

Canadian land claims

Roger Lang, President of the Alaska Native Foundation and Willie Hensley from NANA, met with the Council of Yukon Indians, at their request, for three days in January.

They discussed their land claims and proposal and their participation in the pipeline construction.

The Yukon Indians constitute one third of the total Yukon population and are perceived by the caucasian community as being "radical" in their concept of settlement. Despite their population they are not represented at either the territorial, or federal levels of their government, nor by legal counsel or a lobbying effort.

On land claims, the Council of Yukon Indians presented their "Conceptual basis for the settlement of land claims," to the government while Roger Lang and Willie Hensley were in Whitehorse. Because of the Yukon Indians' perception on how things get done, neither Roger Lang or Willie Hensley were allowed to read the document. From other conversations they found that it contained no acreage, no monetary amounts, but dealt largely with the system that their wisdom says they want to receive the benefits. To the best of Roger and Willie's knowledge, it is a concept which creates a "Govern-

ment for the Yukon Indians, under the Provisions of a Canadian Indian Organization Act, which passed a few years ago." It relates to the delivery of programs to their clientele including all of the functions of government; i.e. housing, education, and other social services. To complicate the bargaining position of the Yukon Indians, the federal government has already passed legislation which provides for a five mile wide right-of-way corridor for construction of the gas line, two hundred and fifty miles long.

(See CANADIAN, Page Nine)

● Canadian

(Continued from Page Three)

They have also bypassed the regulatory process by promulgating the regulations for this project by law and not through the normal processes usually intended for public input. The Yukon Indians want to stop the construction of the line pending their settlement of the land claims but have lost these bargaining points.

The Council of Yukon Indians seeks help from AFN because of AFN's clout with our government. They will want a resolution from AFN which spells out our pipeline position until their claims have been resolved.

There is a climate for change, and the sale of their side of the issue will depend on their ability to adapt to both changes in board direction and their use of government, the press, and negotiations.

Roger Lang says, "their potential for leadership is good and imminent, privately in talks other than at meetings, we find that they realize the enormity of their situation, but are still defining their style and future efforts."

He also commented, "it was a good trip, and some joint ventures, some combined political effort, and some mutual benefits for both Alaskan and Canadian Natives may come out of it yet."