

Forty Years of Cultural Change among the Inuit in Alaska, Canada and Greenland: Some Reflections

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ABSTRACT. The peoples in the arctic regions have experienced unprecedented cultural change in the last 40 years. The Dene, Metis, Samis, Athapaskans, Inuit and other aboriginal people in these regions have all seen their traditional lifestyles altered dramatically with the increased influx of southern peoples, with their baggage of modern technology, bureaucracy and assorted economic/political/social/cultural systems. This paper focuses on the Inuit regions of Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland, for the Inuit have experienced more cultural changes since 1945 than in any other concentrated time span before.

Although the changes have often resulted in great human tragedies, such as suicide epidemics and alcoholism, many positive changes have also occurred, as shown by major events in the three Inuit regions examined, as well as the establishment of some cultural and educational institutions. The paper draws on interviews with contemporary Inuit leaders. It concludes that the Inuit culture is now in the process of being re-affirmed and will indeed be of increasing worldwide importance as the Arctic emerges as a new international and transnational region.

Key words: Alaska, northern Canada, Greenland, Inuit, cultural change

RÉSUMÉ. Les peuples des régions arctiques ont subi des mutations culturelles sans précédent depuis quarante ans. Les Dene, les Métis, les Samis, les Athapaskans, les Inuit et d'autres peuples autochtones de ces régions ont tous subi une modification spectaculaire de leurs modes de vie traditionnels devant l'afflux de gens du Sud débarqués avec leur bagage de techniques modernes, de bureaucratie et de systèmes économiques/politiques/sociaux/culturels assortis. Le présent article se concentre sur les régions de l'Alaska, du Nord du Canada et du Groënland peuplées par les Inuit, car ces derniers ont subi plus de changements culturels depuis 1945 que jamais auparavant.

Même si ces changements se sont souvent traduits par de grandes tragédies humaines, comme des épidémies de suicide et un taux d'alcoolisme élevé, il en est également résulté quantité de changements positifs. L'auteur analyse certains des événements majeurs qui se sont produits dans ces trois régions peuplées par les Inuit ainsi que l'implantation de certains établissements culturels et éducatifs. L'article s'inspire d'entrevues menées auprès de dirigeants inuit contemporains. Sa conclusion est que la culture inuit est en passe de se réaffirmer et revêtira de plus en plus d'importance à l'échelon mondial tandis que l'Arctique émerge comme nouvelle région internationale et trans-nationale.

Mots clés: Alaska, Nord du Canada, Groënland, Inuit, mutations culturelles

CULTURAL CHANGE

The peoples in the arctic regions have experienced unprecedented cultural change in the last 40 years. The Dene, Metis, Samis, Athapaskans, Inuit and other aboriginal people in these regions have all seen their traditional lifestyles altered dramatically with the increased influx of southern peoples, with their baggage of modern technology, bureaucracy and assorted economic/political/social/cultural systems. This paper focuses on the Inuit regions of Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland, for the Inuit have experienced more cultural changes since 1945 than in any other concentrated time span before. Today, however, Inuit culture appears to be in the process of being re-affirmed; it has not only weathered the changes, but is strong and flourishing in many respects.

Cultural change and/or stability is an intricate web woven by the interrelationship of culture, economics and politics. By economics is meant financial power and by politics political power and the ability to influence the political process combined with a grassroots political will. "Culture" is a very difficult word in an arctic context — when an Inuk speaks about his or her culture, it is generally understood to mean "the Inuit way of life," whereas a non-Inuk will think of Inuit culture in a more narrow sense as, for example, Inuit songs, legends and material culture. In this article, culture is used in the wider sense.

Among the Inuit, cultural change seems to be proportional to the changes in political and economic status and power, and a certain cultural change (as in learning the white man's ways and language) seems to be necessary in order to increase economic

and political power. Cultural change has therefore been greatest among Inuit in larger settlements or towns, not to mention among those who have lived in southern cities, and has taken different paths in Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland.

In the last 40 years, the arctic regions of Alaska, northern Canada and Greenland have experienced enormous change: the centralization of camps and small settlements into larger ones; the introduction (or expansion) of southern-style schools, social/health services and legal systems; the changing role of women; the increasing militarization and resource exploitation of the Arctic; the change from a subsistence hunting economy to a mixed economy; the creation of a class structure with an Inuit elite; the change from a communal society to a society with emphasis on individual attainment; the introduction of materialistic values and consumer goods; a diversification of religious denominations, including sects such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahai and the Pentecostals; the teaching of English (in Alaska and northern Canada) or Danish (in Greenland) as the primary language; the increased involvement of the state/provincial/territorial and/or central governments (the dawning of the bureaucratic age); and the pervasive introduction of southern media. The list of major changes is almost endless.

Everyone knows, and all too often it is the *only* thing known, the negative results of these changes — the alcoholism, the suicide epidemics, the discrimination, the human tragedies. Much more importantly, the changes have also served as catalysts for new directions; current reactions to these changes are resulting in the new movement toward decentralization; the change from a subsistence economy to a mixed economy; the

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extraordinary emphasis by Inuit on northern control of schools, both at the elementary and secondary levels, and on their teaching of native languages and skills; the dramatic increase in the northern administration of, and input into, social, health and legal services; the "Inuitization" of bureaucracy and political institutions; the eradication of serious health problems, such as tuberculosis; the lengthening — in some places, the doubling — of Inuit's anticipated life span; the reduction of infant mortality and the doubling of the Inuit population (in most regions); the establishment of Inuit-controlled media; the formation of an Inuit elite; a more equal and respectful relationship between whites and Inuit; and the highly successful attainment of land claims settlement and self-government as experienced, for example, in the North Slope Borough, northern Quebec and Greenland, which has resulted in a strong political voice, a reasonably solid economy and a steadfast sense of identity.

The story of cultural change in the last 40 years is a story of great tragedies, but also of extraordinary successes, that would have been unimaginable 40 years ago and that point to a strong and increasingly bright future for the Inuit in the Arctic.

GREENLAND

Though one can discern common patterns, each region, of course, experienced its own particular changes. In Greenland, World War II was the threshold between the old and the new.

Peter Frederik Rosing, a Greenlander (Greenlanders are Inuit living in Greenland) and director of Kalaallit-Nunaata Radioa (KNR — the Greenlandic Broadcasting Corporation) spoke to me of some of these influences in an interview conducted in July 1987:

The country was in effect closed until the war, closed in the sense that one did not want to disturb the old culture too much, which was the hunting culture. However it was slowly starting to change to a mixed economy of fishing and hunting and the money economy was starting to surface just before the wartime years. But because Greenland was effectively cut off from Denmark during the war years and received all their supplies from the United States, it meant that Greenland had started to understand that, in fact, there was something else out there in the world, especially of material goods, and started to have a taste for consumer goods, and it was impossible to put that aside once the war was over.

