

ICC president sees much growth and change

By Bill Hess
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When Hans-Pavia Rosing succeeded Eben Hopson as president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1980, funds for running the organization were small and the potential costs great.

Transportation and communication concerns to bind together a scant 100,000 people scattered across the remote top of the world were tremendous. When Rosing traveled from Nuuk, Greenland to Barrow, Ak., by regularly scheduled commercial airline, he had to fly southeast to Denmark, then southwest into the "Lower 48" United States, head back north to Anchorage and finally on to Barrow.

Telephone service between many points was non-existent, and mail delivery could take weeks, even months.

"We had no staff, no office, no facilities, and a very low budget," Rosing recalls. Those obstacles had to be faced before other problems could be dealt with.

"We owe a lot of thanks to the North Slope Borough," Rosing added, "who contributed \$50,000 to start our operations. The Home-rule government of Greenland provided a small office in Nuuk with a telephone, and we started from scratch." For some time, Rosing was the only full-time employee within the ICC. "I was making my own coffee, and writing my own letters," he emphasized.

With the resources he did have, Rosing travelled to Alaska and Canada, to advance the goals established by the ICC in 1980, and to raise funds. By the spring of 1981, he was able to hire on a secretary and a special administrative secretary. In the fall of 1982, a regional office was opened in Alaska.

Operations in Canada have been coordinated closely with the Inuit Taparitat of Canada, who sponsored the recent General Assembly meeting in Frobisher Bay. Rosing expects a full-time office to open soon in Canada. Thanks to satellite communications and computers, the three nations are linked by a communications system which provides instantaneous electronic mail transmission at a fraction of the cost of long-distance telephone conversations.

The ICC's worldwide status was greatly enhanced this past winter when the group won recognition within the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization. ICC also demonstrated its growing clout when it played a leading role in halting the Arctic Pilot Project. The APP would have experimented with giant, ice-breaking tankers smashing their way through the frozen seas of Northern Canada.

The Inuit feared the potential damage this could bring to the noise-sensitive marine mammals on which they depend.



Hans-Pavia Rosing sings in a Greenlandic choir

PHOTO BY BILL HESS

Yet, no accomplishment of the ICC gives Rosing greater hope than the participation he witnessed during this last General Assembly meeting.

"With all the time we've spent getting organized," Rosing explained, "we've used too little time in turning our heads to our common problems; in thinking beyond our own communities. A lot of the Greenland delegates were here for the first time. They saw the Alaskan and Canadian delegates for the first time. Now they fully realize what it is all about. They are enthusiastic about the ICC. When they go back home, they will talk about it, and tell their friends what ICC really is."

"I am sure it will be the same with the delegates of all three countries. Then, people in their own communities will have the Inuit movement in the back of their heads whenever they are discussing local issues."

One group of Inuit had no representatives to take the message home, a fact which clearly bothered Rosing. "We don't feel happy about having one nation missing," he said, referring to the Soviet Inuit who were prevented by their government from attending.

"We will keep an open seat for them on the executive council, and fly their flag, so that when they are ready, they may take the seat as observers." Rosing stressed that the Soviets would not have voting rights until they could attend with a full contingent of two members on the executive council seat, plus 18 delegates.

The Soviet Union has never allowed its Inuit people of Eastern Siberia to participate in the ICC. This year, it seemed the Soviets were ready to send some cultural observers, but then they changed their minds, citing the political issues which they feared would be brought up at ICC.

"ICC is a cultural organization," Rosing countered the

Soviet objections. "True, political issues do come up. In our minds, culture is not just a question of arts and crafts, it is a way of life. Nuclear placement in our Arctic environment, oil development, and all the development from the Outside world greatly affects our way of life."

"Apparently, the Russian government only sees these issues as political, and does not see the culture."

Rosing would not speculate on how the Inuit show of solidarity with their Siberian relatives would be greeted by the Soviets. "It is very hard to tell how the Soviets will react, if they will react at all," Rosing explained. Although he did not know whether the Soviet Embassy in Canada would bother passing on the ICC's message to the Soviet Inuits as requested, Rosing felt they would know.

