

# Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium

## Tromsø, Norway, October 19-21, 2008

### Speaker Bios

#### Duane Smith

Duane Smith was born and raised in the community of Inuvik, Northwest Territories which is now the centre for the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). He continues his close attachment to the land, annually harvesting marine mammals and caribou much as his ancestors did. Duane has represented the Inuvialuit locally, regionally and internationally for many years on matters regarding the environment, indigenous rights and co-management. His professional involvement began when he was sworn in as a Renewable Resource Officer in 1985. He was named to the Inuvialuit Game Council (IGC) in 1992 as a member from Inuvik, and until the Fall of 2003 was its chair.

Duane is presently on a multi-year, Canada-led international research body coordinating and documenting data on the Arctic through traditional knowledge and western science. Duane was also a past co-chair of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Arctic Specialist Group Sustainable Use Initiative.

#### Olav Mattis Eira

Olav Mattis Eira is Vice President of the Saami Council. He was born in Northern Norway and practices traditional reindeer herding as his family has done since the 1400s. He is a strong advocate for strong public policies to protect the language rights of indigenous peoples.

#### Mary Simon

Mary May Simon who was born in Kangiqsualujjuaq (George River) in Nunavik (Northern Quebec) has devoted her life's work to gaining further recognition of Aboriginal rights and to achieving social justice for Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples, nationally and internationally. Ms Simon was elected Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association in 1976 and in 1985 elected 1st Vice-President and then President of Makivik Corporation. Mary Simon subsequently served six years as President of Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) the international Inuit body. She is currently president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the national Inuit organization.

In 1994, Ms Simon was appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada to be the first Canadian Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. As part of her work, she took the lead in negotiating an eight country council, which is now known as the Arctic Council. During her Chairmanship of the Arctic Council and subsequently as the Canadian Government, Senior Arctic Official, she worked closely with the Indigenous "Permanent Participant's" of the Arctic Council, as well as the seven other Arctic Countries, including Russia.

Mary Simon has received numerous honours for her leadership in developing strategies for Aboriginal and Northern affairs. Throughout her career she has been a champion of social justice for Inuit, with particular focus on children and youth, and the preservation of the Inuit language. She has been awarded the Order of Canada, National Order of Quebec, the Gold Order of Greenland, the National Aboriginal Achievement Award and the Gold Medal of the Royal

Canadian Geographical Society. Ms Simon has received honorary doctorate of law degrees from McGill, Queen's, Memorial and Trent Universities and currently holds a number of senior positions including:

- Board Member, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
- Patron – Nunavut Youth Abroad Program
- Board Member , National Mental Health Commission
- Board Member – Institute for Research on Public Policy

## **Fenya Lekhanova**

Fenya Lekhanova is Director of the Center for development and education, culture and gender "IN" ("LIFE") under the RAIPON umbrella. She is also a Senior Associate Researcher of the Federal State Institute of Nationalities' Schools of the Republic of Saha-Yakutiya and a teacher of the Yevenki Language and author of Yevenki Language textbooks.

## **Jose Amaujaq Kusugak**

Amaujaq was born in Naujaat, Nunavut in 1950. He is the second born of 8 brothers and 4 sisters. His passion for language started when he was taking Latin in high school and realized unlike Latin, Inuktitut was a working and living language.

Right after high school he started working as an Inuit language teacher at the Churchill Manitoba Vocational Training Centre. In 1970 he moved back to Rankin Inlet and taught qablunaat Inuktitut then transferred to the high school to teach Inuktitut there.

Developing school curriculum in Inuktitut was next to impossible with the different dialects and writing systems so he proposed to the newly formed Inuit Tapiriisat of Canada for a grant to standardize the Kivalliq writing forms. ITC invited him to do his work across the Canadian Arctic. In the mid-1970s he was the director of the Inuit Language Commission, which studied many aspects of contemporary Canadian Inuktitut.

## **Carl Christian Olsen, Puju**

Born in Sisimiut, Greenland, Puju completed his doctoral studies in linguistics in 1975 and has devoted much of his life to language issues. He co-founded the University of Greenland and taught there as a professor of linguistics and literature. In addition, he has served as Director of Oqaasileriffik/Greenland Language Secretariat, Chair of Oqaasiliortut/Greenland Language Committee, and as a member of the Nordic Language Council, the Commission for Scientific Investigations for Greenland, and the Executive Council of the Inuit Circumpolar Council.

## **Ronald Brower**

Ronald H. Brower Sr. was born in 1949 in Barrow and was raised in a traditional sod home at Eviksook about 30 miles south of Barrow until the family moved to Barrow.

After an Honorable Discharge from the Army in 1971, Ronald served as the first Chairman of the North Slope Borough Home Rule Charter Commission establishing the North Slope Borough and was also involved in establishing the North Slope Borough Commission on Inupiat History,

Language, and Culture in 1975. He later served as Chairman from 1982 until 1989. Ronald then served as Land Chief and President of Ukpeagvik Inupiat Corporation for 8 years.

Ronald also served as key staff to the ICC Elders Conferences from 1980 to 1995 when he was elected to serve on the ICC Executive Council as Vice-President for Alaska, and also President of the then newly reorganized ICC –Alaska. He was the founding director of the Inupiat Heritage Centre and developed over 14 exhibitions for its grand opening in 1999.

Brower retired from the Inupiat Heritage Centre in 2003 and went into a teaching career with the NSB School District. After several years he moved to the University of Alaska, Fairbanks where he currently teaches Inupiaq language.

