



News Release



Nunavut Examines Indigenous Language Issues on World Stage

May 2, 2008 (Iqaluit, Nunavut) – The Government of Nunavut recently returned home after attending the 7th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. The forum is a United Nations advisory body that deals with indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights.

“It was indeed very encouraging to hear directly from other indigenous peoples about their experiences, challenges and best practices as well as to showcase Nunavut’s unique language legislation and our efforts to promote and protect our Inuit language,” said Naullaq Arnaquq, Assistant Deputy Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY).

A focal point for the forum was the 2008 *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages*. The report calls for concrete actions at the national, regional and community levels, including legislative and other measures to promote and protect indigenous languages. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Inuit Broadcasting Corporation and the Government of Nunavut were among those who contributed to this critical report.

While developing the report and participating in the forum, many other indigenous peoples, governments and experts from around the world expressed interest in and support for Nunavut's proposed language legislation. Bill 6, the Official Languages Act, and Bill 7, the Inuit Language Protection Act, are presently under review by the Nunavut Legislative Assembly.

“Saving indigenous languages is a matter of great urgency and is crucial to ensuring the protection of the cultural identity and dignity of indigenous peoples and safeguarding their traditional heritage,” states the report.

Nunavut’s Interim Languages Commissioner has also taken notice of this report. “Our language is eroding in many communities and particularly among our youth” said Eva Aariak. “We must take action, at all levels, to ensure our personal and cultural expressions, our Inuit knowledge, traditions and identity can be transmitted through our Inuit language to future generations.”

