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10<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY, 9<sup>TH</sup> SESSION

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# Canada

## Make world aware of trek, mayor says

IQALUIT, N.W.T. — People outside the Arctic must be reminded of the significance of the 2,500-km Qitdlarsuaq dog sled expedition from Baffin Island to Greenland which finished on the weekend, says Andy Theriault, mayor of this town of 2,800.

The expedition, which left Igloolik March 6, retraced the route of the last great Inuit migration from Baffin Island to northwestern Greenland, taken by the shaman, Qutdlarsuaq, and 40 of his kin 125 years ago.

"The sad thing is that if this had been done by Americans instead of local residents, it would have been on the CBC National every night," says Theriault. "As it is, the only guy who seems to be following the journey is from Edmonton."

The journey is a symbol of Canadian northern sovereignty, he says.

Theriault was one of the people whose last-minute appeals in early March convinced defence minister Perrin Beatty to promise the five adventurers and their 40 dogs a flight home from Greenland on a military supply plane

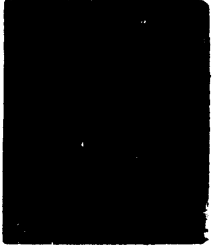
"I don't think we appreciate yet the historical and cultural

value of this trip," said Theriault, who is also manager of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for the Baffin Island region. Noting that the expedition includes four Baffin-area residents, three of them Inuit, Theriault says that "people in every community are sharing in the pride," of the journey.

The Journal co-sponsored the expedition. A Journal reporter joined the sledgers on an earlier stretch between the Baffin Island communities of Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay.

The expedition members, meanwhile, are enjoying a warm welcome among the 400 Polar Eskimos who live in the traditional hunting community of Qanaq, Greenland. It is their ancestors that the Baffin Island Inuit saved after an epidemic had wiped out the Greenlanders' elders and left the young without the hunting skills needed to survive.

"Everyone smiles at us on the street," said expedition leader Renee Wissink in a telephone interview. "People have been fantastic, taking us in and feeding us. I don't know how many gallons of tea we've drunk."



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# AN EPIC ARCTIC

## SPECIAL REPORT

**P**itched alongside a sheltering cliff, the tiny campsite on the frozen sea of Maxwell Bay in the Canadian Arctic was only a speck in the seemingly endless expanse of polar ice. Inside a pair of tents on the southern edge of Devon Island, five Canadian adventurers paused at the halfway mark of an 1,800-mile northern trek to await the arrival of a Twin Otter aircraft bringing supplies of seal meat for their 44 sled dogs. The purpose of the gruelling journey: to retrace the route followed by Qitdlak, an Inuit shaman who led the last recorded migration of Baffin Island Inuit to the northern coast of Greenland 125 years ago.

The campsite provided a respite from the  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  temperatures and the physical strain of driving dogsleds across heavily ridged ice. But the delay in late April was still in some ways an

unwelcome interruption. With each passing day the winter ice in Smith Sound, separating Canada from Greenland, continued to break up, potentially forcing the group to plot a path ever farther north in case they were forced to seek solid sea ice for a safe crossing.

**Symbolic:** For expedition organizer Renée Wissink and his four companions, the dangers of the trek were obscured by its challenge and symbolic value. Setting out from Igloolik on March 6, the group last week arrived at Grise Fiord, at the southern end of Ellesmere Island, Canada's northernmost Inuit community. In the final stages of the 17-day march from Arctic Bay, the expedition had been travelling at night. The night sky in spring is almost as bright as in the daytime, but the snow underfoot is firmer at night. "It is also a more beautiful time to travel because of the changing

light," said Ottawa photographer and wilderness tour operator Michael Beedell, a member of the expedition. While resting at Grise Fiord, the team planned the journey's next leg—north on Ellesmere Island toward Pim Island, where they hoped to make the crossing to Greenland later this month.

The purpose of the arduous journey was twofold. By recreating Qitdlak's epic journey, the expedition members hoped to draw attention to the achievement of a little-known northern pathfinder. But they also viewed the expedition as demonstrating Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, by underlining the fact that northern routes across the frozen sea have been travelled by the Inuit for centuries.

**Link:** That, in turn, supports Canada's contention that the arctic waterways—frozen and used like land for



# ARCTIC JOURNEY

much of the year—should have a special territorial status in international law. "We are not rich kids out for a lark," said Wissink, a former high-school social sciences teacher from St. Thomas, Ont., who fell in love with the Arctic from afar as a child and became a schoolteacher, first in Frobisher Bay and then in Igloolik. Now he is a tour outfitter and breeds Canadian Eskimo dogs—a rugged breed used by the Inuit for centuries—in Igloolik. "We are explorers dedicated to traditional ways of travel in the Arctic who are proud to be Canadians and believe in asserting a Canadian presence up here."

