THE COMMITTEE FOR ORIGINAL PEOPLES' ENTITLEMENT

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Consultant, COPE,
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THE COMMITTEE FOR ORIGINAL

PEOPLES' ENTITLEMENT

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FOREWARD

Words have been written many times about the NWT Eskimo and Indian. Studies, programs and projects have been done on Eskimo and Indian people in the name of the NWT original peoples. Yet, very little has been written from the point of view of the original peoples in their own words. In the present and the future, the successes of the NWT Eskimo and Indian will bring many people to ride on the coat-tails of each small step they take forward. This will cause confusion and misunderstanding and make it difficult for native people to retain proper control over their own lives. It is these thoughts in mind that a full report has been written to tell all that the NWT native people know their problems clearly and can deal with them given the economic and political authority to do so. COPE believes this report will help set the record straight at a time when there is so much confusion as a result of development getting out of control. Peter Usher was asked to write this report because he has worked with native people in this area for many years and is well known to them as a person who is willing to listen and help. The Executive of COPE has read and approved this report as a true statement of the situation in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic today, and as a true record of COPE's activities and policies.

Agnes Semmler, President,
THE COMMITTEE FOR ORIGINAL
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PREFACE

In the summer of 1972, the president of COPE asked me to write a report on the history and policies of COPE, so that the people of the Western Arctic and Mackenzie Delta could have a written record of their organization. In October and November 1972 I visited most of the settlements where there are COPE members, in order to get the most up to date information. The report was written during the winter.

I have tried to put together the ideas and thoughts that native people in the region have about their problems, the way things are going, and what COPE is trying to do about it all, as they have expressed them to me over the last few years and particularly last fall. I have tried to write this report so that it says what the people are saying, in plain words so that everybody can recognize it. Since different people have different ideas and opinions, it probably doesn't say exactly what any one person believes in. Instead I have tried to bring out the meaning of what a lot of different people are saying, as I understand it.

After I wrote the report, I discussed it with most of the members of COPE's board of directors, in Inuvik in April 1973. They suggested several ways I should change the report, as well as things they wanted to add to it. After I made these changes, the final report was presented to the annual board of directors meeting at Sachs Harbour at the end of April. The report was adopted by the new board of directors at that meeting. By writing the report this way, the final version is more truly what the people who asked me to write this report wanted it to be.

Even since the final report was written, some things have changed. COPE has a new constitution, and it appears to have a better chance now of getting money from the federal government. COPE has also had some successful dealings with local government as well for projects in Inuvik. But just about all the rest of the information is still true, and the reader can judge the ideas for himself.

Peter J. Usher

21 May, 1973

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INTRODUCTION

Native Northerners today are hearing and talking a lot about development. They want to know how they can adapt to it, how they can benefit from it, and more important, how they can control it. Native people know that development has brought some good things. The physical conditions of life are better than they used to be. On the whole there is better housing, better health, better transport and communications, and more money. They also know that development has brought problems. The price of development has been more welfare, more alcohol, more broken families, and more outsiders who are getting more and more control over money, privileges and other people's lives. This is a matter of growing concern in every community.

One of the things native people have done about it is to form an organization which is really their own, which they can control, and which can help make development a good thing instead of a bad one. That organization is COPE, the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement. This report is about COPE, and tells why and how it started, and what it has done to stand up for the rights of native people and to improve their lives.

COPE started in Inuvik, and has grown to include members from the other Mackenzie Delta settlements of Aklavik, Fort McPherson, and Arctic Red River, as well as the Western Arctic Coast settlements of Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour and Paulatuk. These are the settlements and regions which COPE now represents, and this report talks mostly about those places, rather than the entire North.

This report begins by discussing the historical background and present situation in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic. That way it will be easier to understand why COPE formed in the first place, and why it does and

says the things it has.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is a long time now since the white man first came to the Mackenzie Delta and the Western Arctic. The first explorers, whalers, missionaries, policemen and fur traders are now beyond the living memory of almost everyone in the region today. So are the beginnings of the changes they brought -- rifles, traps, the fur trade, the disappearance or depletion of many animals, epidemic diseases in which many people died, the white man's religion and laws, and so on. Whole groups of people died, some moved away, others moved in.

The Fur Trade Years

What came out of these early changes was the fur trade years, and a way of life based on trapping and hunting that lasted from the time of the First World War until less than 20 years ago. Many people in the Delta and the Western Arctic did well out of the fur trade, or at least much better than most people in other parts of the North. People worked hard, they had good equipment, boats and dogs, and there was usually lots of food on the table and money for other things as well. Life wasn't easy, and it wasn't always secure. Poverty and disease touched almost everyone's lives at one time or another. Yet people were pretty independent and the North seemed to run by its own rules. People knew more what to expect, and what was expected of them. Hard times seemed due more to bad luck or because nature was not always generous, than to a lot of outside people bringing in a new set of rules and getting most of the benefit themselves. In reality, there were new rules, and outsiders were benefitting from the labour of local people. Yet native people only had to really face that a few days of the year, when they went to town to trade, for example.

Most of today's adults remember those days. They remember them with mixed feelings. There was hard work, few conveniences, less comfortable housing and inadequate medical care, but also more pride and independence, and better family and community life. As for whites, some were good and some were bad, but there weren't that many of them, and anyway they depended on native people to survive and made a living.

Those days are gone, however people remember them. There were many reasons for change -- perhaps as far back as 1948 when fur prices dropped, the cost of living was going up, and people were sick and even dying from influenza and TB. Soon afterwards the government started putting in schools and hospitals. People couldn't make as good a living out on the land anymore, and at the same time, new schools and nursing stations were being built in the larger settlements. There were fewer reasons to stay on the land, more for moving into town.

