

Alaska Native Language Center News

ANLC staff member Edna MacLean, instructor in Inupiaq at UA Fairbanks, attended the second interim committee meeting of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Washington, D.C. in mid-December, acting as proxy for committee member Willie Hensley who was unable to be present. In an evening meeting after the regular session, Robert Peterson and Carl-Christian Olsen of Greenland met with MacLean to discuss the development of a common writing system for the Inupiaq-speaking people of Alaska, Canada and Greenland. At present Alaskan Inupiaq uses a writing system first developed in the 1940's and put in final form about 1970. Greenland employs a somewhat different system. In Canada, the Inuit use two writing systems, one similar to the Alaskan system but using only standard English-alphabet letters (similar to the system used in Alaska for the Yupik Eskimo languages), and another of syllabic symbols not related to English-language letters. The development of a common writing system will be an important step in the achievement of international Inuit unity.

At ANLC in Fairbanks we have just published a new programmed reader, "Suvali Una?", a sequel to the popular "Suva Una?". Both books are by Edna MacLean. A third book in the series, "Suaqsiva?", is now being edited. MacLean is also preparing two major books for use in North Slope schools, a student's dictionary developed from dictionary work by Leona Okakok, Larry Kaplan and Edith Tegoseak, and a book on the use of Inupiaq postbases. Both are scheduled to be in print by summer of 1978.

Over twenty books in North Slope, Kobuk, and Unalakleet dialects of Inupiaq are now available from ANLC. For a descriptive list, interested persons should write to the Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska, Fairbanks 99701.