

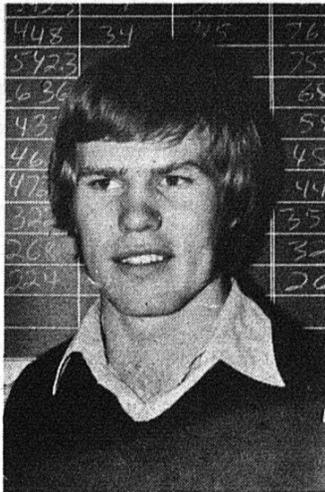
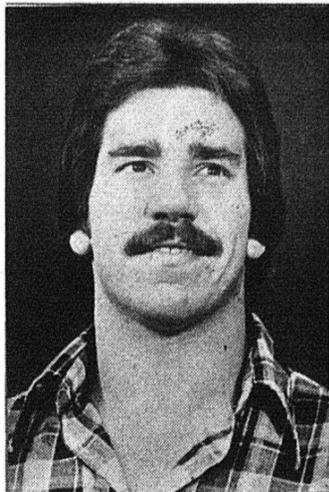
## LETTERS, from page 4

more harm than good.

Perhaps if the problem is examined with the academic detachment we should possess, rather than emotionally, we can begin to aid those who have these sexual problems. At least examine the situation analytically before trying to produce a senseless moral outrage.

Can you not see the idiocy of statements such as, "...destructive forces working within our society to destroy it utterly and totally!" From some newspapers, I could accept an erroneous train of thought from some misguided moralist. From *The Gateway*, I find it totally unacceptable.

Curtis Andressen  
Arts II



Gateway errors corrections dept. These two smiling gentlemen were those inadvertently left out of Tuesday's election forum. They are Paul Belanger and Larry Wall. Both contest the president of men's athletics position. Now you see 'em.

## GATEWAY EDITORIAL NOMINATIONS

have been extended  
to Monday  
February 16 5 PM.

So why not come on into our offices, room 282 SUB, and pick up an application form. You'll be subjected to a brief but intensive public grilling on Tuesday the 17th, but not to worry, almost all have survived.

# Northern land claims: just another Yggdrasil

*This essay was written by a first-year Commerce student, Colin Ross. Ross's wife is a native from the North West Territories and he himself has spent a good deal of time in the Territories.*

The Indians in the North are kicking up quite a fuss about land claims. Let's take a tour through the relevant issues:

Linguistic historians tell us that as late as 700 B.C. the Na-Dene stock consisted of a single group resident in eastern Alaska. Approximately at that date, dispersal of the parent group began - the Pacific branch of the stock not completing its diversification until 1000 A.D. Between 900 and 1400 A.D., not too long before Columbus, the Apachean subfamily began to move south. Not everyone realizes that the Apache and Navaho of the southwestern United States are Athabaskan Indians, members of the same linguistic group as the natives of the MacKenzie Valley.

In the eighteenth century the Slavey Indians, who are Athabaskan, inhabited the area between Lesser and Great Slave Lakes - until they were pushed out of the plains by the Blackfeet. Today the Slavey inhabit the country roughly from Great Slave Lake north to Great Bear Lake and west into the MacKenzie Mountains. Apparently, they have inhabited the Fort Norman area for only several hundred years, whereas my ancestors, through my maternal grandfather, have been in Quebec over three hundred years. And yet the Indians claim to have lived in the north since "time immemorial," living "the traditional ways."

Baloney. A subgroup of the Dogrib, a MacKenzie Valley Athabaskan group, were called the Yellowknives. The Chipewyan, also Athabaskan because they acquired trade goods before the Yellowknives, were able to suppress them to such an extent that today there are no Yellowknife Indians remaining. Those who survived the persecution of the Chipewyan have merged with the Dogrib.

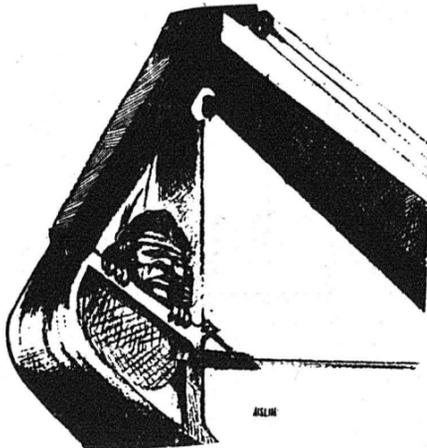
Another MacKenzie Valley group which has barely survived as a distinct entity is the Nahanni Indians - they were decimated during a raid from the North by the Slavey, in the nineteenth century. Up until the beginning of the missionary period of northern history both the Cree & the Chipewyan used to raid down the MacKenzie as far as the Bear River - primarily for women and slaves.

So much for historical background.

## Indian polyglot

The Indians were not a culturally static people: like the Europeans, they migrated over immense distances, adapted to coastal, desert, fishing or big-game technologies, developed new dialects, were influenced by other Indians. It may not be generally known that the North American Indian is as varied in language, culture and physique as the European peoples - some Indians are as foreign to each other as Sicilian and Swede. This is just elementary fact, but the Indians are negotiating their land claims on the basis of their "rights",

those rights having been established through the occupation of the Mackenzie Valley by Athabaskans since "time immemorial." In truth the Athabaskan languages are not older than Latin - presumably they have changed as much since the time of Caesar as have the European languages, though no one will ever produce a grammar for the Athabaskan of 50 B.C.



