understanding that the balance would shift again over time.

"It was kind of like a celebration," she says, "but also to assess, and ask, 'how are we doing?'"

That question still shapes how Nunavik's institutions operate today. At Makivvik, it happens in regular all-organization meetings, where leaders from across the region come together to share updates, raise concerns, and align priorities. These meetings, often held ahead of annual general meetings, create space for deeper discussion than formal presentations allow.

"We see what our pressing issues are, what we're going through as a region," Aragutak explains. "How can we help each other out?"

At the centre of that network sits Makivvik, responsible for protecting and implementing the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*. Over time, its role has expanded beyond administration into coordination. When gaps appear in services or when

"So, everybody is a leader," he says.  
"Every time there is a meeting, it's  
not just me being president, it's  
everybody else."

pressure needs to be applied to governments, Makivvik often becomes the bridge between communities and provincial or federal decision-makers.

For Makivvik President Pita Aatami, that role depends entirely on teamwork. "Collective leadership is teamwork," he says. "It's something I really try to make people understand. It takes a team to make it happen."

Aatami has worked to embed that philosophy internally. One of the changes he introduced when he returned to Makivvik was to rotate the chair of executive meetings. Instead of the president always leading discussions, every executive member is given the opportunity.

"So, everybody is a leader," he says. "Every time there is a meeting, it's not just me being president, it's everybody else."

The intention is not only to share responsibility, but to reinforce a mindset. Leadership is not a title but a role that shifts depending on the moment and the need. Even when one person appears to be leading, Aatami insists the work is always collective. "Some people think they do things by themselves, but there's a whole team behind the scenes."

That approach has shaped how Makivvik engages with other regional organizations as well. Nunavik's institutional landscape is complex, with bodies responsible for health, education, municipal governance, economic development, and culture. While each operates independently, their mandates often overlap, and their success depends on coordination.

To manage that complexity, Aatami has prioritized regular communication through meetings, conference calls, and direct outreach to leaders across the region. "I want to make sure that we're all working for the same goal," he says, "which is to help out people living in Nunavik."

That goal, he emphasizes, extends to everyone in the region, regardless of background. "These organizations are for everyone, not just for Inuit, but for everyone who lives in the region."

In practice, that means listening as much as leading. Aatami describes a willingness to step back when others bring forward stronger ideas. "If your idea is going to help people and it's better than my idea, I'll run with your idea and give you credit for it."

That openness is critical in a system where no single organization holds all the answers. Aragutak describes the network as something like an octopus: Makivvik at the centre, with multiple "tentacles" reaching into different sectors. Each has its own expertise, but all are connected.

Yet that interconnectedness can also create tension. Collaboration, both Aragutak and Aatami acknowledge, is not always easy. "It's easier and faster to work alone," Aragutak says. "But the end result is always better when you collaborate."

At the same time, the sheer number of organizations in Nunavik presents its own challenge. Over the years, new bodies have been created to address specific issues, like land management, culture, recreation, and social services which can strain limited human resources.

In smaller communities, the impact is especially visible. A handful of individuals may be expected to sit on multiple committees, manage programs, and maintain administrative responsibilities. "There's almost an organization per capita," Aragutak jokes.

For her, this raises questions about efficiency and sustainability. Rather than continuing to expand, there may be a need to streamline by finding ways to reduce duplication and better align efforts. "No one organization has all the expertise," she says. "We need to utilize each other."

That idea of complementarity, of each organization acting like a tool in a larger kit, aligns closely with Aatami's emphasis on teamwork. Both point toward a model where strength comes not from independence, but from coordination.

The importance of that model becomes even clearer in discussions about Nunavik's future. As conversations around self-determination continue, the structure of governance may change, but both leaders agree that the principle of collective leadership must remain.

"It has to continue," Aatami says. "It will be even more important when we have our own government in place."

Aragutak envisions a system where roles are more clearly defined, where Makivvik could function as a central government, with other organizations acting like departments. But even in that scenario, collaboration would remain essential, not optional.

