

W. Conshohocken to Tuktoyaktuk: One Lawyer's Business Trip

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When lawyers on the eastern seaboard talk about getting away for a long, summer weekend, they typically mean somewhere like Cape Cod or the Jersey Shore, not a tiny whaling village in the northern-most reaches of Canada's Northwest Territories.

But that's precisely where Cozen O'Connor's [1] [Bill Stewart](#) (pictured) spent the weekend before last — in a town called [2] [Tuktoyaktuk](#) (known as "Tuk" to the locals), on the coast of the Arctic Ocean.

Stewart wasn't there for pleasure. Cozen O'Connor, like a handful of other firms, recently launched a "global warming practice" to service its insurance clients, among others — and it tapped Stewart to lead it. "The people I deal with on a regular basis are interested in talking to someone who's looked at the science and read the literature," he says. "But I wanted to do more than that. If I could go up there and talk to Inuit hunters about what they're seeing, it'd be a big help."

It was a whirlwind trip, paid for entirely by Cozen. To get there, Stewart, who toils in the firm's West Conshohocken, Pa., office, had to take five flights (Philadelphia to Toronto to Edmonton to [3] [Yellowknife](#) to [4] [Inuvik](#) to Tuk). In Tuk, Stewart talked with several Inuits, who could get into the nitty-gritty of global warming's effects — ice floes breaking away, vegetation changing, animals from lower latitudes making their way north. (Stewart said a hunter recently came across a first — a polar bear/grizzly bear hybrid.) Stewart left Philadelphia on a Thursday; he was back in the office on Monday.

So what are Stewart's clients going to do with his information? Litigation concerning global-

warming issues is still in its early stages, says Stewart, and has yet to take a big toll on the insurance industry. But for underwriting purposes, "every insurance company needs to take a position," he says. "Companies need to know how big weather events are going to be affected, whether soil erosion's going to become much worse. At this point, I'm really providing consulting work to my clients." He's already given a presentation to one insurer, and says several others have requested meetings.

Did the trip change the way Stewart thinks about global warming? Absolutely, he says. "I went up a skeptic and came back thinking this is very real."

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