Now, one can no longer just depend on skins, but one has to actually have real money in order to get what one wants. That is the reason why it was no longer possible for Denmark to continue its closed policy. The country became more and more open toward the end of the forties and officially became a part of the Danish Kingdom in 1953.

That was when the privatization started. Until then privatization had not been known, except in the sense that if one is a hunter, one is really in private enterprise; one is one's own boss. The same applies when one is a fisherman. Otherwise all forms of commerce and production were left to the Danish government. It was only after 1953 that one was able to establish oneself as one's own employer. So we have only had 30 years' experience in this kind of economy. . . .

Production, of course, is still very much a part of government; now it is the Home Rule government, but before it was the Danish State. So the biggest changes are on the material side and in the economic structure of society.

Just after 1945, the Danish authorities realized that it was no longer possible to have the closed country policy without it causing problems for the Greenlanders, including health problems. Tuberculosis was extremely prevalent at the time. That is

one of the reasons that material development was accelerated. New kinds of housing, for example. New ways of sanitation and hygiene. The whole thing exploded within a few years.

And then it is expected that the innards, that is us, keep pace with this and, of course, we do, to a certain extent. But one has to have a lot of patience because 30 years does not make a child of nature into a New Yorker.

There is another change now in the eighties. Progress and development went very fast for the reasons just mentioned. But now in the eighties, we are starting to look much more towards the quality of life. For example, in terms of housing we are finding it is much better suited for people's needs and their lifestyle and way of life that they have single family housing, instead of the big apartment blocks that were built first.

We have, all of a sudden, started to take our time to try to do it the right way rather than just rushing along madly because we have to keep up with the Joneses, and the way they live in Hvidovre [a Copenhagen suburb]. We have started to give the European type of development in Greenland a more Greenlandic profile. And I am still talking about material things.

We didn't have much choice 40 years ago as to whether or not there should be development. And therefore it is hard to say whether it has been good or bad. Because there was no choice, it was obvious that things had to change. Of course, they could have changed in a thousand different ways. But it is easy in hindsight to say that things could have been done differently The only thing is that maybe there should have been more restrictions on business in the North because it was very easy for Danes, who had several centuries of experience in trade and commerce, to come up and seize the best opportunities, and Greenlanders ought to have been more involved in this process.

The increased contact with countries such as the United States and Canada (Greenland obtained many goods from the U.S. during the war and Greenlanders were introduced to such things as the Sears catalogue), the material progress with its many new and exciting consumer goods, the shift toward a money economy and a feeling that it was possible to live and progress without a close and closed government by Denmark were the outcome of the war years. It made Greenlanders expectant and prepared for changes that would give them greater autonomy and open up Greenland to the modern world.

In 1953, following the United Nations declaration on decolonization, Denmark got a new constitution, which made Greenland an integral part of the Danish Kingdom, rather than a colony as it had been until then, with the same rights and privileges as any other Danes. Two Greenlanders were elected to Folketinget, the Danish parliament, thereby ensuring Greenland's representation in national politics.

To many Danes, the inclusion of Greenland as an equal region of Denmark meant that Greenlanders (or "northern" Danes, as some called them) should now be made over in the image of "southern" Danes and that a pseudo-blueprint of Danish society — its institutions, its architecture, its educational system, etc. — should be impressed on Greenland. These trends peaked in the infamous G-60 bill (1964), a ten-year plan for social and economic development that was the result of this thinking; it led to the centralization of settlements and outposts into larger towns and centralization of social and health services, and it included the *foedesteds-kriterie*, which made Greenlanders so angry that it became a catalyst for political and cultural change because of its inherent discrimination. The *foedesteds-kriterie*, the birthplace criterion, made a person's place of birth a major criterion for the determination of his/her salary. A Greenlander with the same education as a Dane would

thereby get a smaller salary even if their jobs were the same — e.g., a Greenlandic teacher filling exactly the same position as a Danish teacher would get less pay. Already, in 1958, a new school law had created an education system where the criterion for success was how well you learned Danish and where the brightest students were sent off to Denmark for further education. It solidified the establishment of a new Greenlandic elite, but it was exactly among members of the new, well-educated elite that discontent started.

Partly as a reaction to the school law of 1958 and Bill G-60, Unge Gronlaenders Raad (Young Greenlanders Council) was formed among Greenlandic students in Copenhagen in 1963. Their goal was a much stronger voice for Greenlanders in Greenland's political, economic and cultural future. Among its members were students who are now prominent Greenlandic politicians, such as Prime Minister Jonathan Motzfeldt.

An example of the interaction of economic, political and cultural forces to induce a major cultural change was the closing of the mining town Qutdligssat in 1972. It was a Danish bureaucratic decision that made eminent sense when laid out on a desk in Copenhagen but was the stuff that cultural revolutions were made of in Greenland. Qutdligssat was a coal-mining town in the Disko Bay; the coal mine was closed because it was no longer profitable and its inhabitants were unceremoniously relocated into larger towns on the west coast. To many Greenlanders, this forced move meant the destruction of families, suicides, alcoholism, unemployment and despair. The process was documented in the first modern Greenlandic feature-length film by Aqqaluk Lynge (now Minister for Social Affairs in the Home Rule Government) and included several highly political ballads. The film, the songs, the tragedy of Qutdligssat made a stunning impact on many Greenlanders, and the determination that this should never happen again grew. Its first, and maybe most visible and influential, result was the founding of Assivik in 1976. This was the re-establishment of the old Inuit tradition of a summer camp; Assivik became a cultural summer camp devoted to the preservation of Inuit values. It became a place for the discussion of political, social and cultural events, the teaching of Inuit history, the teaching of traditional Inuit dances and songs by elders and the creation of modern Inuit songs and literature. The Assivik camps have become a major cultural force in Greenland and are still held each summer (each year in a different settlement), drawing up to 1500-2000 people from all over Greenland and now also from northern Canada, Alaska and, last year, Siberia as well. The Assivik camps have been influential in the formation of the Inuit Ataqatigiit party (with a strong emphasis on Greenlandic identity and independence), which now has three ministerial posts in the Home Rule parliament and holds the balance of power in the present government. Several past participants in the camps have become teachers who have been instrumental in setting up the Ilisimatusafik (the beginning of a Greenlandic University) and other cultural institutions. Assivik started a grassroots movement supporting the active maintenance of the Greenlandic identity.

The growing concern for cultural independence and political autonomy led to the negotiations and referendum that established Home Rule in Greenland on 1 May 1979. Greenland has its own Home Rule Government, which step by step is taking over the responsibility for all areas of jurisdiction, except defence and foreign affairs, from the Danish government. Most areas of jurisdiction have already been taken over — the last one, the health sector, will come under Greenlandic authority in

1990. Greenland remains a part of the Danish Kingdom; however, it now also has its own flag and Greenlandic is its official language.

