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**International association forms to expand Inuit business opportunities in Arctic**



OTTAWA, Canada – On a Thursday, feb. 6, representatives from Inuit businesses throughout Alaska (USA), Canada and Greenland initiated the founding meeting of the International Inuit Business Association (IIBA). The group’s newly affirmed mission is to encourage sustainable and equitable expansion of the economy throughout the Arctic to promote greater self-sufficiency in Inuit Nunaat – meaning those Arctic and sub-Arctic areas where, presently or traditional, Inuit have Indigenous rights and interests, or where Inuit culture is predominant.

“This is a transformative time for Inuit businesses in the international Arctic,” said Jim Stotts, president of ICC-Alaska and convener of IIBA’s founding meeting. “The IIBA will be a resource for Inuit business leaders who have a collective interest in ensuring the success of our northern economies.”

The IIBA was born out of the Inuit Circumpolar Council’s (ICC’s) 2018 Utqiagvik Declaration, which urged sustainable development and collaboration among Inuit businesses as Arctic economies continue to rapidly change and interest in the Arctic grows. The ICC, in part, advocates for policies that facilitate cross-boundary trade, employment and travel across the circumpolar Arctic. The IIBA will move forward independently and as an affiliate of ICC.

“As Inuit business owners and partners, we’re seeing increased opportunities for collaboration across borders for pan-Arctic economic development,” said Liz Qaulluq Cravalho, IIBA provisional executive committee chair. “I am excited to be part of the founding of this association, open to all businesses interested in encouraging sustainable and equitable expansion of the economy of Inuit communities.”

In addition to building Inuit business relationships and promoting business development opportunities among its members, as well as recruiting businesses from Canada, the United States, Chukotka (Russia) and Greenland, the IIBA will undertake research in areas of economic priority to Inuit and participate in international organizations affecting Inuit economic and business interests.

The IIBA is currently finalizing processes for membership and recruitment.

*Photo caption: Executive committee members Liz Cravalho, provisional chair; Maggie Emudluk, secretary; and Jens K. Lyberth, vice-chair, met with other founding members to establish the International Inuit Business Association on Feb. 6 in Ottawa, Canada.*