



Arctic Leaders Summit (April 2010)
By Jim Stotts, ICC Chair

The Arctic Offshore (Who Gets to Decide?)

Good morning honored guests, participants, observers, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Jim Stotts, Chairman of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). The ICC is a non-governmental organization representing the international interests of 160,000 Inuit from Russia, the United States, Canada and Denmark. My hometown is Barrow, Alaska, the northernmost community in the United States, located on the coast of the Arctic Ocean, about 530 kilometers north of the Arctic circle and 330 kilometers west of the Prudhoe Bay oilfields.

Barrow is a small town of about 4500, mostly Inuit inhabitants, with most of the modern amenities. We have daily jet service from the outside world, satellite TV, internet, and modern school and health facilities. We also practice a traditional lifestyle that we all work hard to maintain and preserve. We are fighting to keep our language and culture intact and this will to survive as a distinct culture is alive and well within Inuit communities all across the northern landscape.

I mention this at the outset to explain that, despite having its roots in prehistoric times, present day Inuit culture is quite modern. Inuit have no desire to end up as an exhibition in some museum as just another extinct culture. We intend to leave our children and grandchildren a better life. We will be involved in everything that goes on in our homeland, including what goes on in our ocean. As the first inhabitants and stewards of the Arctic we have the responsibility and right to ensure the protection of our environment and culture. We accept this responsibility for the benefit of all mankind.

The world is coming to the Arctic. Hardly a day goes by without another news article in the international press. The issues and opinions are many and diverse. The future of the Arctic is being fought over in the media, the stakes are high, and it seems everyone wants to get into the act. As usual, everyone has an opinion.

This Arctic Leaders Summit hopefully will give clarity and direction to the debate over industrial development, particularly in the offshore. At this Summit you will hear perspectives of the people with the most experience living in the north, the indigenous peoples of the Arctic. I suggest you listen closely and carefully.

I don't intend to go into a detailed description of industrialization or global climate change in the Arctic. I will simply say, those of us that live in the Arctic have been feeling impacts from industrialization and climate change for some years now. For Inuit, this is not some scientific discussion on cause and effect. These developments are real, immediate, physical and psychological. We are pondering climate change adaptation strategies for our survival. Rapid industrialization in the Arctic only adds to our concerns.

ICC views this Leaders Summit as an opportunity to discuss offshore development. Global climate change is simply the background context to the discussion. Without global climate change there would be no development in the Arctic Ocean. Before the advent of global warming it was not possible to seriously consider moving into the Arctic Ocean to pursue resources, marine shipping or commercial fishing. Weather and ice prohibited these activities. It was cost prohibitive.

Global warming changed all of that with warmer temperatures resulting in a thinning icepack. It appears this trend will continue unless there is a planet-wide effort to reverse global climate change. Prospects for this to happen anytime soon appear to be slim. Let's recall what happened during the COP15 in Copenhagen. Nothing, nothing happened, nothing happened to address this global crisis.

Inuit and other Arctic indigenous peoples find themselves in the crossfire of the debate over industrial development in the Arctic Ocean. On one side are the resource developers claiming to have the technology and means to develop offshore resources in a safe, prudent and sustainable manner. On the other side are the environmental organizations that want to stop resource development at any cost. Both sides are powerful and well funded. In our opinion, both sides are wrong.

Both sides profess to have the best interest of indigenous peoples at heart; frankly neither side is very convincing. Inuit often feel like pawns in a chess game in this ideological struggle. Inuit history contains painful memories caused by people from the outside. Inuit society has been disrespected and ignored by outside societies. Trust is a big issue for us. Our experience with the outside world has taught us to have a strong healthy distrust of outside intentions.

During COP15 I gave a speech at an *Inuit and Arctic Indigenous Peoples Day* side- event. In the speech I posed the question, are Inuit prepared to sacrifice their culture and identity for the sake of solving global climate change? The response was no, they are not. If I were to ask the same question regarding offshore development I'm sure the answer would again be no, they are not. This does not mean Inuit are against development per se. This means Inuit are concerned about how development will proceed. Inuit believe in responsible sustainable development. This includes cultural sustainability. Inuit are fighting to survive as a distinct culture.

I'm sure you have heard of the Arctic Council. The ICC was quite active in the formation of this inter-governmental forum. RAIPON, the Sami Council, and ICC are original permanent

participants to the Council. The Arctic Athabaskan Council, Aleut International Association and Gwitchin Council International joined soon after.

These six organizations effectively represent the Arctic's indigenous peoples. ICC considers the Arctic Council probably the most important international forum for the development of Arctic Policy. It is the only international forum that provides Arctic peoples a place at the table discussing the many important issues facing the Arctic. We will continue to jealously guard our right and obligation to participate.

The Arctic Council has come under fire recently. A Canadian spokesman for a large environmental organization recently claimed the Arctic Council moves too slowly. He said a cohesive approach to govern the Arctic does not exist. He said the Arctic needs a co-operative stewardship between states and institutions as the basis for inevitable multilateral governance. Imagine that, multilateral governance. What does that mean exactly? I'm fairly certain it means his organization should be one of those institutions within this multilateral governance scheme.

