

# Metis for Mackenzie line

From our Anchorage Bureau

"We look to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline as one of the major economic projects we want to take part in."

With this statement, Larry Firth, executive director of the Metis Association of the Northwest Territories, announced his group's full support for a Canadian gas pipeline after an agreement with the Canadian government on a land claims settlement has been reached. The Metis Association has, until recently, supported the stand of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories. The Indian Brotherhood is seeking political control and land ownership in order to protect the traditional lifestyle of their people.

Speaking at a conference on northern change and development in Anchorage last week, Firth said his group were interested in the Indian Brotherhood, or Dene, proposal at one time but added, "We were not able to agree on the most fundamental principles."

The Indian Brotherhood represents full-blooded Indian people, while the Metis Association is composed of descendants of white trappers and merchants who married Indian women.

Firth said the Metis are not abandoning their Indian heritage, but at the same time, cannot escape their dependence on jobs and wages. "We are taking on and receptive to other ways of making a living," he said.

Firth suggested that a new Metis land claims proposal might be similar to the Alaska Land Claims act by encouraging Native participation in economic development. Without development, he said, "apathy and depression set in."

In addition to supporting the gas line for economic reasons, Firth emphasized that the Metis

are not Indian, and not white and that one of the main reasons for the splitting with the Indian Brotherhood was that they failed to give the Metis the recognition they wanted under the Dene proposal.

The Metis Association claims to represent at least 7,200 people, approximately one third of the population of the Mackenzie Valley.