**Luck:** In fact, the expedition took place at a time of renewed interest—and controversy—over the future of Canada's arctic domain. Since August, 1985, when the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker Polar Sea sailed the Northwest Passage without Canada's per-

mission, Ottawa has sought to strengthen its claim to sovereignty over the region. Now there are signs that Washington may be willing to extend limited recognition—but only in return for freedom of movement for the U.S. navy in the arctic waters claimed by Canada. That prospect contributed to growing fears that strategic considerations could make the Arctic a future battleground. Faced with suspected incursions by Soviet—and U.S.—nuclear submarines in arctic waters, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government now is considering the acquisition of as many as 10 nuclear-powered submarines for the Canadian navy.

At the same time, the Arctic's economic fortunes have been severely shaken by the international boycott of seal pelts and the decline in petroleum exploration and development in the re-

gion. Luckily, the slump has been partly offset by a resurgent interest in the North that is prompting growing numbers of southerners—including flamboyant adventurers as well as ordinary tourists—to explore Canada's last frontier (page 28). Still, the sluggishness of the Arctic's resource-based economy has also served to focus attention on Canada's social and administrative record in the Arctic—a record that some critics compare unfavorably with that of other northern nations (page 30).

**Stark:** But for Wissink and his fellow expedition members, their lonely journey provided an ideal opportunity to assert Canada's presence in the desolate but starkly beautiful region. One month into their journey, expedition members symbolically planted a Canadian flag in the heavily ridged ice of Lancaster Sound, at the eastern en-

PHOTO BY GUY W. LORENZ



A tea break in the snow; Mike Immaroitok (below): commemorating a northern pathfinder while asserting Canada's claims

trance to the disputed Northwest Passage. Said Wissink: "It was our way of saying that this is a pretty important piece of real estate, and we have to stand up for it."

Few arctic expeditions in modern times have taken on a physical challenge as severe as that faced by the members of the expedition memorializing *Qitdlarssuaq*—the term means Qitdlak the Great in the Inuktitut tongue. In a three-month odyssey the group planned to travel from Baffin Island to Greenland by dogsled, a journey that took Qitdlak six years to complete. At times the trek has been nightmarishly difficult. Expedition members had to manhandle their three 1,000-lb. sleds across dangerous terrain littered with boulders and around 10-foot-high ridges of ice on Lancaster Sound.

**Break:** When the time comes to make the crossing to Greenland, the group will have to contend with the perils of shifting sea ice as the winter

cold recedes and ice, in slabs six feet thick, begins to break up. And at all times expedition members have to be alert to the presence of the huge and lethally dangerous polar bears, which provoked fights with their dogs during the first half of the trip.

**Trek:** But the five expedition members are well-prepared for traditional arctic travel. In addition to Wissink, 28, the trekkers are: Beedell, 30, who has travelled extensively throughout the Arctic, and three Inuit residents of Igloodik—Theo Ikummaq, 32, a former arctic wildlife officer and a great-great-nephew of Qitdlarssuaq; Paul Apak, 32, another of Qitdlarssuaq's descendants and an Inuit Broadcasting Corp. tele-

