

## ARCTIC INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES SYMPOSIUM

The Challenge of language preservation, promotion, and revitalization has been at the core of ICC's work over decades. Over the past 2 decades, ICC has set up two language commissions, and played a lead role in many other language initiatives. At the Inuit Circumpolar Council 10<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting in Barrow, Alaska July 9-13, 2006 delegates mandated ICC to participate in international bodies and promote technological initiatives promoting linguistic diversity and to address language issues.

The Government of Canada through its Department of Canadian Heritage and with the assistance of other government departments has offered to its fellow members of the Arctic Council to take a lead role in supporting an *Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium* following the call by the ministers in the *Salekhard Declaration*. The Symposium is a project initiative of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG).

As part of its mandate ICC Canada will be responsible for planning, managing and implementing the symposium in collaboration with the Canadian Government, other member states of the Arctic Council and permanent participants.

The Inuit Circumpolar Council is a Permanent Participant to the Arctic Council which is comprised of 8 Arctic States and 6 Permanent Participants. The Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group carries out many initiatives of relevance to Inuit.

### ***The preliminary objectives of the Symposium are:***

- to provide an opportunity for people of the circumpolar region to share their unique stories and challenges, to benefit from new information, tools, and best practices;
- to highlight the importance of new technologies for language preservation to communicate and engage youth and to share tools for revitalization;
- to revitalize attitudes of youth towards learning indigenous languages and cultures;
- to highlight governmental and non-governmental activities in support of languages to an international audience; and
- to take a historical look at the relationship between Indigenous languages and cultures in the Arctic region in relation to our changing environment and sustainable development

Since the Vadsø SDWG meeting considerable progress has been made. ICC Canada has been provided funds to initiate planning and will be seeking further support for involvement of the PP's. The first planning session was held in Tromsø, Norway March 7-14, 2008 and it was at this meeting that it was agreed the Symposium will be held in Tromsø, Norway October 21-22 in conjunction with the SDWG meeting.



**Tromsø Harbour**



**Gunn-Britt Retter, Saami Council  
Member of the AILS Steering Committee**