

## Opinion by Sayers Tuzroyluk, Sr., President – Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat

Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat is pleased with the recent opportunity to engage with White House officials in advance of Friday’s/today’s Nordic Nations Summit, hosted by President Obama. The opportunity to offer the unique perspective of the Iñupiat people of Alaska’s North Slope in advance of policy decisions was a novelty and we look forward to this outreach continuing in light of the recent focus on Arctic issues. These efforts to include the local people ensures key issues are addressed which correctly reflect the priorities of the North Slope Iñupiat.

Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat (“VOAI”) is a 501(c)4 non-profit organization established to provide direct input from the Iñupiat people in matters of Arctic policy. VOA’s membership includes 20 of the 28 entities from across the North Slope - including tribal councils, municipal governments and Alaska Native corporations. VOA reflects *our* Arctic priorities during a time when it seems many outside voices are demanding policy initiatives that do not reflect our needs, and in fact have the potential to adversely impact our people and our Arctic communities.

VOAI is hopeful the White House understands our perspective on Arctic policy in advance of the Nordic Nations visit to Washington D.C., especially in today’s very dynamic policy-setting environment. Too often, the Iñupiat people have felt left out of key discussions and over-run by policy decisions which directly impact our region and communities. We are grateful for the chance to be included and heard ahead of the Summit, and we are eager for these engagements to continue. VOA looks forward to collaborating with the White House to ensure the needs of the Iñupiat people are rightfully represented.

The people of the North Slope seek active participation in any dialogue that would affect the economic well-being of our communities, our subsistence resources and our esteemed Arctic environment. While the impact of climate change is an important discussion, and advocacy for certain protections can seem innocuous in nature, we urge the administration to not be fixated on this singular issue in our region. Instead, carefully acknowledge the myriad of priorities which could impact our northern communities. We cannot support “saving” the Arctic when certain policies aim at accomplishing exactly the opposite.

We appreciate the understanding the White House has expressed recently for the need for a balanced approach to resource development, the environment and subsistence—all of

---

### Member Organizations

Arctic Slope Native Association	City of Anaktuvuk Pass	City of Wainwright	Native Village of Point Lay	Tikigaq Corporation
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	City of Atkasuk	Iļisagvik College	North Slope Borough	Ukpeagvik Iñupiat Corporation
Atkasuk Corporation	City of Barrow	Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation	Nunamiut Corporation	Wainwright Tribal Council
	City of Katktovik	Native Village of Atkasuk	Olgoonik Corporation	
	City of Point Hope	Native Village of Point Hope		

which are essential pieces in the mosaic of life in the Arctic. The Iñupiat people look forward to enhanced collaboration with Nordic Nations to understand what parallels their experiences may provide to Alaska’s Arctic. We seek new solutions for balancing a sustainable economy based on responsible resource development with environmental and subsistence protections. We cannot be expected to survive without a stable, fully-functional economy - and like many northern people, our economy relies on resource development. We are confident that during President Obama and other senior officials’ recent visits to the Arctic, the complexity of Arctic issues and the reality of a balanced approach were obvious to them. It is unfair to us to put the needs of the environment and animals above our own survival; as stewards of our land and resources, we understand the need for balance.

As such, we advocate for culturally and responsible resource development. This is essential to maintain the modern luxuries that many in the rest of the United States may take for granted, such as: K-12 education, power for our villages, the existence of our health clinics, fire departments, and many other essential services. This co-existence is critical to survive in the Arctic and we have been successfully managing this complex relationship between sustainability and resource development for over 40 years. Our unique perspective and history of co-existence should be important factors in any policy directions, especially those which limit opportunities in our region by establishing “protections” without our input.

Our experience as the local people cannot be overstated; it offers a unique perspective based on a millennia of traditional knowledge which supports our priorities and offers solutions to maintaining a healthy ecosystem while providing for the economic longevity of our communities. We look forward to the Nordic Nations Summit and the continued collaboration to cultivate a balanced approach to the Arctic which ensures protections for our region and the Iñupiat people.

We appreciate the initiation of the White House engagement this week and look forward to a continued dialogue which includes balanced policy, responsible development and new solutions for the Arctic communities. Voice of the Arctic Iñupiat was established with the intention of providing a conduit for the local perspective to engage on matters of Arctic policy and representing the voice of the Iñupiat people. We appreciate the White House’s recent efforts to hear us.

---

**Member Organizations**

Arctic Slope Native Association	City of Anaktuvuk Pass	City of Wainwright	Native Village of Point Lay	Tikigaq Corporation
Arctic Slope Regional Corporation	City of Atqasuk	Iļisagvik College	North Slope Borough	Ukpeagvik Iñupiat Corporation
Atqasuk Corporation	City of Barrow	Kaktovik Iñupiat Corporation	Nunamiut Corporation	Wainwright Tribal Council
	City of Katktovik	Native Village of Atqasuk	Olgoonik Corporation	
	City of Point Hope	Native Village of Point Hope		