Because Greenland was a part of Denmark, Greenland became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1972, even though 70 percent of Greenlanders voted against entry into the EEC. It is a mark of the new Greenlandic self-confidence that Greenland held another referendum in 1982 and voted to withdraw from the EEC in 1985, because it no longer wanted its cultural and economic future made dependent on decisions taken by foreign powers, i.e., the European Economic Community.

ALASKA

In Alaska, as in Greenland and northern Canada, World War II also had its effects; the main result was the urbanization of Alaska, including the construction of major Air Force bases, with its subsequent influx of people and money. Soon after the war, Alaskan residents started to want full statehood. When Alaska received statehood in 1957, the whole relationship between Alaskan residents and the federal government changed. As the 49th state, Alaska gained its own state legislature, direct representation in the federal Senate and House of Representatives and active jurisdiction in sectors such as education, health services and oil and mineral concessions, which eventually brought about conflicts with native land rights. Just as Greenland had changed its relationship to Denmark in 1953, so Alaska now assumed full state rights and opportunities in spite of its demographic differences.

Together with statehood and urbanization, another major agent of change was the civil rights movement. The American civil rights movement of the late fifties and the sixties had an enormous impact; it showed the Alaskan natives that minorities *could* and *should* stand up for their rights within the American system and that indeed it was possible for minorities to take their rightful and equal place in American society, as guaranteed by the Constitution and by a number of Supreme Court rulings. The "War on Poverty" provided native leaders with money to mobilize and organize across the state.

It is impossible to bring about a positive cultural change without a psychological change that makes you assert yourself, believe in your own values and makes you ready to deal with the cultural changes in process and willing to work toward the economic and political changes needed to implement the cultural ones. The greatest change effected by the civil rights movement among the Alaskan natives was this psychological change. The Alaskan natives felt the same kind of new-found confidence and equality felt by the blacks in the Lower 48. In the conflicts over control of Alaskan lands, the native population quickly learned to use the American judicial system; the sense of minority groups' power in litigation and the subsequent changing relations between whites and non-whites were some of the positive results for the minorities.

But all of these changes were overshadowed by the increasing world importance of fossil fuels and the discovery of oil in Alaska. The oil focused attention on Alaska, forcing the federal government to cooperate both with the native population and the oil industry — an alliance that resulted in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as well as in the tremendous oil boom period of the seventies and early eighties.

In the late sixties the United States experienced rising oil prices and an increasing demand for self-sufficiency in oil

supplies because of the unstable situation in the Middle East. Because of government's and industry's eagerness to start oil exploration, the Alaskan natives negotiated the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) with the U.S. federal government in 1971, which gave the Alaskan natives a settlement of 44 million acres of land and U.S.\$962.5 million. It gave them serious economic and political clout; they would no longer be easily dismissed as a weak minority group.

ANCSA established 12 regional corporations and 200 village profit corporations, which were set up as financial corporations to handle the compensation money and to administer the land holdings. A 13th corporation was set up to incorporate all the Alaskan natives living outside the state. The regions were given a large measure of autonomy, varying somewhat from region to region. For example, the North Slope Borough set up its own municipal assembly, which has a wide sphere of jurisdiction, including the power of taxation; other regions established locally controlled school boards and other services.

The settlement money, together with the oil boom money that the oil companies brought in during the building of the Alaska Pipeline and the pursuant oil production, made for an unprecedented wealthy economy. For a decade, the sky was the limit. In this case, that statement is more than a metaphor, for Alaska is the only state in the United States to own its own satellite, *Aurora*, which the state essentially just went out and bought "off the shelf" at a price tag of approximately \$25-30 million. Satellite communication (Fig. 1) brought television and telephone to every bush village with more than 25 inhabitants. A southern culture and a foreign language filled the Inupiaq and Yupik homes, but it also gave access to better education, better communications systems and better health care.



FIG. 1. Station KOTZ, Kotzebue, Alaska — satellites bring news to the settlements. Photo credit: Marianne Stenbaek.

The ANCSA money meant political power, as it was the largest in-state source of direct liquid capital: native leaders were elected to the state legislature; it meant lobbying power in Washington — one of many results of this is the U.S. Arctic Research and Policy Act (1984), as well as influential input in other bills; it meant new educational and cultural facilities, such as high schools in 150 villages, including a variety of heritage and elders' programs (Fig. 2). The money meant an enormous construction boom; some villages now have ranch-style houses with every modern convenience — houses that would equally fit in a Dallas suburb, although they are often side by side with far more modest homes. It meant the electrification of villages, the installation of heating and utilidor systems in some villages and

the introduction of ski-doo's and other all-terrain vehicles. It meant native-owned businesses, construction firms, hotels (including the Sheraton and the Westward Hilton in Anchorage); it meant jobs in rural Alaska, which speeded up immensely the movement from a subsistence to a mixed economy. The money gave the Inuit the power to hire lawyers who were able to safeguard their interests on several issues and to hire scientists who could work for the natives' interests on such issues as whale quotas and environmental protection. The money gave them all these materialistic goods and services, but more importantly, the money also gave them the political and economic power.



FIG. 2. Young Alaskan Inuit learn the traditional dances from their elders. Photo credit: Alooook Ipellie, courtesy of ICC.

The Alaskan Inuit have made enormous strides in terms of autonomy and political influence at the regional level. The education system has expanded to include Inupiaq and Yupik language and culture; heritage and elders projects and cultural organizations, such as the Manileq Association, reflect these concerns, as do the communications media. The oil boom and land claims settlement money have made much of this possible. But the oil boom is over, at least for now, and the land claims settlement has also caused many problems. Alaskan Inuit are right now going through a period of re-evaluation, taking stock of the last 30-40 years, examining what a future without an oil boom might be like, and particularly looking at both the negative and positive effects of ANCSA and its influence on their culture, on their way of life.

ANCSA, which at the time of its implementation was looked upon as a model for land claims settlement, has proved to have had many negative or potentially negative results. Several of its significant provisions come up for revision in 1991, and it is feared that some of the land will be lost, either through bankruptcies, sale by individuals, or through tax burdens. ANCSA has also created a serious philosophical split between the new "corporation" Inuit and the more traditional "tribal" Inuit; this has given rise to the "sovereignty" tribal government movement. Justice Thomas Berger spent a year and a half holding hearings in 65 Alaskan villages about the present and future impact of ANCSA; his findings on both the positive and negative impacts are detailed in *Village Journey* (1985) (Fig. 3).