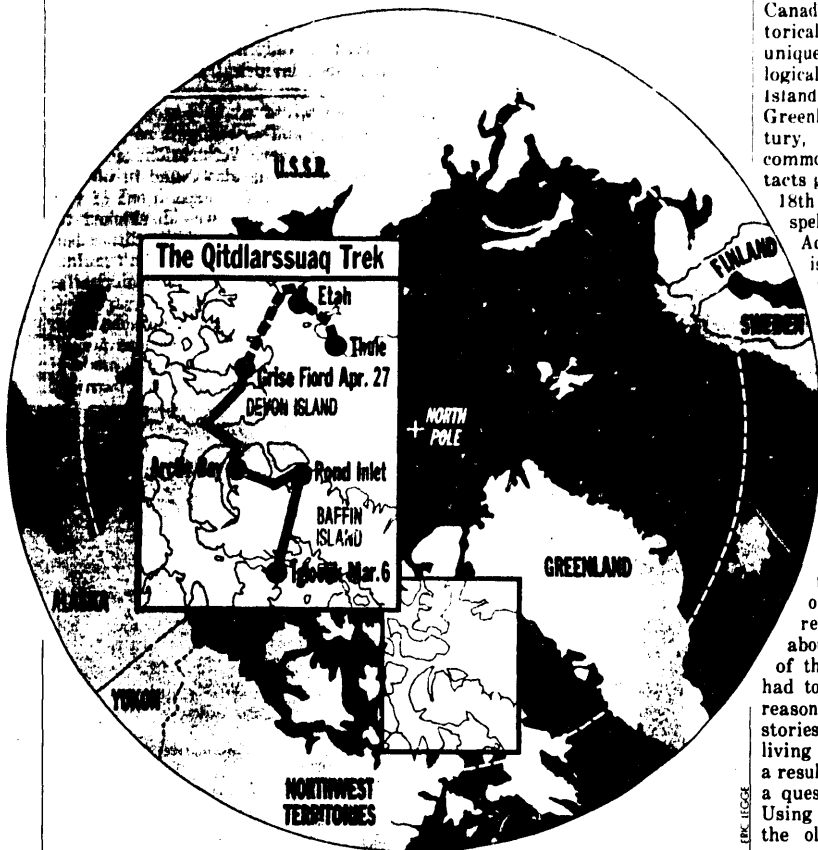
vision cameraman who is recording the journey on videotape; and Mike Immaroitok, 18, a nephew of Ikummaq's and a dog driver.

The journey was conceived last summer by Wissink. He and his team subsequently raised \$35,000 to finance the

expedition, with a \$10,000 grant from Ottawa, \$11,000 from the Northwest Territories government, \$10,000 from the Baffin Tourism Association and contributions from private Canadian organizations and firms. Said Wissink, a respected arctic adventurer who has trekked widely in Baffin: "I wanted a commemorative trip that could be done by dogsled and that had a strong Canadian identity. The *Qitdlarssuaq*



## THE CIRCUMPOLAR LANDS



Paul Apak working on sled: dedicated to the traditional ways of arctic travel

Expedition met both those criteria."

**Historic:** Qitdlak's journey from the Canadian Arctic to Greenland had historical significance, but it was not unique. Anthropological and archeological records suggest that the Baffin Island Inuit had been travelling to Greenland as far back as the 12th century, and the two groups shared a common maritime culture. Those contacts gradually ended in the 17th and 18th centuries, when severe cold spells prohibited extensive travel. According to anthropologists, the isolation of the Inuit of northwestern Greenland caused them to become inbred and enfeebled—to the point where they may have faced extinction.

In the meantime social pressures in Baffin Island had persuaded Qitdlak to begin his journey. According to a traditional belief among the Inuit, the outbreak of a bloody intertribal feud near Pond Inlet on northern Baffin Island in the middle 1850s forced Qitdlak to flee from avenging relatives. According to another theory, Qitdlak, as a shaman, or religious leader, had brought about the deaths of some members of the community and consequently had to flee for his life. Whatever the reasons, Qitdlak had apparently heard stories of a small community of Inuit living across the sea in Greenland. As a result, he turned his forced exile into a quest for his people's overseas kin. Using his ample powers of persuasion, the old man rallied 38 followers—many of them women and children—to join him.

**Back:** Qitdlak's long march was punctuated by peril and tragedy. After two years of hardship 24 members of the expedition rebelled against Qitdlak and turned back. But according to oral legend, Qitdlak was a leader with "a flame burning above his head, so great was his might," and in the early 1860s he succeeded in leading the remaining members of his band across Smith Sound into Greenland. There, near Etah, they met hunters from a tribe of Polar Inuit. The two groups lived together, sharing knowledge on hunting techniques, clothing and igloo construction. According to historians, that cultural exchange—and the new blood injected by the visitors from Baffin Island—may well have helped to prevent the Inuit of northwestern Greenland from dying out.

After six years there Qitdlak decided that the time had come to return home. Once again, he set out with followers. But Qitdlak died during the first winter. After battling famine and

ERIC LECHE  
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL BRETEL

# A FEEL FOR LIVING

**A**s a boy of 11, Theo Ikummaq left his native community of Igloodik and went to live in a wilderness encampment 140 miles away, where his brother Emile's nine-member family and two other families survived by hunting and fishing. In the tiny outpost, Ikummaq learned how to build igloos and travel by dogsled over the rugged arctic terrain. As a result, he is now equipped to pass on to younger Inuit some of the traditional skills that are rapidly fading from his people's cul-



*Ikummaq: linking an arctic heritage to the modern world*

tural memory. But Ikummaq says that he is worried that many young Inuit may not be interested. "In the last 30 years," he told *Maclean's*, "we have gone from the Stone Age to the middle ages to the space age. Now the younger people are introduced to the school system at an early age. That is good, but they don't have a feel for the culture that my generation does. And there are going to be fewer and fewer young people who care. That is how cultures are lost."

