

## **Chair Duane Smith enshrines Inuvialuit interests in historic new national Inuit Nunangat Policy**

April 22, 2022 [OTTAWA] - At meetings in Ottawa this week, IRC Chair Duane Smith and Inuit leaders secured approval for a new Inuit Nunangat Policy, which will improve the treatment of Inuvialuit by all federal government departments.

The policy was announced on April 21, after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and members of his Cabinet sat down with representatives of all four regions of Inuit Nunangat as part of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, which was founded on the principle that an equal partnership between Inuit and the Crown is essential to the reconciliation process.

The announcement marks the first time the Government of Canada has co-developed an overarching, whole-of-government policy of this nature.

The Inuit Nunangat Policy recognizes that Inuit are a distinct rights-holding people with their own history, identity, culture, language and way of life. It will:

- Provide guidance to federal departments and agencies on how to apply an Inuit specific approach in the context of implementing policies, programs, services and initiatives.
- Recognize that Inuit have the right to self-determination, which includes the inherent right of self-government.
- Require that all federal ministries, departments, agencies and corporations continue to support Inuit law-making authority, enhanced administration and/or assumption of jurisdiction through self-government and Inuit self-governance negotiations.
- Recognize that as part of supporting Inuit self-determination, federal departments and agencies must consider a distinctions-based approach to directly fund Inuit Partners or organizations appointed by them to administer a federally-funded program, policy or initiative over which they seek to exercise their right to self-determination.
- Recognize that Inuit are the most knowledgeable about the issues affecting their communities and must, therefore, maintain an integral role and progressive responsibility in decision-making over matters that apply to Inuit and/or in Inuit Nunangat.
- Recognize that Inuktitut is the first language used in Inuit Nunangat and the majority of Inuit Nunangat residents continue to speak Inuktitut as their first, only, or preferred language. As such, access to services in Inuktitut in Inuit Nunangat is recognized as necessary for public health, safety, and to uphold the inherent dignity of Inuit.

A guiding principle of the Inuit Nunangat Policy is recognition that federal investments for Inuit are an important element of the right of Inuit to self-determination and self-government. The Policy directs federal government organizations to consider the unique rights, interests, and circumstances of Inuit in their approach to directly fund Inuit Land Claims Organizations.

The policy has been years in the making and its formal adoption represents a significant success for Inuit across Inuit Nunangat.

“We are done explaining who Inuvialuit are and why we matter,” said Chair Smith. “This policy means everyone in the Canadian government must understand and respect our unique Inuvialuit identity and work directly to support our people.”

Inuit and the Crown will jointly monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy through the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee. It is intended to be transformational and represents a significant commitment by the Government of Canada to effective partnership and collaboration.

Read the Prime Minister’s announcement of the Inuit Nunangat Policy [here](#).

Read ITK’s response to the Inuit Nunangat Policy [here](#).

### **About the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation**

Established in 1984 to manage the settlement outlined in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation represents the collective interests of Inuvialuit in and beyond the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. The IRC works to continually improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of Inuvialuit through implementation of the IFA and by all other available means.