

Major Native settlement in Canada

Government, Eskimos of COPE, reach agreement

The Committee for Original People's Entitlement (COPE), representing about 2,500 Inuvialuit Eskimos in the Mackenzie Delta of the Northwest Territories, and the Canadian Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development announced an agreement Friday providing for a \$45 million cash payment to the Natives and a land settlement of 37,000 square miles.

Announcement of the agreement was carried in the July 14 issue of the Whitehorse Star. The government and the Native organization indicated that an agreement in principal would be signed shortly if the settlement terms are approved by the affected Native settlements.

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Native settlement said 'model' for Canada

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Native communities represented by COPE include Sachs Harbour, Holman Island, Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik and Aklavik.

The Indian affairs minister said the COPE agreement would "provide a model" for settlement of other northern Native claims.

Of the 37,000 square miles, the Natives would only receive

subsurface rights to 5,000 square miles, although they would be permitted to negotiate "participation agreements" with developers on the remaining 32,000 square miles, according to the report. No mention was made of what type of ownership vehicles would be available to the Natives.

The original COPE proposal called for Native ownership of 68 000 of the area's 168,000

square miles and \$150 million in cash compensation.

The "joint position paper" announcing the agreement also provides for establishment of a Land Use Planning Commission, consisting of Natives, federal and territorial representatives. Earlier this month, the Indian affairs minister withdrew some 15,000 square miles in the northern Yukon with the objective of developing a manage-

ment plan for the Porcupine caribou herd. Hunting rights are provided for in the agreement for the Natives "on their lands."

The \$45 million in cash compensation would be paid over a 15 year period. As with the land settlement, no mention was made of what structure might be created to handle the money, or whether payment may be made directly to individuals. Mention

is made of a \$3.5 million social development program to assist

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the Natives with "social transition" problems.

Although the settlement terms appear to fall far short of the original Native proposal, COPE issued a statement calling the arrangement "consistent with the elements and the philosophy of our proposal. The organization further described terms as a "fair balance" between Native interests.

In a news release concerning the settlement, COPE stated, "We want to be equal without being identical. We want to achieve self-reliance within the Canadian society."

In contrast to the manner in which Alaska Natives dealt directly with the U.S. Congress in settlement of claims, Canadian Native groups have been engaged in a complex negotiation process involving a full-fledged bureaucracy within the Indian affairs and northern development department. The process was presented in a serial recently published in this newspaper.