Despite that fear, Ikummaq and the other members of the Qitdlarsuaq Expedition have discovered that curiosity about Inuit traditions can readily

be reawakened. When the expedition arrived at Arctic Bay on April 5, Inuit children and teenagers—who are more accustomed to rock music and snowmobiles—were fascinated by the sight of genuine dogsleds. That was gratifying for Ikummaq, 32, a former wildlife officer with the Northwest Territories government. Ikummaq, who holds a degree in renewable resource technologies from Thebacha College in Fort Smith, N.W.T., left the service nine months ago to return to the subsistence lifestyle he mastered as a teenager. Said Ikummaq: "The kids have lost interest in their past, but because they see us as young people we have a chance to sell them on our keenness for this way of life."

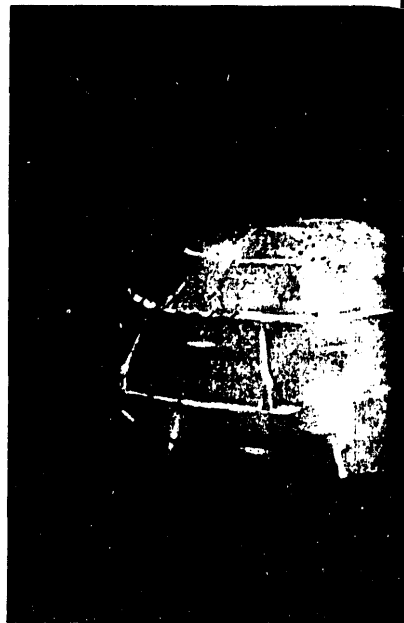
**Roots:** Ikummaq himself is a man with roots in his own cultural heritage, as well as a keen awareness of the modern world. A descendant of both the Greenland and Baffin Island branches of Qitdlak's family, Ikummaq attended a boarding school at Chesterfield Inlet, on the west coast of Hudson Bay, before going to live with his brother's family. In the outpost camp, Ikummaq kept in touch with the outside world by reading *National Geographic* magazines and listening to shortwave radio. Later, a teacher in Igloodik encouraged Ikummaq to go back to school and earn a diploma in renewable resources.

Ikummaq brought both skill and enthusiasm to the expedition. An expert dogsled driver, he admits that "I love bashing the sled against those ice ridges." When the trek is over, Ikummaq will likely try to set up a tour outfitting business, as did his brother Emile, who has already taken several wealthy Americans on arctic dogsled excursions. Still, Ikummaq says that he is happy when he is alone, pushing his dogs to an even greater pace in the grandeur of his arctic homeland.

—BRUCE WALLACE in Maxwell Bay

resorting to cannibalism, the surviving members gave up and returned to Greenland the next year.

The story of Qitdlak has been preserved not only in Inuit legend, but in European historical accounts as well. In 1908 Danish explorer Knud Rasmussen wrote of an encounter with survivors and descendants of the shaman's journey. Verification of Qitdlak's journey is also found in official chronicles of arctic expeditions of the day. One of those was dispatched to search for the ill-fated expedition led by British explorer Sir John Franklin, which had vanished in 1845 during a search for the Northwest Passage. Diaries from the period, which describe contact with Qitdlak at various points along his route, have enabled modern historians to plot his band's journey.



Said Alan Cooke, director of Montreal's Hochelaga Research Institute, a northern documentation centre: "It is a great detective story. It is the only migration of its time for which we can relate the historical record to the oral tradition."

**Skin:** In their re-creation of the shaman's march across the ice, Wissink and his team have paid close attention to historical detail. The clothes worn by expedition members are largely handmade, from sealskin boots to caribou pants and mittens. The team is travelling in the traditional Inuit manner, aboard sleds—or *komatiq*—laden with walrus and seal meat for the dogs who pull them. Said Ikummaq: "When we pull into a village, the kids are real-

ly excited by the dogs and sleds. We hope our trip can get the kids interested in their heritage."

Still, there are concessions to modern times. In the first stages of the expedition members slept in igloos built by Ikummaq. But after the expert igloo-builder strained his back hauling a sled over the ice, they decided to use their tents instead. As well, Beedell's sled is loaded with camera equipment. The author of *The Magnetic North*, a book of photographs taken on his numerous wilderness expeditions, Beedell is also recording this journey in pictures. To cope with the monotony of the miles of endless arctic whiteness, some members of the expedition listen to music—"everything from rock to mellow stuff," said Beedell—on their Sony Walkmans. And for meals, expedition members often



heat up freeze-dried packages of beef bourguignon or chili con carne.

