

The James Bay Agreement

IN 1973 the federal government recognized the "traditional use and occupancy of land" as well as rights under treaty and the Indian Act as a basis for native land claims. Since 1970 the federal government has provided approximately \$7 million in loans and contributions to native groups for research into treaties and rights relating to "specific" claims. In addition more than \$11 million have been provided for the development and negotiation of "comprehensive" claims proposals—claims based on traditional use and occupancy.

The first comprehensive claims agreement was signed with the native people of James Bay in November 1975. The principals were: (1) the Grand Council of the Crees, representing individual bands at Fort George, Old Factory, Eastmain, Rupert House, Waswanipi, Mistassini, Nemaska and Great Whale River and the Northern Quebec Inuit Association representing fifteen Inuit (Eskimo) communities; (2) the government of Quebec, the James Bay Energy Corporation, the James Bay Development Corporation, Hydro-

Quebec; and (3) the Government of Canada.

The native people agreed to stop litigation and permit the development of the hydro-electric power complex in the valley of the La Grande River, the first phase of the gigantic James Bay project. The federal and provincial governments and the other signatories agreed to pay a total of \$225 million to the native peoples over the next twenty years. The native people were also given permanent guarantees of exclusive hunting, fishing and trapping rights in certain lands, a considerable degree of self-government, a voice in all decisions affecting the environment and an opportunity to participate as investors and paid workers in future developments in the territory.

The affected area includes the entire part of Quebec above the fifty-fifth parallel and the area south of that line which was transferred from the Northwest Territories to Quebec by statute in 1912. Some twenty thousand people live in the vast area, including some six thousand Crees and some four thousand Inuit.

A languages teacher at Ohsweken, Ontario, uses both English and Mohawk dialect. There are bilingual programs in 174 federal and 34 provincial schools. Some 210 federal and 155 provincial schools have programs which emphasize Indian culture.

