

Native Science Commission in planning stages

by Tricia King

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Increased Alaska Native involvement with scientific research into Arctic contaminant and health issues is one of the goals of a new agreement signed this week by the Ukepeagvik Inupiat Corporation (UIC) and Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC). "We have not gotten the type of answers we need," said Ronald Brower, President of UIC, referring to current research programs which are often poorly coordinated between countries and primarily based in locations other than Alaska.

Under the new funding agreement, a staff position will be created at the Inuit Circumpolar Conference head office in An-

chorage, with a focus on promoting new research activities to be conducted within Alaska. "California-based Arctic research doesn't quite cut it," Brower said.

The new position will allow ICC to transmit scientific findings back to communities, and work toward the establishment of a Native Science Commission, according to ICC President Caleb Pungowiyi. The new Native Science Commission will help to coordinate a 1994 international conference between Arctic indigenous peoples and scientists, to work out details of incorporating traditional knowledge into scientific research studies.

"We feel this is very important to Alaska and also to Arctic science in general," Pungowiyi

said, because it will help focus some things we feel are being missed by Arctic research, on health issues and the impact on our lifestyle and the resources that we utilize for our foods and traditions and culture."

Scientists have recently released information leading to concern about a variety of contaminants present in Arctic regions, which may cause serious human health effects.

Speaking of the potential global impact of Arctic research findings, Brower expressed his hope that other ICC member organizations may make similar contributions to furthering ICC's goals and objectives. "It is imperative that the member organizations support the international organization," Brower



Ronald Brower and Caleb Pungowiyi sign agreement.

Photo by Tricia King

said, "which is not only working for the Inuit, but the United States and the global Arctic peoples as a whole."