Remembering Edward Itta (Saggan)

By ICC Alaska Staff

Edward S. Itta passed away in Barrow, Alaska on November 6 after an extended struggle with cancer. He was 71. Our condolences go out to his wife Elsie, daughter Muriel, son Price and the rest of his family and friends. Edward will be missed by all that knew him.

Edward held many prominent roles in the Arctic. He was Captain of the Saggan Whaling Crew, President of the Barrow Whaling Captains and Vice Chairman of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission. He served as North Slope Borough Mayor from 2005-2011. He was President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) Alaska from 2006-2010. President Obama appointed Edward to the U.S. Arctic Research Commission in 2012. He represented Alaska on the Outer Continental Shelf Policy Commission.

He was a passionate advocate for Inuit. “I try to remind people that we need to be heard, loud and clear. We are the people of the Arctic. We still live in America’s Arctic and we’re going to live in America’s Arctic, after all the battles over the wilderness and the oil are done. We are the ones who have to live with the consequences,” Edward said in a keynote address at the Arctic Encounter Symposium in 2015.

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Edward was a strong supporter of ICC. When Edward was leaving ICC Alaska he wrote in the DRUM, “The time has come for me to step aside and welcome new leadership at ICC Alaska. After four years as President of this organization, I decided not to seek another term because of my heavy workload as North Slope Borough Mayor. I’m reluctant to give up this role, because ICC Alaska is close to my heart and I want to see it continue to grow stronger. I am pleased and honored to have been involved in international Inuit representation, and I hope the organization will continue to pursue the priorities established in the 2006 Utqiagvik Declaration: subsistence hunting and fishing; tribal issues; and healthy communities. These are fundamental concerns for our people across regional and national boundaries.”

Current ICC Alaska President Jim Stotts said, “Inuit lost a great leader and spokesman for the Inuit cause. May we all have the courage and strength to carry on his work and dedication for Inuit empowerment. Edward, rest in peace. We will miss you.”
President’s Message

James Stotts

It’s All About Meaningful Engagement…

2016 will go down as the year that created the most divisive US Presidential campaign in modern history. After the inauguration of Donald Trump, it’s hard to know what to expect. Clearly President Trump intends to take the country in a different direction. Will he push for major changes in Arctic policy? Will these changes be good or bad for Inuit?

Under the US Chairmanship, the Arctic Council had three overarching themes: Arctic climate change; Arctic Ocean stewardship, and; improving economic and living conditions in the Arctic.

Climate Change: The US accomplished its major climate change initiative when the Paris Accord was ratified at the UNFCC COP21. Climate change impacts the Arctic more than other parts of the planet. We all know the story of Shishmaref; how it’s being consumed by erosion caused by climate change. We all know the effects of stress on our wildlife and its impact on our ability to feed ourselves and sustain our culture. The list of negative impacts from climate change in the Arctic is long and complicated.

We believe US policy should focus on climate change. We realize climate change is one of the most important issues facing the planet. However, we feel the focus should be on adaptation strategies to help Inuit and other northern peoples survive impacts. This would be more constructive than creating protected areas and declaring Arctic animals endangered. These restrictive actions directly impact our ability to maintain our way of life, threatens our cultural survival, and does little to reverse climate change impacts.

Dialogue between Inuit and the US suffered a bit during the US chairmanship because of US ambitions to forge a global climate change agreement. The US chose to work with environmental NGO’s rather than with us. This needs to change; the environmental community often has an agenda that is not in sync with our viewpoint of what’s best for the region, our region.

Ocean Stewardship: The US part of the Arctic Ocean is now nearly 100 percent under protected status. Recently the Obama administration created the ‘Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area’ spanning from the Kuskokwim Bay to northeast of Shishmaref, all the way westward to the maritime border with Russia. This was followed up with the administration withdrawing most of the waters of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas from future oil and gas leasing.

Reaction from Alaskan Inuit on these protected areas has been mixed. Generally, in the Bering Sea there is support. This is because the Association of Village Council Presidents and Kawerak, Incorporated were consulted from the outset. Both AVCP and Kawerak are members of ICC Alaska.

Generally, there is less support for the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea withdrawals. The North Slope Borough and the Northwest Arctic Borough together with the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation and NANA Regional Corporation were not consulted. They are ICC Alaska members. The Chukchi and Beaufort withdrawals appear to be a fearful reaction to what a Trump administration might decide on Arctic offshore oil and gas in the future.
The Alaskan Inuit Education Alignment Summit was held in Anchorage, November 8-9, 2016. There were 130 participants representing all ICC Alaska regions and their respective education institutions, as well as others passionate about Inuit education.

