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Stars Venture to Arctic Circle to Spotlight Human Face of Global Warming
Salma Hayek, Jake Gyllenhaal Join 1,000 Native People to deliver an Arctic Warning

IQUALUIT, NUNAVUT, CANADA (APRIL 22, 2005) -- While the contentious energy bill debate and the onset of spring have been heating up Washington, D.C. and the rest of the lower 48, politicians, scientists and celebrities are heading to the colder climes of the Arctic Circle this Earth Day to highlight the real heat global warming is putting on the lives of the Inuit people who live there.

Hollywood actors Salma Hayek and Jake Gyllenhaal will join more than 1,000 Inuit people to help mark their traditional spring festival and learn how global warming is threatening the Inuit's way of life. The event will be punctuated by a ceremony in which the Inuit gather on the sea ice for a dramatic photo to send an "Arctic Warning" to the world: the Arctic is melting, pollution is causing it, and we can stop it before it's too late.

The Arctic is one of the most sensitive regions to the effects of global warming, and is regarded by scientists as a barometer of changes to come in the rest of the world. Recent major studies predict dramatic reductions in ice and snow cover over the next fifty years in the Arctic Circle. That could spell real trouble for the native peoples and wildlife inhabiting these remote regions, and for the rest of us, because loss of the polar cap means loss of the Earth's ability to deflect heat from the sun, causing global warming to accelerate and oceans to rise worldwide.

The Inuit, led by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, will file a petition with the Human Rights Commission later this year to have global warming declared a human rights violation. Global Green USA and NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) have advocated for mandatory limits on global warming emissions and for more investment in clean renewable energy solutions such as wind and solar power.

"Global Warming is an abstract concept to most people; we know its happening, but we can't really visualize its effect. Unfortunately, the Inuit people put a human face on global warming, they are literally melting away. They are the canary in the coal mine," said Jake Gyllenhaal.

According to scientists' most conservative estimates, half the summer sea ice in the Arctic will melt by the end of this century, along with a significant portion of the Greenland Ice Sheet, as the region warms an additional seven to thirteen degrees Fahrenheit by 2100. Rising sea levels are expected to accelerate as warming continues, according to the report of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA).

Global warming is caused when heat-trapping emissions from burning of fossil fuels collect in the atmosphere. The United States is the largest world contributor of those emissions, yet has failed to enact limits.

"The Inuit people realize the challenges global warming present to their way of life should be a warning to the rest of us in more temperate climates," said Dr. Dan Lashof, Science Director for NRDC's Climate Center. "It is now clear we have to cut the pollution that causes global warming to prevent dangerous changes in the climate."

The ACIA study found that global warming will present serious challenges to the health and food security of some indigenous peoples, testing the survival of some cultures.

“Each of us has a stake in combatting global warming, and the Inuit have reminded us that the clock is ticking,” said Matt Petersen, President of Global Green. “Without urgent adoption of clean energy solutions, the impact to humanity from global warming will be incalculable. While our federal government in the US fails to act, we must follow the lead of places such as California, and Canada, that are actively reducing their global warming emissions.”

Also joining the delegation were California political leaders Joe Nation, Assemblyman (CA) and Eric Garcetti, LA City Councilmember who are advocating local legislation to reduce the impact from global warming. They are part of a larger trend of states and local officials pushing for limits on global warming pollution, in the absence of federal policy to combat the problem. For example, California has passed a global warming emissions law for vehicles and in the last elections Colorado voters approved a requirement that by 2015 ten percent of all electricity come from renewable sources like wind and solar power.\

The event is sponsored by the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the City of Iqaluit, Natural Resources Defense Council, Global Green USA, Union of Concerned Scientists, Rainforest Action Network, Kyoto USA, Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, USC Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, Loreto Bay Company, Canadian North, Frobisher Inn, Ayaya Communications, Nunatsiaq News, the Government of Nunavut, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), Canadian Helicopters and Spectral Q.

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Global Green USA, the U.S. affiliate of Green Cross International led by Mikhail S. Gorbachev, works in cooperation with individuals, industry, and governments to create a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future. For more information, please visit www.globalgreen.org

The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has more than 1 million members and e-activists nationwide, served from offices in New York, Washington, Santa Monica and San Francisco.