Modern amenities did not soften the numbing shock of the  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  temperatures that greeted the group when the winds picked up on their second day out from Igloolik. Beedell's fingertips froze as he tried to use his camera. That did not prevent Beedell from delighting his comrades with an April Fool's Day stunt that defied the sub-zero temperatures. Propping a sled against an outcropping of ice, Beedell stripped naked in the  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  weather and pretended to dive off the sled into the snow. Said Dr. James Howe, an Ottawa physician and runner who has competed in the annual Midnight Sun Marathon in northern Baffin Island

and who has been Beedell's doctor since infancy: "Mike is one of the few people in the world who went after what he wanted to do and did it when a lot of people told him he was crazy."

Travelling in cold but generally clear weather conditions—except for a treacherous whiteout—the expedition

ice creaking and groaning beneath them. But the greatest challenge was propelling the heavy komatiq over the ice ridges. "The pressure ridges are stacked like dominoes, some as many as 50 feet high," said Beedell, who bruised both his knees falling from his sled as it swerved off an ice ridge.



**Igloo (centre); checking the dogs' harness: travelling until the dogs become tired**

completed the first 250-mile leg of its journey to Pond Inlet by March 23. Then, after a northwestern trek of roughly the same distance to Arctic Bay, the team struck out on the more dangerous portion of the trip across Lancaster Sound on April 9.

**Knees:** With the arctic summer on its way, expedition members heard the

"And the komatiq get bent out of shape from repeatedly smacking against the ice."

An even deadlier threat came in the form of hungry polar bears who regularly investigated the expedition's camps. The Lancaster Sound crossing cut across a haunt of polar bears. When the bears came too close, expedi-

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL BEEDLL



# DISPUTED CLAIMS IN THE NORTH

tion members scared them off by firing round rubber pellets into the bear's flank from a 12-gauge shotgun. Said Ikumnaq: "Bears don't scare easily. But I am not afraid of bears." As well, the excited barking of the expedition's dogs served as a reliable warning of approaching bears.

The sturdy dogs also proved themselves capable of pulling the komatig for long hours under tough conditions. Said Beedell: "We do a lot of screaming and yavng and ranting at the dogs during the day. But they are working animals who are happy as hell just hauling their guts out hour after hour." Impressed by their endurance, Beedell was able to overlook some of the dogs' more mischievous acts, such as eating his caribou mitts or trying to steal his caribou pants from the tent. As the arctic daylight lengthened toward almost 24 hours daily during late April, the dogs' staying power began to dictate the distances to be travelled each day. "We go until the dogs get tired," said Wissink.

**Link:** Despite occasionally frayed tempers and nagging minor injuries, the group expected to reach Etah by the end of May. Along the way, the trekkers planned to cross Makinson Inlet, where many of Qitdlak's followers starved to death during the attempt to return to Baffin Island, and a more northerly location, where Qitdlak is believed to be buried. Although Qitdlak's descendant Ikumnaq claims to feel no special spiritual affinity with his ancestor, Beedell expects a linkage to grow. "Knowing you are passing spots where people starved to death, or where Qitdlak is buried, is sure to be eerie," he said.

The expedition members say they hope that their trek may have a more lasting impact by reminding Canadians of the importance of their northern heritage. Like other southerners who have fallen under the spell of the Arctic, Beedell says he worries that unless Canada acts to strengthen its presence in the Arctic, real sovereignty over the area could slip from its grasp. At the same time, he sees in the Arctic abundant opportunities for Canada to build constructively for the future. "More and more North Americans," noted Beedell, "are becoming aware of wilderness travel in the Arctic, and the Arctic needs those tourist dollars. Canada has a chance to be a showcase to the world on how to preserve a wilderness." For Canadians, the importance of the Qitdlarsuaq expedition may be the vivid reminder that it provides of the fact that mastery of the Arctic is a prize well worth winning—and keeping.

—BRUCE WALLACE in Maxwell Bay

**S**eventy-five years ago, when vast areas of Canada's Arctic remained unmapped and only loosely claimed, explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson began raising money in the United States to finance a major expedition to the Canadian Arctic. Stefansson, an American born of Icelandic parents near Gimli, Man., was following a familiar pattern in 1912. Then, and for decades before that, the Arctic's islands and icy waters were dominated by adventurous American and European navigators, whalers and cross-country explorers who were often sponsored by their governments. That activity provoked growing concern in distant Ottawa, where politicians were preoccupied with consolidating control over a vast but thinly populated land and with establishing a navy to guard Canada's coasts.

