

*Government Orders*

I could go on and on and still probably leave someone out inadvertently. If I have I apologize.

I also want to recognize the contributions of the elders such as Peter Kaminguak and Abe Ookpik and those who are no longer with us.

• (1035 )

[*English*]

The history of this land claim goes back many years. It spans several federal governments and numerous ministers of Indian and northern affairs. Very few people realize that prior to 1973 the Government of Canada did not have a policy to negotiate land claims. It was the current Leader of the Official Opposition, under whom I am proud to serve, who, when he was the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, brought forward the first policy to negotiate and resolve land claims.

In 1975 the Inuit of Nunavik achieved the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. The following year, in 1976, the Inuit of the Northwest Territories, as represented by the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, presented their land claim to the federal government for negotiation. Their submission included the proposal for the creation of the Nunavut territory.

The claim proposal was subsequently revised in 1977. In that same year, the Inuvialuit of the western Arctic filed their own land claim. In 1978 they signed an agreement in principle with the federal government and the final agreement was reached in 1984. Between 1976 and 1979 the Inuit of the central and eastern Arctic experienced difficulty with their negotiations. There was an impasse over dealing with Nunavut at the land claim table.

In 1980 a breakthrough was achieved. Agreement was reached to deal with the Inuit proposals on Nunavut through a political development process in the Northwest Territories separate from but parallel with the land claims negotiations. In 1982 the Tungavik Federation of Nunavut was formed for the specific purpose of negotiating the Inuit land claim.

In April 1990 an agreement in principle was reached. Article 4 of that agreement in principle affirmed federal, territorial and Inuit support for the creation of Nunavut as soon as possible. In December 1991 negotiations were finalized on outstanding items in the land claims, including the creation of Nunavut. In November 1992 the Inuit of Nunavut voted to ratify their land claim agreement.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

It has been a long journey filled with many rough spots and roadblocks. I want to focus now on the actual land claim and some of the obstacles Inuit encountered in their negotiations with the government. From the beginning the government set out all kinds of preconditions and restrictions. In return the Inuit were more than generous.

Some of the comments I am about to make I have made on other occasions over the past several years and many of the people watching or listening today will be familiar with them. However, I feel I must restate them for the record.

[*English*]

First I want to take issue with the term "land claim ". It is highly inappropriate. I wish there were a better term to use but I will try to describe what I mean by inappropriate.

When aboriginal peoples talk about their lands, we are talking about our homelands. We are talking about the territories and resources upon which our people have survived for thousands of years. We are talking first and foremost about our cultures and our way of life on these territories. The land, the waters, the wildlife and we, the people, are one and the same. We are not separate from our environment. We are part of it and it is part of us.

Yet non-aboriginal governments have looked upon land claim negotiations as real estate transactions. This is not our view. It is difficult for us to understand the non-aboriginal concept of individual land title and ownership.

[*Translation*]

We see these negotiations primarily as the means to preserve our relationship with the land and ensure our survival as peoples in the larger society surrounding us. Therefore we are also talking about economic and political power. We require the economic and political means to control what happens on our lands.

In claim negotiations aboriginal peoples are not seeking something that someone else already owns. We dispute that implication. We are not asking the government to give us anything that does not belong to us. We are only seeking recognition of what is rightfully ours. We are trying to take back what was taken away from us by governments without our consent in the past.