“The aim of the Summit is to strengthen the movement to reclaim our own ways, including how we impart knowledge and advance an education agenda that stems from our collective worldview. Drawing inspiration from our ancestors, we will reignite those concepts and beliefs that originate from those who came before and will result in the articulation of ideas for improving education for our people today. We will share with each other and learn together in a way that promotes and will nurture meaningful change and builds momentum for those who are to come.”

One of the goals of the Summit was to create alignment between the strategies spelled out in the Alaskan Inuit Education Improvement Strategy and the Priorities of the Rural Caucus of the Association of Alaska School Boards. The Summit was well received and had local and national media coverage. All in all, it was a healing and healthy dialogue that we believe moved the Inuit education agenda in a positive and powerful direction.

The opening remarks were given by ICC Alaska President, Jimmy Stotts, who stated, “Along the way we have to realize that we need to unlearn some things, before we can begin to learn again.” As the conference was designed to be a sacred and safe place for dialogue and healing it was a perfect opening for us as collective Inuit to unify and begin to process past wounds and begin a new journey towards a healthy holistic approach to education for our children. To begin to break up old frameworks to build new ones.

Our speakers on the first day included, Dr. Graham Hingangaroa Smith, an internationally renowned Maori educationalist who has been at the forefront of the Maori initiatives in the educational field and beyond; and Dr. Keiki Kawai’ae’a, who is the director of Ka Haka Ula o Ke’elikolani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, which is the first indigenous language college in the United States. We also heard from Valerie Shirley and Monica Tsethlikai from the University of Arizona, that research and data can be useful tools to help us make informed decisions, that indigenous researchers can help us better tell our stories to build awareness and work towards creating new forms of educations and repairing the damage done by the past in healthy ways. Cecelia Martz and Nita Reardon, retired Alaskan educators, showed us we have what it takes within ourselves to build the kind of education system we want to see, they also gave us practical guidance and wisdom from their many years of service. Lastly, we heard from Marjorie Tahbone, our youth speaker, that we are still Inuk, still people with purpose, passion and love and that we have a proud heritage, strong ancestors and our youth are ready to take the torch and work through the challenges we will face.

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Board Meets in Anchorage

By ICC Alaska Staff

The ICC Alaska Board of Directors met in Anchorage during November in a regular meeting. The agenda focused on administrative items including reviewing and approving previous meeting minutes, financial reports, the 2017 budget and work plan, along with administrative resolutions and board polls. The agenda also included regular reports from the President and Executive Director, the Strategic Plan for 2014-2018 Progress Report and member organization reports. The 2018 General Assembly and 2018-2022 Alaska Chairmanship was discussed during the board meeting, logistics and program planning is scheduled to begin in 2017 with the organization of committees with representatives from each of the regions.

President Jim Stotts presented the organizations activity report to the Board. In his report, he provided an update and summarized the organizations activities over the last quarter. The communications strategy has been completed and implementation has begun with the development of a brand style guide. In our efforts to improve communications, youth were identified as a special target audience recognizing the need to improve communications with youth to build interest in the organization. We have begun exploring ways in which to improve communications with youth. Nicole Kanayurak, Board of Directors Youth Representative shared a letter to Alaskan Inuit Youth to begin to build a relationship and to find out about other existing youth groups in the regions. This will be a starting point for potential youth engagement activities.

The I am Inuit project is winding down; Brian Adams, Project Photographer has traveled to the last two villages of Wainwright and Hooper Bay. Copies of the photos will be sent to the participants to thank them for participating in the project. The Anchorage Museum will host an exhibit beginning in February 2017.

The Education project is moving along as planned. Regional education decolonization think tanks have been held in Nome, Kotzebue and Barrow. The final think tank will be held in Bethel in April 2017. We were very excited to report that the first-ever Alaska Inuit Education Alignment Summit held in Anchorage in November was a great success with over 130 delegates, participants, and guest speakers from New Zealand, Hawaii, Arizona and Alaska. The final big event we are looking forward to is the International Inuit Education Summit which is scheduled to be held in Greenland in 2018.

The “Alaskan Inuit Food Security Conceptual Framework: How to Assess the Arctic from an Inuit Perspective” report has been completed and published online on the ICC Alaska website. Fundraising continues for follow up activities, including further dissemination and promotion of the work.

Jim also provided an update on the organizations efforts within the Arctic Council, including work within the Arctic Councils Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Working Group, the Protection of Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Group, and the Task Force on Arctic Marine Cooperation. Various meetings of interests for Inuit attended by ICC Alaska over the last quarter, including Arctic Council Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities (MEMA) Project Workshop Meeting and the ICC Executive Council meeting in Qaqortoq, Greenland. Jim completed his report with a review of upcoming activities and meetings occurring before the end of the year.

