

Good afternoon everyone.

It is a wonderful to be back in Iqaluit and especially to be here to celebrate with all of you.

Thank you President Akesuk, Secretary of State Provost, Mr. Tunraluk, and Mr. Arreak for your inspirational words.

My name is Kathleen Fitzgerald. I am the Project Director of Enduring Earth at The Pew Charitable Trusts. What this means is I have the pleasure of working with partners around the world, like QIA, on the development of project finance for permanence initiatives, or as we call them PFPs.

The Pew Charitable Trusts is a founding partner of Enduring Earth, a consortium of four organizations, World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and ZOMA LAB, committed to accelerating conservation and community development through PFPs.

I think everyone in this room knows that globally, we are witnessing unprecedented biodiversity loss and severe impacts of climate change. Many of you have seen this first-hand with weather changing, ice receding, shifting fisheries and declining wildlife. These impacts have serious consequences for people, livelihoods and our planet.

The scale of these challenges requires innovative and durable solutions. They require radical partnerships.

And that is what PFPs are all about. That is what SINNA is about.

There are a number of factors that make a PFP feasible and I want to highlight four that made SINAA possible.

The first is local leadership.

The leadership provided by the QIA and the leadership provided within each of your communities participating in SINAA made this project possible. PFPs are complex. SINAA is the 10th PFP to ever be completed in the world, and the leadership provided by QIA over the past 2.5 years is what made this project possible.

The 2nd piece is government commitment.

In December 2022 the Government of Canada announced an 800 M commitment for indigenous led initiatives to advance conservation, climate mitigation and reconciliation. This catapulted the SINAA PFP into planning and it serves as a great example of what is possible when a government invests in local communities and enables them to lead.

The 3rd piece needed for a successful PFP is vision.

PFPs are built around a clear and unified vision. The Qikiqtani Inuit vision for your region is clear and it is compelling. The SINAA conservation plan and the Qikiqtani Inuit Protected Area Plan, QIPCAP, are powerful examples of what large-scale, Indigenous-led biodiversity conservation can look like.

The 4th piece is donor partnership.

The capacity of QIA, the GoC commitment and the Qikiqtani vision is what drew donors to this PFP. Through this project you have created a community of Canadian and international philanthropic partners who are committed to this journey with you.

We have heard that the successful implementation of SINAA will result in regional and local Inuit governance, well equipped Nauttiqsuqtiit programs and a vast network of connected conservation areas upon which Inuit communities depend.

But SINAA will have impacts beyond the Qikiqtani region, beyond Nunavut and beyond Canada.

Because just three years ago, in Montreal, 196 countries committed to The Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes a commitment to protect 30% of the planet by 2030. Around the world, governments, communities, donors and NGOs are looking for ways to meet this target.

And SINAA provides just that. It provides a blueprint for a public, private, community partnership that will achieve large scale conservation, honor and incorporate local traditions and cultures, and support Inuit leadership and self-determination.

As I was flying in yesterday, I was recalling our numerous negotiation meetings here in Iqaluit. Our meetings often included reflections from Inuit leaders, community members or Nauttigsuqtiit staff. I was moved by these stories, which were about your history, your families, your challenges and your visions. I honestly believe that SINAA captures your stories and your visions, and again, congratulations, because this was an incredible team effort.

I'd like to close by thanking again:

- President Akesuk for your leadership
- Secretary Provost – to the Government of Canada team for your commitment
- QIA staff for your tireless work
- Oceans North for your partnership
- Philanthropic partners for your steadfast support.

On behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts, it is an honor to be with you today. Thank you.