"As an Inuit, I feel confident they will hear. And when the Soviet Inuit hear, they will celebrate, and want to be with us." Even censorship by the government will not prevent word from reaching Siberia, Rosing said. "Now and then, Inuit from Siberia meet Inuit from Alaska on the ice, when they are hunting. There are Inuit radio programs broadcasting from Nome. The word will be passed on."

A major undertaking of the ICC which has generated at least a little controversy in Alaska was the founding of the Alaska Native Review Commission. The commission, which is being chaired by Canadian Judge Thomas Berger, is charged with making an in-depth study of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1974 and how it has affected Alaska Natives to date.

The two-year study will take place concurrently with a U.S. Interior Department study and an Alaska Federation of Natives study. AFN leadership has expressed concern that the ICC study may be weighted against ANCSA from

the start.

Rosing said they have nothing to fear. "The Alaska Native Review commission will be Justice Berger's own report; it will be completely independent of ICC". The purpose, said Rosing, would be to find out how individuals across the Alaska Native spectrum feel the act has affected them.

"We are not trying to reveal the books of the corporations to see if they have succeeded financially or not," Rosing said. "There is no reason for anybody to be worried. What we want is to have a review, to talk to the people who are not listened to and heard from normally." To do this, Berger will hold hearings throughout Alaska at which anyone who is interested may testify.

"They will be asked questions like 'How do you feel about it? (ANCSA) How has it affected you?'" Rosing said. "Nobody will be forced to testify." The results will be of interest to the international Inuit community, Rosing said.

The 50,000 Inuit of Greenland have only recently won a certain degree of autonomy under the colonial rule of Denmark through their new Home-rule government. While certain responsibilities, such as national defense and law enforcement, remain entirely under Danish authority, the Home-rule allows Greenland to exercise a much greater degree of sovereignty and self-government than the Danes had permitted in the past.

"This is a very new concept," said Rosing. "It was only introduced in 1979. We will want to conduct an evaluation of how the Home-rule government is working out in Greenland... the review commission can have a lot of impact on the evaluation of Home-rule."

Land claims in Canada have never been settled on a large scale, Rosing pointed out, and the Natives of Canada are cur-

rently seeking a complete land-claims settlement. ANCSA has been suggested as a possible model for the Canadian settlement, so the Canadians will be very interested in the findings of the commission, Rosing said.

Although delegates to the recent conference in Frobisher Bay adopted an Arctic Policy in principle, Rosing noted that over the next three years, opinions and comments on that policy will be sought from all corners of the Inuit homeland. Then, at the next meeting, scheduled for Kotzebue in 1986, a more final Arctic policy which will probably be adopted as a resolution will be hammered out.

In setting an Arctic policy, the ICC plans to set guidelines for scientific research and development of the North which will place the needs and participation of the Inuit first in any activities taken by the different governments.

"I believe the Arctic Policy will develop into a sort of constitution for the Inuit on our values. I hope we will be able to declare to our nations and to the world that there are certain values which must be considered when any project is undertaken in the Arctic. This is our homeland and has been for thousands of years; long before any of the national governments came to be."

The Inuit are seeking a nuclear-free zone in their homeland, and a relaxation of the customs and trade restrictions they must face when traveling from one country to another.

"Eventually, what I think you will see is a very unique sovereignty established within the nations," said Rosing. "I won't at this time be able to tell you how it will develop. We are not urging anything. We will give people time to go back to their communities, to discuss these things, and put them in their heads."

"What is important is that we develop a relationship with the outside world where they see very clearly that we are the people of the Arctic. That we have an economy with hunting, fishing, whaling and that these are our resources, and not in just some romantic, old-style way."

"We want to manage this economy ourselves, as we have always done. The International Whaling Commission is only 25 years old; our whalers have been hunting for thousands of years."

"We want the world to realize that we are dependent on our economy exactly as they are dependent on theirs. It's exactly like someone who lives in New York, who goes to an office to get a salary. These people depend on hunting."

"I think there is a romantic perception of our way of life as something of the past; a museum piece, an exhibit! We are going to change that all around!"