

An international Inuit Body is born in Nuuk

By Thomas Richards, Jr.

The Inuit from Greenland were awestruck by the Inupiat Elder from Wainwright on Alaska's Arctic Slope. Taking a break from the heavy agenda items during the formal session of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference at Nuuk, Chairman Pro-Tem Willie Hensley asked the Wainwright Elder to take out his violin bow and play hymns on his metal saw. Wonderous, enchanting notes echoed through the meeting hall as the Elder played his masterwork. After the performance, the Greenlanders, music lovers all, asked the Elder to come to Assivik to play.

Assivik, the Greenlandic Inuit summer festival, was being held at a nearby fjord. The elder agreed, and boated across the fjord to play his enchanting melodies. Upon his return, Tom Brower asked the Elder what the festival was like. Somewhat shaken, the Elder replied that the Natives were staying in small tents, eating only what could be caught from the sea, and that Assivik was probably not a good place for Elders to visit.

Curious about the Elder's reaction, a young Barrow Inupiat inquired from others about the visit of the Alaskan musician. Upon further investigation, it seemed the Elder's reservations about Assivik were based more upon his reception than the accommodations. After the Wainwright Elder caressed the hauntingly beautiful hymnals from his saw, it was reported, he was relentlessly pursued by Greenlandic women who were captivated by his music.

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•historic meeting of the Inuit tribes

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Thus another legendary story is born from a historic meeting of Inuit from many tribes. It is without question that many tales such as this one will be repeated by the Elders for generations about the great Inuit Circumpolar Conference at Nuuk in the Inuit country of Kalaallit Nunaat.

Many such stories about social encounters will abound throughout villages across vast thousands of miles of the Inuit Homeland. They will be carried faithfully into the future times through the oral traditions of the arctic Natives. The proceedings of the formal sessions of the I.C.C. are also being faithfully recorded using new technology, on sound tapes and video cassettes, fully transcribed and translated into a dozen languages, broadcast via

satellite to hundreds of villages, and will form the basis for serious deliberation about the destiny of the world's Inuit population.

—Inuit Homeland—

The Inuit, among the smallest minorities of humankind, occupy more of earth's space than any other race of man. Spanning nine of the world's time zone's, Inuit have shown amazing mobility and resourcefulness, and a remarkable talent for survival and richness of cultural development. Until the 1980 Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Nuuk, their vast territory was known simply as the circumpolar region. After Nuuk, the area has acquired a new name with an ancient and appropriate meaning.

The circumpolar region is now the Inuit Homeland. The

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phrase grows out of a great family reunion, the first gathering of the tribes in a least 5,000 years. The 1980 ICC meeting at Nuuk began on Saturday, June 28. By Sunday afternoon, the Inuit had created the first international organization to bring them together in a common bond.

—Many Obstacles—

Like the timeless struggle for survival itself, the challenges and obstacles to organization were many. Logistics, transportation, communication, financing and politics were among many problem areas which had to be overcome before the ICC could be

created.

The framework for the ICC organization was established at the first conference in 1977 at Barrow, where representatives of Greenlandic, Canadian and Alaska Inuit agreed the organization should be founded. Work on an acceptable charter for the ICC, anticipated to be concluded within a year, took three years, however. Regional concerns and developments, such as Canadian Inuit land claims and the Greenlandic Home Rule effort, and political infighting among Alaskans (between Hopson-Hensley leadership and a group led by Charles Edwardsen, Jr.) slowed progress on the charter. Additionally, ICC organizers wished for a careful review of charter language and provisions by experts in international law.

Work on the drafting of the charter document continued by the Planning Committee right up to the start of the Nuuk conference. The Interim Committee of the ICC, created at Barrow and chaired by Edwardsen, was dissolved by Hopson in 1978 in an action Edwardsen charges was illegal and which was protected by the Greenlanders. The Reso-



ICC President Hans-Pavia Rosing

lutions Committee established at Barrow conducted ICC planning until the fall of 1979, when the Planning Committee was created and Greenland Information Minister Hans-Pavia Rosing was chosen as Chairman.

