

News from Inuvik

by Lois Keating

Nov. 28, 1976—It's been a long time since I've sent news from this area.

The Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Hearings are finally over. The hearings have been going on for over twenty months, and over sixteen hundred people have been heard.

Judge Berger is now working on his report to the government, which he hopes to have completed early in the new year. His report will be in two volumes. In the first, he will deal with the broad social, environmental and economic impact of the pipeline, and what measures which can be taken to lessen that impact. In the second volume he will set out in detail the specific terms and conditions that ought to be imposed on the right-of-way if the pipeline is to be built.

Judge Berger himself is not the one who makes the decision about the pipeline. It is his job to tell the government what he has learned from listening to all the speakers. He says that what he has learned from the people who live here in the Mackenzie Valley will carry more weight

than what was said by people from the south.

The National Energy Board, together with the Federal Cabinet are the ones who make the decision whether or not a pipeline will be built. If the Board approves a pipeline, it will recommend approval of a particular proposal by a particular company, thereby rejecting all the other proposals. And the Board will say what conditions will have to be adhered to when the pipeline is built and operated.

At the end of October, George Erasmus, president of the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. presented a land claims proposal to Warren Allmand, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The proposal contains a set of principles which the Brotherhood says must form the basis of any land claims. It also states that the Dene (Indian people) absolutely refuse to give up their aboriginal rights. They also want complete control over their own affairs. They also feel it is the

right of the Dene to say who would or would not be a part of the Dene Nation.

As the Dene proposal was being presented to the government, the split between the Indian Brotherhood and the Metis Association was widening. Rick Hardy, president of the Metis Association, says the Brotherhood proposal does not have the approval of the Metis Association. He says the Metis Association will start developing another proposal which is more in line with the thinking of the people of the Mackenzie Valley.

However, there has also been serious conflict within the Metis Association, and many people do not agree with Rick Hardy and the "official" Metis position.

There have also been changes in thinking regarding the Inuit Land Claims proposal (Nunavut). The Inuit have recently taken back the Nunavut proposal for major revisions, much of this regarding the extinguishment of aboriginal rights. The proposal has been taken back to the people to discuss the changes.

After a mild fall and one of the latest freeze-ups in history, winter had finally set in. Trapping is well underway, but has been hampered by deeper-than-usual snow, and lots of overflow on creeks and rivers.

So far the fur signs seem to be good in most areas. And on Banks Island, reports indicate that it could be an especially good season for white fox.

There have been a lot of caribou around Tuktoyaktuk, and permission has recently been given to allow caribou hunting in parts of the reindeer reserve. And in the Mackenzie Valley, there seem to be an unusual number of moose this year, so most of the settlements have a good supply of meat.

People are now beginning to prepare for Christmas—so I'll finish this time by wishing you all a very happy holiday season. See you again next year!