

CROSS CANADA CURRENTS

Northern Rights



Last fall, in a tiny native community in the Northwest Territories, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney signed a historic agreement in principle that will make the Dene and Métis of the region the largest non-government landowners in North America.

The pact gives about 15 000 aboriginal people of the Dene and Métis tribes that inhabit the Mackenzie Basin of the Northwest Territories ownership, including sub-surface rights, of approximately 10 000 km² of land.

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations George Erasmus after signing a historic agreement in principle that will make the Dene and Métis of the region the largest non-government landowners in North America.

Accordingly, the two aboriginal groups receive mineral rights that would entitle them to half of the first \$2 million the government receives in royalties

and 10 per cent of anything above that. The first \$20 million would be tax-free. The deal also gives them special rights and interests in an area totalling 180 000 km², including a voice in land, wildlife and water management decisions. Starting in 1990, the Dene and Métis are entitled to \$500 million in cash to be paid out over 20 years.

Prime Minister Mulroney said the signing marked "a day of justice" and heralds "new economic and political development" for the North. "This agreement in principle, when carried to its final form," he said, "will establish a new, stronger and healthier rela-

tionship between the people of this area and the governments which serve them." The Prime Minister added that the land pact marks "real progress" in the Dene quest for self-determination.

But issues such as self-determination and aboriginal title were not included in the agreement. These have yet to be hammered out in discussions between the government of Canada and aboriginal leaders over the next two years.

Victorious Victoria

Victoria, the British Columbia capital, has been chosen to host the 1994 Commonwealth Games.

The decision was reached by the Commonwealth Games Federation in Seoul, South Korea, the site of last year's Summer Olympics. The Canadian west-coast city was selected on a first-ballot majority.

David Black, chairperson of the Victoria organizing committee, said it was the "personal approach" that made the difference. "We worked to get to know the delegates and their needs, to design a Games that would help them," said Black. "We're

in a situation where the Games are guaranteed . . . we have a good management team and funding in place. Our Games will be great Games."

Delegates were perhaps looking for an angel to save the Commonwealth Games from extinction. The 1986 Games in Edinburgh, Scotland, became a financial disaster when more than half of the entries pulled out as part of an anti-apartheid boycott.

The 1994 Games make Victoria the fourth Canadian city since 1930 to be awarded the Commonwealth Games.