

## **Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Remembers Robert Kuptana, IRC Chairperson 1994-96, C.O.P.E. Negotiator resulting in the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement with Canada.**

**May 20, 2024** – (Inuvik, NT) From the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Chair & CEO Duane Ningaqsiq Smith, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Board of Directors, staff we offer all our condolences and our prayers to Robert Kuptana’s wife Agnes of 58 years, his children, extended family and home community.

Robert Kuptana served as a negotiator representing the interests of Ulukhaktok (Holman) on the Committee for Original People’s Entitlement (COPE) to come to terms with Canada on what would become the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, Western Arctic Land Claim, of which he signed in 1984. Robert continued to be active, elected into positions of Director, UCC Chair and as IRC Executive- serving as IRC Chairperson 1994 and 1995.

Robert was passionate about storytelling in the Inuvialuktun language and in English, and devoted much of his life to being a patient translator, and in interviewing, speaking or telling stories on tv, and radio including Inuvialuit Communications Society, CBC, and Tuhangnarvik Radio program. He received the Queen Elizabeth II’s Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012 for “outstanding contribution to Canada.”

Koana Robert Kuptana for your political astuteness and sacrifice, especially standing for Inuvialuit throughout the lengthy land claim negotiations;

we won’t forget your memories of the nomadic ways of life on our lands and sea ice with dog sled, hunting, trapping- contributing to and mentoring Inuvialuit knowledge, and all your humor in storytelling.

On behalf of all Inuvialuit, IRC expresses our gratitude and recognizes a life of deep thought and curiosity, political service, continued practice of subsistence ways and care for the wellbeing of our land and people.

We will miss you at the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations for the IFA. Here are some of Robert Kuptana’s words about our land claim:

“Our way of life has been validated because of the claim itself. We have more freedom to promote our way of life. We can take young people out on the land, and teach them about our culture in the schools. The IFA was a gigantic step for the Inuvialuit and also the Inuit, in terms of negotiating with the government of Canada. Our rights have become law in Canada. It made us feel we are a part of Canada. This is why each year, we celebrate the signing. We want our younger people to remember June 5th 1984.”

For media inquiries, please contact Communications, at [communications@inuvialuit.com](mailto:communications@inuvialuit.com) or 867-777-7000.

***About the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation***

*Established in 1984 to manage the settlement outlined in the Inuvialuit Final Agreement (IFA), Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) represents the collective interests of Inuvialuit in and beyond the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (ISR). The IRC works to continually improve the economic, social, and cultural wellbeing of the Inuvialuit through the implementation of the IFA and by all other available means.*

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