

between the Inuvialuit and the Inuit of Alaska, and the participation of Indigenous communities in the management of the Porcupine caribou herd and its range in Alaska, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories.

### *Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs*

In 1994, the Government of Canada demonstrated its continuing commitment to circumpolar affairs by creating the position of the Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. The Ambassador's initial assignment involved the conclusion of negotiations with the seven other Arctic states (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Russian Federation, and the United States) to establish the Arctic Council, which was inaugurated in September 1996.

The Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs acts as Canada's senior Arctic official participating in the ongoing work of the Arctic Council. The Ambassador consults with northern communities to understand their needs and how they can be translated into a Canadian circumpolar agenda.

*Mary May Simon, an Inuk from Nunavik (northern Quebec), was appointed on October 31, 1994, as Canada's first Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. In October 1999, she took up the position as Canada's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark while retaining her responsibilities as Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs.*

### *The Arctic Council*

The Arctic Council is a key element of Canada's sustainable development efforts in the circumpolar North. It is a high-level forum to advance circumpolar cooperation to address the issues of common concern to Arctic states and northern residents relating to sustainable development. The declaration establishing the Arctic Council provides Permanent Participant status for up to seven international Indigenous organizations from the Arctic states. Currently, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, the Saami Council, the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, and the Aleut International Association are actively engaged as Permanent Participants. The Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat in Denmark is to provide support to them in their work at the Arctic Council.

A particularly innovative initiative endorsed by the Arctic Council is the establishment of the University of the Arctic based on distance learning technology and stressing the need for Indigenous peoples to learn with and from each other. The Arctic Council has a mandate to improve the environmental, economic, social, and cultural well-being of northern peoples. There are five Arctic Council working groups.