Government policy was, mainly, to encourage people to move into town. The government would not provide health and educational facilities in the smaller settlements and camps. The children were increasingly made to go to the large hostel schools. People began to feel that even if they themselves wanted to stay on the land, the only way they could do right by their children was to move into town. So they began to move into places like Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk (and later, Inuvik), not always because they wanted to, but because they had to.

The Beginnings of Wage Employment

Even though fur prices went up again later on, it was still hard to made a decent living. With people moving into the settlements, trapping and hunting areas nearby got overcrowded, while the more distant areas, to which people could no longer afford to travel, went untouched. Then in 1955, the

construction of the DEWline started, and later, Inuvik. Suddenly there were lots of jobs. Many people got some kind of job training, as well as good wages, working on construction. The government hoped this would be a solution to the region's problems, both immediately because of the wages coming in, and later because it would get people used to a new way of life of steady working for wages.

The jobs didn't last, though. When the DEWline was finished, and Inuvik was mostly built, there was no more work. Many who had given up trapping in order to work for a few years found it difficult to go back to the land, even if they wanted to. People earned a lot of money, but they spent it fast too. Their hunting and trapping equipment was worn out or lost, or they didn't have any more dogs, and there was little money left to buy more.

Inuvik and the Arrival of Government

Perhaps more important was the effect of the new town of Inuvik itself. Government had arrived in a big way, and, setting what became a familiar pattern, did not consult local people about the creation of Inuvik. The town was planned from faraway Ottawa, built largely by outsiders, and built for them, mostly, as well. Money and technology had made it possible for outsiders to bring the south with them for the first time. Most of the conveniences of Edmonton or Ottawa could be brought north now -- electricity, plumbing, central heating. It was a big change for outsiders living in the North. The modest frame houses of the missionaries and traders in Aklavik looked almost as out of place in Inuvik as the native peoples' log cabins.

Modern construction techniques were expensive, though, and so they were only for whites. Thus ten years ago, the government people, who started coming north in large numbers, all moved into the nice houses at one end of town. The native people who moved to Inuvik had to make do with less -- a tent frame, a

shack, or, if one was lucky, a 512. There was no running water, no toilets, no furnaces. Housing for native people is better today, but costs are soaring, and the contrast with transient housing is still there for all to see.

In front of the Mackenzie school is a monument, dedicated at the official opening of Inuvik in 1961. Three curved metal arms reach up to join at the top. They represent the three races of people, Indians, Eskimos and whites, joined together in the building of Inuvik. Many native people think this is just a bad joke. They have learned that the white man has really been saying in Inuvik, ever since it started, is this: "We white people will not shut you Indians and Eskimos out just because of the colour of your skin. You must, however, reject your old way of life and learn to think and act much like us. Those of you who are willing to do so are welcome to take advantage of the opportunities we are providing here in Inuvik, and welcome to take part in the building of the New North. We give the directions, if you are willing to follow, we will reward you with a good job and maybe a house."

Actually, even that wasn't entirely true, because local people were not eligible for many of the fringe benefits that outsiders were. Often local people were hired on a casual basis and therefore could not get the same wages, northern allowances and free flights that outsiders could. Even those who obtained permanent employment could not get the benefit of high quality, subsidized, housing because they were hired locally. That was only for transients.

Pretty soon outsiders were in the majority. They ran the town, the educational system, the stores and the work places. They had their own clubs and associations and meetings about things, to which native people were often not invited. If they were, they felt out of place because they didn't know what was going on or what was expected of them. And the bureaucracy grew. It was no longer possible to go to someone you had known for years with your

problem and get it sorted out in one visit. Now there was a big building, with lots of offices, and new people all the time. Lots of forms and pieces of paper now, but not many straight answers.

Most white people were strangers now, not like the old days. They didn't depend on native people the way they used to, either. The fur trade didn't matter much anymore, and white people seemed to be able to get around the country without any help from those who really knew the old ways of travelling. The people who made the best living now were not the native people who really knew the country, or were physically strong and competent. The people who lived well were the outsiders, who mostly sat in offices all day pushing paper.

Even the familiar institutions changed. The kids didn't get out trapping during the school year anymore. With more outsiders around, the churches started catering more and more to their needs and less to the native peoples than they used to. The Hudson's Bay Company didn't much care if you trapped anymore, it was happier to take your wages. The policeman was no longer the man who visited your camp by dogteam to see if things were alright. Now he dealt with only law enforcement, and came around only when there was really bad trouble. As a result of extremely fast growth and so many changes in the last ten years or so, human relationships had been replaced by specialization and bureaucracy.

White people didn't seem to respect native people very much either. Few made any attempt to learn the language or customs anymore, or really live the way native people did. Too many whites just insulted native men and abused native women.

Inuvik just didn't belong to native people. A few did well, came to own businesses or have good jobs, own good houses, and mix comfortably with the

outsiders. Most didn't do as well. Even those who feel they have a better life than 10 or 20 years ago realize that the outsiders have got far more than they themselves have. No matter how well you do, the outsider, the newcomer, seems to do even better. The contrast is always there. And those who really make a lot of money, those who really have the power to run things and change things, somehow they are never native people. The rules are all different. Even a native person who wants to own his house has to buy land from the government, land he always thought belonged to his own people anyway.

Some of the same things were happening in the other settlements as well. In the larger ones, like Aklavik, Fort McPherson and Tuk, there were more and more outsiders (even though still a minority), more separation between them and the native people, more new rules for native people to follow, but not to set. The smaller places like Arctic Red, Sachs Harbour and Paulatuk, were spared for a few years, but even there the same thing is happening now. People everywhere are beginning to feel more and more like strangers in their own land. Some didn't even know their children anymore. Universal schooling and hostel residency separated generations. The children were unwilling and unable to go back to the old ways, yet the new ways seemed to offer little to them, especially in terms of good jobs.