The charter document grew out of the Planning Committee meetings between the Alaskans and Greenlanders. Meanwhile, Canadian Inuit, through the COPE organization (Committee on Original Peoples Entitlement) drafted their own charter document and brought it to Nuuk. The Greenland-Alaska proposal

was the only one developed in time to be considered at Nuuk, the Planning Committee ruled, and the Canadians expressed concern that their views were not being adequately considered.

On the eve of the Nuuk conference, several key leaders of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and Acting North Slope Borough Lloyd Ahvakana cancelled Greenland travel plans as Eben Hopson lay near death in a Barrow Hospital. Substitutions were made among arctic slope delegates. Pro-Tem Chairman Hensley, worried about the arctic slope cancellations and the likely challenge to the Planning Committee's charter work, and with strong reservations about leaving Alaska while his friend Hopson's death seemed imminent, suggested the possibility of postponement of the Nuuk meeting.

When the Canadian jet charter left Alaska, Hensley was not on board. Learning of this development, Greenland and Canadian organizers placed calls to Hensley, rousing him at his Anchorage home and urging him to travel to Nuuk. Hensley

reconsidered, and flew commercially via Europe to arrive in Greenland during the afternoon of the first day of the conference.

—Etok Arrives—

Shortly before Hensley arrived and began to chair the sessions, Charles Edwardsen, Jr. and Billy Neakok arrived on a chartered Canadian propjet. Edwardsen walked into the meeting hall at Nuuk's Teacher Training College and stood to speak. He was not recognized during the debate on the charter, a proceeding closed to all but delegates and Inuit observers.

Edwardsen then left the hall that Saturday afternoon to make a statement to the press in which he threatened a legal challenge to the validity of the sessions. Shortly thereafter, the meetings were closed to all but seated delegates while the ICC delegates sought to sort out the Edwardsen challenge and conclude discussion on Canadian reservations about the Planning Committee draft charter. The meeting recessed early Saturday evening.

—Hopson's Death—

During that night, word was received of the death of Eben Hopson. A memorial service was scheduled for Sunday morning. Jens Christian Chemnitz, Lutheran Bishop of Greenland, eulogized Hopson in a moving tribute. The Bishop compared Mayor Hopson to Moses, who led his people to the promised land without entering it himself. During prayers for the Mayor, the delegates stood somberly in a silent, yet emotional moment. They broke for Sunday lunch.

After lunch, any sign of conflict or controversy seemed to have completely disappeared. Hensley suggested that sessions be called off for the afternoon out of respect for Hopson. Calista Delegate Phillip Guy, receiving the floor, quietly stated, "Mr. Chairman, we are running behind schedule and have much work before us. I believe the Honorable Mr. Hopson would have wanted us to continue." From that point on, all actions were unanimous. Discussion was thoughtful, deliberate and conducted quietly. Edwardsen and Neakok participated freely.

Canadian reservations about the charter were dealt with amicably, with Canadian Inuit accorded a two-year period to formally ratify the charter. The Inuit from Canada wanted time to focus on land claims in the country before formally considering the charter. Another concern of Canadians, about internal affairs, was adopted. They allowed each Member Party (country) to decide for itself how delegates were to be selected, although the process itself is to be approved by all ICC Members. With these exceptions, the charter took shape according to the Alaska-Greenland document.

Press and observers were
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After the applause finally quieted, the delegates sat. Charles Edwardson, Jr. remained standing. "Mr. Chairman, May I have the floor," Etok said. Edwardson got the attention of the assembly and announced, "I would like for us to sing Happy Birthday to Charlie Watt." Watt, Canadian Inuit from the Makivik Corporation of Quebec, was the center of attention as all stood and sang. The English version done, the Greenlanders heartily sang two more verses in their language.

Thus came a joyful ending to a day which started in sorrow and somber silence. Eben Hopson was dead. His dream, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, was born.

On Monday morning, after Hensley called the assembly to order, some announcements were read and the conference adjourned for delegate caucuses from each nation. Before noon, the session resumed for the election of officers of the ICC. A motion by Oscar Kawagley of Alaska was seconded by Michael Amatook of Canada, and unanimous approval was given to the election of Hans-Pavia Rosing of Greenland as the first President of the ICC. Rosing, 52, leaves his job as Chief of the Information Bureau of the Greenland government to accept the \$45,000 annual-salaried position until 1982.