The next four years between now and 1991 will determine much of the future for Alaskan Inuit. Fundamental decisions concerning self-government and models for self-government (e.g., tribal governments or native corporations) have to be

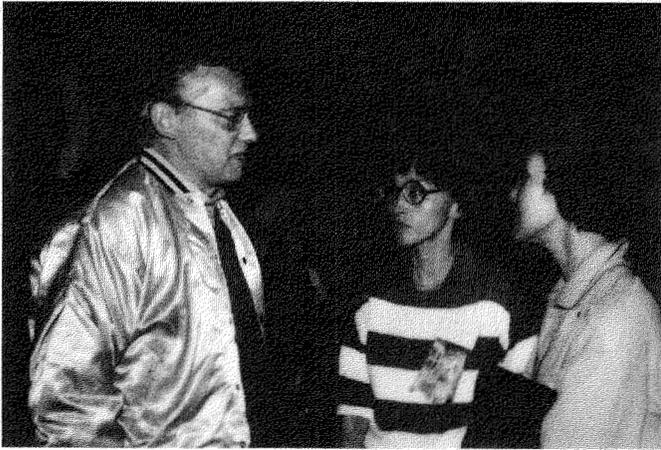


FIG. 3. Justice Thomas Berger discussing his report on ANCSA with Edna MacLean and Eileen MacLean. Photo credit: Alookook Ipellie, courtesy of ICC.

taken. Jurisdiction and management of fish and wildlife, particularly native peoples' right to subsistence hunting, and trapping and gathering on native lands have to be negotiated. The role of the village and the regional corporations has to be re-evaluated. All of these decisions touch upon the Alaskan Inuit's relationship to the land, which ultimately, more than anything else, determines the future of their culture.

CANADA

In Canada, the war years also brought an American presence to the North, where they built a number of air bases. As several of the bases' landing strips were later converted into commercial airports, it helped make the North more accessible. At the same time, the American presence also started to raise the question of arctic sovereignty. Partly because of this, the federal government took a new interest in the Inuit, who could help them assert Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. Thus, Inuit from the west coast of northern Quebec, particularly from the district around Inoudjuac (Port Harrison), were relocated to the areas of Resolute Bay and Grise Fjord, and new government services were set up there.

The relocation of Inuit into centralized settlements in their region or to settlements in other parts of the Arctic initially got under way as a result of famine in the Keewatin and Ungava districts in the late forties and early fifties. Inuit were also resettled from the Ungava area because of the diminishing hunting grounds. The centralizing resettlements were later extended to all Inuit areas, for the federal government pursued a centralization policy, moving Inuit from outposts, camps and small settlements into larger settlements. As in Greenland, the disruptions caused by this relocation policy also had devastating effects in terms of high suicide rates and alcoholism.

The Liberal government wanted to extend the benefits of being a Canadian citizen to everyone, including the Inuit; this meant setting up centralized health, educational and social services, which in turn entailed a central administrative structure. The Conservative government in the sixties perpetuated these policies; indeed, Diefenbaker's vision of a new northern frontier with expanded resource development added to the influx of southern bureaucracy, with a continuously increasing government involvement in education, health and social services.

At the same time that dependence on the federal bureaucracy increased, the Inuit responded by beginning a grassroots movement, the cooperative movement. At a meeting in George River in 1959, Inuit from northern Quebec met with federal officials to form the George River Eskimo Co-operative — the first cooperative in the Canadian Arctic. The co-ops provided a local economic base by buying soapstone carvings and graphics (often made at the co-op workshops) and by selling food, clothing and other necessities at favourable prices.

The co-op movement, because it was a genuine grassroots movement, gave a large measure of self-sufficiency and pride to Inuit settlements both in northern Quebec and in the Northwest Territories. Through the great success of its print and sculpture workshops, it gave an enormous boost to Inuit culture and economy by issuing artistic recognition and financial rewards for Inuit and by promoting Inuit graphics and carvings in North American and overseas markets.

At the same time, the Canadian Inuit slowly gained a greater political voice with the formation of Inuit Tapirisat (1971) — the Inuit national organization representing the six Inuit regional organizations — the election of the first Inuit federal member of Parliament, the appointment of an Inuit senator and the formation of the Territorial Legislature in the N.W.T. with several Inuit, Dene and Metis as elected MLAs.

In 1968, a federal white paper on the future of telecommunications satellites in Canada recommended a satellite system for the North. In 1972, Canada set up the world's first domestic geo-stationary satellite system, which made it possible to establish stable and reliable telecommunications in the North, be it telephone service or television. The Anik satellites helped to overcome some of the geographical and psychological isolation of the Canadian North. Orbital satellites were already being used as navigational aids and to survey many meteorological and geophysical conditions, all obtaining more information about the Arctic and making it more accessible to southerners. But it was the geo-stationary communications satellites that perhaps made the biggest impact. The easy access to satellite communication was a boost for mining and oil exploration companies, whose activities it facilitated, and it introduced television to the Inuit, at first showing them another world but later becoming an important tool for the assertion of their identity and their culture. Satellite communication led to the formation of Targramiut Nipingat (TNI), the Inukshuk project and the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) and later of the Okalukatiget Society (Labrador) and the Inuvialuit Communications Society during the late seventies and early eighties.

Another major step in the process of change was the James Bay Agreement in 1975, which gave the Inuit of northern Quebec a measure of self-government and financial compensation. It set up the Kativik School Board, which has autonomy over Inuit education in most settlements in northern Quebec; the Kativik Regional Government in Kuujuaq; the Makivik Corporation, which, among other functions, oversees several business ventures.

The repatriated Canadian Constitution from 1982 acknowledged the "existing aboriginal rights" of the Inuit, and indeed acknowledged the Inuit as a distinct people for the first time. Since then, the Inuit, Indians and Metis have participated in three constitutional conferences with the federal prime minister and the ten provincial premiers to define more clearly the concept of aboriginal rights, but there has yet to be final clarification.

A referendum held in the Northwest Territories in 1982 accepted division into an Inuit territory to be called Nunavut and a western territory, having a population mainly of Dene and whites, to be called Denendeh. The division has been accepted by Cabinet in the Canadian Parliament but details still remain to be worked out. Nunavut will at first be a bilingual (English and Inuktitut) Inuit territory and possibly later an Inuit province. This could have quite important consequences for the future of the circumpolar world and the interrelationship with Greenland, to the east, and Alaska, to the west. It would strengthen the political, economic and cultural bonds among these three regions to a considerable degree by creating a transnational Inuit homeland and helping to make the circumpolar region into a major international, political and economic entity.