The Board discussed upcoming Circumpolar Inuit Summits planned for this term during the meeting. The Wildlife Management Summit is postponed a year due to lack of funding. The Summit is rescheduled for November 2017 in Kuujjuaq, Canada. The Education Summit is scheduled to be held in Greenland in early 2018, prior to the ICC General Assembly which is scheduled for June/July 2018 in Utqiagvik, Alaska. ICC Greenland will be hosting the Inuit Education Summit. Finally, ICC Alaska will be hosting the Economic Summit, which is scheduled for March 28-30, 2017 in Anchorage, Alaska. The agenda has been drafted, and organization and planning is underway.

The next board meeting will be held this spring via teleconference. ☉
Ullukkut

Christmas has come and gone and we welcome the New Year in and the return of the sun to our Arctic homeland. It is, once again, a time of reflection, renewal, reconciliation and an opportunity to plan for our future.

This past year we have seen a rise in nations fearing immigration, a backlash against globalization and a return to decades of old thoughts of populism, nativism and xenophobia – words we do not understand nor have considered in Inuit Nunaat, as we have always welcomed newcomers, shared our knowledge, learned from each other and made our communities richer though friendship.

In the 70’s, through the leadership of Eben Hopson, Inuit fought for rights and a voice in the exploration and development of the marine environment. Inuit stood in solidarity with much of South Africa in the 80’s against apartheid and called for the freedom of Nelson Mandela.

In the 90’s and into the new millennium we lobbied to rid the Arctic of persistent organic contaminants, and raised the global awareness of the human dimension of climate change.

We have lobbied the European Union for the right to hunt, eat and sell our seal pelts, as we continue to defend one of the last remaining indigenous hunting cultures in the world. For 25 years we helped forge the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Issues and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This past year we celebrated the 15th Anniversary of a MOU of cooperation between ICC and the Government of Chukotka Autonomous Region, and the Association of Indigenous Minorities of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug.

In 2016, ICC was central to the first White House Arctic Science Meeting which resulted in an agreement between Prime Minister Trudeau and former President Obama. This statement recognizes the need to make certain Inuit are central to decision making in Inuit Nunaat. In 2016-17, the Inuit led Pikialasorsuaq Commission continues its important work to re-establish Inuit led management of the unique marine polynya shared by Canada and Greenland and central to Inuit food security on both sides of the polynya.

ICC will continue to work for improved cooperation between the four Inuit homelands and the broader global community.

The Arctic is better and the world is better for this cooperation. Inuit have much to offer each of our nation states – our indigenous knowledge, our culture, our ties to family and to the land, holds the solutions too many issues Inuit face.

The Arctic is a key topic in international relations between Arctic countries and others. This is due in a large part to climate change and growing global economic interests. We may wonder what our role is in addressing the changes in Inuit Nunaat and what our role may be in relation to global issues. Inuit may only be 160,000 strong, one people across four countries, and we have a powerful voice. Inuit must be the driver of positive change for our communities. We must bring the wisdom and voice of our people to support the global community to do what is right and we must also be the voice to protect Inuit Nunaat.

As the geopolitics shift, the Arctic is transforming into an important area with new and sometimes contested economic, legal, and governance perspectives on maritime activities. Inuit manage a great percentage of the circumpolar Arctic through our land claims, treaties, self-government and emerging governance instruments – our voice, our experience, our presence guide these difficult discussions.

We are working with our four countries to bring concrete economic and social issues and the vision of Inuit for our economic development forward through the ICC Economic Summit to be held in Anchorage, Alaska March 28-30. The Pikialasorsuaq Commission continues its work to bring recommendations from Canada and Greenland on an Inuit led management regime for the Pikialasorsuaq in Baffin Bay. We are bringing Inuit knowledge to various capitals on the control of contaminants including mercury and the continuing impacts of climate change on Inuit Nunaat.

ICC is working to make certain research and science has Inuit knowledge at the core of the research planning, undertaking and implementation of the results. We believe better decisions are made with all knowledge available. We continue to be central to the discussion of the Arctic Council.

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Chair’s Message
J. Okalik Eegeesiak
Celebrating the Return of the Sun

Check Out Our Website
www.iccalaska.org
“DRUM” is now online!

Find us on Facebook and Twitter!
New Staff Joins Office

By ICC Alaska Staff

Vernae Angnaboogok joined the ICC Alaska team in November as Cultural Sustainability Advisor. She is from Wales, Alaska, traditionally known as Kiŋigin. She was raised by her mother Edith “Birdi” Pinson and grandparents Roland and Edna Angnaboogok, who she said, “instilled in her the values and passion for learning and embracing the Iñupiaq way of life.”

Regarding her appointment, Vernae said, “I am excited to have the opportunity to work for ICC Alaska on behalf of Inuit to promote cultural sustainability in the Arctic and to advance Inuit perspectives and share expertise in living and adapting within the changing Arctic.”