In the end, collective leadership in Nunavik is not just a strategy but a necessity shaped by history, geography, and community. For Aatami, the principle is simple. "We do it together," he says. "And we succeed together when we do it together." ♦

# NUNAVIK NOTES

## UPCOMING ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT

**This is to advise the public that the Makivik Universal Election for the position of President will be taking place in Winter 2027. The deadline for nominations will be Thursday, January 7, 2027, with the election to follow on Thursday, February 4, 2027. For information on who can run in the universal elections and the process, please visit our website at [makivik.ca](http://makivik.ca).**



## MORE DIVERS CERTIFIED

From left, Tasiujaq residents Jimmy Angnatuk, Tamisa Saunders, and Matthew Berthe take part in practical SCUBA training outside Halifax, Nova Scotia, last fall. With their certification in both wet and dry suits, the community now has six fully trained divers. Makivik supported the program by sending participants to Nova Scotia for instruction with East Coast SCUBA and Watersports. The training initiative began in 2024 as part of a Tasiujaq project to deploy and retrieve tidal gauges. Graduates can now pursue advanced roles, including Search and Rescue diving, with the goal of eventually having a local trained Divemaster to lead teams and continue SCUBA instruction in the community.



# VANESSA DOIG APPOINTED

Makivik's Vanessa Doig has been appointed to the newly established Indigenous Advisory Council of Canada's Major Projects Office.

The Council, announced by Prime Minister Mark Carney last September, will support the Major Projects Office by providing guidance on how selected large-scale infrastructure projects advance in a manner that acknowledges both Indigenous rights and Canada's duty to consult obligations. The Council's mandate focuses on strengthening collaboration, advising on consultation and process, and ensuring Indigenous perspectives are reflected early in the development process, right through to implementation.

Doig is the Assistant Director of the President's Department, and is also a Nunavik beneficiary (Inukjuak). She holds the mandate for Makivik's national and federal files, and her experience spans governance, community engagement, and policy development, positioning her to contribute practical insight to the national table.

As one of two Inuit representatives on the council, Doig joins a diverse group of 11 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leaders from across the country. Doig was also named as one of two Co-Chairs of the Council in February 2026, taking on the additional responsibilities of coordinating and leading the work as it advances. Together, Council members will continue to meet regularly over a two-year term to provide advice on key policies and practices of the Major Projects Office as it advances its mandate.

The creation of the Advisory Council is an important element of a federal effort to streamline projects of national interest. By bringing together experienced Indigenous leaders like Doig, the government aims to further support more inclusive and efficient decision-making processes with Indigenous partners.





© MARIE CHAREST/AIR INUIT

## The B737-800NG's Homecoming

**The atmosphere was joyous on October 23 as Air Inuit staff, Board members, and special guests assembled in the company's Montreal Hangar. The occasion was momentous, a world first in fact, the unveiling of the Boeing 737-800NG in a combi configuration.**

Towering over the 250 guests, the Boeing 737-800NG's stature is as imposing as it is impressive. With its 90 seats and five cargo pallet capacity, the aircraft is nothing short of a game changer for the region.

"This three-year project, from purchase to today, is the result of tireless efforts, valuable contributions and a vision that we all elaborated together," stated Christian Busch, President and CEO of Air Inuit, to the crowd.

Set to replace the Boeing 737-200C Series fleet currently in operation, the New Generation 737-800s are forward-looking investments for Air Inuit. "The main difference is 40 years of technology," explained Andrew Gordon, B737 Chief pilot. The 737-200 engines push a huge quantity of air through its combustion chamber, producing thunderous noise and extreme heat. In the case of the 737-800s, the airflow is predominantly cool and blown around the combustion chamber. "What this means is that it decreases noise significantly and it decreases fuel burn by a huge percentage," he added. These technological advancements are not only cost saving, but they also translate to a lower environmental impact.

The integration of the 737-800NG will additionally enhance the flow of cargo in transit. In its combi configuration, passengers and goods will travel on regularly scheduled flights daily. Add to that



© MARIE CHAREST/AIR INUIT X2



complimentary high-speed Starlink internet, extra overhead cabin space, and the adaptability required to install a medical stretcher, the 737-800NG combi is sure to be a crowd pleaser.