The Canadian Inuit generally lack the financial resources of the oil-rich Alaskan Inuit or the reasonably stable, well-to-do (though subsidized) economy of the Greenlanders. The northern Quebec Inuit have done well financially because of the business acumen of Makivik Corporation, which was set up with the compensation money from the James Bay Agreement, and the new Cope Agreement gives financial compensation to the Inuvialuit. The Inuit-owned co-ops have also provided a stable, though modest, community-based economy, but a great deal of the northern economy still depends on government projects and grants.

Although the Canadian Inuit have had neither the oil-boom wealth of their Alaskan North Slope brethren nor the Home Rule status of the Greenlanders, they have retained a firm grip on their culture and made important contributions to contemporary Inuit culture in the fields of public policy, education and broadcasting.

SOME INUIT PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE

I asked a number of well-known Inuit who are directly involved in the cultural life of their regions about what they saw as the biggest cultural change in the last 40 years. During our talks, it quickly became clear that the biggest change they saw was the whole turn toward materialism — toward an individualistic as well as a consumer goods and profit-oriented way of life. It is a change from a purely subsistence economy to a mixed economy, a life diametrically opposed to their traditional life based on communal sharing. Another major change is seen to be going from being isolated communities cut off from the rest of the world either by government policy or by circumstance to now feeling they are part of the modern world. The loss of traditional skills and language are lamented, but there is a feeling of hope in this regard: in fact, one of the changes taking place right now is that the younger generations are keen to learn both traditional skills and language. This change in attitude has come about through new, quite exciting developments in education, in various heritage and cultural projects, and to some extent by the radio and television programs being broadcast in various Inuit languages.

Several Inuit also mentioned that one of the effects of political and economic changes, particularly centralization, has been that it has given a new role to Inuit women. Centralization often destroyed the communal patterns of living and very often also the subsistence hunting. It often led to unemployment, disorientation and despair, but more so among Inuit men than women, it seems. Inuit have pointed out to me that it was easier for the women to cope with these changes, because they were not the

ones to suffer the direct loss of pride from the destruction of the hunting traditions and because they *had* to cope with home and family. The women were often the ones who adapted more easily to higher education, who became the teachers and social workers, who learned to live more comfortably in the larger towns. The other side of this coin, of course, is that since the alcoholism and the despair were predominant among men, this led to high incidences of spousal assault and child abuse. It is noteworthy that across the Arctic an amazing number of powerful women have emerged. Canada might well be the very best example of this, if you look at what could be considered the three major Inuit organizations in Canada: the president of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (which is, of course, more of an international rather than national organization) is a Canadian Inuit woman, Mary Simon; the Inuit Tapirisat is headed by President Rhoda Innuksuk; and the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation is led by President Rosemarie Kuptana (Fig. 4).

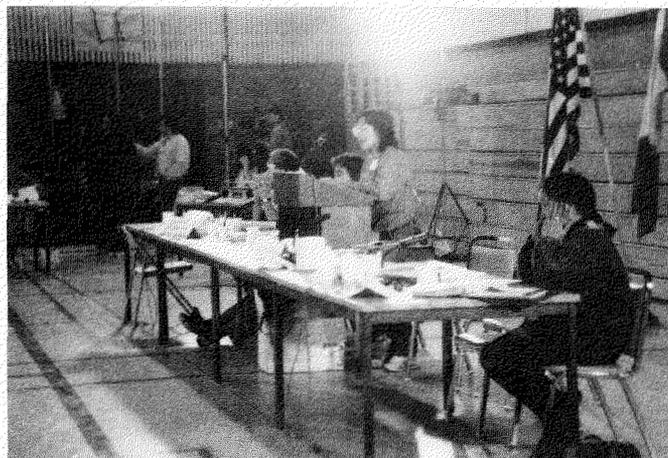


FIG. 4. Rosemarie Kuptana, President of Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (Canada), addresses a workshop at the ICC General Assembly in Kotzebue, Alaska, 1983. Photo credit: Alooook Ipellie, courtesy of ICC.

Central, also, is the lack of regret; white people often nostalgically mention the grand Inuk, alone on the land, resisting the elements and vanquishing the animals — but that seems to be much more a white man's nostalgia than an Inuk's. It is startling how un-nostalgic the Inuit whom I spoke to are and how astute they are in separating the positive impacts from the negative. It is also remarkable how self-confident they are about themselves as Inuit and about the Inuit's place in the modern world. There is a strong feeling that they are no longer an endangered people or culture and that in fact they have much to contribute in the modern circumpolar world both nationally and internationally in their respective countries. Surely that self-confidence vis-à-vis the modern white world is a major cultural change in itself.

What then were some of the major cultural changes as experienced by these Inuit? Changes in education and its influence on the preservation of their language are a major concern to Annie Popert, Director General of Kativik School Board, and Eva Lepage, a teacher in the Kativik school in Kuujuaq:

Author: What in your mind is one or several of the major cultural changes that has taken place among the Inuit in the last years?

Annie Popert: I would say that as far as education is concerned in

the last 20 years, the biggest change for the better is that we have Inuktitut in the schools now, we have culture classes, we have excursions on the land. Whereas, when I was going to school, we had none of that, we were taught in English, no culture classes at all and no excursions.

Eva Lepage: I think education has changed very much. I think the teachers are much more aware of Inuit culture than the teachers that came in before. I think that the teachers who came in from the South came with this attitude that they had a lot to give and nothing to receive from the community. Teachers are a lot more aware now that it's both ways rather than just the one way, which it was very much in my days when I was going to school.

Author: But a big change would also be the teachers themselves; I mean, 20 years ago you didn't have any Inuit teachers or very few, and certainly the directors were not Inuit, were they?

Annie Popert: Yes, that's another big change. I guess as far as people working in education, the change is that it is now Inuit at all levels in northern Quebec. I don't know the exact percentage of Inuit teachers, but it would be close to 50 percent, I think. In each of our schools, we have Inuit administrators. Most of our school principals are still not Inuit, but that is changing; we have two school principals that are Inuit now. In administration, at the head office, we have a fairly good number of administrators, as well as technical staff, who are Inuit, so that's another big change that has come around.

I guess the biggest change in education in northern Quebec is that the education system is run totally by Inuit — that is to say, our school commissioners are all Inuit. People in our positions, like Eva and myself, who are administrators, we have a lot of input into how the education system is going to be run. These Inuit, like our teachers who have gone on to jobs in administration, have the know-how, they have the pedagogical background and they are very confident in being educators. [Interview, June 1987.]

Their remarks point out the great changes in language and education policy and in the relationship between white and Inuit as reflected in the administrative structures.

Changes in language are also the major concern of Jonah Kelly, a respected Inuit broadcaster with CBC North (Iqaluit) for over 25 years. Jonah Kelly is known all over the Eastern Arctic for his deep concern for the state of Inuktitut and his attempts through the radio medium to keep it correct and up to date. Jonah Kelly spoke to me in Iqaluit in June 1987:

Jonah Kelly: One major change in our culture has been that we are educated in a foreign language.

