

A Message from Ambassador Simon

In 1994, Mary Simon was named Canada's first Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. Ambassador Simon is an Inuk from Nunavik (northern Quebec), long active in broadcasting and in public policy on northern and native issues. She has been honoured for her work, with appointments to the Order of Canada, the Order of Quebec and the Gold Order of Greenland. In April 1996, Ambassador Simon received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for her work with the environment and for raising awareness of, and promoting solutions to, the challenges facing the Inuit of Greenland, Alaska, Russia and Canada.

Canada has long wanted an Arctic Council. We saw the need for an international forum that provided a means for promoting cooperation among all the countries around the Arctic Circle and that had the participation of the northern peoples themselves.

The Council is an exciting new international cooperative initiative to pursue environmental protection and sustainable and equitable development, which includes the economic, social and cultural well-being of the northern peoples.

The Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS), begun in 1991 by the eight Council member countries, will be integrated into the Arctic Council. Seemingly pristine and remote, the Arctic's fragile ecology is vulnerable to long-distance pollution from toxic chemicals, from the dumping of low-level radioactive waste, from oil spills and seepage of wastes from mines, from overfishing and from global warming, among others. The AEPS oversees joint projects to combat pollution, prevent further degradation of the Arctic environment and conserve Arctic flora and fauna.

Until recently, important circumpolar issues of environmental protection and of social and economic

development for northern peoples were looked at in isolation. Under the Council, both areas can be considered together in a more balanced way. This approach, linking environmental protection, sustainable development and human rights, is true to the principles that the eight Arctic countries, as part of the global community, agreed to under the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In Canada, during this first year of the Council, I will meet with interested Canadians and Northerners to hear their ideas on ways to improve environmental protection, economic prospects, education, health and other aspects of life in the North. The challenge for us all will be to translate ideas into effective and practical measures.

The Arctic's Indigenous peoples have always stressed that the first step towards achieving sustainable and equitable development is to recognize the fundamental link between cultural diversity, differing knowledge systems and a deeper understanding of environmental and ecological processes. It is my sincere hope that the Arctic Council will pioneer innovative approaches that respect both cultural diversity and the integrity of the Arctic environment. 🍁

The Association of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (AKMNSSDV, R.F.)

The AKMNSSDV, R.F. is a non-governmental organization which represents the cultural, economic, environmental, political and social interests of the 31 Indigenous peoples of the Russian North with a total population of over 200 000. Founded in March 1990, the Association adopted its current name at its Second Congress in November 1993. In March 1994, it was incorporated as a public

organization with the Russian Ministry of Justice.

The Charter defines the main objectives of the AKMNSSDV, R.F. as follows:

- to promote the unification of the Aboriginal peoples of the North;
- to defend their rights and interests; and
- to resolve problems relating to the socio-cultural and economic development of these peoples.

The organization deals with such issues as self-government, the safeguarding of rights, the preservation of identity and the environment.

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) is an international organization representing approximately 130 000 Inuit living in the Arctic regions of Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Chukotka, Russia.

The principal goals of ICC include the following:

- to develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment;
- to seek full and active partnership in the political, economic and social development of circumpolar regions;
- to secure recognition of the Inuit right to self-determination and their equal rights as a people.

ICC views the Arctic Council as an essential step towards the comprehensive Arctic policies and coordinated action that are needed

to address the many social, economic and environmental issues important to the well-being of Inuit and the environmental integrity of the Arctic.

The Saami Council

The Saami Council is a representative body for cooperation among the Saami of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Established in 1956, the Council is also listed as a non-governmental organization within the United Nations.

information about Canada's North. This data is used to establish national and international boundaries, produce topographic maps and aeronautical charts and provide an overall picture of the landmass.

• Health, Safety and Environmental Protection:

A wide range of activities — from investigating natural hazards to studying climate change to ensuring the protection of the Arctic's fragile ecosystems — contributes to the health and safety of Canadians as well as to the protection of the environment.

Most scientific research carried out in the Arctic, whether by NRCan scientists or those from other government agencies, universities or industry, requires logistical support. This is supplied by NRCan, which coordinates aircraft and other field requirements from its two Arctic bases.

More information about NRCan activities is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nrcan.gc.ca>. 🍁

Science and Technology in the North

Exploration and development of the Arctic's natural resources are increasing rapidly. And so is the need for a thorough scientific understanding of this environmentally unique region. The science and technology activities of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) help provide the needed knowledge base.

NRCan works with various government agencies, universities and international research programs to ensure that the development of the North's natural resources contributes to a safe and healthy environment. NRCan also supports the use of traditional knowledge and the meaningful participation by Aboriginal peoples in development as well as in environmental decision making.

The department's northern science research is grouped into five programs.

• Minerals:

NRCan geoscientists provide geological maps, models for identifying and locating deposits, and innovative exploration concepts and technologies that help industry identify new mineral resources. The

department's research also focuses on increasing the efficiency of mineral production.

• Energy:

Precise three-dimensional pictures of the northern Canadian sedimentary basins aid in new discoveries and in assessing resource potential. Marine geoscience surveys and engineering studies provide information for offshore oil and gas well-siting, environmental impact assessment, and locating pipelines and loading/shipping facilities. The department also researches alternative and renewable energy resources and examines ways to reduce the environmental impacts of hydrocarbon and biomass-based fuels.

• Forestry:

NRCan researchers monitor northern Canada's forest ecosystems and develop better ways of protecting and enhancing their health, diversity and productivity.

• Geomatics:

Using up-to-date remote sensing, global positioning and survey technology, NRCan collects and publishes a range of geographical