## **Zacharias Kunuk**

Zacharias Kunuk was born in 1957 in Kapuivik near Igloodik. He is president and co-founder in 1990 of Igloodik Isuma Productions, Canada's first Inuit-owned independent production company. Zacharias won the Camera d'Or at Cannes 2001 for Isuma's first feature, *Atanarjuat The Fast Runner*. His credits include several short dramas and numerous documentaries featuring Arctic indigenous themes. Kunuk is the winner of the National Arts Award, National Aboriginal Achievement Award and in 2005 was awarded the Order of Canada

## **Piquk Linda Lee**

An Inupiaq from Shungnak, Alaska. Has been passionate about saving the native languages from teen years. First place of employment was with the Northwest Arctic School District working as a translator technician. Translating and transcribing oral history of the elders from recording in 1976-1981 and from those translations assisted in editing and producing three volumes of textbooks for middle and high school. Today is involved with recording history from elders around the Nana Region and is employed with Nana Regional Corp, as Inupiaq Language and Culture. Is a member of the Inupiaq Language Commission and Aqqaluk Trust Board of Trustees.

## **Per Langgård**

Per Langgård is Senior Adviser at Oqaasileriffik – the Greenland Language Secretariat. His area of expertise includes language technology.

## **Shelley Tulloch**

Shelley Tulloch is an assistant professor of anthropology at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Canada, where she teaches courses on language and culture, language contact, and language issues in the North. She completed a Ph.D. in linguistics at Université Laval. Her dissertation describes the current linguistic situation among Inuit youth in the Baffin region of Nunavut, and suggests that the values Inuit youth attach to Inuktitut and English lie at the root of needs and possibilities for future promotion of Inuktitut. Her current research studies the relationship between language and community in Nunavut.

## **Hishinlai' Kathy R. Sikorski**

Hishinlai' studied linguistics and education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), receiving a Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction earlier this year. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. Hishinlai' has been an instructor of numerous Gwich'in courses at UAF since 1990. She has written and presented extensively on various subjects related to language acquisition, indigenous languages, and the Gwich'in Athabaskan language in particular. She is active in her

community, providing language training and tutoring to a variety of interested groups as a community service.

### **Gunn-Britt Retter**

Gunn-Britt Retter is a Saami from the Varanger area on the coast of northeast Norway. She is a teacher by training and holds a Master of Arts in Bilingual Studies from the University of Wales. Since 2001 she has been working with Arctic and environmental issues, first through the Arctic Council Indigenous Peoples' Secretariat in Copenhagen, Denmark, and since 2005 for the Saami Council as head of the Arctic and Environmental Unit. Gunn-Britt is co-vicechair to the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). She has recently also been involved in work related to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and is co-chair to the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), the indigenous forum working with CBD. Retter is a member of the Saami Parliament in Norway. Gunn-Britt moved back to her community in 2005, where she enjoys living closer to nature, the local culture, and speakers of her native language.

### **Vera Metcalf**

Vera Kingeekuk Metcalf was born and raised in Sivungaq (Savoonga) on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. She now lives in Nome and has been the Director of the Eskimo Walrus Commission (EWC) with Kawerak, Inc. since 2002. She works to promote local community participation in research that involves a community's natural and cultural resources. As the EWC Director and with support of the Commission, she has begun several community-based projects documenting local traditional ecological knowledge and resource management practices.

### **Lars Anders Baer**

Lars Anders Baer is a reindeer herder and President of the Swedish Saami Parliament. He is also the Arctic representative at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Lars has been a key figure in the Saami Council since the mid 1970s and has been active in the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations since 1983. Between 1987 and 1989, when ILO revised Convention No. 107 and replaced it with the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169) adopted in June 1989, Mr. Baer was involved in this work both as an NGO-representative and an expert in the governmental delegation. He is also involved in indigenous-related matters at the World Intellectual Property Organization and UNESCO, and has been a research fellow at the Nordic Sámi Institute, Kautokeino, Norway and a visiting researcher at the University of Finnish Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland.

### **Svetlana Semenova**

Svetlana Semenova has PhD in pedagogy with a major in indigenous education. Currently she is the Head of the Federal State Institute of Nationalities' Schools of the Republic of Saha-Yakutiya.

### **Louis Tapardjuk**

Louis Tapardjuk was born on January 30, 1953 in an igloo out on the sea ice near Igloodik, Nunavut where he later became Councillor and Mayor. Louis was elected to the 2nd Nunavut Legislature in the 2004 Territorial Elections. He was subsequently elected to Cabinet by his colleagues and was appointed as Minister of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth (CLEY) and Minister of Human Resources (HR). He has been very outspoken on Inuit Culture and Language and is acknowledged to be the spokesperson for Inuit on the issue by his contemporaries. As

Minister, he was responsible for the recent passing of the Inuit Language Protection Act for Nunavut.

## **Ole Henrik Magga**

Ole Henrik Magga is Professor of Sámi linguistics at Sámi allaskuvla (The Saami University College) in Guovdageaidnu (Kautokeino), Norway. He has a broad experience in Sámi and indigenous peoples' issues through his active involvement in the Saami movement for more than 30 years. He has been a member of numerous committees and commissions on Saami issues. He has been member of the Sámi Council 1976-78, chairman of The Norwegian Sámi Association (NSR) 1980-85 and the years 1989-97 he was the first president of The Sámi Parliament in Norway. On the national level he has been a member of The Freedom of Speech Commission in 1996-99 and The Mjoes-commission on higher education in 1998-2000. In 2001 he became a member of the Board of The Administration of the Courts in Norway. He has been active in the international indigenous movement for several decades and has participated in numerous meetings and conferences on indigenous questions. He was a delegate to the founding conference of The World Council of Indigenous Peoples in 1975. His other international engagements include membership of the Norwegian delegation to United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro 1992. In 1992-1995 he served as a member of the World Commission of Culture and Development (UN/UNESCO) chaired by Perez de Cuéllar. In 2002 he became the first chairman of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.