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### Canadian Association for Northern Research Proposed

At a meeting held during 26–29 February 1976 at Rankin Inlet, Northwest Territories, an arctic settlement on the west coast of Hudson Bay, representatives of fourteen Canadian universities that are active in northern research agreed unanimously to plan a new organization. The Sixth Canadian Universities Northern Scientific Training Conference concluded the three-days Rankin Inlet meeting by appointing a Working Group to report later this year on the best form of organization to meet the universities' needs for collaboration in carrying on northern research and training, and for closer liaison with governments, industry, and northern residents.

The proposed association will be designed to serve the increasing scientific needs of the North and will be something new for Canada. It will be bilingual and reflect the interests and strengths of all regions of the country. An administrative headquarters will be opened in due course.

The demand by governments, private industry, and native organizations, for scientific information, skills, and advice, is growing daily. Canada needs to utilize the scientific resources within its universities more effectively. The new association is intended to facilitate this.

The Working Group met further in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in April and in Montreal in May, and will also

discuss the role of the association and its headquarters with Federal, Territorial, and Provincial governments, with native organizations, and with private industry. They will bring the plans for the association to the attention of the people of Canada—especially those living in the Arctic and Subarctic—and recommend arrangements for close relations internationally with scientific centres and universities.

The Working Group's Report will be considered at a meeting of representatives of Canadian universities that are active in northern research, which is to be held, by invitation of the University of Alberta's Boreal Institute, at Fort McMurray, Alberta, in December 1976. Founding of the new association should follow soon afterwards.

The association, with its member university centres, institutes, and committees for northern research, is expected to play a significant role in meeting Canada's northern scientific needs and in the long-term development of the North.

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### International Polar Bear Agreement

The First International Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears (*Thalarctos maritimus*) came into force on 26 May 1976 and was widely welcomed. Of the five circumpolar nations, Canada, Norway, and the USSR have ratified the Agreement, which was signed in Oslo on 15 November 1973. The other signatories, Denmark and the USA, are expected to accede in the near future. The Agreement prohibits the hunting, killing, or capturing, of Polar Bears except for *bona fide* scientific or conservational purposes, or by local people, such as Eskimos, using traditional methods in the exercise of their traditional rights.

This important Agreement crowns the work of the Polar Bear specialist group from the circumpolar nations which was brought together by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. The group has coordinated research and, as a result of conservation measures already taken on its recommendations in individual countries, the Polar Bear is showing signs of recovery from its widespread decline in numbers which was due largely to killing for fur, trophies, and sport.

An important feature of this agreement commits the

parties to protecting the ecosystems of which Polar Bears are an integral part, including their denning and feeding sites and migration routes. These are liable to considerable disturbance from increasing human penetration, especially in the search for oil.

Polar Bears are found only in the Arctic, where they live mainly on seals, although they also eat berries, roots, and shrubby vegetation\*. Six separate populations have been identified: Wrangel island—western Alaska, northern Alaska—northwestern Canada, northeastern Canada—West Greenland, East Greenland, Svalbard—Franz Josef Land, and central Siberia. Details of numbers are not known but the total population is believed to be fewer than 20,000.

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\* As we noted in 1931 on Akpatok Island, Ungava Bay, where at least several were marooned for the summer but seemed to do very well on the generally sparse limestone vegetation.—Ed.