

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NUNATUKAVUT COMMUNITY COUNCIL SAYS INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI HAS NO AUTHORITY TO DENY NUNATUKAVUT INUIT ACCESS TO MUCH NEEDED FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

HAPPY VALLEY-GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR, October 13, 2021 – The NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) today issued the following statement in response to a recent letter that the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) addressed to Prime Minister Trudeau about NCC and NunatuKavut Inuit:

“ITK has no authority to deny NunatuKavut Inuit access to much needed federal programs and services. It is appalling and repulsive that they would choose to write such an ill-informed and discriminatory letter about NCC and our people and without our knowledge. The ITK does not have the right to unilaterally determine Inuit identity, nor how NCC should be recognized by the federal government. ITK’s reliance on Eurocentric and outdated archeological and historical research about our presence in Labrador is false and is counter to ITK’s own principles of self-determined research. It is disappointing that they have chosen to take this path, where opinions are formed about us, without us. As I have said before, NunatuKavut Inuit are the only authority on NunatuKavut Inuit.

NunatuKavut Inuit remain connected to the lands, waters and ice of our ancestors. We continue to practice our traditions and we hunt, harvest, trap and fish in the same places as those who came before us. We are beneficiaries of the British-Inuit Treaty of 1765, entered into in our territory, which recognized and affirmed our presence and connection to these places. Inuit knowledge passed down over many generations continue to sustain us. This is despite many generations of colonization, where the colonizer’s intent to displace us from our lands and disconnect us from our ancestors have failed time and time again.

Our people experienced firsthand the horrific realities of multiple forms of colonization, like residential schools, forced relocation and the Grenfell mission. We have borne the brunt of racist and sexist assumptions which suggest that our Inuit grandmothers did not pass down our culture. And now we are confronted with colonial attitudes and positions from political organizations like ITK, which are trying to adjudicate the Indigeneity of another people in the context of access to policy, programs and initiatives. Yet we are still here. Empowered by our stories of family, kinship, culture, history and our relationships to the land, waters and ice in NunatuKavut.

Our Recognition of Indigenous Rights & Self Determination (RIRSD) process with Canada is about NunatuKavut Inuit realizing our vision and furthering priorities that advance the health and well-being of our people. The invitation to sit at the negotiating table with Canada has been achieved after more than 30 years of exhaustive and extensive research that supports and affirms the history and culture of our people and the permanent occupation of Inuit in south Labrador prior to European contact and assertions of sovereignty. Our engagement with the federal government has not and will not adversely impact ITK, its financial agreements or the rights of its constituents. The federal government has a constitutional responsibility to all Indigenous peoples in this country, which includes the Inuit of NunatuKavut.

We want to assure our people, especially our youth, that while the letter from ITK is extremely hurtful and disheartening, it does not change who we are as Inuit or where we come from. NCC will press on to ensure the recognition and affirmation of our Inuit rights. We will continue to strengthen our Inuit governance. We are committed to the revitalization of our culture and language. And we will build up our families and unify our communities. We are moving forward on a path that builds up, not tears down. One that affirms and does not diminish. That is who we are as a rights-bearing people and as an Inuit governing body.

NCC has reached out to ITK President Obed multiple times, inviting him to NunatuKavut and encouraging him to learn about NunatuKavut Inuit, our history and our stories of connection. The ability to meet, share stories and introduce him to our traditional places is integral to understanding our people and culture. This offer to President Obed remains open. It is clear that greater understanding is needed now more than ever.”

To learn more about NCC and NunatuKavut Inuit, please visit our website at www.nunatukavut.ca and we invite you to check out our new Story Map page which helps tell our story. Please also join in the conversation at facebook.com/nunatuKavut and Twitter [@nunatuKavut](https://twitter.com/nunatuKavut).

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