Author: What has been the effect of that change, do you think?

Jonah Kelly: I think the effect of that change is that there has been a kind of loss of identity of Inuit culture, in the way we move, the way we eat, the way we do hunting. That changed a lot of things from more traditional culture that we were brought up in.

Author: Is the language situation changing more? Is it going back to Inuktitut?

Jonah Kelly: I think the Inuktitut language is coming back after more than 35 or 40 years. It's coming back at least where the language has almost totally disappeared, in the western part of the Territories in the Inuvik area. Over here in the east, we are fortunate that we didn't have to go through what the Inuit there have gone through. The missionary schools were not introduced here, and the federal schools that were here were a lot more complex and flexible than the missionary schools, where the students tended to lose their Inuktitut language. I think it's coming back slowly, but I hope those educators will do it

properly rather than just teaching students to read and write in Inuktitut.

Author: What do you mean by "properly," Jonah?

Jonah Kelly: When I went to school in the English language, they told me how to do "proper" sentences in Inuktitut. Many of us have seen Lone Ranger and Tonto. Tonto will say "me no look"; at the present time Inuktitut is almost like Tonto speaking Inuktitut. I hope that will change. That is one explanation I have in comparing Inuktitut to English.

Author: In Baffin, there is something called Jonah Kelly Inuktitut and you have played a great deal in safeguarding the language. But what role has the media played in either helping or not helping the language?

Jonah Kelly: Since I started working at the CBC, I try to maintain the proper use of sentences in Inuktitut without using bits of English here or bits of English-oriented language, which is very, very important. I maintain the South Baffin dialect, which has become quite understandable even as far down as Eskimo Point, where they have a different dialect. The CBC made a policy of hiring a local person who had a specific dialect, which would then be maintained on the radio.

In Alaska, the concern about language is much the same. Edna MacLean, professor of Inupiaq at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, speaks strongly of how she remembers language teaching in her childhood and how this has changed:

Edna MacLean: . . . well that was the 1940s, we were punished for speaking Inupiaq, you know, first grade, second grade. My kindergarten teacher was Inupiaq but the teachers were not supposed to speak Inupiaq . . . she taught primarily in English but when we had difficulty understanding what she was trying to teach us, instead of getting frustrated, she'd explain the whole thing in Inupiaq. We were supposed to report her, but she did it anyway. So, that was kindergarten, and then first grade was an English teacher; I don't remember that year, but it was uncomfortable, as I recall. Not for myself but for my classmates, because I remember so many people crying and that year just kind of went. One thing I remember about first year was there was a little room in the classroom where you could go, and when you whispered, then the teacher wouldn't hear us speaking Inupiaq, and I remember that was the best place in the classroom. That persisted up until the early sixties.

Author: People even got hit —

Edna MacLean: Oh, my goodness, you had your ears pulled! I remember standing in front of the classroom for 15 minutes, I mean after the first 5 minutes, that's hard. And for speaking Inupiaq, even during recess there would be teachers monitoring, standing outside listening to see whether we were speaking Inupiaq or not. It was terrible. Some children who did not know English had their ears pulled constantly. I had my ear pulled once and my mother came back with my younger brother Max on her back. We used to go home for lunch and I told my mom that I had my ear pulled — this must have been in the fourth grade — I knew she got angry just from listening to me, she asked me what I had done, and I said I had spoken Inupiaq, I was whispering to my girlfriend who was sitting in the back. I forgot that I wasn't supposed to speak Inupiaq in the class and I told the girl next to me and the teacher didn't understand what I was saying, so she came up and pulled my ear. But after lunch, I saw my mother stomping across the lagoon to the school. I thought she was going to the hospital but she was coming for the teacher, and I heard her open the door and I heard the loud knocking on the door, and she pulled that teacher out of the classroom and started hollering at her — but nobody would do that now. . . . But it was bad then, it was really that bad.

Author: What caused the big change? I mean, a thing like that would just never happen now.

Edna MacLean: Oh, I guess just people waking up to the fact that nobody can treat you that way, the civil rights movement in the early 1960s.

Author: You mean, a sort of spillover from the Lower 48?

Edna MacLean: Oh yes, that's where all the things for teaching bilingually stem from — civil rights, equal rights. It spilled over into bilingualism in the schools, which began with the Japanese, I guess, in San Francisco — you know, the Lau vs. Nichols case in California.

Author: But how did the influence come, through following court cases like that one, or through seeing civil rights demonstrations on the television?

Edna MacLean: I think the combination of all of them, because they can't treat people that way, and there was a lot of preaching about that concept of civil rights, equal rights and equal opportunity, and it just spilled over. A lot of people at that time too, I think, were beginning to have new ideas. Alaska was still a territory then and they were forming governments that were more responsive to the regions, and Eben Hopson was also very vocal at that time, he was within the State Legislature and they knew that something was going to happen. I can remember Inupiaq talking and giving speeches; then they started trying to look out for themselves and started forming meetings and started looking into what type of government would be best for themselves. [Interview, June 1987.]

Mary Simon, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, reflects on the changes she has seen since her childhood:

Mary Simon: Inuit were fairly nomadic people. They used to travel a lot with the availability of animals and seasons, and the timing of their hunt determined where they were, to a large extent. Then, whether it was for a good reason or not, the fact that people started being settled into what is known as the community has created a cultural change among the Inuit — a very definite change, because not only has it brought about change among the Inuit, but also a very definite change in terms of the units that were established in being able to govern one's life. They became dependent on another type of system that was being brought in. As a result of that, I think there has been a major cultural change. Another one is the fact that we are now exposed to many different societies, and as a result there has been, I think, a lot of assimilation in terms of culture and language — the fact that we have had to learn a second language. In some regions our language has been virtually lost. That is a major cultural change.

I guess, like any society, when you start being exposed to what we call certain luxuries, then people have a tendency to want them and to appreciate the fact that if you, for example, have a washing machine rather than washing everything by hand, of course you are going to want that materialistic piece of equipment. So, in a sense, as we would become more exposed to what is available in different societies in terms of material things, then we become more dependent on them and that is a cultural change because we, as a people, were very self-sufficient — we didn't rely on any type of equipment except hand-made stuff years ago when these types of things were not available. We didn't have that type of thing 40 years ago in most places.

Author: Is that a change for the better or for the worse?

Mary Simon: I often feel that something like southern television is not necessarily a good cultural change, that a lot of the programming that is seen in the North is not culturally appropriate either for us or for the people in the South. There is too much violence and I think that young children are exposed to many things that they normally would not learn at such a young age.