The Indians speak of their "traditional culture." Their traditional culture is as dead as ours. The technology of the northern Indian has changed as much in the last two hundred years as has the English woodworker's. There is no active Indian religion, and the only traditional clothes ever seen in the North are mukluks and moosehide mitts. Even they are very different from the crude mitts and wrappings from two hundred years ago, which we see in museums. The modern "traditional" mukluk is modelled according to European fashion ideals. The conclusion drawn from these facts is that Indians can indulge in sentimental nostalgia as easily as white people. The difference is that white people don't receive millions of dollars from the government for indulging in some nostalgic contemplation.

The lament we hear is that the white man has destroyed the Indian way of life. That might be true on the prairies, but it is a falsehood for the Northwest Territories. Nobody has forced the Indians off the land and into towns in the North. They traded for knives, they accepted traps, guns, blankets, flour, with no military force being exerted whatsoever. No one is keeping the Indian down. In many ways the Indians are the most privileged citizens in Canada. The trouble is that, at least politically, they are chronic complainers. The white man this, the white man that. The white man bosses me around, the white man destroyed my culture, the white man took away my manhood, the white man made me get drunk. When a white person blames all their troubles on someone else, don't we come to certain conclusions?

Question: if we're going to award the northern Indians a gigantic welfare payment, on top of all the welfare being handed out now, why are we calling it a land claim settlement?

The Indians say they have a just right to a land claim settlement. They say that

their length of tenure establishes this rightful claim. Length of tenure! What a little timescale it is, for which a thousand years draws the line between native and foreigner. What a legalistic, possessive sort of foundation this right is erected upon, and how amenable it is to measurement, statistical analysis and argumentation on television. If there is to be a just land claim settlement made with the Indians, it will have nothing to do with length of tenure, and there will be no transfer of funds involved.

Money, money, money, I own, I own, I own, I need, I need, I need: that's what the Indian land claim boils down to. If there is no such thing as racial superiority, then we have to admit that all races produce their proportion of crooks, political hucksters, sentimentalists and morally dishonest opportunists. It may be, of course, that the races are not equal, and that all northern Indians are victimized noble savages, spiritually enlightened with respect to ecological matters, honest, and incapable of conscious exploitation of their traditional culture for economic gain. But that is unlikely, isn't it?

## Just settlement

The just land claim settlement will occur when there is a national recognition of the distinction between native and foreigner. That distinction will be at once the vindication of Indian civilization, and the perception of a creative purposefulness for technological man. Today, the Indians are no longer aboriginal hunters: they, like us, are twentieth century urban technological man. That we sentimentalize about them testifies to the degeneracy of our nervous system, our language and our culture - inseparable triumvirate.

The ancient traditions, the life of the hunter - those things are part of the past for northern Indians, the dead entombed past. The present is a present of social breakdown, individual aimlessness, crime and mental imbalance - the urban technological present. If we have a debt to the Indians, it is also a debt to ourselves. How absurd it would be to award ourselves a land settlement. But our conducting the present land claim settlement in terms of money and property allows us, on both sides, to evade that more profound and difficult debt.

We have suppressed the pagan religious body of man. The natural physical depth of being, those wonderfully human faces that we see in photographs of nineteenth century Indians, that is what we have killed off. Technically, the Indians of the North are just as capable of trapping and hunting as ever, in the individual case. In the aggregate their population has now boomed, and made them too numerous to live off the land *en masse*. But take any individual northern Indian - the only thing preventing him from living his "traditional" ways is himself. By "traditional" ways the northern Indian means hunting and trapping, equipped with guns, tents, flour, tea, knives, flashlights, long underwear, snare wire, tics, lumber and snowmobile.

We haven't prevented the Indians from doing something, or anything, in particular. We have prevented them from being. Just look at those old photographs, then look at a modern Indian. Since we are foreigners in this country, and since we inherit the Christian traditions of hatred for the religious body of man, we have had to eradicate the Indians - spiritually eradicate them, one might say. But "spiritual" suggests a special kind of nerve-consciousness peculiar to the Europeans. It's not delicate harmonies and vibrations of the nervous system which the Indians have lost. Their civilization never developed in that direction. What we have tried to

destroy in the Indians is housed in their bodies, below the diaphragm. It is a truth which is rooted in the land, and which in Scandinavian mythology was called Yggdrasil, the World Tree. It is a universal truth.

But let us not forget that it is a truth for which there are few words. Men can forget it, Indian men as well as European men. When a bureaucratic Indian political leader harangues about "rights," "funding," "land," and all the other jargon, he may have completely

forgotten, be completely out of touch with, the truth which makes him a native. Insofar as we know of his existence, by listening to him speak, he may truly not be a native. That is very likely, and it is that fact which makes length of tenure so important in land claim strategy. Length of tenure: have you been on earth, you Indians, as a race, longer than the whites, or the Chinese? Why are we quibbling about details of location?

## Missing roots

The problem confronting technological man here in Canada is one of roots. If the special memory, the survival of such roots, in the Indians, can contribute to a solution of that problem, then it could be argued that the Indians deserve a cash bonus. We mustn't forget that at one time the Indians were newcomers here too, foreigners. They didn't become natives just by sitting around for two thousand years - they worked hard, as religious men, to be natives rooted in the land. Only continuing hard work will maintain or restore nativehood, for Indian or white.

The true land settlement will occur when the white man, aided by his understanding of the Indian, becomes a religious native of this country by virtue of his physical roots in the land - physico-spiritual, some might want to say. Then he will be able to recognize the achievement of the Indian civilization for what it was, without sentimentality. Concurrently, his ears will tell him that the modern land claim settlement is not just an absurdity, but, on both sides of the negotiations, the sacrilegious exploitation of the land and of human culture. It was an essential fact in the traditional Indian vision that the animals, the clouds, and the rivers were native too. Should the federal government, to be consistent, negotiate a settlement with the squirrels also?