In the last eight or ten years, another strange new group of people arrived in the North. These were the investigators. They came from government, universities and private industry. Like geese, they arrived in spring to do research, make surveys and ask endless questions about practically everything in peoples' lives.

At first, local people thought that surely all these experts coming in and studying their problems should also be able to help solve these problems. Maybe these expert investigators and researchers had the answers, maybe they

would take care of things. But again, like geese, they went south in the fall time, and too often nobody in the North ever heard the results of all their surveys and questions. People began to feel they were just being used, but they didn't know what for. As individuals, some of the investigators were good, others weren't, but on the whole, it got harder and harder to understand what all these people were doing and what would come out of it. Native people got tired of helping these investigators and answering their questions when they never got any return for it, either for themselves or their communities. In the end, maybe all these studies and surveys just held the people back, because if they hadn't looked to the investigators for answers, maybe they would have realized sooner that they had to depend on themselves.

Natives and Outsiders

In some ways, these problems were not new. There is no use in romanticizing the old days. Native and whites never really had equal power. The white man nearly always had something native people needed or wanted, but could only get at a price. The white man nearly always wanted to change native people in some way, usually so they would be more like whites. Sometimes there were good things offered, and sometimes the changes were good, but then, as now, the white man took it as his unquestioned right to tell native people what was good for them. Not only to tell them what to do and how to live, but to make them, if possible. The difference in recent years has been that this has been happening more and more often and in more and more parts of peoples lives. Native people seem to have less and less they can really call their own, independently of outside society. It is all so much harder to get away from now, especially in the larger towns.

To make things worse, the government is now telling people that it would

like them to be more independent, and to run things on their own. Yet it never seems to work that way. In reality the government only lets native people run things if they do it the way the government wants. The government decides what organizations will be set up, how they will run, and what they will be responsible for. Settlement councils and hamlet councils are supposed to be running things. Yet mostly the goverment tells them that there are all kinds of problems they aren't allowed to deal with or can't do anything about anyway, even though those problems may be the most important ones in the lives of the local people. They can't change the educational system, or the hospital system, or the housing programme, or the oil companies' activities, or the game laws. Mostly this new independence the government offers is being told what you can't do.

The government really offers native people only token power. It gets people to serve on one committee after another, and flies them around to meetings here and there. At first people think they are getting a chance to have some real input and do something worthwhile, but then they find out that very little comes of it after all. When they see their time and energy and hard work seems to go for nothing, people begin to feel they are just being used. When people are given responsibility and they find out they can't do anything with it, they get frustrated. But people are learning the difference between token power, which is just a diversion, and real power. Real power is economic power, and that is based on ownership and control of land and resources.

Consultation is another new government word. Native people are, unfortunately, learning that it means the government will sometimes listen to you talk, but will go away and do exactly what it intended all along.

They are learning that consultation is often nothing more than government or industry propaganda, where the plans are laid down and native people are just told how they can adapt to them. If there were real equality between natives and outsiders, consultation would be replaced by negotiation. That

means that the two sides would bargain as equals, with native people having their own information, research and representatives and not depending on just the government's view.

Change Out of Control

What was really happening was that change was getting out of control. New problems and new faces and new solutions seemed to be coming up every day. Before one thing was done, another thing was starting. It seemed like change was getting out of control for everyone, not just native people. Some white people who had been in the North for a long time were almost as confused as native people about what was happening. Even government people seemed confused. Nobody seemed to have any power or responsibility anymore. One government agency didn't know what the other was doing. Who to see or who to write to about a problem got more and more mysterious, and it took longer and longer to get an answer. People didn't know what was expected of them anymore, or what they could expect from anybody else. When change is out of control, nobody knows what to expect, so their lives become more difficult and they suffer in many ways.

The Effects on Native People

Many native people got more and more demoralized, especially in Inuvik. Some found that if they couldn't really take part and control what was happening around them, alcohol was one way of coping with the problem, even though it in turn created more problems. Drunkenness, alcoholism, violence, crime, and poverty were some of the results. People spent a million dollars a year at the liquor store, as well as money at the beer parlour, and more money yet to bootleggers. In Inuvik especially, it became harder and harder to get good food from the land. There was lots of fancy stuff in the stores, but store bought grub and store bought clothing were no good for the trail.

Inuvik seemed like a trap to many. The people who still lived in the settlements had mixed feelings about the place. It was fun, though expensive, to visit occasionally, but no good to live in. They dreaded their own settlements might become just like Inuvik some day. Yet the government seemed to pour all the money and benefits into Inuvik. The small communities really had to fight for things like schools, decent medical care and electricity. There didn't seem to be much reward for hard work and decent living anymore.

Some people began to wonder if everything that was happening around them was really necessary. The white man had always said, "adapt to the changes and you'll be alright." Some people began to wonder why white people couldn't do a little adapting instead. White people, after all, had chosen to come North, whereas the North was home to native people. Besides, maybe native people could control some of the changes instead of adapting all the time. Just about everyone agreed that some kind of change and development was necessary and inevitable. All societies change. Indians and Eskimos had changed even before the white man came. Just about everyone wanted better living conditions. It is true that no one wanted to go back to the old days, but they didn't think everything that was good from those days had to be abandoned. Some people started to ask if the kind of development that business and government offered was the only kind. Maybe there was a better way, a way which allowed native people to still be native people, and yet able to select what they thought was best of the new ways.

