

Yukon government questions

COPE agreement

Yukon Territorial officials, concerned that a Canadian Native settlement in the northern Yukon and Northwest Territories is an "infringement" on the right of the territory to manage wildlife, want to talk with the Prime Minister's office before the land settlement is signed.

The Whitehorse Star reported on September 6 that the Yukon Territorial Government wants to talk "in principal" with Canadian Federal officials before a settlement of land claims of the Committee on Original Peoples Entitlement (COPE) is finalized.

According to the Star, YTG Renewable Resources Minister Jack Hibberd said he received a telex from the Prime Minister's office indicating YTG officials would be able to discuss the COPE settlement with federal officials before it is signed.

In discussing his concern Hibberd said, "The majority of the agreement, as far as the Yukon is concerned, involves the wildlife. By Canadian statute we have the responsibility to manage wildlife in the Yukon—no matter whose land it's on."

As part of the COPE agreement, the Inuvialuit of the Northwest Territories would be given hunting, fishing and trapping rights on the Yukon's North Slope and be allowed to establish settlements on up to 1,000 square miles of that land.

The Star said that, while Yukon Indian leaders were invited to travel to Ottawa with YTG officials to discuss the COPE agreement, the Native leaders declined.

Gerald Isaac, president of the Yukon Native Brotherhood, was reported as stating that Indians didn't recognize the Yukon government and would not travel to Ottawa with YTG officials to complain about the COPE settlement.