

National Inuit Organization calls on Ottawa to include Inuit in Arctic Summit

February 17, 2010 – Ottawa, Ontario – Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national organization representing Inuit in Canada, urged the federal government today to include Inuit in the five-country Arctic Summit, which will be hosted by Canada next month.

“It is inconceivable that the Government of Canada would contemplate holding a conference to discuss economic development and environmental protection in the Arctic without the active participation of Inuit, who will have to live with the consequences of any new government policies. This reeks of paternalism,” said acting president Pita Aatami.

“As we have said many times before, a specific and direct relationship with Inuit should be at the core of any Arctic discussions. That remains our position and we fully expect that Inuit, through the Inuit Circumpolar Council, will have a seat at the conference table.”

The Arctic Summit, scheduled for March 29 in Chelsea, Quebec, includes representation from the governments of Canada, Russia, Norway, Denmark and the United States – five countries bordering the Arctic Ocean. Arctic sovereignty tops the agenda.

Lawrence Cannon, Canada’s minister of foreign affairs, said this month that the summit is being held to discuss “new thinking on economic development and environmental protection.”

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Quelle/Source:

<http://www.itk.ca/media-release/national-inuit-organization-calls-ottawa-include-inuit-arctic-summit>