Some people began to say that native northerners were good enough to start running some things on their own. They had lived for hundreds and thousands of years in this country and had survived. They could still do it, as individuals and as a society.

Oil Exploration and the Assault on the Land

All these changes brought about by the white man were very important, and

affected everyone's lives. But still, they were all happening in the towns and settlements. These are only tiny dots on the enormous map of the north country; in area, only a few square miles out of hundreds of thousands. All the white people lived and worked in towns. The land itself remained untouched. The rules of town life did not apply on the land. The land was a refuge. Some people still lived in small settlements or in bush camps, hunting and trapping for a living. The land was the source of their income and the basis of their whole way of life. Many others, living in settlements or towns and working for wages, also depended on the land. They went hunting and fishing on the weekends and holidays. They went partly because they needed the food. They also went to get back to an older, simpler, but more interesting and rewarding way of life. On the land, men who worked all week for someone else suddenly became their own bosses again. The land was good not only for food and as a refuge from town life, it was a good place to be. There are special places around every settlement that whole families want to visit at certain times of year, not just to fish or shoot geese or hunt whales, but to enjoy.

Most white people don't understand that the land is very important to native people. They think that just because most native people don't need to hunt and trap for a living, because most native people earn their money on construction or exploration jobs, or in offices or stores, because most have moved into houses in the larger settlements, that the land doesn't matter any more. Maybe they think that the land and its resources have been replaced with something better, such as jobs and industry and town life.

Native people don't think that way. Some still depend on the land to make all of their living. That is important enough. Many more depend on it for part

of their food and a little extra income from trapping. The fish, the caribou and the geese are important to these people not just for their cash value, although that too is important enough when frozen beef or pork costs $3.00 a pound in some places. Local food is better than store bought food. It tastes better, you can cook and eat it the way you like it, not just as an individual but as a family. It keeps you going longer. You feel better after eating it and you can work better, especially outdoors in the cold. Native people don't think about food in the same way as money. Food is to be shared and enjoyed by everyone.

To native people, the land is more than just a source of food or cash. It is the permanent source of their security and of their sense of well being. It is the basis of what they are as people. The land, and the birds, fish and animals it supports, has sustained them and their ancestors since time immemorial. Properly cared for, it can always do so. Native people know how to take care of the land, and they know why that must be done.

Now native northerners are being asked to forget about the land because development and jobs are supposed to be better. Different people have different ideas about working every day for wages, and the kind of life they have to lead in order to do that. Some people like that kind of a life and some don't. One thing just about everyone agrees about, though, is that jobs and town life are not necessarily permanent the way the land is. Native people know that whatever kind of new life the white man has offered them has never lasted very long. Boom and bust is the white man's way of doing things. That's how it started with the whalers, and that's how it is today with the oil companies. When the DEWline was built, lots of people got jobs. Then the jobs were gone. Now there is oil exploration and maybe a pipeline. What happens after that? Native people have every reason to think jobs are just a temporary resource. They are nice

to have, sometimes, but you don't build your life around them.

In spite of government promises of jobs on big development projects, native people have found that they get very few of these jobs in the end. In Fort McPherson, for example, only two people had jobs in 1972 on the Dempster Highway. Even with all the development so far, unemployment is still a big problem among native people. Therefore they are skeptical about sacrificing the land for jobs that may never come. Even those who prefer working for wages know their jobs may be gone someday. But the land, at least, is always there. It can always provide the basis of some kind of a living. Native people always think about that. It's alright for white people. When the boom is over, they can always go back where they came from. Most native people don't want to live in the south. The North is their home, so they have to think about the future. They have to make sure the North will always be a good place to live, for them and their children and grandchildren.

The land is one of the things that makes the North a good place to live. Even if you have a job, it's nice to go out hunting and fishing. People like to camp in the bush or on the tundra. They like to watch the weather and the water, to see the first signs of break up, the first geese arriving, or the first snowfall. To many people, these are the real pleasures of life.

Most people would rather be themselves than somebody else. Native people know that in order to be themselves, the land and the animals must be part of their life. In that sense, the land sustains them and their communities. Without the land, and everything it means, native people would lose that which makes them special in their own eyes. They would have to become hollow immitations of white people.

It is not just a matter of individual people, it's a matter of whole

communities as well. People identify themselves by their community. They are Aklavik people, or Paulatuk people, or Fort McPherson people. People have roots in a community, they have relatives and friends there. People in communities work together, and relax together. They share good times and hard times together, People help each other, and by their collective efforts make life better for every member of the community. Around every community, there are places to trap, to fish, to get water and wood, to go for picnics or to pick berries. The community depends on these places. The things that are done there are part of community life. Without these places, community life is less possible and less happy.

These are some of the reasons that the land is so important to people. No matter how many changes there were in the towns, the land stayed pretty much the same, and so there was always some protection. Now even that is changing. Now the white man is everywhere, with his machines and garbage and destruction. No matter how far your trapline is from town, bulldozers may run over your traps. No matter how far your bush camp is from town, you might have an exploration crew staging their equipment there. Lakes are blasted and the fish and muskrats are killed. Creeks are blocked and the fish don't run. Maybe the noise and fumes of the bulldozers will scare away the caribou and the foxes. The animals are threatened, the land itself is threatened. So the native people are threatened in a way that they never have been before.

If native people complain, if they try to tell the government or the oil companies what is happening, nobody listens. At meetings they get a lot of big words and technical arguments, from people who know nothing of fish or animals or what they mean to native people. The government and the industry talk about consultation, but whether native people like it or not, they just go ahead and do what they want. Native people are beginning to think that outsiders,

despite all their wisdom, don't know how to take care of the land, and worse, don't even care. That, in their eyes, is a good enough reason not to become like outsiders.

