

News Release

October 20, 1994

No. 209

QUELLET AND IRWIN ANNOUNCE FIRST CIRCUMPOLAR AMBASSADOR

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet and Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Ron Irwin announced today the appointment of Mary May Simon as Canada's first Circumpolar Ambassador. She will be the first Inuit to hold an ambassadorial position. The appointment is effective October 31, 1994.

"All Canadians have a stake in circumpolar affairs. Having spent the last 25 years as a strong advocate of Inuit rights and circumpolar issues, Mary Simon will be an effective and knowledgeable voice for Canada in its dealings with other circumpolar nations," said Mr. Ouellet.

"In working with Mary Simon over the last year, I have been impressed with her extensive knowledge and understanding of circumpolar issues and concerns. I am certain that the unique perspective she brings to this position, gained over the past two decades as a spokesperson for Inuit people, will make her an extremely credible and effective Circumpolar Ambassador for Canada," Mr. Irwin added.

The appointment of a Circumpolar Ambassador fulfils a foreign policy platform commitment of the new government.

Reporting to both ministers, the Ambassador will:

- represent Canada at international meetings on circumpolar issues;
- consult with interested Canadians, particularly northern governments and Aboriginal groups; and



- co-ordinate federal efforts on circumpolar issues including:
 - Canada's participation in the eight-nation Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy;
 - the implementation of a Canadian proposal to create an Arctic Council, composed of Canada, the United States, Russia, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark; and
 - Canadian policy with respect to Antarctica.

Mary Simon's biography is attached.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mary May Simon, born in Kangirsualujuak (George River), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), joined the CBC Northern Service in 1969 and worked as a producer/announcer of Inuit radio and television programs until 1973. She has held a number of positions with the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and since 1991 has been a Board Member. In 1978, she was elected Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association (which later became the Makivik Corporation). In 1979, Simon was elected First Vice-President of Makivik Corporation with responsibility for political development for the Inuit of Northern Quebec, and for the implementation of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. In 1982, Simon was elected President of Makivik Corporation. From 1980 to 1983, she was an Executive Council Member of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) and served as its President from 1986 to 1992; since then she has been Special Envoy to the ICC. In 1992, Simon was awarded an Honourary Doctorate, Doctor of Laws, from McGill University. In 1993, Simon was appointed co-Director (Policy) and Commission Secretary of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In 1994, she was named Commissioner of the Nunavut Implementation Commission. Mary Simon has been honoured for her work through appointments to the Order of Canada, the National Order of Quebec, and the Gold Order of Greenland.