

Panel on economic development and international trade

The opening discussion noted that increasing globalization has meant:

- liberalization of trade
- increased international competition
- a high quality education system is required for businesses to compete
- specialization is required to compete successfully.

Inuit have great opportunities for business, but they must find their comparative advantage to compete successfully as low-cost, high quality producers. Since development in Inuit areas is based on wildlife and other renewable resources, development cannot be separated from resource management.

Editor's Note: For many years, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference has led the way in building strong ties between Inuit peoples across international boundaries. The group has also played a key role in securing United Nations recognition for the right and concerns of indigenous people around the world. More recently, the conference has provided a forum for important discussions about striking a balance between economic development, environmental concerns and cultural survival. Tundra Times agrees with the view expressed by Ronald H. Brower, Sr., president of the Ukpavik Inupiat Corp. of Barrow that Alaska Natives should be participating in these discussions. The following is a summary of presentations on Inuit business development issues put forth at a recent conference in Inuvik.

It was noted that the economic tradition of Inuit is based on subsistence, which only recently has been recognized as a viable economic activity. To this has been added the cash-based, commercial activities resulting from ANCSA. These two principles are not inconsistent, and they have been successful in pursuing both types of activities. Development and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive.

Now that many companies in

the non-renewable resource sector are leaving the North, this is an opportunity for Inuit to take greater control of development and see greater self-determination. Ownership and self-determination go together. The Free Trade Agreement is a signal for Canadian and Alaskan Inuit to cooperate in developing businesses.

It was also noted that over the past ten years both ICC and various governments have wished to strengthen North Atlantic and circumpolar relationships, but little has been accomplished. There are immense social, political, and economic changes going on in the world, and if circumpolar countries don't work together, they will be left behind. Inuit in all countries must work together to adapt to new conditions to create new ideas and opportunities. The world is getting smaller and business is getting bigger. Inuit must join the club in order not to be left behind.

The conference was encouraged to establish a round table to begin debate on how to promote greater ties among Inuit businesses across the Arctic.

There was a review of the accomplishments of Inuvialuit since the settlement of their claim in business development based on renewable and non-renewable resources, and in the area of investment management. The Inuvialuit are actively seeking opportunities

to apply their expertise in working with other Inuit business organizations in business development and in the establishment of an international investment vehicle.

We said that in the discussion we hoped to review what each country is doing in economic development, and focus on concrete proposals for how they can assist each other in the development of solid Inuit economies.

The following key themes emerged from the discussion:

- a) The need for greater information about business problems, such as the marketing of animal products, on business opportunities, and on Inuit businesses which currently exist.
- b) The need for direct assistance, cooperative arrangements, and commercial links among Inuit businesses in all the regions.
- c) Specific barriers such as daycare and access to training that face women who wish to participate in economic development.
- d) The balance which must be maintained between economic development and preservation of the environment and of Inuit culture.
- e) The need for Inuit businesses, if they are to be successful, to pursue markets outside of their own home regions, and the need for cooperation among Inuit businesses in international marketing.
- f) The need to review government laws and regulations which impede Inuit business development, and the role which ICC can play as an intermediary with governments.

- g) The need to establish a circumpolar free trade zone.

Concrete proposals were put forward and draft resolutions have been drafted in the following areas:

- 1) Establishment of a round table of Inuit businesspeople to discuss concrete steps to promote greater international cooperation and direct commercial ties among Inuit business organizations.
- 2) Facilitation by ICC in promoting direct contacts between Inuit business organizations in all countries; and production by ICC of an international directory of Inuit businesses.
- 3) Addressing barriers facing women in participating in economic development.
- 4) A study to be undertaken by ICC of the experiences of Inuit in pursuing international trade in wildlife products.
- 5) Lobbying by ICC on the taxation of Inuit primary producers in Chukotka.
- 6) Lobbying by ICC to address national barriers to the development and expansion of Inuit businesses.
- 7) Concrete steps to be taken by ICC in the establishment of an Inuit Free Trade zone across the Arctic.

It was noted in the discussion that many statements have been made and principles established over the past ten years in regard to increased contact, assistance, and cooperation of Inuit in the area of economic development. However, few specific measures have been implemented over these years. The panel session at this workshop has resulted in a number of concrete proposals to address this area. If Inuit do not wish to be left behind by the global changes going on today, we must begin now to work together to build strong, competitive economies in our homelands.