



**The Arctic Imperative Summit (June 2011)**  
**By Jim Stotts, ICC Alaska President**

### **Conditions for an Arctic Imperative (The Inuit Perspective)**

**Distinguished participants, guests, movers and shakers, I'd like to thank Alice and Alaska Dispatch for this opportunity to present the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) perspective on resource development and for recognizing the importance of including us in this discussion. Without input from Inuit and other Arctic indigenous peoples this conversation would be incomplete.**

**My name is Jim Stotts. I was born in Barrow on the Arctic coast. I'm the President of the Alaska branch of ICC. ICC is an international organization that advocates on behalf of approximately 160,000 Inuit from: Chukotka/Russia; Alaska/United States; Canada; and Greenland/Denmark.**

**ICC has consultative status as an Indigenous Peoples Organization at the United Nations and consults to the UN on matters concerning the Arctic on a wide range of issues. ICC is also a permanent participant to the Arctic Council, the eight nation intergovernmental organization that works to develop Arctic policy. ICC represents Inuit at the international level and we are involved in all activities occurring on our lands and waters, including the themes being discussed at this gathering. ICC celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary last summer.**

**The principle goals of ICC are, to: strengthen unity among Inuit of the circumpolar north; promote Inuit rights and interests on an international level; develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and seek full and active partnership in the political, economic, and social development of the circumpolar north.**

**First, let me suggest a change to the theme for this summit, I think the theme should be, "*The Arctic Imperative: Conditions for Cooperation, Investment, Development.*" ICC recently released "*A Circumpolar Inuit Declaration on Resource Development Principles in Inuit Nunaat*", which states our position on development. We have copies available for those that want to study it in detail. I won't delve into its finer points; however, I would be happy to discuss our declaration with you during the margins of this meeting.**

**Our declaration sets out basic principles to guide development, the principles that lead to responsible sustainable development. We believe these principles should apply to all involved in Arctic development including: local, state and national governments; industry; civil society organizations; and indigenous organizations, including those controlled by Inuit.**

**As the first inhabitants and stewards of the Arctic Inuit have the responsibility and right to ensure the protection of their environment and culture. We accept this responsibility on behalf of all mankind. You will find this philosophy and perspective throughout our declaration.**

**Last summer ICC held its General Assembly in Nuuk, the capitol of Greenland. At our Assembly it was evident there were differences of opinion amongst Inuit on three issues. These issues were: offshore oil and gas; mining, particularly uranium mining; and the environmental and social impact assessment process.**

**At our Assembly the Premier of Greenland suggested that ICC facilitate an Inuit Leaders Summit to discuss these three issues. ICC hosted the summit last February in Ottawa where our declaration was formulated. The declaration was launched publicly just prior to the Arctic Council Ministers meeting last month in Greenland. The premier of Greenland has offered to host a second Inuit Leaders Summit to further refine our position on development issues in the near future. So, our declaration is out in the open, a public document.**

**To us, development is more than the opportunity for jobs or making money, much more. We take the broad view on how development will affect Inuit society. Development in the Arctic must bring real and tangible benefits to our people. We believe in the ecosystem based approach to managing the environment. There must be a balance. This is the true meaning of responsible sustainable development. ICC will be involved whenever decisions are being made that affect Inuit.**

**ICC looks at development from a holistic point of view. This is just common sense; common sense is a form of traditional knowledge. When we look at development in our part of the world we consider the big picture. This means we look at development in its entirety. For example, we don't look at offshore oil and gas separately from marine shipping, mining, commercial fishing or hunting. We believe it's necessary to look at development issues as a whole, from different angles.**

**When it comes to development, we make a distinction between development on land and development in the ocean.**

**First, it's no secret that pollution is more serious in water than on land. Pollution in rivers, lakes and oceans is much harder to contain and clean up than pollution on land. It's even**

worst in ice-covered waters. According to the Arctic Council, a major oil spill in the Arctic Ocean is the single largest threat to the Arctic marine environment.