Delegate caucuses then elected two members to the Executive Committee from each nation. Oscar Kawagley, Calista Corporation President, and Jimmy Stotts, ASRO Director and NSR Assemblyman, were elected from Alaska. From Canada, John Amatook, NWT Inuit leader, and Mary Simon, of Quebec, were chosen. Elected from Greenland were Lars Chemnitz, Atassut Party leader, and Arsaluk Lynge, Member of the leadership of Inuit Atagaitag.

Following the adoption of the charter and the election of officers, the ICC participants broke into workshops Monday afternoon. Seven workshops were convened on culture and language, village technology, environmental protection, arctic resource development, arctic coastal zone management and OCS, health and welfare and transportation and communication.

The workshops considered policy questions in each issue area late through the evening Monday and through the day Tuesday, drafting resolution which were brought before the General Assembly late Tuesday afternoon. 35 resolutions were adopted by the ICC assembly before it adjourned until meeting next in Canada in the summer of 1982.

Among the most significant resolutions were those which accomplished the following:

- a request for a ban on OCS exploration for oil and gas throughout the Inuit Homeland

and development of coordinated international arctic planning and enforcement of standardized arctic coastal zone management regulation to protect the environment throughout the Inuit Homeland.

- establishment of an international commission on Inuit language and culture.

- establishment of an international Study Group on arctic air transportation, creation of a regular air link across the Inuit Homeland and relaxation of customs restrictions on Inuit.

- creation of an International Inuit Study Group on Broadcasting and Communications to improve and develop communication among the Inuit.

- development of acceptable standards and resources for community planning, including construction of housing and community facilities, and review of alternative and less expensive energy sources for Inuit communities.

- Inuit involvement in planning, monitoring, and regulation of resource development activities.

- support for continued Inuit participation in international management oversight of subsistence species throughout the Inuit Homeland.

The resolution designated ICC Resolution Number 01-80 named Eben Hopson as the Founder of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference. Many other significant resolutions were adopted. (Editor's Note: a summary of resolutions and several other stories about events and activities at the Nuuk ICC meeting will be featured in the 1980 Summer Special Edition of the Tundra Times.)

The last resolution was considered and adopted well past midnight on Tuesday. Adjourn-



As delegates went to their rooms to pack for the long journey home during the hours of dawn Wednesday, a thick fog rolled into Nuuk off the Davis Strait, delaying shuttle flights for the Alaska delegates until Wednesday evening. The shuttles took the Alaskans to Baffin Island, in the eastern Canadian arctic, where a chartered jetliner met them to bring them home. The Alaskans enjoyed the historic visit, yet were anxious to return to their homes. 30 hours after the first shuttle left Nuuk, the chartered Boeing set down at Anchorage International as Alaska Inuit passengers applauded and cheered their homecoming.

The following were among the Alaska delegates to the Nuuk Conference: Thomas P. Brower and Harry Kaleak, Arctic Slope; Carl Ahwinona, Sr., Z. William Barr, John I. Pullock and Roseann Timbers, Bering Straits; Phillip Buy, Johnny T. Hawk, John Paul Jones and Oscar Kawagley, Calista; Willie Hensley, Robert Newlin, Vincent

Schuerch, and Carolyn Smith, NANA Region; Arnold Brower, Sr., (George Agnasaga, Alternate), Lennie Lane, Jr., and James Stotts, North Slope Borough; and, admitted as participants after the conference began, were Charles Edwardson, Jr. and Billy Neakok of Barrow.

The 1980 Inuit Circumpolar Conference at Nuuk is over. Hans-Pavia Rosing is in Greenland, assembling his Secretariat and preparing to open the ICC Office, and is to recruit Special Assistant for Alaska and Canada. The Executive Committee is contemplating how to carry out the instructions of the General Assembly, and will meet next during January of 1981 at Montreal. The delegates and observers are in their villages throughout the Inuit Homeland, enjoying what is left of the short arctic and subarctic summer.

And, on Alaska's arctic slope, an Inupiat Elder is home in the village of Wainwright, looking at his saw and bow, wondering if he ought to bring them to Canada for the 1982 Conference.