

NATIVE LAND CLAIMS, from page 1

With the objective of establishing a basis for detailed negotiations, Buchanan said the Dene Committee has agreed "that its first priority is to

prepare a proposal for a comprehensive land claims settlement which will be submitted to the federal government about November 1st of this year."

Buchanan was enthusiastic over the recognition of native land claim rights by the federal government. "For the first time in the history of the special relationship that the federal government has had with native people in Canada," he said, "their deep-rooted and long-standing grievances are being recognized and acted upon."

In speaking of the recognition which had been afforded native claims in the past, Buchanan cited the claims of the Nishga Indians of British Columbia who presented their claims to Sir Wilfred Laurier in 1909. "The concept of government recognition of aboriginal title is, indeed, not a new one," he said. He added that various acts of colonial, provincial and national legislatures going as far back as the 1700s recognized that native people as prior residents of this land had certain types of rights in relation to the land.

Buchanan cited the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling of the Nishga land claim as bringing about a major change in the government's policy to "formal-



Judd Buchanan, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. Photo Kevin Gillese.

ly recognize the existence of native interest in those areas of Canada where it had not been extinguished by treaty or superseded by law - that is, in Yukon, in Northern Quebec, and in most of B.C. and the Northwest Territories."

The Supreme Court split three to three on the validity of Nishgas' aboriginal rights, while the seventh judge ruled against the claim on the basis of a technicality. The signing of the

James Bay Agreement followed that ruling on November 12, 1975.

Buchanan called this Agreement "a result of the determined efforts of the Cree and the Inuit of Northern Quebec to ensure recognition of the fact they had used and occupied these lands for generations." Following two years of "complex and intensive negotiations," Buchanan said the Agreement established "specific rights which had, up to that point, been vague and ill-defined."

These rights, he said, included the protection of native economy and culture, a substantial degree of local and regional native authority, and a strong voice in decisions affecting the environment and the socio-economic development of the region as a whole.

Buchanan said he is confident the James Bay Agreement will be a good one and "developments in other areas of Canada where long-standing grievances still remain give me reason for optimism, too."

He closed by stating the obvious, that negotiations are often difficult and good faith is required by both sides, but that "the prospects for just and enduring settlement (of native land claims) do exist."

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RIVER GROVE (ENS-CUP) - A college in River Grove, Illinois has announced a new, accredited academic program in household moving.

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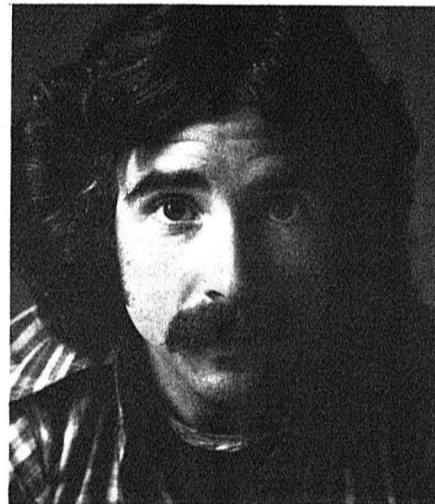
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