Second, most Inuit are coastal people and rely heavily on resources from the ocean for nutritional and cultural survival. Inuit are a hunting society and are extremely concerned about the health of the ocean ecosystem for the sake of those birds, fish and animals that need a clean and healthy habitat. Despite adapting to the modern world, hunting still defines Inuit as a people and we are concerned for our food security.

This shouldn't put a damper on everyone's enthusiasm. I just want everyone to realize the consequences of development going forward without proper caution and concern for the Arctic ecosystem and people. I know everyone here has the same frame of mind.

As businessmen you understand the concept of risk and reward, the classic approach to finding the proper balance for deciding whether to proceed or not with your business plans. Under the present scenario it seems to us that the Arctic environment and people are taking most of the risk while industry is getting most of the reward. This is true with development in the U.S. part of the Arctic Ocean.

I need to say a few words about the Arctic Council (Council). It's important for you to understand that the Council's approach to developing Arctic policy is balanced in the way that ICC believes it should be. The Council is the premier forum for developing Arctic policy and ICC has participated in the Council since its inception.

The Council was responsible for the "*Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment*" and the "*Arctic Offshore Oil & Gas Guidelines*." A new Council Task Force is being established to address oil spill preparedness and response with the aim of creating an international agreement between the Arctic states on oil spills. I smell a business opportunity here. Whoever comes up with the technology to clean up oil spills will make lots of money.

The Council also addresses the human dimension in the areas of health and well-being, climate change, language and culture, food safety and security, biodiversity, community energy and infrastructure needs, pollution and toxic contamination, and scientific research and traditional knowledge. These are the issues that Inuit are interested in.

At the recent Council Ministers meeting Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "It's time to change the Arctic Council from a policy shaping to a policy making body." Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar sat at the head table with Secretary Clinton. Senator Lisa Murkowski and Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell were part of the U.S. delegation.

It's interesting to note that there were six Inuit sitting at the head table: including the Premier of Greenland, Kuupik Kleist, who headed the Danish delegation; and Canada's

**Health Minister, Leona Aglukkaq, who headed the Canadian Delegation. It was a good day for Inuit.**

**It's clear to us that development in the Arctic will take an international cooperative approach rather than each Arctic nation going its own way. This approach is set and progress is well on its way. This means the State of Alaska will have to cooperate within this larger framework or get left behind or left out of the discussion.**

**This international focus is already discussing: the need for scientific assessment and research to better understand the fragile ecosystem; the need for new technologies and standards for industry; the need for robust management and oversight capabilities; and the needs of Arctic peoples and communities. The State of Alaska needs to get involved in this larger forum and be a part of the process. Our advice is, don't wait too long.**

**The Arctic has changed and will continue to change. If the State of Alaska wants to be a player in development it needs to realize it will have to change too. The old way of doing business doesn't work anymore. Alaska's politicians, citizens and business community have to come to grips with this. Alaska has to change its way of thinking.**

**ICC is not opposed to responsible sustainable development. It's evident to us development will occur. The Inuit future is tied to the development of the Arctic's resources. It's a new world and it's not possible for us to go back to the good old cold days. The planet is warming. The sea ice and permafrost is melting. We can see it with our own eyes. Our world is on the verge of being turned upside down.**

**I'd like to suggest that the next time Arctic Dispatch decides to hold a summit that the topic could be, "*The Arctic Imperative: Sustaining Arctic Communities.*" I would invite back all the people that are attending this summit. Now that's a topic ICC could sink its teeth into.**

**So, what's next? I think the answer might lie with the theme for this summit, "*The Arctic Imperative: Cooperation, Investment, Development.*" I think the key word is cooperation, and I mean real cooperation, not one side telling the others this is the way it's going to be.**

**Alaska needs to experience a paradigm shift, a collective paradigm shift. It won't be easy. But, if we can, then the Arctic imperative might become the Arctic reality.**

**Thank you.**