

Canadian Native Affairs

OTTAWA—Inuit of the Western Arctic will proceed with their own regional land claim proposal as a matter of immediate priority, it was announced in Ottawa today by James Arvaluk, president of Inuit Tapirisat (Eskimo Brotherhood) of Canada.

Mr. Arvaluk and Sam Raddi, president of the Committee for Original People's Entitlement (COPE) met with the minister of Indian and northern affairs, Warren Allmand, to advise him of this change in the overall approach to settling land claims in the North. A regional affiliate of Inuit Tapirisat, COPE represents the Inuit of the Western Arctic.

The reason for proceeding with western Arctic land claims first is that the people are under extreme pressure due to oil and gas exploration and development, including the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline. The

western Inuit want an agreement with Ottawa to preserve their traditional lands and resources while there is still something left to claim.

Meanwhile, Inuit Tapirisat fieldworkers are continuing to consult with Inuit in other regions of the Northwest Territories to determine exactly what they want to be included in a revised comprehensive proposal to be submitted to the federal cabinet.

In a letter to Mr. Allmand, James Arvaluk re-emphasizes that Inuit Tapirisat and COPE are "mutually supportive in respect to Inuit land claims and there is no conflict between the two organizations. However, there is a necessity for the Western Arctic to negotiate a settlement within a shorter time span than is required by the people of the Central and Eastern Arctic."