



November 6, 2023

An Open Letter from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami to Alert Canadians to False Claims to Inuit Identity

This letter is intended to draw attention to efforts by the NunatuKavut Community Council (NCC) to engage federal leaders, academic institutions, and Canadians in an attempt to advance its illegitimate claims to Inuit rights and status. NCC seeks to secure the lands and rights of legitimate Indigenous peoples and to further misappropriate the already limited resources that are intended to benefit Inuit, First Nations, and Métis.

NCC is not an Inuit rights-holding organization, and the organization has no affiliation with the four Inuit Treaty Organizations that collectively represent all Inuit in Canada.

In recent years, Canadians have been confronted with a tidal wave of false claims to Indigenous identity. These cases take advantage of the uncertainty many Canadians have surrounding Indigenous identity. Fraudulent claimants often change their stories over time and use aggressive measures to silence those who question them.

Before 2010, NCC called itself the Labrador Métis Nation, and its members, including president Todd Russell, identified as Métis. During the period when this group called themselves Métis, the Métis National Council did not recognize the Labrador Métis Nation and did not include them in their governance.

NCC is a shape-shifting non-Indigenous organization that is part of the alarming trend of non-Indigenous people and groups co-opting Indigenous identities, cultures, and experiences to secure financial resources and rights.

Inuit are one people, and we share a common history, language, culture and way of life. We are bound to each other through this commonality and through our kinship and family ties. Inuit know who we are and where our people are in Canada and throughout the circumpolar world.

ITK has served as the national Inuit representative organization for more than half a century. We serve and are directed by Inuit, through the four Inuit Treaty Organizations that form the ITK Board of Directors.

...2

Inuit-Crown treaties recognize and affirm the rights of Inuit under section 35 of the Constitution of Canada. This affirmation came after decades of negotiations and legal battles and culminated in the negotiation of Inuit-Crown treaties.

These Treaties, which are negotiated agreements between the four Inuit Treaty Organizations and the Crown, include extensive and detailed provisions regarding membership and citizenship in Inuit Treaty Organizations – provisions that the Crown required and agreed to in order to have certainty with respect to who Inuit are.

Inuit Treaty Organizations co-developed the federal [Inuit Nunangat Policy](#) with the Government of Canada. This Policy is premised on the recognition of Inuit inherent rights and treaty rights and defines Inuit as members of the [Inuvialuit Regional Corporation](#), [Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated](#), [Makivvik](#), and the [Nunatsiavut Government](#).

The solution to the alarming threat posed by false claims to Inuit identity is for federal departments to actively implement the Inuit Nunangat Policy by ensuring that only Inuit Treaty Organizations and their members are eligible to access federal programs, policies and initiatives that are intended to benefit Inuit.

Academic and other institutions should follow suit by adopting formal eligibility policies that cohere with this definition of Inuit, the basis of which must be the official identity documents provided by Inuit Treaty Organizations to prevent non-Inuit from exploiting opportunities reserved for Inuit.

Those who falsely align themselves with a recognized Indigenous people to secure resources, rights and status are practicing a perverse form of colonial racism that not only harms Inuit by diverting badly needed resources away from our people but may, in certain circumstances, amount to criminal fraud. The federal government must stop enabling this morally reprehensible and possibly criminal behaviour.

Federal and other government leaders need to show leadership and prevent the erosion of Indigenous rights and status by rebuffing NCC and other fraudulent organizations that are seeking to exploit Inuit, undermine carefully negotiated and hard-fought Inuit-Crown treaties, as well as the rights of other Indigenous peoples. The future of our rights and our cultural survival depend on it.

For more information, please visit www.itk.ca/open-letter-false-claims-to-inuit-identity.

Nakummek,



Natan Obed, President

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) is the national representative organization for Inuit in Canada, the majority of whom live in Inuit Nunangat, the Inuit homeland encompassing 51 communities across the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavut, Nunavik (Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Labrador). Inuit Nunangat makes up nearly 40 percent of Canada's land area and more than 72 percent of its coastline.

