

Indian and Inuit peoples in a disadvantaged position within Canadian society."

Mr. Chrétien said it was basic to the government's position that these claims must be settled and that the most promising avenue to settlement was through negotiation. "It is envisaged that by these means agreements will be reached with groups of the Indian and Inuit people concerned and that these agreements will be enshrined in legislation, enacted by Parliament, so that they will have the finality and bonding force of law." The government was determined to remove the sense of grievance.

For their part the Indian, Métis and Eskimos, seeing themselves as dispossessed peoples, have rarely shown greater enthusiasm for decisive action to redress historic injustices. "Not since the last century have native peoples been so determined to secure a future in Canada for their race, their children and their way of life," a Toronto newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, said, in an editorial. "They are challenging the *status quo*, the product of centuries, which has left them poor in goods and in lands while latecomers to the country thrive. They challenge the historic transfer of the land from the original occupants to the white men. They are prepared to take their challenge to the courts, to Parliament, to political parties, to pressure groups, to the conscience of the nation."

So far more than 100 claims have been recorded. Officials predict the total may reach 500. First claim to be settled involved a so-called "ammunition treaty" with the Blackfoot Indians, comprising groups known as Sarcee, Blood, Peigan and Stoney. Conflicts of interest may not be a monopoly of the white man. The Indian groups failed initially to reach agreement on how to divide the \$250,000 compensation — \$190,000 plus a grant in lieu of interest — among themselves. The claim was paid under a treaty signed in 1877.

Eskimo claim

Bristling difficulties still lie ahead. An organisation representing 18,300 Eskimos, called Inuit Tapirisat, planned a claim to the entire coastline of Canada's Arctic reaching several hundred miles inland and covering most Canadian islands in the Arctic ocean. "We're talking of a settlement involving hundreds of millions of acres," said Eskimo counsel, Peter Cumming. "It involves an awful lot of land because the Eskimos occupied an awful lot of land." In the Northwest Territories, the land over which the Canadians claim aboriginal title includes the route through the Canadian Arctic of a proposed gas pipeline from Alaska.

The federal government fears that if Indian claims are not settled expeditiously, pipeline investors might be frightened off, leaving the way clear for an alternative United States route. Indians in the Northwest Territories are banking on a court decision which says they have Native title to 400,000 square miles in the Mackenzie Valley.

Both in Canada and the United States, the native peoples have often complained about unjust treatment. With the coming of the white man, they say, they were herded into reserves where they found it difficult to continue their traditional way of life, close to nature and innocent of

No place to go

"I call myself a nothing."

That is the heart-cry of Janet Fietz, a social worker in northern Saskatchewan. She is a Métis — a term applied originally to those of mixed European and Indian stock, but widened recently to include some full Indians whose ancestors rejected the special protection of Indian legislation.

Denied treaty benefits of housing, education and health care, they have become an underprivileged group, described in one account as a "sub-society of chronic urban poor." Ninety per cent are unemployed; school dropouts are commonplace. Population density in some cases is 9.5 persons per room, one of the world's highest figures. Infant mortality rates are high. "We've got no place to go," says Miss Fietz. "No wonder they call us the forgotten people."

The Métis—descended from French fur traders, buffalo hunters and Hudson's Bay company employees — have struggled to keep a sense of identity, in a kind of limbo between white and Indian, since the suppression of the second rebellion of Louis Riel in the late 19th century. Howard Adams, a Métis who rose to be a professor of education in Saskatchewan, promoted a call for Red Power in the 1960s. He says the Métis used to be noisier, gayer and more excitable than the stolid Indians or the smug, wealthy whites. The Indians, he said, called the Métis a man and a half — "half white, half red and half devil."

Now a new sense of militancy is rising among the Métis. "We are more frustrated now because our expectations are higher," says Adams. But he adds that Métis lack the white man's sense of competition. And social worker Janet Fietz agrees that Métis work patterns are different. What is needed, she says, is a willingness by white employers to give the native people another chance.

Meanwhile, says Adams, there is a danger that violence through racism may come "because Canadians are so darn self-righteous. Canada is going to be stuck with us for a long time."

urban sophistication. Partly because of this, there has grown up a picture of the Indian as a people who do not develop great skills, suffer from inertia and often console themselves with "firewater," the Indian name for liquor.

But if many Indians lag behind their white counterparts in education, skills and sense of equality there are some who would be at home in any society. One such is Noel Starblanket, at 26 said to be Canada's youngest Indian chief. He is cutting through the complex network of federal and provincial laws to help win jobs, independence and pride for the 120 Cree Indians on his reserve near Regina, Saskatchewan. When Starblanket became chief in 1972, 99 per cent of the reserve was on welfare. Now only four persons are drawing this benefit.

"Money talks and I'm going to make it talk for me because it's the only language the white man understands," said Starblanket. He recalled that his great-grandfather signed a treaty saying that the Great White Mother — Britain's Queen Victoria — would teach her children the wit and cunning of the white man. "I've learned that wit and cunning," said Starblanket in a recent interview sprinkled with racy idiom. "This is a capitalist society we're living in and the Indian people are the greatest conformists in the world."

Political clout

The Indian Affairs department had sometimes been accused of trying to keep the Indians in a state of dependency. But Starblanket scorned any such fears. "They used to try," he said, "but they don't any more because I have enough political clout to go to someone higher up if I get any static from petty bureaucrats." He warned that in 1974 Indians would no longer be fobbed off with the image of the "noble red man."

Canadian Indians form only a small proportion of visitors to Britain. When they do come, in native dress, they rivet attention. *The Times* noted that a Cree Indian woman in full ceremonial tribal dress, a single eagle's tail feather in her hair, outshone all the other guests at Queen Elizabeth's first garden party of 1972. The visitor, Mrs. Papamkesikow Wuttunee, from Saskatchewan, had to ask the London Zoo to find her an eagle feather to replace one she had lost on her travels. Mrs. Wuttunee was in Britain on a lecture tour.

The Canadian government's policy towards the Indians has won newspaper tribute. *The Globe and Mail* said in an editorial last year: "It is only fair to state that the present government in Ottawa has done more than any previous government in Canada's history to move towards just settlements with our native peoples. This is true despite cautious Indian attitudes . . . or the scepticism of Canadian opposition parties." The government also came in for praise from Inuit Papirisat, the national Eskimo brotherhood. It called Mr. Chrétien's promise to negotiate an agreed form of co-operation with