“From humble beginnings with the Beaver in the ‘70s to this magnificent piece of art that will be a utility, a life saver and a life giver to the region. This will help our economy and the economies adjacent to us,” stated Makivik Executive and Air Inuit Board Member, George Berthe.

The first of two, this 737-800NG combi will service Kuujuaq as of December 2025. The second will be part of the Hudson modernization plan that is under way for next year. As Noah Tayara, Executive Chairman of Air Inuit, declared: “The future is looking good.” ♦



© ELISE DANIELLE/AIR INUIT

TARALIK



**Fifty years ago, the Inuit and Cree negotiated a historical agreement called the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement*. The *JBNQA* was the first modern treaty signed in Canada, establishing a legal and constitutional framework for governing land management, local self-governance, and traditional ways of life. The Naskapi First Nation later joined through the Northeastern Québec Agreement in 1978.**

These treaties include two special regimes. One is the environmental and social protection regime aimed at minimizing negative environmental and social impacts of development projects by ensuring Indigenous participation in the assessment process and protecting Indigenous rights, societies, economies, and wildlife resources.



© CHRISTINE LAMBERT/KEAC X2

The second regime is the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Regime, which exists to recognize, protect and prioritize native harvesting rights on the territory. The regime applies to terrestrial mammals, fish, migratory birds, and marine mammals and grants the Inuit, Cree and Naskapi beneficiaries the right to harvest any species of wildlife at anytime and anywhere in the territory to meet their subsistence needs.

Created under Sections 22, 23, and 24 of the *JBNQA*, three committees oversee the implementation of these special regimes. The Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee (KEAC) is mandated with the administration and management of the environmental protection regime in Nunavik, while it is the James

Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment (JBACE) for the Eeyou Istchee. The Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee (HFTCC) provides guidance and recommendations on all hunting, fishing, and trapping matters in the region.

On September 23, 2025, the KEAC, JBACE and HFTCC held a first ever tri-committee meeting in Kuujjuaraapik-Whapmagoostui to reflect on the 50th anniversary of the *JBNQA* and to discuss the achievements and challenges related to their role within the regimes, current topics of interest and prospects for future collaboration.

During this special meeting, representatives from both Kuujjuaraapik and Whapmagoostui were offered a presentation on the three northern committees. But more importantly and given *JBNQA*'s aim to empower Indigenous communities to participate in decisions that affect their environment and social well-being, the representatives were provided with an opportunity to express



their environmental concerns and questions regarding the role of the committees. This exchange highlighted the importance of being present on the territory, to converse with community representatives and to visit with the people and places the committees are mandated to protect. •

**If you would like to know more about these *JBNQA* committees, you can find more information on their respective websites or by email:**

Kativik Environmental Advisory Committee:  
[www.keac-ccek.org](http://www.keac-ccek.org)

James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment:  
<https://ccej-jbace.ca/en>

Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping Coordinating Committee:  
[m.smart@cccpp-hftcc.com](mailto:m.smart@cccpp-hftcc.com)



Aerial view of the Kuukallak River mouth north of Inukjuak.

© PHILIPPE POULIN (MAKUVIK)

## Understanding Nunavik Rivers in a Warming North

By Philippe Poulin, Fisheries Biologist at the Nunavik Research Centre

Across Nunavik, the importance of Arctic charr needs no explanation. It is not only the most valued fish in the region and one of the main sources of local food, but also closely tied to Inuit identity and traditions. As climate change continues to impact Nunavik, harvesters have noticed significant changes in the smaller rivers that support Arctic charr, particularly lower water levels that can block or delay migration. "All rivers were stronger before," said Jobie Oweetaluktuk, President of the Inukjuak Anguvigaq.

Reports of drying creeks and shallow sections that are difficult for charr to cross are common in many communities. In Aupaluk, Johnny Akpahatak, President of the local Anguvigaq, reported an unusual sighting in the Nanuit River: Arctic charr were trapped in a shallow pool due to extremely low water levels, and a black bear was catching and eating the fish. "It was not like that before," he said.