**Presence:** Foreign domination of the Far North had persisted even after the Arctic mainland became part of Canada in 1870 and Britain nominally ceded the arctic islands to Ottawa in 1880. During the first decade of the new century, when the Royal North-West Mounted Police finally established an official Canadian presence on the Arctic's mainland shore, it was Norwegian Roald Amundsen who completed the first voyage through the Northwest Passage and American Admiral Robert Peary, on a trek from Ellesmere Island, who first reached the North Pole. Those foreign ventures testified to Canada's tenuous grip on a polar hinterland that Stefansson accurately predicted would prove to hold both mineral wealth and strategic importance.

But before Stefansson set out in June, 1913, on an epic journey of discovery that was to last five years, Canada at last exerted its sovereign claim over the high Arctic in a practical manner—by taking over the sponsorship of his venture. When Stefansson asked Ottawa to round out his \$75,000 expedition budget with a \$5,000 grant, then-prime minister Robert Borden—as the 1913 *Canadian Annual Review* relates—"took the view that it should be a Canadian expedition entirely and this was accordingly arranged."

As a result, previously unknown is-

lands discovered by Stefansson were claimed for Canada and later named for Canadian leaders, including Borden, Arthur Meighen and Mackenzie King. Since then successive federal governments have tried to reinforce sovereignty claims by investing spo-



radically in the Arctic's use, including resource development, law enforcement, exploration and tourism.

**Sparse:** Still, the Canadian arctic presence remains sparse, scattered and often transient. The 1986 census figures released last month show that the Northwest Territories and the Yukon—more than one-third of Canada's land—have only 75,742 residents. Only about 15,000 of them live in the Arctic. And after 75 years of fitful attempts by Ottawa to buy an arctic presence, the region remains remote from Cana-

dian society. Now the federal government is preoccupied by attempts to affirm sovereignty over the waters between the arctic islands, and notably the Northwest Passage.

That disputed claim, says External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, is Canada's "one pure sovereignty issue of truly major proportions." At a meeting of the House of Commons defence committee last week, Clark said that at present the major threat to Canadian sovereignty "comes from our friends, the United States." He said that the defiant 1985 voyage of the U.S. Coast Guard icebreaker *Polar Sea* through the Northwest Passage "brought home to all of us, in a shocking way, the

Command pact with Washington—the upgrading of five northern landing strips for jet fighters. As well, Clark confirmed last week that the federal cabinet is actively considering the purchase of a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for surveillance in the Arctic, where U.S. and Soviet submarines already operate under ice-covered waters—the American boats with Ottawa's agreement under mutual defence arrangements.

**Demand:** Still, none of those programs ensures Canadian control or U.S. compliance with Canada's arctic waters claim—nor even with Ottawa's demand that Washington seek prior Canadian consent for each future sur-

Meanwhile, Ottawa continues to sponsor adventuring, cultural and political visits in the Arctic which federal officials conclude may generate publicity and reinforce Canadian claims to sovereignty. Sponsorships of the current Qitdlak expedition include \$10,000 in federal funds (page 22). A year ago Vancouver artist Toni Onley and Quebec poet Claude Pélouin took what Onley described as "a sovereignty trip" aboard the Canadian Coast Guard ship *Des Groseilliers*. The ship accompanied the ore carrier *Arctic* on its way to Nanisivik on northern Baffin Island in early June—the first time such a voyage had been attempted so early in the season. Recently, federal cabinet ministers have been visiting the Arctic at a rate of one visit every six weeks because, said one ministerial aide, "the government is very hot on sovereignty right now."

In order to provide maximum effect in support of sovereignty claims, such arctic ventures are designed to attract outside attention. Both Onley and Pélouin, as well as the Qitdlak trekkers, are publishing books on their experiences. But Federal Energy Minister Marcel Masse postponed indefinitely a proposed late-April visit to Canada's polar floating ice station—where scientists are conducting weather and ocean studies off Ellesmere Island—after news media organizations turned down invitations to accompany him. An aide cited "scheduling conflicts."

**Feature:** Ottawa's eagerness to generate publicity about its arctic activities has been a feature of its sovereignty programs since they began. More than 70 years ago there were fears in Ottawa that the federal investment in Stefansson's sovereignty expedition may have been wasted. Not only was his journey upstaged by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, but for months there was no word on his whereabouts.

