

# Nunivak Takes Over Reindeer

BETHEL—Representatives of the village of Mekoryuk, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the State of Alaska met January 15, 1970, and agreed to a program for the Nunivak reindeer herd calling for immediate Native ownership.

Under the terms of the new agreement the Mekoryuk Village Association will take on the full

responsibilities of management, marketing, herding, and slaughtering.

The village will continue to make reindeer available for starter herds. This will aid the growth of the reindeer industry with other Alaskan Natives.

Under the terms of the Reindeer Act of 1937, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has managed the reindeer herd on Nunivak Island from 1937 to the present. The Nunivak herd has been a source of loan animals for starter herds in other areas of Alaska.

The BIA will transfer ownership of the buildings, equipment, and reindeer to the Mekoryuk Village Association. Physical assets consist of corrals, abattoirs, sheds, vehicles, and an estimated 10,000 animals.

Under the program the BIA will provide financial support during an interim period. The extent to which the BIA is being relieved of providing services will determine the amount of financial support.

The Mekoryuk Village Association has contractually obligated itself to provide the same number of animals it receives to other Natives requesting animals for starter herds.

The economics of sound herd management will be the only re-

striction on these transfers.

Technical assistance to the Mekoryuk Village Association will come from the State, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Community Enterprise Development Corporation.

The State will provide slaughter inspection and animal husbandry assistance. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will assist in determining range capacity through its surveys. The Bureau of Indian Affairs will make knowledge and records acquired through its operating experience available to the new management.

The Community Enterprise Development Corporation has pledged assistance in training, marketing, bookkeeping, and financing, if required.

Final, formal approval of the reindeer program must come from the Secretary of the Interior, Walter J. Hickel.