The Common Experience of Native People

What we have talked about so far is the history of the white man's activities in the north as native people have experienced them. That common experience alone is something that unites native people, although there are many other things as well. Whatever differences there are between Indian and Eskimo, between the Delta people and the Tuk people, even between some families and others, all have shared these experiences in some way. People's reaction to these experiences has also been similar. The problems created by the white man and his ways have been shared by all native people and all communities. That is why native people can identify themselves as native people, in addition to being just from one family or one village. That means there is, in the Mackenzie Delta and the Arctic Coast (and perhaps even in the whole North), a distinctive native society. That is, a larger group big enough that maybe not everyone knows each other, but in which people have a common heritage, common values and common goals. In such a society, people have reason to work together and help each other, because it helps them to protect themselves and to have a better life.

The next part of this report talks about what all these experiences every individual native person has had means to their society as a whole.

THE POLITICS OF NORTHERN SOCIETY

Every society has rules. That is the way people get to know what is expected of them, and how to get along with other people in order to do things together. Not just the written laws, like the criminal code or the game regulations, but all kinds of unwritten rules that are learned from childhood on. Rules like how to behave toward your father and mother, how to share food when hunting

together, how to know when it is the proper time to do certain things and not others, indeed, what you and others should consider more important and less important in life. Rules that everyone knows so well they hardly even think about them.

The question is, who makes these rules and how do they enforce them. Normally, rules come about gradually, within a society, which is a group of people with common experience, problems and purpose. No one individual simply announces a rule from nowhere. Rules grow out of people's collective experience and wisdom, and change with that experience and wisdom over time. Most people agree on them. They may not always be good rules, but they make some kind of sense to everyone who is guided by them. Rules express the kinds of values that societies or groups of people have.

Different societies have different rules. It's not always that one society's rules are better or worse than another's, although sometimes that is true. One set of rules may be best for one group in one place, given their experience and problems, another set is better for another group in another place with a different experience and set of problems.

Sometimes, one society comes into contact with another. Maybe one group got pushed out of where they were before for some reason, or maybe they were looking for something new. People from one start travelling and living amongst the other. The newcomers have a choice between two ways of doing things. One is to forget about their old ways, and adopt the ways of the people among whom they have moved. The other is to insist that their own ways are the best, not just for them but for everybody, and try to make the other people adopt their ways. The choice they make usually depends on how strong they think they are, and how much power they have. Very often, in this kind of a situation, people do not learn to live as equals, and work together cooperatively. One society comes to

dominate the other, because it is bigger and stronger, and because its people want the resources and land that the other group controls.

White people coming North have almost always chosen the second way, that is, to make native people adopt at least some white ways. People don't always recognize this, because many of the individuals who have come North have been really fine people, who have done good things and earned respect from almost everyone. They, as individuals, only wanted to help native people. More important, really, is that the organizations in southern Canada or in foreign countries that sent these people North have chosen the second way. The Hudson's Bay Company, the missions, the police, the government, and now the oil companies, have always come North because they wanted something for themselves, and they had some ideas how to get it. Always, this has meant changing native people in some way, like getting them to follow a certain religion, or follow certain laws, or to hunt and trap for certain animals instead of others, or to speak another language, or to run their lives by a clock instead of by the sun, the weather and the season.

Rarely has this been done by force. With so few people in such a large land, the white man could afford to be generous. He could offer things in return -- trade goods, money, jobs, houses, medical care, even a better life after death. He could persuade and bargain instead of fight.

Everyone has their own ideas about whether the bargain has been a good one, who got the best of it, and whether and how it might be changed. Two points are very important, however. One is that the terms of the bargain were always set by the white man. Even if he was generous, he still set the terms, because he had the power. He set the fur prices, the wage rates, the whole system of rewards and punishment for everything people did. He made the rules about how people ought to behave. He enforced them through the courts, by hiring and firing people, by the welfare system, and by helping some people and not others in all kinds of ways.

Sometimes the rules that white people made weren't very clear, or they didn't make any sense, or there were different groups of people setting different rules. All kinds of different people have been making different rules, except for native people who have less and less opportunity to write their own rules. Different administrators, different employers, different churches, and different teachers are all making and imposing new rules, and new values, That has been very confusing for native people. Everyone needs to know what is expected of them. If the old rules are taken away, and the new ones are not clear, people suffer. They suffer in their minds, and after a while they don't know what to expect or what to do.

The second point is that if the bargaining position of native people was bad fifty or twenty years ago, it is a lot worse today. When white people first came North, they depended on native people for survival. They depended on them for food, shelter, guiding and travelling. The fur traders depended on native people to trap the furs and bring them to the trading posts. Some white people, after a while, got pretty good at hunting and trapping, and could survive pretty well on their own, but they had to live a lot like native people in order to do that.

When Inuvik was built, with a lot of fancy housing and office buildings, things changed. Whites were no longer dependent on native people for physical survival. With big houses, unlimited supplies of fuel and electricity, radios to order things from outside and airplanes to bring them in, all the new outsiders working for the government could not only survive perfectly well, they could actually live much better than native people. Still, they were dependent on native people for their jobs, in a sense. Administrators, welfare officers, development officers, teachers and nurses, were all there supposedly to help native people. If there were no native people in the North, then there would have been no need for them either.

