

Statement of witness Aqqaluk Lyngø

1. I make this statement as a witness in the case of R v Hewke and others.
2. I am an indigenous person. I am Inuit. I was born in a small town, on the Northeast coast of Greenland – in the Disko Bay – not far from where millions of icebergs are born as they plunge into the Ilulissat Icefiord, and as they battle each other in their move towards the Davis Strait and eventually to the North Atlantic Ocean.
3. As many my age, I was sent from Greenland to Denmark for much of my mid-level education. I was trained as a social worker and assisted families within Greenland until I began working for a fairer deal for my people within the Danish Kingdom. As I worked for greater autonomy for Greenlanders in the context of Denmark, I also applied myself to fostering unity among all Inuit from across the circumpolar Arctic, from Chukotka in the far northeast of Russia to Alaska to Canada to Greenland, and working collectively with them on environmental and social issues.
4. I have been a minister in the Greenland Home Rule Parliament and, continuously since 1980, an executive council member of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, or ICC. For six years, I was ICC's international Chair and continue working as the president of the ICC chapter in Greenland.
5. I am a writer and a poet, something I have been doing since I was quite young.
6. I have worked, and shared my experiences, with other indigenous peoples from around the world, helping them address their challenges of poverty, marginalization, and

dispossession. Most recently in this regard, I was the Vice Chair and member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2005 – 2007.

7. I am a part-time hunter. Many of my extended family members are hunters, whereas others play an important role in other areas of the Greenland economy.
8. I have come to know about climate change in the Arctic and among my people in various ways.
 - a. First, I have witnessed the effects of climate change with my own eyes right across the Arctic. I have seen Inuit villages in Alaska and Canada eroding into the sea. I have seen my cousin's hunting camp be inaccessible during winter for five years straight due to thinning or non-existent sea ice during the coldest months of the year. I have seen homes been relocated inland due to eroding shorelines, and I have also seen plans to relocate health centres, and police stations. I have seen flooding of towns due to high winds pushing ocean water further into inland bays and rivers, due to less or non-existent ice protecting the shorelines. I have seen the Greenland ice cap – the only such feature in the world – melting in areas, and have witnessed fast and heavy waterfalls flowing from the icecap into the sea – in areas where previously I have not seen any water – not even dripping.
 - b. Second, in my capacity as a leader within the Inuit Circumpolar Council, I am asked to visit and meet with Inuit across the Arctic on many issues. Over the past five years, I have witnessed an increasing

number of Inuit come to me, asking ICC and me personally to help address their concerns regarding climate change. They ask me increasingly to take their local concerns to the international community, as ICC is mandated to do. I work with them, for example, on trying to address the issue of polar bear habitat shrinking I work with them, for example, on trying to address the challenge of the disappearance of certain fish species as well as the arrival of new species of fish in their waters that negatively affect the balanced Arctic marine ecosystem. I work with them, for example, in addressing the dramatic influx of ships coming to the Arctic as the shipping routes widen through the ice, and the subsequent effects of marine pollution on the Inuit environment. Through ICC's permanent participant status in the 8-nation Arctic Council, I have worked with leading scientists and others providing them with an Inuit perspective on climate change, while at the same time learning from them.

- c. Third, in my capacity as Vice Chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, I dealt professionally with the issue of climate change, not only in the Arctic but across indigenous communities globally. I was named a Special Rapporteur, along with the Chair of the Forum, to investigate how climate change mitigation measures applied globally have affected indigenous peoples. In our investigation, and as outlined in our report to the Permanent Forum, we noted widespread negative impacts of climate change on indigenous peoples and other marginalized peoples especially. In addition, we concluded that among this widespread

negative impact, the Arctic and its indigenous peoples require a special focal point due to their unique and dramatic experience with climate change.

d. Fourth, I was asked to work with various academics on climate change matters, including renowned scholar, Dr. Ross Virginia, during my three-month stay at Dartmouth College earlier this year as a Visiting Fellow. Also, I have worked with Stanford University scholar Dr. Stephen Schneider and Dr. Terry Root, who were both on the Nobel Peace Prize winning International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). They visited Greenland just last month and I was able to both show them around Greenland personally, and learn from them what is happening from a physical scientific point of view. So while I do not have a doctorate in climatology or related fields, I believe my ongoing work with academics has give me a unique perspective in coming to know about the effects of climate change among my people, the Inuit.

9. I am personally responsible for property affected by climate change. As an elected leader in the Inuit Circumpolar Council, I am given direct marching orders by Inuit delegates from Russia, Alaska, Canada, and Greenland every four years during ICC's General Assemblies. The last one was held in 2006 and through the Utqiagvik Declaration, ICC's 8-member executive of which I am a member, was asked to defend Inuit interests and property on various levels. While Inuit do not have the same notion of "private property" as perhaps the rest of the world does, I nevertheless take these directives from the ICC members

very seriously. In addition to the quadrennial assemblies, I am also bound by directives given to me by my ICC Greenland board, which is made up of 18 individuals from representative organizations from across Greenland society. In my capacity as ICC Greenland president, I am responsible for addressing the climate change damage done to property within Greenland.

10. Climate change has affected me and my family directly by negatively affecting the ability to hunt along with my extended family due to thinning ice.
11. Climate change affects my community, the Inuit people, by affecting their environment, which we see is more polluted due to increased shipping, the kind and numbers of species that they hunt, the house and camp constructions that they have to build on melting and unpredictable soils, the unpredictable weather that they now experience as they take their dog teams across the ice cap and tundra, the sliding of houses into the sea on some Inuit coastal communities, the relocation of cemeteries due to increased and widespread flooding never seen before, the reduction of habitat for polar bears and other species, and the introduction of new pest species.
12. Perhaps the most profound and terrifying impact on my people is related to the use of their traditional knowledge. For years, for thousands of years, Inuit have relied on knowledge that was gained first hand by lengthy observations of the environment, wind patterns, ocean currents, animal migration patterns, weather, and flora growth. Most of this knowledge was gained by elders who gained it from their elders, who in turn gained it from their elders. This way of knowing through observation, and this

way of learning through listening to elders' ancient experience has sustained us for millennia. This way of knowing is often referred to as "traditional knowledge" and increasingly we use it in cooperation with "western science". Together we solve many problems. Inuit men and women have also known and experienced changes over time, including changing animal migration patterns, ocean currents, and weather. But only a decade ago, Inuit men and women have come to me and to others telling us that something was radically different. The changes that they were observing were of a different order, that they did not correspond to the traditional knowledge that had been handed down to them and that they had acquired themselves through their own patient observations. This is the most chilling impact – the fear that our knowledge system will be so severely jolted by such a radical shift in the climate that the very foundation of who we are as a people may be at risk.

13. I am unable to attend Court to give this evidence in person and I am currently in Greenland. However, I am happy for this statement to be read at Court.