When you talk about things such as television in terms of programming that is not educational, it is harmful to the cultural growth. I think that it is important to note that we are now taking more control over communication and therefore our programming is beginning to have more cultural content, because I feel that education and communications are two key areas that can be used as tools to uphold and allow our culture and language to grow and be a strong foundation.

Author: What role has ICC played in this? You say that there was no contact with the outside world — is ICC an outgrowth of this contact with more people? In other words, is ICC a product of this cultural change? And the second question to that is, in what ways will ICC affect more cultural change?

Mary Simon: We want cultural change in a positive way. I think ICC can be used as a vehicle to promote the growth of culture and language and to strengthen it. I think that it is a very positive fact that we are living as a people, living in different countries, but are able to work together at concerns and aspirations we have jointly, whether they are cultural or otherwise. I think that is going to make a positive change, perhaps going back to the more original foundation that we as a people depend on in terms of culture.

Author: Is ICC an outgrowth of the breakdown of isolation?

Mary Simon: I suppose the more contact we have had, the more avenues we need in order to facilitate that contact. I don't know if it's a growth of what's happened in the past, but when I said we were not in contact with the outside world, I was talking about the southern exposure rather than the northern, because maybe it wasn't as often that people were in contact in earlier days but there was still contact among the Inuit because they lived in Quebec or in the Territories. There was that contact among the people. [Interview, June 1987.]

The introduction of television has certainly been a major cultural change. At first it was seen as quite disruptive, and to some degree still is, because of its portrayal of violence and its constant exposure of materialistic values, but as Inuit, particularly in northern Canada and Greenland, have gained control of it, they have managed to stem a great deal of its negative impact and to use it as a medium to promote the Inuit culture and language. Aimo Nookiguak, regional manager of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation in Iqaluit, gives his view of the changes:

It hasn't really changed the Inuit that much, but it has broadened their scope of understanding of what's going on in the rest of Canada. It has been quite a cultural change in terms of delivering information to our own people, but we are using it quite effectively. We have taken advantage of modern technology in delivering the information that needs to be known by the general public, and by the general public I specifically mean the Inuit people that we serve. It has shown that the Inuit media, which is not as highly trained as the southern media, is still as effective. We don't deliver media information as aggressively as the southern people do. I have been sort of dumbfounded to learn that the coverage of southern issues at times tends to be blown way out of proportion where it doesn't really deliver the message that he or she intended to deliver. A good example is watching the National News earlier today where there was this great rumour that Princess Di was having an affair or going out with bachelors, which turned out that it was just a rumour. That's the kind of thing that I am talking about, and I hope that we will never be forced to do that. We would like to deliver a concrete message that can be understood by the general public with evidence, not hearsay. [Interview, June 1987.]

To other Inuit, television has also meant a change for the better. Peter Frederik Rosing, director of Kalaallit-Nunaata

Radioa, Greenland, does not see the new medium as detrimental either:

I don't think that television will come in and change us all into Americans or Europeans. Of course, it has an entertainment value and will, at the same time, give people some ideas, that it is "cool" to be a European or an American. We have our increased consciousness of being our own people, a special people who are able to make it on our own, even as a small country. We have our own special characteristics and our own special culture. I don't think that television or video can really destroy that consciousness. The worst thing that can happen is that a child might not use his time to finish his homework or get enough sleep, but in the overall picture, those are small things and are not enough to destroy a complete culture. If it were like that, then foreign literature would have spoilt us too, some time ago.

There are so many other things that are coming into our country to distract us from being ourselves and being Greenlanders. There is not that much any more in Greenland that is purely Greenlandic, except possibly our temperament and personality, but that is not a result of television. It is something that is in our souls.

Our basic Inuit personality is not something that media can alter. [Interview, July 1987.]

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are many positive signs that the future looks more promising now for Inuit in the arctic regions than at any other time in the last 40 years. Major hurdles still need to be dealt with, such as the constitutional question concerning aboriginal rights and self-government, including an adequate land base in Canada; the re-evaluation of ANCSA and the resolution of the tribal versus the "corporation" government conflict in Alaska; the question of sub-surface rights and resource development in Greenland. All three regions urgently need to find solid, long-term solutions to the establishment of a local, stable economy. All are conditions necessary for the continuation and expansion of Inuit culture, but these problems are being faced positively and with a great deal of will to succeed. Many positive changes have already taken place among the Inuit groups. Some of these changes include the proliferation of community-based organizations designed to deal constructively with the forces of cultural change, such as local education authorities, alcohol and drug coordinating committees, regional councils and associations and such cultural institutions as the Inuit Cultural Institute and Avataq Cultural Institute.

There is a renewed but un-nostalgic awareness among Inuit of the value of the past. This finds expression in a variety of ways, e.g., in television programs that record and preserve elders' stories, dances and music, and in the establishment of local museums and heritage societies. Another major change is Inuit involvement in cooperative research; for example, Makivik Corporation has its own research department, which has done a variety of research projects on everything from archaeology to harvesting studies. The North Slope Borough has a vast research network; indeed, it has instituted the prestigious North Slope Borough Science Prize for outstanding northern research. The whole direction of research has moved toward including Inuit and toward respecting and acknowledging traditional knowledge. In Canada, for example, the Association of Canadian Universities on Northern Studies promotes its Ethical Principles on Research in the North, which sets new standards for cooperative research. Similar standards are also written into the new

arctic research plan in the United States and in ICC's principles on scientific research.

Politically, Inuit are now assuming greater measures of self-determination and are certainly directly involved in most major decisions. The Greenlanders have their own Home Rule parliament; in the Northwest Territories, the Legislative Assembly includes a majority of aboriginal MLAs; in northern Quebec there is the Katavik Regional Government; the North Slope Borough Assembly has already been mentioned, and native politicians sit in both the Alaskan Legislature and Senate and natives are included on important commissions, such as the Presidential Commission on Arctic Research.

The Inuit face many challenges in their national regions, but the Arctic is more and more emerging as a new international region with common concerns and problems that reach over the national borders. Questions such as environmental protection and militarization of the Arctic have to be addressed both on a national and an international level. One of the most positive changes in the Arctic is that the Inuit groups now have organized to confront some of these concerns together and on an international basis. The establishment of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference has given them a united cultural voice and has re-established old bonds among the regions. By the early seventies, the Greenlanders had experienced many of the cultural changes brought about by a centralization policy and an educational system that glorified Danish values; they had experienced first-hand how it was to be in a region closed to the external world. The time had come, some of them felt, to make an attempt at a reaffirmation of Inuit culture on an international level. Angmalortok Olsen, a Greenlander, therefore initiated the Arctic Peoples Conference in Copenhagen in 1973. Canadian and Alaskan Inuit and Indians, as well as Samis, attended the conference to discuss common problems and strategies for the future.