With oil exploration, something new has happened. The outside world needs the North, or at least its oil and gas resources, but it doesn't need native people at all. Outsiders know exactly what they want, and exactly how to get it, and they need absolutely no local help. Now they can travel to any place with tractors, trucks, airplanes and helicopters. They can keep themselves warm, sheltered, clothed and fed by bringing everything with them from outside. They have all the skills and knowledge to explore for oil, produce it, and take it out of the country. They can bring all the labour they need from outside. If there were no native people in the North, they could still do all this, maybe even with less trouble because they wouldn't have to worry about giving native people jobs or royalties or land rights. If native people have nothing to offer the oil companies, how can they bargain with them?

The answer is that native people do have something, only they have to fight to show that it is theirs, and that others can use or obtain it only at a price. What they have is their land. That is what native people in Alaska learned. They organized and they fought, and they finally got a settlement for their land. Native people in Canada have been hearing about that, and wondering if they couldn't get something like it themselves.

THE FOUNDING OF COPE

That is the situation native people are in today. It has happened gradually, for the most part. Little things happened from time to time, rather than a big thing all at once. That made it harder to see what was really happening. Two big things did happen recently to help a lot of people see, though. One was the growth of the native movement in neighbouring Alaska, and how it was actually holding up oil development in order to get a fair land claims settlement. The other, which brought matters closer to home, was the discovery of oil at Atkinson Point in January 1970. A lot of people started asking themselves what this oil discovery meant for native people. Would it really help them or would

all the riches of the country be taken from under their noses and they would be left with nothing? Many of the people who really started thinking and talking about this lived in Inuvik, some of them even had jobs and good houses. That was no accident. Those people have experienced all the things mentioned earlier in this report, in a direct personal way. Inuvik was where the worst things were happening, so people in Inuvik knew better than anyone else what was happening to native people, and what would happen in the future. The people who were working at jobs had the most contact with government and industry, and could see most easily what these organizations were really doing.

Nineteen native people met together in Inuvik on the night of 28 January 1970. They talked about the need for some kind of native organization that could be an organized voice for native people, and look into their land rights. Oil had just been discovered at Atkinson Point, and they knew that now was the time to speak up or native people would really lose out. There was no other organization speaking up for native people in this way. The federal and territorial governments seemed to be frustrating the people more than helping them. The political parties weren't saying much or doing much to help. The service and community organizations in Inuvik were mostly run by white people.

The idea of a native rights organization, run by and for native people themselves, was new in the North. There were Indian Brotherhoods down south, in the provinces. The N.W.T. Indian Brotherhood had been formed shortly before, but in early 1970, it was active only around Yellowknife and Rae, and depended on Alberta Indians a lot for help. There were no Eskimo organizations at all. So at that time, there had really been no such thing as an entirely local group in the North getting together to form their own organization with no outside help.

These 19 people decided to form a northern native organization, and they

called it the Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement. It was to be for all the original people, those whose ancestors, whether Indian or Eskimo, had been in the North country for hundreds and thousands of years, long before the white man. The purpose of the committee was above all to find out about the proper entitlement of the original people, and to make sure that they got it. It was to ensure that native people got what they were entitled to by aboriginal rights, by treaty, by their present use of the land, by their majority position in their own country, and by the standards of common human decency. This would happen only if native people worked together for their rights. That is why it was decided that the two main objectives of COPE would be:

1. To provide a united voice for all original peoples of the N.W.T., and
2. To work for the establishment and the realization of the rights of the original peoples.

COPE's written constitution also states its other purposes, such as promoting equality among all people in the North regardless of race, encouraging native business enterprise and leadership, preserving native culture and traditions, and working with other native organizations or with government or other groups or persons toward the same goals. But the first two objectives have always been the most important.

The people at the meeting knew it would be a big job and take time. They were the charter members of the new organization and they decided to have the headquarters in Inuvik. Efforts to enroll members and raise money would start in Inuvik and the nearby settlements. People were elected to take responsibility for running COPE. The meeting also talked about getting a lawyer, to look into land rights and see how the native people could benefit.

What has happened since then is the subject of the rest of this report. First we will look at COPE's policies in more detail, then its plans of action,

what it has actually done, and the problems it faced.

COPE'S POLICIES

COPE is not affiliated to any political party. Yet it is a political group in the sense that politics is about getting the power to do what you want. Every group that wants to change something for its benefit is a political group, even if it has nothing to do with the big political parties, or even if it doesn't run candidates for election to Parliament in Ottawa or the Territorial Council in Yellowknife. Such groups are political pressure groups, which try to persuade the politicians that what they want is right and just and best for people. COPE is trying to persuade the government and the rest of Canada to do what is best for native people. COPE is the only organized voice of native people in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic which is doing that.

The Land Question

Native people, and their representative organization COPE, now know that the main problem today is to control the land. This report has already talked about how important the land is to the people. It has also shown how that, at the same time the outside world wants more and more from the North, native people have less and less to offer, and therefore less bargaining power. The key to changing that is the land.

According to the federal government in Ottawa, all the land in the North belongs to the Crown, and can only be sold or leased by the government. In a few places, like Yellowknife and Inuvik, the government has given land to the town, and the town council can sell land. The government's view is that all the land in the North was "discovered" by the British, and about a hundred years ago, given by them to Canada which was then a new country. In the last few hundred years, European countries, including England, got into the habit of claiming any land that they saw for themselves, thinking themselves more important

than the people already living there. They thought all they had to do was to send a ship, put up a flag, and suddenly the "newly discovered" land belonged to them. In fact, native people had discovered the land long before, and were already living in it and using it effectively for their own benefit.