Several environmental changes are affecting river flow. Riverbanks are weakening, and erosion is increasing, adding more material to rivers and making channels wider and shallower. Yet, thawing permafrost is believed to be the main driver; with less frozen ground beneath riverbeds, water drains more easily into the soil. Shifts in rainfall patterns further contribute to these changes. However, studies in the Western Arctic show that rivers respond differently to permafrost thaw, with some even gaining water. Similar studies have not yet been carried out in Nunavik.

Better understanding these phenomena matter because the consequences can be serious. Low water can block migration and limit access to upstream habitats such as spawning grounds and overwintering lakes. Fish may also delay migration while waiting for suitable water levels, increasing vulnerability to predators and rising temperatures. Arctic charr, a cold-water species, avoid water warmer than 16 °C, with temperatures above 24 °C being lethal.



A channel was dug manually by youth in a creek near Kangiqsujaq in 2012.

Communities have long taken action to maintain and enhance Arctic charr habitat. In shallow rivers, channels were created or deepened by hand or with heavy equipment. In the southern Ungava Bay, three impassable waterfalls were also blasted to allow the free movement of Arctic charr. These stream enhancement projects have proven to be an effective way to safeguard vulnerable populations.

To better understand the causes of these changes and respond to community concerns, the Nunavik Research Centre launched a new project this year funded by the 2030 Plan for Green Economy and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

The Nipirqanaq Creek near Aupaluk was deepened with an excavator in 2005.





Water level and temperature recorder installed in Kuukallak River near Inukjuak during fall 2025 fieldwork.

© PHILIPPE POULIN (NAKUVIK) X3

data. Such water level time series for small rivers do not currently exist in Nunavik, and these new data will support the development of models to better understand river dynamics and predict potential future temperatures and water flows.

During the summer and fall 2025, the project began with Inuit traditional knowledge interviews in Inukjuak and Aupaluk, along with the deployment of water-level and temperature recorders in 10 rivers by the NRC team.

#### Future steps

While the logger collects data in the rivers, satellites will provide a view from above. Historical imagery from Landsat and Sentinel-2 satellites will be analyzed to provide a broader view of how water extent has changed over the years.

Next summer, additional communities will be visited, and more loggers will be deployed. A drone equipped with a thermal camera will also survey the rivers and identify areas where water



Near Aupaluk this fall, Paulusie Papak, NRC Wildlife technician, anchored a logger to a boulder in Allavik River (left) to measure the amount of water flowing in Qingaujaq River (right).



The Nunavik Rivers Watch Project aims to monitor how Nunavik rivers respond to climate change, with particular attention to the southernmost Arctic charr rivers, where populations are expected to be most vulnerable.

The first step is always listening. Local knowledge holders are interviewed to gather historical observations and information to decide which rivers should be monitored. Small underwater recorders are then installed on boulders or bedrock in valued Arctic charr rivers, providing continuous water level and temperature

temperature is cooler, often caused by groundwater resurgences. These cold-water refuges will be increasingly important for fish as river temperatures are expected to rise in the future.

All data and findings will be shared with the communities that helped shape the project. Maps, photos, and summaries will be provided locally. The collected data will support local understanding of the impacts of climate change on Nunavik's small rivers and provide practical tools to identify the most vulnerable Arctic charr populations and prioritize stream enhancement projects accordingly. ●

# NUNAVIK PLAYER



|                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Full name:</b>                           | <b>Lazarusie Iserhoff</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Age:</b>                                 | 28                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Place of Birth:</b>                      | Val'dor                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Home Community:</b>                      | Chisasibi. Lived in Kangirsuk for 2 years now.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Role model:</b>                          | My late grandmother. I grew up under her roof, I believe she helped many youth.                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Favourite food:</b>                      | Goose with flat dumplings!                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Occupation:</b>                          | I'm an Ungava Youth Coordinator for the Qarjuit Youth Council.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Proudest Moment:</b>                     | My proud moment is seeing Kangiqsujuaq teams improving hockey, especially winning the tournaments. I'm proud of who they become, they show respect towards other players. We've been training them for the past 3-4 years now. |
| <b>Future goals:</b>                        | My goal is to support more youth, helping them thrive and reach their full potential. I'm committed to listening, learning, and working together to create opportunities that benefit our young people and our community.      |
| <b>Best advice you could give to youth:</b> | Believe in yourself, stay positive, and never give up on your dreams. Your future is bright, and every step forward is a step closer to success.                                                                               |

## MYSTERY PHOTO CONTEST

Congratulations to Myna Echalook, who correctly answered the Mystery Photo Contest from *Tarralik* Issue 137!

