

Mary May Simon
President, Inuit Tapiriit

Mary May Simon was born in Kangirsualuujuaq (George River) in Nunavik (Northern Quebec). She was the Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade from 1994 to 2003. Ms. Simon was the Canadian Ambassador to Denmark (1999-2001) concurrently during her Circumpolar position, a member of the Joint Public Advisory Committee of NAFTA's Commission on Environmental Cooperation;(1997-2000), and was;the chairperson from 1997-98. Ms. Simon was the Chancellor of Trent University (1995 to 1999). In 2001, she was appointed Councillor for the International Council for Conflict Resolution with the Carter Center.

Ms. Simon has devoted her life's work towards gaining further recognition of Aboriginal rights and to promoting the study of Northern affairs. She began her career with the CBC Northern Service as a producer and announcer. She was subsequently elected Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association (1976-1978). From 1978-1985, Ms. Simon was elected 1st Vice-President and then President of the Makivik Corporation;and went on to hold a number of positions with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Canada's National Inuit Organization. For 14 years (1980-1994), she served as Executive Council Member, President and Special Envoy of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

Mary Simon was one of the senior Inuit negotiators during the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution as well as the First Minister Meetings (FMM) that took in the 1980's and the Charlottetown Accord.; Ms. Simon also served as a member of the Nunavut Implementation Commission in 1993 until her appointment as Circumpolar Ambassador.

In 1980, as Executive Council Member for the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), she assisted in the efforts to obtain approval from the Russian Government to enable the Inuit of Chukotka to participate in the work of the ICC. In 1986, when Ms. Simon was elected President of ICC, she led a delegation of Canadian, Alaskan and Greenland Inuit to Moscow and then to Chukotka to meet with Russian Officials as well as the Inuit of the Far East of Russia .The Following year the ICC was successful in securing agreement for the Russian Inuit to attend the next ICC General Assembly which was held in Alaska in 1989.

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 was instructed by the Government of Canada to take the lead in negotiating an eight country council, which is now known as the Arctic Council. This Council was established in 1996 and includes the active participation of the indigenous peoples of the Circumpolar Region. 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 7 other Arctic Countries, including Russia.

Mary Simon has received many honours for her leadership in developing strategies for Aboriginal and Northern affairs. 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. She is a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America and of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society.

She has received honorary doctorate of law degrees from McGill, Queen's and Trent Universities.

Ms. Simon has gained the respect of many heads of government and international organizations through her diplomacy and firmness of purpose. She has become a respected international advisor on important issues such as the environment, human rights, scientific research and development and peace.

From November 2004- February 2005, she worked with a team to facilitate and write the reports on the Sectoral Follow-up Sessions announced by Prime Minister Paul Martin at the conclusion of the April 19, 2004 Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable on Strengthening the Relationship on Health, Life Long learning, Housing, Economic Opportunities, Negotiations, and Accountability for Results.

Ms. Simon was Special Advisor to the Labrador Inuit Association on the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement from 2004 to 2005.

She was elected President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami on July 7, 2006.