Native people feel that since they and their ancestors have lived continuously in the North since long before the whiteman came, that the land belongs to them. The way native people think of land ownership is very different from white people. White people generally own land as individuals, and mark off their property by surveys and fences. Otherwise the land is owned by the government, which can sell or lease land to individuals who want it. White people buy and sell land, and they have to pay taxes on it in order to own and use it. Traditionally, no native person ever thought that he personally owned a particular piece of land and could therefore keep other people away. People owned land collectively, as a whole group or village. Even then, they did not own it the way white people think of owning it. It meant that everybody in the group or village had the free use of the land as they needed it. People respected one another's traplines and bushcamps, for example, but that didn't mean that any individual actually had exclusive rights to any particular piece of land. If one person didn't use an area, another person might use it later on. Different people might use the same land at different times, or they might even all use it together for hunting caribou or whales. White people had different ideas. When they came north, they figured that if no individual native person had actually laid claim to a piece of land, it was theirs for the taking.

Aboriginal Rights

Many people, not only native people but some people outside, including some lawyers, now think that this is not true, and that in fact native people do have collective rights in the land, which are called aboriginal rights. Some

lawyers say that the government has always recognized these rights until recently, since they signed many treaties with Indian tribes down south. These treaties, even if they were unfairly negotiated and the government got the advantage, indicated that the government felt it had to make an agreement with the Indians before it could use their land. There are also court cases in which the judges have recognized the principle of aboriginal rights. That principle goes back many many years, long before Canada was a country, to when Europeans first came to America.

Aboriginal rights mean that the native people who occupy certain lands have special rights there. According to white peoples' own law and tradition, the courts have usually decided that it does not mean that native peoples' land is like a separate country. Native people in the North, for example, couldn't sell their land to another country, or to individual people. They can make a settlement only with the government. But the government, on its part, is supposed to recognize aboriginal title to the land, and is morally obligated to make a fair settlement with the native people who occupy it before government or industry can use it.

In the North, only one treaty was ever signed. The Indians of the Mackenzie Valley signed a treaty with the government in 1921. It is known as Treaty Number 11. On government maps, that treaty includes all of the mainland right to the coast and as far east as the Coppermine River. The Indian people didn't know anything about those boundaries until lately. The boundaries extend far beyond where Indian people actually lived, and they say they never intended to sign a treaty for such a large area, some of which belongs to Eskimos anyway. In any case, the Indian people understood the treaty to be one of peace with the white man, and had nothing to do with giving up their rights in the land. Treaty 11 has provisions for reserves based on one square mile for every five

people. Nobody could make a living hunting or trapping on that amount of land. The land for these reserves has never been selected by Indian people, one reason being that nobody except the government seems to have known anything about these reserves until recently. So Indian people still feel the land belongs to them, and the white man has no right to take it over and spoil it.

The Eskimo people never signed any treaties anywhere. They never lost their land in war, they never treatied for it, and they never sold it. Eskimo people also feel the land still belongs to them. The same is true of metis people, or of anyone who has native ancestry but is not a status Indian or an Eskimo with a disc number.

Native people do not define themselves the way the government does. That is why more and more native people, regardless of their particular origin, feel that they have rights in the land no matter what the government thinks, and no matter how the government defines them legally. So far as COPE is concerned, anyone who has native ancestry as far back as the fourth generation, and has been a resident of the N.W.T. can be a member.

The principle that COPE has stood for above all is that the land belongs to the native people. If anybody wants to use it, they should settle the matter with native people. There should be no more development without a settlement. If native people can get the government to recognize their aboriginal rights in the land, then they will have real power and a strong bargaining position. Then they will be able to get some lasting benefit out of development. The government used to recognize aboriginal rights in the land. Now native people have to force it to recognize these rights again. That can only be done by organizing politically, and putting pressure on the government.

COPE'S PRIORITIES

Every organization has to decide what is the most important thing it wants,

and what has to be done to get it. It has to set priorities. No organization can do everything. COPE had decided its most important priority was the land question. A land settlement which gave native people both control over their land and compensation for whatever was used by others, would solve many other problems that native people have. The land would not be spoiled, and people could still make a living from it or enjoy the use of it, as they wished. If industry wanted to get oil and gas, and could do it without spoiling the land, then native people would get royalties out of it. If the government wanted certain pieces of land for some special use, it would have to pay compensation to native people for it. Native communities could use that money to provide their own services and start their own businesses and small industries. A land settlement could mean a better life for all native people.

Since that is so important and so basic, that is where COPE puts most of its time and money and energy. COPE does not want to be just a service organization, doing things the government is responsible for anyway. That would just divert native people from getting control of the land. Other native organizations, like Inuit Tapirisat and the Indian Brotherhood, which also feel the land is the most important problem, have the same priorities as COPE. The N.W.T. Metis Association puts more effort into alcohol education and housing, and trying to get more government money for social and economic programmes. Those are good things but they don't solve the land problem. In a way they make the native people more dependent on government instead of less so. It is true that many native people feel their most immediate problems relate to alcohol, housing, recreation and employment. The question is whether these problems are solved just by giving people less alcohol, more houses and more jobs, or whether the best way is to change the situation that created these problems in the first place. This report began by talking about that situation and how

it developed. COPE, and some of the other native associations, believe that changing that situation is the best way. That is why COPE talks about a land settlement most of all.

Nonetheless, COPE does not want to neglect the other problems, because they are related. That is why COPE is interested in developing native leadership and business, and in preserving native traditions. That is why COPE helps individuals get justice and proper service in their own dealings with outside organizations, private or government. What is important to COPE is that native people have rights. Everyone else should recognize those rights and deal fairly with native people. Native people also have the ability to run their own lives, and so they should be given the encouragement and the means to do that. Native traditions and native communities are good and valuable, so that should not only be preserved but allowed to develop in their own way. Everything COPE does is based on those ideas.