In 1977, the mayor of the North Slope Borough (Alaska), Eben Hopson, who had attended the Copenhagen meeting, decided that the time had come to formally organize the Inuit across the Arctic in order to ensure the continuation of Inuit culture and the protection of their environment, particularly in the face of the danger to it posed by the encroachment of oil and gas companies.

It became clear to Mayor Hopson that, because the Arctic is a single ecological system (irrespective of national boundaries), it is important that an environmental and cultural policy dealing with the entire Inuit homeland be formulated, for the land is an integral part of Inuit culture, indeed the very basis for it. Hopson also felt that, in order for such a policy to be developed and implemented, it was imperative to establish an international, pan-arctic Inuit organization that could voice the Inuit's concerns both nationally and internationally.

In testimony presented in 1976 to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry conducted by Justice Thomas Berger, Hopson outlined these concerns:

With the development of local government, we Inupiat of the Arctic Slope have found that we must deal in areas in which local government is seldom engaged. Our borough government, for instance, has had to evolve its own policy toward Arctic oil and gas development that transcends our political borders into a kind of foreign policy.

The Beaufort Sea is a symbol of the reasons for this. There is only one Beaufort Sea. It is a single Arctic ecological system shared by the North Slope Borough, the Yukon, and the North

West Territories. We Inupiat are a single Beaufort Sea community living under two national flags. We must contend with two different political systems and two sets of rules governing oil and gas development to protect our environmental values within our larger Beaufort coastal community. . . .

We Inupiat feel that safe and responsible Arctic shelf resource development must be governed by a single set of rules established by international agreements. *We feel that the special problems of the Arctic necessitate the development of an international set of Arctic policies* if we Inupiat are to be able to develop trust and confidence in the oil industry's ability to conduct Arctic shelf operations safely and responsibly. [Dubay, 1985: 26-27.]

Hopson's aim was to preserve the Inuit way of life, the Inuit culture; but based on experience, he knew that in order to do that the Inuit had to have political and economic clout and that the best way to both ascertain and use it was to have a united front. And vice-versa, he knew that it would be of little value to have economic and political clout if there were no culture left to sustain it. He truly understood the interrelationship of economics, politics and culture.

In 1977, he therefore invited Inuit from Alaska, northern Canada, Greenland and Siberia to come to Barrow, North Slope Borough, Alaska. In his opening speech (at what was to become the founding meeting of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference), Hopson spoke of the Inuit as ". . . one people under four flags," for though the Inuit live in Canada, Denmark, the Soviet Union and the United States, their way of life has retained a remarkable similarity through many centuries of separation. Their goals are common right across the Arctic; they want to maintain their close interrelationship with the land; they want to protect the fragile arctic environment; and they want to preserve and affirm their special Inuit way of life, culture and language. They want non-Inuit who come into the Arctic to deal with them on their premises in a spirit of cooperation, not confrontation. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) was set up as a cultural organization but with a firm mandate to speak out on a variety of subjects at the regional, national and international levels.

Today the ICC is a flourishing international organization; it achieved non-governmental organization (NGO) status at the UN in 1983. One of its priorities at the moment is to develop a comprehensive arctic policy that integrates Inuit cultural values in all its aspects, as its President, Mary Simon, explains:

There are a number of priorities that the council has established. When we had our executive council meeting at the beginning of December [1986], we went through all the different resolutions and the decisions that were made at the General Assembly in Kotzebue and decided how we could implement some of these initiatives that had been undertaken by the delegates, so to some extent that sets some of the priorities that I have. I had my own priorities when I was running for election and those form a part of the overall ICC objectives. One priority which has always been consistent with my view is the development of a comprehensive arctic policy. I see a real need for this type of initiative coming from the ICC, and I have always emphasized the importance of coming out with a comprehensive statement that deals with the different elements of the Arctic that are not necessarily seen in a comprehensive way. A lot of the time various issues are seen in very segmented ways. But you have to look at it in a global sense, and I think that by creating an arctic policy from *our* perspective it will bring about that focus needed to look at the issues in a global sense and how they interrelate with each other and how one affects the other. So that's one of the priorities — making sure that we develop a

comprehensive arctic policy from the perspective of the Inuit in the three regions. [Interview, February 1987.]

A comprehensive arctic policy would deal with a variety of concerns (e.g., environmental protection, militarization, culture and language and education) from a united Inuit perspective. Some of the ICC's other priorities include the formulation of an Inuit regional conservation strategy that will be the basis of a common environmental and developmental policies approach for the Inuit homeland. ICC also works at the moment on setting up communications exchanges across the Arctic and in developing cultural activities for Inuit youth and children, among other programs. They are also undertaking several studies concerning the militarization of the Arctic. The work of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, both at the international and national levels, may be a major force in ensuring a future where the Inuit culture will be fully respected.

The last 40 years have seen remarkably rapid changes as an old culture was thrust into the electronic age. As an Inuit once told me: "A day in the life of my culture is like a decade in the life of your culture." Some changes have resulted in human tragedies and some continue to do so. But it is not to diminish the impact of these tragedies to say that there now are many very positive signs in the Arctic that the Inuit culture will not only live on, but will live on very well. Inuit culture is not the same now as it was 40 years ago, but neither is the white man's culture, nor should it be. The myth of the grand old Inuk bravely facing the elements alone in an igloo on a storm-tossed ice floe is a wonderfully romantic and nostalgic myth, but it is just that — an old myth. White people do not live any longer in Bonanza Land, or in the Little House on the Prairie, although television sometimes wants to pretend that. In the real world white people live in skyscrapers and deal with the possibility of nuclear war, and in the real world Inuit now deal with self-government, economic progress, militarization of the Arctic and oil exploration. Marshall McLuhan once said that when the present and the future are too scary to be faced head-on, then we retreat into the past, which seems so much more manageable and less scary; we retreat to the igloo or to the Little House on the Prairie.

There has been much retreat to the old because it was too scary to look at the new, but that time now seems past; the future is being faced with confidence. That does not mean disregarding the old, but it implies working out positive ways to forge a renewed Inuit culture out of a traditional Inuit culture meshed with some of the good parts of European and North American culture — and the Inuit are doing it, on their own terms, with much spirit and with much dedication.

Cultural and political institutions and organizations such as the Home Rule Government, the North Slope Borough Assembly, the Manileq Association, the Inuit Tapirisat, the Co-op Federations and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, to mention just a few, are all manifestations of this new spirit — a spirit that in itself is maybe the greatest cultural change in the Arctic in the last 40 years. Inuit culture is being changed to incorporate new ways and new ideas but remains firmly rooted in tradition. It is in the process of being re-affirmed and will, no doubt, come to play a major role as the Arctic now emerges as a new international and transnational region.

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