

# Separate land claims for Western Arctic

News From Inuvik  
By LOIS KEATING

March 7, 1977 — Ever since COPE decided at the end of last year to go ahead with separate land claims for the Inuvialuit of the western Arctic, there have been a number of complications. Vincent Steen, Executive Director of ITC (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada) and a board member of COPE, was not in agreement with the separate land claims. He resigned from both positions — and then in February at the ITC annual conference at Fort Chimo, Quebec, he was elected a vice-president of ITC. However, he said he will not remain in Ottawa but will work mostly from his home in Tuktoyaktuk.

In the meantime his brother, John Steen, Territorial Councillor for the Western Arctic, started a petition in Tuktoyaktuk asking ITC to represent the people of Tuk in regard to land claims, rather than COPE. A counter-petition was then circulated, stating that people did not fully understand Steen's petition. COPE held a meeting last Friday in Tuk to explain their position more fully, and a vote was taken to withdraw John Steen's petition. At this writing the whole situation is up in the air — and it looks like it's liable to remain there for some time.

## New President

ITC has a new president — Michael Amarok, 35, of Baker Lake. He replaces James Arvaluk who recently resigned for personal reasons. One of Michael Amarok's first statements after the election was that he will do all he can to bring COPE and ITC together again regarding land claims. At the conference, ITC decided to set up a separate commission to deal with Inuit Land Claims.

ITC also has a new Executive Director — he is Mark Gordon, 28, who is from Fort Chimo, Quebec.

The Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. held an assembly in Fort McPherson in February concerning Dene land claims. Several Metis representatives were also in attendance. The delegates said they were fed up with the bickering between the Brotherhood and the Metis Association, and they called for unity between the two organizations. Unfortunately, bad feelings can't be erased by a vote at a conference, and it may be some time before any kind of real unity exists. But at least it's reassuring to know that some people are working toward that goal.

In February Ingamo Hall in Inuvik sponsored an evening featuring the Delta Drummers and Dancers, and the Arctic Red River Children's Drum and Dance Group. The hall was packed. The Native dancers were enthusiastically received, and were followed by an old-time fiddle dance, which included square dances and jigs, and which also was a resounding success.

## Church Fire

Early in February the well-known St. Theresa's R. C. church in Fort Franklin was completely destroyed by fire. The church, built in the shape of an igloo, burned to the ground shortly after the Sunday service. The fire started in the furnace system which was not working properly because of a recent power outage in the settlement. This also complicated the fire fighting, since the fire and water trucks were frozen up. The people tried to fight the fire with snow, but to no avail.

James Wah-Shee, former president of the Indian Brotherhood of the N. W. T., has been hired as Land Claims Coordinator for the N. W. T. Metis Association.

Two more N. W. T. communities are hoping to hold plebescites regarding liquor. Fort Franklin wants a vote on prohibition, and Fort Norman wants one on rationing.

The Inuvik Alcohol Steering Committee has submitted a proposal to the N. W. T. Alcohol and Drug Coordinating Council to begin a four-part program. Immediate plans are for a drop-in centre, a small halfway house operation, a counselling and information service, and an outreach program. The second phase of the proposal is for a rehabilitation centre which would hopefully be in operation by July. It will be a while before they hear if approval has been given for these projects. But the time is long overdue for some kind of an alcohol program to be underway in Inuvik.

According to a new ruling, when a person in the N. W. T. is convicted of impaired driving, the judge can send him to a rehab centre for treatment, rather than sending him to jail. The only catch is that presently there is only one rehabilitation centre in the N. W. T. — in Yellowknife — and that will soon be overflowing, and what happens then?

## Trappers Meet

The Delta Hunters and Trappers Association held a meeting in Inuvik last week. They dis-

cussed land use applications, borderlines between the various trapping association areas, and other subjects of mutual interest. They also asked for the resignation of Vince Steen of Tuktoyaktuk who had been appointed by the government to the N. W. T. Games Advisory Council. In fact he is chairman of it. They say he is not doing his job properly and is not communicating with the Trappers Associations in the western Arctic. Vince Steen has replied that he will not resign.

## Highway Opposed

Last week a meeting was held in Old Crow (Yukon)

between federal and territorial officials, representatives of the CYI (Council of Yukon Indians), the Old Crow Band Council, and the Fort McPherson Band Council, concerning the completion of the Dempster Highway, which will link the Yukon and N. W. T. All of the Native groups were unanimous in their opposition to the highway, chiefly on the grounds that it would have adverse effects on the caribou migrations.

However, earlier that same week Warren Allmand, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, said at a public meeting in Inuvik that tenders

for the final 50 miles of the highway would be let very soon, and work would be continued this summer.

Two Delta oldtimers passed away during the last few weeks. Rev. James Simon of Fort McPherson and Archie Erigaktoak (Headpoint) of Aklavik, both in their 80's. Another well-known and well-liked resident also passed away.

Eliza Andre, wife of Hyacinthe Andre, long-time chief at Red River. She died a few days after an operation at Camisell Hospital in Edmonton. All three will be sadly missed by many people.