You could win \$100 if you correctly guess what this mystery photo is. Mail your answer to the address below, or you can email your answer to [mdewar@makivik.ca](mailto:mdewar@makivik.ca).

Mystery Photo Contest  
Makivik  
P.O. Box 179  
874 Naalavik St.  
Kuujuuaq (QC)  
J0M 1C0

WHAT IS THIS? ►



## What is Lilly's Fund?

Many Inuit families in Nunavik support members living with severe and permanent physical or intellectual disabilities. These families play an essential role in providing daily care and support for their disabled loved ones. However, the support they receive is limited, and they have significant additional costs to bear. This is why Makivik created Lilly's fund, to provide additional support to these families.

Lilly's Fund was named in recognition of the advocacy work of Lilly Mina, from Inukjuak. She tirelessly sought to raise awareness of the challenges faced by Nunavik Inuit families who were caring for a severely disabled family member.

### What kind of support is available through Lilly's Fund?

A beneficiary with a severe and permanent physical or intellectual disability, or his/her parent or caregiver, may be eligible to receive one of the following amounts based on the program's criteria:

- \$12,000 per person per year, in 2025-2026, if the disabled person lives at home
- \$6,000 per person per year if the disabled person lives in a residential facility

### Who can apply for financial support from Lilly's fund?

Lilly's fund was designed to help Nunavik Inuit who are living with severe and permanent disabilities, as well as their parents or guardians if they are minors.

The following criteria determine eligibility for the program:

- Be a beneficiary of the JBNQA.
- Living with a severe and permanent physical or intellectual disability, as established by a healthcare professional.
- Being 64 years old or younger.

### Do I need to use a form for my application?

Yes, the Lilly's Fund Program Application Form can be downloaded from the Makivik website <https://www.makivik.ca/lillys-fund-support-program/>

### How do I apply for financial support from Lilly's Fund?

To apply for financial support from Lilly's Fund, please send a completed and signed copy of the Lilly's Fund Program Application Form to the following email address: [Lillysfund@makivik.ca](mailto:Lillysfund@makivik.ca)

There are two ways to assess a beneficiary's eligibility for the program:

- Either the beneficiary is eligible for the Canada Disability Tax Credit, in which case they simply need to attach proof of this eligibility (letter, etc.) to the Lilly's Fund Program Application Form.

- Either the beneficiary does not know if they are eligible for the Canada Disability Tax Credit, in which case an assessment by a healthcare professional is required. This assessment allows the healthcare professional to sign the Lilly's Fund Program application form.

### How can I be evaluated by a healthcare professional?

A healthcare professional will carry out the assessment through the "Access Point – Functional Limitation Programs" of the Nunavik Regional Board of Health and Social Services. A professional at your local CLSC can carry out this assessment and complete the Lilly's Fund Program application form following it.

### What happens once the form has been submitted?

After submitting the form to [Lillysfund@makivik.ca](mailto:Lillysfund@makivik.ca) with proof of eligibility for the Canada Disability Tax Credit or following an assessment by a healthcare professional, you will receive written confirmation via email and/or mail.

Your application will then be reviewed to ensure that it is complete. You will be contacted if any information is missing.

If you meet the program criteria and are eligible, you will receive a confirmation letter containing important information.

### Does the application have to be renewed every year?

A renewal form will be sent to you each year to update your file.

### Can I get help filling out my application?

If you need help filling out the form, please contact Makivik. The Lilly's Fund webpage will be kept up to date so that you can find the contact details of the person who can help you.

### Can I receive Direct Deposit?

Yes. To receive Direct Deposit, please include a specimen cheque to your application.



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