

Aklavik Hearings on Mackenzie Pipeline

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June 5, 1975 — Whenever I finally get around to taking the time to write this column, and I start making notes about all the things I want to say, I always wish I had written sooner, so there wouldn't be so much news all at once. However, that seems to be the way it happens every time, no matter how determined I am to write more often.

The Aklavik hearings for the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry turned out to be very enlightening, and many people spoke, a number of them through interpreters.

In May the government drastically cut the budgets of the Native and environmental groups for the funds needed for their participation in the pipeline hearings. And then, shortly after the cut, a large part of the budgets were restored.

The hearings have been continuing — some of them in Yellowknife and then in Hay River — and soon they will go into the settlements again — to Old Crow, Yukon — Fort Good Hope — Fort McPherson — and others which have not been scheduled yet. But it does not appear that the people are being given a chance to have their say. And at the formal hearings, the questions are pertinent and probing, and much important information is coming to the surface.

Judge Berger's job is indeed not an easy one — and he seems to be making every effort to allow all interested parties to present their cases in as much detail as possible.

The Inquiry will take a two-week break starting June 6th — but Judge Berger won't be having a holiday. He will be visiting Alaska to study the impact of the pipeline there.

In early April, some visitors

from Kaktovik came over on skidoos to the Delta — and when they went back, Hope and Alex Gordon and Silas Kangeegana went with them. They returned shortly thereafter, having had a wonderful visit with relatives and friends at Barter Island.

The first session of the new fully-elected Territorial Council was held at the beginning of May. David Searles of Yellowknife is the Speaker of the House, and Peter Erneark of Baker Lake is the Minister of Social Development, and Arnold McCallum of Fort Smith is Minister of Education.

For the first time at Territorial Council sessions, there were simultaneous translations, in the eastern Eskimo dialect, as several of the Council members speak very little English.

It is hoped that at future sessions there will also be translations in western Eskimo and several Indian dialects. The first working session of Council begins in Yellowknife next week.

Wally Firth, the Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories, has opened part-time constituency offices in Inuvik, Frobisher Bay and Yellowknife, in an effort to become more accessible to the people. But still he has a tremendous area to represent.

Fortunately, at last Parliament has voted to divide the N.W.T. into two constituencies, and at the next election, we will be able to have two M.P.'s. A committee has been set up to study the best way to divide the territories.

Most people seem to feel that the division will be between the east and west, but that remains to be seen.

In May a group of Northern Games boys went to Frobisher Bay to take part in the annual Toonik Tyme festival there, and to make a special appearance for

Prince Charles during his Arctic tour.

COPE, with help from the Inuit Tapirisat, has installed two-way radios between Inuvik, Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk and Sachs Harbour, and they have two scheds daily, during which local people can send messages back and forth.

More communities in the Territories are becoming increasingly concerned with the alcohol problems in their areas. A number of them are beginning to take positive steps to try to find solutions to the problem.

People in this area are also very disturbed about what is happening in Alaska as a result of the pipeline.

The Indian Land Caveat hearings have started again in Yellowknife. The federal government will continue its case against Judge Morrow's decision of October, 1973, that the Indian people have ownership rights to about four hundred thousand acres of land in the Mackenzie Valley.

In a move which came as a

surprise to most people, at the end of May Tagak Curley handed his resignation to the Inuit Tapirisat as Director for the Inuit Land Claims. The resignation takes effect July 1.

Northern Games will be held this year in Fort McPherson, probably sometime in August, but at this time the date is still up in the air. Hopefully, participants from Alaska will again be able to take part.

Break-up was late this year all along the Mackenzie. The East Branch, in front of Inuvik, finally started running with heavy ice on June 1st, and now it is free, but there are still ice jams at a few places along the River. So far there has been no serious flooding.

Ratting is now in full swing, as earlier there was too much high water. But the season ends June 15th, so many people will have little time left to go hunting.