



Team Ayalik

The Ayalik Fund was initially established in March of 2015. After several years of successful fundraising and program-delivery for Inuit youth, it became clear that the opportunity to make an even bigger difference was very real. As of April 2023, the Ayalik Expeditions program is a component part of the programming at [Northern Youth Abroad](#), which organization also provides governance, human resources, financial and grant management services for Ayalik Expeditions. The Ayalik Fund (as an endowment fund) remains independent, and as always dedicated to improving the lives of Inuit youth in Nunavut. Every penny donated to the Ayalik Fund is used to serve this mandate.

Advisory Committee

The majority-Inuit Ayalik advisory committee is composed of Alex Ittimangnaq of Kugaaruk, Ruth Eetuk-Pootoolik of Salliq (Coral Harbour), Reuben Qaunaq of Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay), Alexandra Anaviapik of Pond Inlet, Ragily Singoore of Pond Inlet, and the Ayalik Fund's founders, Laurie & David Pelly.

Alex Ittimangnaq lives in Kugaaruk (formerly Pelly Bay), one of the smallest and most traditional communities in Nunavut. He and his wife Maria have been volunteers for the Ayalik Fund in the past, and have a longstanding history of supporting the youth of their community. They are the parents of four girls and one boy, and graduates of the Nunavut Sivuniksavut post-secondary program in Ottawa which, they say, “changed the way they look at the world.” Alex brings a vital perspective to our discussions.





Ruth Eetuk-Pootoolik lives in Salliq (Coral Harbour), situated on an island in the northwest corner of Hudson Bay. She has been working for the Nunavut Department of Justice since 2013, has a special concern for the youth of her community, and has served as a volunteer liaison with the Ayalik Fund for several years. Ruth and her husband Mark Pootoolik have two sons and two daughters. They love to go out on the land together as a family, in part to sustain Inuit traditional skills and knowledge.

Alexandra Anaviapik hails from Pond Inlet, at the northern tip of Baffin Island, although she spends much of her time travelling the globe. She formerly worked as the school counsellor there, assisting youth with their personal problems, a job she describes as the most meaningful work she has done. She is dedicated to the support of all efforts to assist Inuit youth. Alex also serves on the board of the Vancouver Maritime Museum, as a result of her family's connection to the history of the Northwest Passage, and occasionally works as an expedition guide for Northwest Passage transits by sea. She is a mentor to the [Ikaarvik](#) program in Pond Inlet.





Born in Igloolik, Ragily Singoore has called Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) home since 1980. She and her husband have raised 7 children, are grandparents to 11 children, and have also adopted an 8-year-old. She has worked at the Hamlet office as a recreational assistant for several years. Previously she worked at the daycare and the school, so she is very well connected to the youth in the community. One of her daughters is an Ayalik alum after participating on several of the Tall Ship Expeditions, so Ragily brings the vital perspective of a parent to the advisory committee's discussions. In her spare time, Ragily likes to hunt and fish, especially in the springtime. She is an accomplished seamstress, known particularly for making beautiful seal-skin parkas.



Born in Iqaluit and raised in Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay), Reuben Qaunaq is an alumnus of the Ayalik Program having sailed with Tall Ships Expeditions Canada in 2021 and '22. Reuben graduated from high school and plans on continuing his post-secondary education. He is an artist, athlete, sailor, and educator who says his life has been shaped by the environment around him. He believes that if he is going to be a part of the Arctic, he needs to understand it, so he wants to acquire more understanding of politics (government) and his homeland. He brings the participant perspective to the advisory committee and acts as a valuable promoter of the program to youth in his community and beyond.



David & Laurie established the Ayalik Fund so that Inuit youth could benefit from the sort of challenging outdoor experiences they believe made a huge difference for their adopted Inuit son, Ayalik, shown here at the age of five on a three-week high Arctic canoe trip, his first of many. Both of our founders have spent most of their careers working, each in their own way, for the Inuit of Nunavut, and many summers canoeing in the barrenlands. They believe deeply in the Ayalik Fund's vision.

Project Director



With a number of years of experience working in Canada's North with a focus on the natural sciences, Heather Dewar is motivated to apply her skills and network in support of delivering experiential opportunities to Inuit youth. Heather believes strongly in the power of nature and community to foster greater resilience in people. As Project Director at Ayalik, Heather is excited to apply her knowledge and expertise to promote and grow the Ayalik initiative through daily management, program development, community outreach, and collaboration with other like-minded organizations.

Senior Northern Advisor



Donna Olsen-Hakongak has been living in Cambridge Bay since 1987 when she arrived as a young teacher. She and her husband George Naikak Hakongak have raised two daughters, while contributing greatly to the community in a diversity of roles. Since 2009, Donna has been working for the Government of Nunavut's Department of Justice, with a particular focus on youth. She has been a strong supporter and a vital facilitator for Ayalik since its inception in 2015. We continue to benefit from her advice.

In addition, Ayalik has a small army of volunteers, across Nunavut and southern Canada, all of whom contribute particular elements to the program's operation. It could not happen without them. Nor without the legions of donors who believe in the mandate and provide the financial resources to make it happen.



The Ayalik Fund gives those Inuit youth who would otherwise not have such opportunities a chance to build self-esteem and confidence, through challenging outdoor adventure, meeting other young Canadians and social-cultural exploration.

www.AyalikFund.ca