Vernae is a Mt. Edgecumbe High School alumna and graduated from University of Alaska Fairbanks with a Bachelor's degree in Rural Development. She and her partner Dallas Ningealook have two kids, Shane and Kiera. Vernae enjoys being out in the country, berry picking, fishing, and camping, especially when traveling home to Wales and Shishmaref.

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On the second day, the delegates and observers were divided into 13 groups to decide what was important for the continuation of the Alaskan Inuit Education Improvement Strategy and the ICC-Alaska regions. There were seven major themes that resulted from the day of collaboration:

1. Language Immersion school from birth to adult.
2. Growing and developing our own local teachers, administrators and leaders.
3. Developing culturally and locally relevant curriculum.
4. Creating our own teacher credentialing and standards.
5. Implementing a local schooling calendar and rhythm that aligns with traditional and subsistence activities.
6. Making appropriate systemic and policy changes.
7. Community building to create unity, clarity of focus and ownership.

The Summit is a directive in the 2015 Alaskan Inuit Education Improvement Strategy. The Strategy was developed with guidance from recommendations by the Alaskan Inuit education community who met in a workshop in Nome in 2014. Overall, the strategy “is a call for a collaborative effort to make Alaska Inuit education meaningful for individuals, impactful for communities and sustainable for Inuit culture.” The Strategy can be found online at www.iccalaska.org.

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and other international fora, and we continue to plan for the ICC Wildlife Management Summit to be held in November 2017 in Arctic Canada. It is our collective future we are working towards.

The Inuit Circumpolar Conference – now the Inuit Circumpolar Council was the brain-child of the late Eben Hopson in 1977- an Alaskan Inupiaq to help address global environment and economic challenges impacting our communities. ICC will celebrate this year 40 years of working in solidarity, four countries one people. Let us re-visit the principle goals of ICC:

• To develop and encourage long-term policies that safeguard the Arctic environment; and,
• To seek full and active partnerships in political, economic and social development in the circumpolar region.

Let’s celebrate this remarkable achievement. As we move into this New Year, ICC wants to hear from you. We would like you to share your pictures over the last 40 years. Perhaps you attended an ICC General Assembly or another ICC meeting or you just want to express and celebrate our unique culture.

There is a great deal of uncertainty in the world today – let the voice of Inuit solidarity and tolerance continue be our guide. Let us show the world we are better together than apart, that we have more in common than we have differences and that those differences do not weaken us, they strengthen us.

Aingai.
What bothers us most is the US hit-or-miss approach in consulting and engaging with us on issues of concern. When it comes to ocean stewardship the US should have lived up to its stated commitment to engage with us more openly. ICC Alaska was not consulted at all.

Improved Living Conditions: During the US chairmanship, there were some projects addressing village issues, including: reducing suicide; indigenous youth, climate change, and food culture; an arctic energy summit; economy of the north; arctic as a food producing region; water, sanitation and health; meaningful engagement of indigenous communities in Arctic marine activities; amongst others. Some of these US projects were ‘repackaged’ for the Arctic Council.

One project co-sponsored by ICC which did not move forward during the US chairmanship was a project on assessing, monitoring and promoting Arctic languages. This was a disappointment because a lot of work had been accomplished under the Canadian chairmanship that was not followed up on during the US term. We continue to have problems convincing the US of the value of our Indigenous Knowledge.

Overall, I think living conditions have not changed much one way or the other as a result of the US chairmanship of the Arctic Council. Again, poor consultation and collaboration is the reason.

Meaningful Engagement: When one looks at US Arctic Policy and other US policy documents you will see great language about consultation with Arctic indigenous peoples; the same with policy documents from the Arctic Council. However, words don’t count for much if they aren’t followed; in the end the US approach remains a top-down approach.

It’s all about meaningful engagement. Until the US decides to sit down with Inuit to discuss common concerns from start-to-finish, results will be less than optimum. Having been involved with the Arctic Council for nearly a decade now, I don’t see much of a difference between the Republicans and the Democrats. Both administrations have tended to take us for granted and use us for their own agendas. I wonder a lot about what the coming administration will look like.
Quyanaq! Quyanna! Taikuu!

Thank you for supporting ICC-Alaska’s efforts in 2015!

Our efforts would not be successful without the generous support received from our contributors. Special thanks for the grants, cash and in-kind donations made this year.

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You too can support our efforts! We are participating in the Pick.Click.Give. Program again this year. When you go online to apply for the State of Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, you will see an option to Pick.Click.Give. and donate to a portion of your dividend to Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska. Donations can also be made anytime and as a charitable organization, your donations are tax-deductible! Please visit our website for more information at www.iccalaska.org