Then, more than two years after Stefansson's departure, the government received his first report, relayed by travellers. It proved, says the 1915 *Canadian Annual Review*, "that he was alive after being for months given up as lost." The explorer's report told the relieved Ottawa sponsors "of hitherto unknown territory discovered in the far northern Beaufort Sea, of thrilling adventure and many privations and dangers." Although Stefansson was to fall out of official favor within 10 years—after enmeshing Ottawa in an international dispute by claiming a Soviet island for Canada—his discoveries remain one of Ottawa's most productive investments in arctic sovereignty.

—CARL MOLLINS with MARC CLARK and HILARY MACKENZIE in Ottawa



**Wissink flag-waving in Lancaster Sound: 'those waters are Canadian, period'**

reality that we cannot assert our dominion there with words alone."

To assert its claim, the Mulroney government has drawn a sovereignty line around the entire arctic archipelago in what Clark has declared was "a signal to the world at large that those waters are Canadian, period." At the same time, the government has ordered the construction of the world's biggest icebreaker and—under the North American Aerospace Defence

face voyage in the Canadian Arctic. Despite President Ronald Reagan's public undertaking in Ottawa last month to seek a solution to the impasse, Washington has shown no signs of retreating from its basic position. Washington insists that yielding to Canada's claim to exclusive control of the Northwest Passage might encourage comparable claims to similar shipping straits in the Pacific and Indian oceans and the Mediterranean Sea.

# POLAR DAREDEVILS

It was a busy time at the North Pole. On April 20 a chartered Twin Otter landed with a group of American tourists who posed for photos around a six-foot-high candy-striped pole brought along for the purpose. Less than three hours later, Shinji Kazama arrived at the Pole after riding and pushing his Yamaha motorcycle about 500 miles over the ice from Ward Hunt Island, off far-north Ellesmere Island. And on the same day, Japanese farmer Mitsuro Oba radioed for a rescue plane (which picked him up four days later) after he twice fell through sea ice up to his shoulders while he was six weeks into a solo hike toward northwestern Greenland.

After centuries of solitude, the Arctic is being invaded by a growing influx of visitors. April is becoming the region's season of polar madness, when milder weather and up to 24 hours of daylight provide ideal conditions for daredevil dashes to the Pole. A pair of dashing French adventurers who left Resolute aboard two ultralight aircraft were among the adventurers who set out for the Pole in April. But the annual flurry of spectacular stunts underscores a more fundamental change: increasingly, the Arctic is becoming a magnet for tourists, who are making their way to the Far North in growing numbers.

**Golf:** Tour operators catering to the tastes of affluent travellers are flying their customers to the Canadian North on pricey tours through the Northwest Territories and the high Arctic. Declared Robert Malott, chairman of the Chicago-based FMC Corp., after having his picture taken beside an American flag and whacking golf balls at the North Pole last month: "You meet interesting people up here. For one thing, you can eliminate the Miami Beach crowd right away."

With oil and gas exploration at a standstill in the Arctic, the expanding tourist business is taking place at an opportune time. One firm that runs tours to the Pole is Special Odysseys of Medina, Wash. "Most of our customers are not just looking for a high," said company president Frederick (Skip) Voorhees. "They have an intellectual curiosity about the Arctic."

But arctic travel is still an expensive proposition. American tourists on luxury excursions pay as much as \$13,000 to visit the Pole and drop in at remote arctic communities. More modestly priced tours are available. Ottawa's

Black Feather Wilderness Adventures Ltd. and Trail Head stores in Ottawa and Toronto offer two weeks of arctic hiking in Auyuittuq National Park on Baffin Island for \$1,150, not counting airfare to nearby Pangnirtung. They also offer a 23-day tour canoeing the Mara River and watching caribou and musk-oxen migrations in the central Arctic for \$3,495, excluding travel to

total of \$90 million in the Yukon. In the Northwest Territories the flow of tourists has grown to roughly 52,000 visitors in 1986 from only about 25,000 a year in the late 1970s, with about 12,300 of those in 1986 actually travelling north of the Arctic Circle.

**Nike:** Travellers to the Arctic are drawn by the spirit of adventure and some of the world's last unsullied



*Kazama: spectacular stunts as growing numbers of tourists visit the Arctic*

Yellowknife, N.W.T. "Travel to the Arctic is increasing," said Wendy Grater of Black Feather. "But it's more expensive to fly to Yellowknife from Toronto than to London, England." Return fares between Montreal and Pangnirtung vary from about \$500 to almost \$1,200, depending on the season, routing and the advance booking notice—roughly double the rates between Montreal and Regina.

