

Common Inuit language

Eskimo Point—Communication in the north may take a giant step forward this month, as a number of Inuit gather to decide upon a common writing system for the whole Canadian north.

Delegates to the meeting, which will take place August 30 to September 3 in Frobisher Bay, will include regional language commissioners, and members of a special advisory sub-committee who have been studying the language situation for two years.

Jose Kusugak, director of the Language Commission, which operates through the Inuit Cultural Institute in Eskimo Point, explained that a common written language in the north would do much to alleviate communication barriers between Inuit in different regions. Right now, there are five different written systems in use in the north.

In addition to Inuit advisors, language commissioners, and representatives from the six Inuit regional associations, delegates to the meeting are expected to include representatives from the various churches as well as the territorial government.

They will listen to the reports of studies done during the two years the language commission has been in existence, and then decide whether they wish to adopt these proposed systems.

If these systems are accepted, delegates will spend time working on an implementation plan to teach Inuit of all ages the new writing systems as soon as possible.

The new systems are based on a 21-letter roman alphabet and a syllabics system which has been reduced from 48 main syllabics symbols to 42.

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