

Inuit intern to UN: denuclearize the arctic

BY THERESA PEDERSON

(C) 1978 by Theresa Pederson

(Editor's Note: Theresa Pederson is a research intern at UNITAR, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and an active member of the Inuit community from Alaska.)

The Inupiat have had a very successful 35,000 years in the Arctic. As everyone we are faced with the future. Industrial and military technologies from the western economies have brought great dangers to the future survival of the Arctic man-animal.

For the Inupiat of the circumpolar region, there is an absolute link between the environmental security of the Arctic and the banning of destructive technologies, of which the most destructive is the one which makes nuclear weapons possible.

Many cultures, other than those which create weapons of mass destruction, persist and have begun to make inquiries into all possible channels to help the modern man, who is lost, to secure and to put into practice the knowledge of survival without such weapons. If such weapons were to be used, the consequence would disrupt the future longevity of all cultures.

Sharing: The Core

Of the Hunter Tradition

The first hunter traditions with human dignity emerged some 35,000 years ago, when

the Neanderthal Man was becoming extinct. By hunter traditions I mean ourselves, such human societies as the Australian Aborigines, the African Pygmy, the Semai of Malaya; the Nordics and the Arctic Eskimo.

From these hunter traditions several survival axioms can be gained...if western societies will take the time and patience to learn their value: First, a pollution free environment; second, an egalitarian social system; third, a robust physique, and fourth, a good family life.

Sharing, as is witnessed in the Eskimo hunt of the whale in my home, is the core reason for the social success of the Inupiat family. Sharing of food and home and legend is the most treasured element which we will not lose to the technocratic invasion.

Anthropologists make a strong case for the hunting way of life as man's most successful adaptation. Clearly, technocratic societies have not adapted for longterm survival and have not made the link between the successful past and the successful future. The presence of weapons of mass destruction proves this. Without real communication there is no global village.

Inuit Circumpolar Conference

Last summer in Barrow, Alaska, the Eskimos who live under four governments in the Arctic met to link the success-

ful past to the successful future. We met to discuss matters of cultural heritage; education; health; environmental security; appropriate technologies; and the denuclearization of the Arctic homeland.

We recognize the highly significant impacts on the environment by the manufacture, testing and disposition of nuclear devices. We have experienced physically the associated insults to the Arctic landscape and life through radiotoxins.

Almost two decades of scientific studies in the Arctic have shown that radioactive contamination of the Arctic tundra is unique because of the ability of the tundra vegetation—the very carpet of our land—to absorb and hold radionuclides, particularly strontium 90 and cesium 137.

This special problem is caused by some local testing mostly from fallout from nuclear testing; all of military origin. There is *nothing* that justifies this infraction by others on our lives.

These biologically dangerous nuclides have entered our food, which we share as part of our lifestyle, and for Eskimos and Saami of the far north, the military has given us body burdens of these nuclides far in excess of any other populations except for the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki of 1945.

Arctic Nuclear-Free Zone

We are now to believe that there is a cessation of atmospheric nuclear testing; and we know that the possibility of nuclear release by war or by accident grows continually. So, it would seem that the threat to the Arctic is still very real, very much a continuing biologic threat.

We recognize that the ecosystems of this planet are not the private domain of any hap-

azard testing, experimentation or accidents as Cosmos 954 is alleged to have been.

This ecosystem has a higher dignity to us as a living place, shared with animals as a subsistence right. No political powers have the right to pollute this place and cause an impossible future.

We come to the United Nations and the Special Session on

Disarmament to show that our home in the Arctic is an important dignity to us, and we hope that the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the follow-up work on UNSSOD will contribute to the delicate ecologic balance in the Arctic through the establishment of a denuclearized zone and to obtain an internationally recognized area for peaceful purposes.