

# The Álgu FUND

*Press Release*

## **The Álgu Fund to Strengthen Indigenous Voice in the Arctic Council**

FAIRBANKS - Today representatives of the Aleut, Athabaskans, Gwich'in, Saami, and over forty Russian Indigenous nations came together to sign the formal documents to create The Álgu Fund, on the eve of the foreign ministers from the eight Arctic states arriving in Fairbanks for the 10<sup>th</sup> Ministerial of the Arctic Council.

The Álgu Fund is a charitable foundation formed on the belief that decisions made about the Arctic should be shaped by those who have lived there since time immemorial and be inclusive of their cultures, traditions, and knowledge.

The goal of The Álgu Fund is to provide resources to support the active involvement of Indigenous peoples in decision-making about circumpolar issues at the Arctic Council, which made history twenty years ago when it became the first international body to give Indigenous peoples a formal role.

This status, termed "Permanent Participant", remains an innovation in international governance today. Indeed, in no other international forum do Indigenous peoples sit at the table alongside powers like the United States and Russia, while countries like China, Japan, India, the UK, and France observe.

However, funding challenges have made it difficult to take full advantage of this status and the Indigenous voice is integral to addressing the significant climate, social, and economic issues facing the Arctic region.

"Our goal is to build The Álgu Fund's endowment to providing stable, predictable, and reliable funding to our organizations," says Jim Gamble of Aleut International Association, who will serve as the inaugural Chair. "These resources will strengthen our capacity to participate fully, consult with communities meaningfully, and undertake the

research necessary, to shape circumpolar policymaking about our Arctic home".

The funding provided by The Álgu Fund will increase their ability to:

- Express and protect the interests of their communities;
- Facilitate the inclusion, understanding, and respect of traditional Indigenous knowledge;
- Actively partner on projects by providing experts and facilitating local involvement, so that projects are more reflective of the communities they are intended to serve;
- Promote cross-border co-operation amongst Indigenous Peoples and the jurisdictions in which they live; and
- Support local initiatives undertaken by drawing attention to them internationally.

Attention now turns towards the ambitious, but achievable goal of raising \$30 million to capitalize the endowment. Says Gamble, "we will be actively engaging with potential donors who have an interest in the Arctic and an expressed commitment to supporting indigenous peoples". Potential donors include Observer States and Organizations, foundations and charitable organizations, corporations and businesses, and governments at all levels.

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## About the Permanent Participants

### Aleut International Association

AIA was formed by the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association and the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North of the Aleut District of the Kamchatka Region of the Russian Federation (AIPNADKR). As an Alaska Native not-for-profit corporation (501(c)3) it aims to work through international mechanisms to address environmental and cultural concerns of the extended Aleut family whose wellbeing has been connected to the rich resources of the Bering Sea for millennia.

### Arctic Athabaskan Council

AAC is an international treaty organization established to defend the rights and further the interests internationally of American and Canadian Athabaskan member First Nation governments. It seeks to foster greater understanding of the shared heritage of Athabaskan peoples, representing 76 communities in Alaska, Yukon, and Northwest Territories, which in total include approximately 45,000 people.

### Gwich'in Council International

GCI aims to ensure that all Gwich'in Nations in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Alaska are represented at the Arctic Council, as well as to play an active and significant role in the development of policies that relate to the Circumpolar Arctic. GCI represents approximately 9,000 people.

Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Far East, and Siberia  
RAIPON represents approximately 250,000 Russian Indigenous peoples from 41  
different groups. It is a registered public political movement in Russia.

#### Saami Council

Saami Council represents Saami in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Russian  
Federation Saami Council membership is comprised of nine national wide Saami  
associations. It aims to: promote Saami rights and interest in the four countries where  
the Saami are living; consolidate the feeling of a unity among the Saami people; attain  
recognition for the Saami as a nation, and maintain the economic, social, and cultural  
rights of the Saami in the legislation of the four states.

Join us as we launch The Álgu Fund at the [Arctic Highlights Forum](#) on May 10 at 3:00  
p.m. at Davis Concert Hall, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Media availability to follow.

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