

Protecting environment his life's work

Andy Carpenter has been recognized for a lifetime of dedication to sustaining the wildlife and environment of the Inuvialuit region. The National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF) has named him as the recipient of its Environment Achievement Award for 2005. Carpenter, now in his 70s, has held many positions of leadership over the years and has been an advocate for protective measures for the land and wildlife of the north as the oil industry and other southern interests became established there.

Donna Kaogak can recall her father's involvement in issues pertaining to the land since her childhood days.

"I can remember missing him because he was away a lot, and at the time that upset me. But now, as an adult, I understand that the work he was doing benefited us all, and I am so proud of him," she said. Her father was a full-time trapper and a hunter and helped the whole region in regards to the animals and the environment in general.

"We hunted traditionally to take only enough meat for our families. When quota systems came in he worked hard to ensure we still had enough for ourselves but the wildlife was protected." In the 1970s, he became head of the Sachs Harbour Hunters and Trappers Committee and was a driving force in the establishment of an agreement between the community, the government of Canada and the private sector that limited industrial activities to the winter months. This became the basis for the Territorial Land Use Regulations, which include rules about clearing lines, trails, rights-of-way, and campsites, to name just a few.

Kaogak said her father also helped to establish the Aulavik National Park on the north end of Banks Island, which protects more than 12,000 square

kilometres of Arctic lowlands. The area is home to both the endangered Peary caribou and to the highest density of muskoxen in the world. "And he was instrumental in establishing the Ivvavik National Park as well, the first Canadian national park legislated by a land claim agreement," she said. The park includes some of the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd and covers the Northern Yukon and Mackenzie Delta natural regions.

"Once an area is declared a national park there is a lot more protection from non-Native activities so those areas are preserved. Dad worked with others in the community to ensure that we could still go in there and hunt for our subsistence."

Carpenter was active in the conservation of polar bears, guaranteeing their continued existence while protecting them from excessive sport hunting.

"Hunters who come in from the south generate a lot of income into our community but we needed to strike a balance to ensure their sustainability," she said.

The International Polar Bear Management Agreement between the Inuvialuit and Alaskan Inupiat, as well as Denmark, Norway and the former USSR, was signed in Oslo, Norway in 1973 and forms an action plan for polar bear sustainability.



DEBORA STEEL

Andy Carpenter, this year's winner of a National Aboriginal Achievement Award in the environment category.

Carpenter's family has followed in his footsteps as son Larry has become chair of the Wildlife Management Advisory Council for the Northwest Territories and is former chair of the local game council. "There are five boys and three girls in our family. We're all concerned with the issues that were his life's work," she said, adding that she has served as chair of the Inuvik community corporation for six years, as well as on various boards of directors.

Over the years, Carpenter has acquired an impressive array of awards, including the Parks Canada Annual Heritage Award, the Ducks Unlimited Canvasback Award, the Fisheries and Wildlife Regional Directors Commendation Award, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference Bill Edmunds Award, and the Roland

Michener Conservation Award, to name just a few. All recognize a common thread of outstanding commitment to conservation through activities that promote and further the protection of Canada's natural resources.

Duane Smith nominated Carpenter for the prestigious NAAF award. He is chair of the Inuvik Community Corporation and also president of Inuit Circumpolar Conference Canada, representing the Canadian Inuit.

"It was a lifelong goal of Andy's to get the people of this region recognized and to have a say in the activities that affected them. That's what caused me to suggest the award should go to him," he said. "He sacrificed a lot of time and commitment, starting in the 1960s. He and his wife Winnie, along with all Indigenous northerners, began to notice the ever-increasing presence of the oil industry that was appearing without any consultation with us, the land holders, and he knew that had to change."

Smith says all of Canada owes a great deal to Carpenter, who was one of the motivators responsible for getting Aboriginal people recognized for their involvement and contribution to the co-management of wildlife. "The Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), which he helped to negotiate in Ottawa, was the first comprehensive one in the Arctic. Most other land claims in the area are fashioned after this first historic one," he said. The basic goals expressed by the Inuvialuit and recognized by Canada in the IFA were to preserve Inuvialuit cultural identity and values within a changing northern society; to enable the Inuvialuit to be equal and meaningful participants in the northern and national economy and society; and to protect and preserve the Arctic wildlife environment and biological productivity. Land, harvesting rights and financial

compensation are the three fundamental areas essential for achieving these goals and ensuring future Inuvialuit success, self-reliance, and pride. Carpenter painstakingly worked through each and every clause of this agreement for countless months and numerous meetings till he was satisfied that the Indigenous people of the area were protected and recognized.

Nellie Cournoyea said Carpenter is a very caring individual whose first priorities are family and community. "Everything he works on he gives 150 per cent effort. He represented the Inuvialuit in very difficult negotiations for the Final Agreement, keeping the team together. But all through his life he has been a very stabilizing force," she said. "He is self-educated, and despite having only a Grade 5 formal education, he is at the top of the class in terms of knowledge about the environment." Carpenter led the way in terms of productivity on his trapline as he met goals unreachable for most people, with traplines more than 200 miles long.

"When you rely on the land, and it's important for your livelihood, you look after it. He greatly values the land and he knows what he's talking about when he speaks about the environment," said Cournoyea, who is chair and chief executive officer of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, which is composed of six community corporations from the Inuvialuit communities of Inuvik, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour, Holman and Paulatuk.

"We all rely on him to give us good council as he is one of the most common-sense people in our community," concluded Cournoyea. "We are lucky to have him and we are proud that the NAAF award has recognized him."

By Heather Andrews
Miller