He said the Arctic Council, while a key building block, is not yet sufficient. He went on to say that if Arctic coastal states do not come up with a cohesive framework for governing the Arctic, they will soon lose the moral authority to do so. ICC disagrees with his statement wholeheartedly and I suspect the Arctic nations do as well. This point of view is from the side of the debate that would stop development at all costs.

Meanwhile, back in Juneau, the capitol city of Alaska, there is political debate over coastal zone management. In the United States, coastal zone management is a way for local, state and national authorities to work together to manage development in the coastal zone. Giant oil companies are lobbying hard to weaken the local control section of the coastal zone management bill currently before the Alaska State Legislature.

A spokeswoman for the Alaska Oil and Gas Association testified before a State Senate Committee that more local control could put deep craters in the road industry navigates to permits, netting consistent and constant disagreement between local districts, the state and industry. She went on to say, I have to encourage you in the strongest possible terms to the impacts of this legislation on Alaska's reputation on its permitting regime. In other words, the indigenous and local voice should not be part of the discussion on development in the coastal zone. This comes from the industry responsible for the tragic Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound only twenty years ago. This perspective is from the side of the debate that professes to have the technology and means to develop the Arctic offshore in a safe, prudent and sustainable manner.

These are two examples, one from each of the two major camps involved in the debate over the future of Arctic development. There are many other examples that I could mention, but they are all basically the same.

Hopefully Arctic states will look at this and other important issues concerning the north from the proper perspective and make decisions that are reasonable and balanced. The Arctic Council is playing a key role in this careful approach to developing a policy that will best serve Arctic nations and Arctic peoples.

When it comes to development in the Arctic, Inuit make a distinction between development on land and development in the ocean. There are two reasons, both based on common sense which is a form of traditional knowledge.

First, it's no secret that pollution or environmental mishaps are more serious in water than on land. Pollution in rivers, lakes, oceans or the water table spread further and is much harder to contain than pollution on land. It's even worse in ice-covered waters. In particular, oil spills caused by oil and gas development or marine transport activities are of major concern to Inuit. A major oil spill in the Arctic Ocean is the single largest threat to the marine environment.

Second, Inuit are coastal people and rely heavily on resources from the ocean for nutritional and cultural survival. It's no secret that Inuit are a hunting society and are extremely concerned about the health of the Arctic Ocean ecosystem for the sake of those animals that need a clean and healthy habitat. Hunting defines Inuit as a people and we make no apologies to anyone for this fact. We are opposed to the animal rights groups that aim to stop all hunting at any cost. We consider these groups to be out of touch with nature. Inuit are fighting to survive as a distinct culture.

It's important to remember that Inuit have been moderately successful developing their own resources and creating their own forms of governance. We are not ashamed of this. Inuit in Alaska and Canada own resources as the result of land settlements with their provincial and federal governments. Last year Greenland, which is 80 percent Inuit, obtained control over resource development within Greenland including the offshore.

Inuit have always attempted to ensure that their economic development is sustainable and conducted in an environmentally sound manner. We attempt to hold other developers in the Arctic to the same high standards. ICC's body of work at the Arctic Council is an example of Inuit commitment to managing development the right way.

So, what does ICC think about resource development in the Arctic offshore? First, a question, what's the big hurry? These resources aren't going anywhere. With so much at stake Arctic nations can afford to slow down to ensure that offshore development is done the right way. The Arctic Ocean is virgin territory for the types of activities being contemplated by developers. There's no reason for us to rush into action before we are ready.

The Arctic Council has done a fine job so far identifying areas of concern and starting research into those areas requiring further study. There is much more work that needs to be done. Before offshore development can start more baseline studies are needed to identify what's out

there. Continued financial and political support from the Arctic states is necessary to continue this work.

New technologies are needed and should be tested to ensure resource development can proceed safely. Clearly oil spill response capability and technology needs to be improved. The infrastructure to support offshore development and marine shipping is nonexistent. Again, what's the big hurry?

Every effort must be made to ensure animal resources in the ocean are protected from further stress. Global climate change is already changing the ecosystem in ways that we are just beginning to understand. The Inuit culture is dependent on continued access to marine mammals for nutritional and cultural survival. Any offshore activity must take into account the health and welfare of these living resources and their habitat.

The Arctic states need to agree on a common set of standards utilizing science, traditional knowledge, up-to-date technology and sound environmental management that includes environmental and social impact assessment. Indigenous peoples and other northern residents must derive benefit from any offshore development as they are the ones most at risk for any catastrophes that may occur.

ICC suggests a slower pace in proceeding towards the offshore. This will give the Arctic coastal nations more time to sort out their boundary disputes. Please no more talk about using the military option to decide questions of sovereignty. The Arctic should be a region of peace.

So, where does ICC go to have its voice heard in the debate over Arctic offshore development? There are really only two options for us. We can work with our respective nation states or work within the auspices of the Arctic Council. ICC chooses to work with both. I guess we could join either the development crowd or the environmental group, but for ICC these are not real options. We are not prepared to sacrifice our culture for their agendas.

This does not mean that Arctic states and Arctic indigenous peoples should not talk to others interested in the Arctic. There's a world of good ideas from outside the north that we can use. However, from ICC's point of view any decisions concerning resource development in the Arctic Ocean must be made by the Arctic countries and Arctic peoples. The Arctic is ours.

Thank you.