**Raft:** In the meantime, the opening of the Dempster Highway from Dawson City in the Yukon to Inuvik in the western Arctic eight years ago has proved to be a catalyst for growth in northern tourism. Drawn by the spectacular scenery, fishing, and rafting expeditions on Yukon rivers, visitors last year made about 1,800 trips along the Dempster and spent an estimated

wilderness. The region also has its own elusive and spectacular beauty. Nancy Clark-Kingston, a Pickering, Ont., schoolteacher, first went hiking in Baffin Island's Auyuittuq National Park in 1981. "The light was always changing," recalled Clark-Kingston. "One moment we were lying on our backs under a blue sky and the next we had drizzle that made the rocks icy and slippery. Then we turned into a valley with gorgeous purple flowers. The experience really becomes part of you, something you never forget." It can become habit-forming as well. Clark-Kingston says that she hopes to return to the Arctic with her husband and two young sons as soon as the boys are old enough.

—MARK NICHOLS with BRUCE WALLACE in Resolute

**S**cattered across the top of the globe, the circumpolar peoples have survived for centuries in some of the earth's most inhospitable terrain and harshest climates. Increasingly now, the distinctive northern natives must also contend with man-made adversities that threaten their cultural heritage—and in some cases their very existence. While the hazards of economic exploitation and environmental destruction menace all the arctic peoples, some appear to be faring better than others. That, at least, is the view of author Farley Mowat, who first wrote about the Arctic 35 years ago and has championed the cause of Canada's northern peoples ever since. After travelling in the circumpolar world last year, Mowat is most optimistic about countries where native peoples have a degree of control. By that standard, Mowat judged the Greenland Inuit to be the most advanced, while—for all of Moscow's poor human rights record—"the Soviet North is not far behind."

**Focus:** The circumpolar world was the focus of a project that took a Canadian film crew on a journey that began last year in Alaska and continued through Norway, Sweden, the Soviet Union, Greenland and the Canadian North. Led by Toronto producer-director Andrew Thomson, the crew shot footage for a two-hour film that will be narrated by Mowat and aired on the CTV network next winter. Mowat says that the experience left him in a pessimistic mood about the future of Canada's arctic people. In Canada, he told *Maclean's*, "we have always exploited the North as though it were a foreign territory. What we have done over the years is to ignore our aboriginal people except insofar as they could be usefully employed, and to do the minimum for them that you have to do so that you won't be accused of cultural genocide."

In contrast to that, Mowat and



Samí child with reindeer: threatened by the hazards of civilization

## CIRCUMPOLAR CONTRASTS

Thomson praised Soviet planners for building a permanent Siberian society in which both native peoples and transplanted southerners could participate. Thomson's crew filmed extensively in and around the city of Pevek, which grew from a onetime prison camp to become a major town in Siberia's far-eastern Chukotska region. Economically, the community is supported by a placer-gold-mining operation nearby. "The rationale for development," said Mowat, "is to use some of the proceeds of that gold to establish a complete community. The Soviets treat resources as magnets that will draw people and keep them there."

The Canadian visitors were equally impressed by the Siberian style of life. At a camp near Pevek, Chukchi tribesmen appeared to have the best of two

worlds. As highly paid reindeer herders, the Chukchi follow their traditional ways, living in reindeer-skin tents and eating dried reindeer meat with utensils made of reindeer bone. At the same time, modern apartments are provided for winter quarters, as well as boarding schools for the herders' children. "The native people are cared for," said Thomson, "in a way that I've never seen in the Canadian Arctic."

**Future:** For Mowat, the future of Greenland offers an even more exciting prospect. As Danish citizens, Greenland's predominantly Inuit population of 50,000—almost double Canada's—is fighting to overcome a legacy of alcoholism, suicide and social dislocation brought about by rapid urbanization during the 1970s. Granted internal self-rule by Denmark in 1979, the Greenlanders are now working to restore the basic elements of traditional Inuit life. Political pressures are also building for full independence. Said Mowat: "I think Greenland is the only place in the arctic regions where a small indigenous people have a chance of making it on their own."

Still, no arctic region is immune to the often deadly side effects of industrial civilization. When the film crew visited Are, Sweden, for a gathering of the Sami people, who herd reindeer across northern Scandinavia, a critical issue was the contamination of large areas of pastureland by radioactive fallout from the April, 1986, Soviet nuclear reactor disaster at Chernobyl. In the meantime, Mowat believes that with global population pressures building, it is time for Canadians to reconsider their approach to the Arctic. "The question," said Mowat, "is whether we are just going to use our North as a grab bag, or whether we are going to say, this could be a place for us to live—and the people who are already there."

—MARK NICHOLS in Toronto