To be an effective organization, COPE has to lead and to teach. It is trying to show all native people that there are answers to their problems, and how to realize these answers. So COPE workers go around visiting other native people. They listen to peoples views and problems, explain to people what their rights are, and talk to them about what to do. COPE also holds meetings from time to time, to explain its aims to the people and to tell them what it is doing. These meetings and visits are also the way COPE finds out what the people really want and how COPE can represent them in the best way possible. COPE encourages people to become leaders who can do things for the benefit of their communities. It encourages people to take part in its activities so that people can learn more about their problems and how to do something about them.

In a different way, COPE also has to teach white people. COPE leaders go to government meetings and to conferences outside, where they can

speak for other native people and make their views known. That is very important, because people in the North need support from ordinary people in southern Canada. That way there are more and more people to put pressure on the government.

WHAT COPE HAS DONE

Since COPE was founded three years ago, it has done many things. First it had membership drives, in which COPE workers went and talked to individual people and families in every settlement, and explained what the organization was for. COPE always thought it was important for their members to really understand what it meant to join COPE. COPE never sold memberships just as a way to get into a dance or anything like that. COPE does not automatically count all native people as members. Only those who have freely and voluntarily joined are members. However, COPE does not fail to serve all native people in the region, whether they are members or not. COPE has enrolled about 650 members in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic, which were the easiest and cheapest places to get to. But other communities got interested in COPE too. In 1971, COPE had about 300 members in the central and eastern Arctic, so it was beginning to broaden out to cover the whole North.

One of the first things COPE did was to help organize the first conference of Arctic Native People, held in Coppermine in the summer of 1970. This was the first chance native people had to meet from all across the North and discuss their problems. The delegates sent a telegram to the Prime Minister asking him to recognize the aboriginal rights of the Eskimo people in their land. That was the first time that Eskimos had said anything collectively to the government about this.

At the same time, COPE supported the people of Banks Island against the oil companies and the government. The Bankslanders had always made a good living

from trapping. So when the oil companies arrived to start seismic exploration all over the island, the people were afraid the animals would be harmed or scared away. The people figured they had prior rights on the island, and appealed to the government to protect them. Instead the government took the side of the oil companies. The Sachs Harbour people were members of COPE, and asked COPE to help. COPE got them in touch with a lawyer, and represented them at meetings.

The Bankslanders were ready to take legal action against the oil companies, but the government deliberately went around COPE and their lawyer, and tricked the Bankslanders into letting the oil companies go ahead. Even so, the Bankslanders got some benefits out of it, and the government had to control exploration a little more strictly after that. These benefits came because COPE, on behalf of its members on Banks Island, was able to help publicize the case and put pressure on the government. Many people in southern Canada protested to the government about the way native people were being treated. The government was also afraid of a court case, which is why it stopped the Sachs Harbour people from going ahead with their injunction.

With the help of an organization like COPE, people can fight back against the government and the oil companies better, and it gives courage to other people. In 1970, the idea of actually stopping the oil companies seemed almost impossible. But two years later, when the same thing happened on Cape Bathurst, the Tuk people were able to shut the oil companies out, for a year at least. Here again, they got help from the native organizations. COPE people went to the meeting and kept careful records of everything that was said. They were able to get news reporters to publicise the affair. COPE was able to get the Tuk people represented directly in Ottawa by Inuit Tapirisat, the national Eskimo organization for the whole North. Very recently COPE arranged representatives for the Holman people at land use meetings, on behalf of Inuit Tapirisat.

COPE has helped individuals as well as whole communities. In Arctic Red River, COPE arranged for men to get compensation for damage to their fishnets. The government and the oil companies know that one person's complaints are easily ignored. But they cannot ignore it when a whole organization which represents all native people speaks up for one of its members. That is why unity and cooperation are good for people.

These incidents are the ones where COPE has most obviously stood up for the aboriginal rights of the people. Its leaders have also made the case for aboriginal rights many many times, to government officials and public meetings, both in the North and the South. The fact that southern Canadians are today more aware than ever before of the problem of native rights in the North, is due to the hard work and perseverence of COPE and other northern native organizations.

One other thing COPE was involved in, regarding the question of land rights, was the case of the Nishga Indians in British Columbia. COPE's lawyer in Yellowknife recommended COPE take part in this case, which was a very important part of the struggle of all native people in Canada for recognition of their aboriginal rights. The Nishga Indians claimed that their aboriginal rights in the Nass Valley of British Columbia still existed, since they have never signed a treaty or sold their land. The judgement in this case could have affected the rights of native people in other parts of Canada who had also never signed treaties, like the Eskimos. When the case was to go to the Supreme Court of Canada, COPE was going to make an intervention, that is, to tell the court of its own interest in the matter.

After Inuit Tapirisat was formed in 1971, its legal advisors thought it would not be a good idea for Eskimo people to become involved in the Nishga case. Therefore Inuit Tapirisat asked COPE to withdraw from the case. It was a hard

decision for COPE to make, but in the interest of unity among native people and their organizations, COPE did withdraw. Now it is working together with Inuit Tapirisat on land problems.

In a more general way, COPE has pressed for the rights and involvement of native people in development at major conferences held in Inuvik. At the Man in the North Conference in 1970, and the University of Canada North Conference in 1971, COPE ensured that these issues were put on the agenda and discussed properly so that planning would not go ahead without any input from native people.

Cope has also done other things to promote the cultural, social and economic life of native people. Northern Games are one example. Many of the people involved in COPE got together with other people in the community and started Northern Games as a Centennial project in 1970. The Northern Games Association has been able to keep the games going every year, with the help of government grants, and the games are becoming more and more popular. They have become a means for contestants from many towns and villages across the North to get together. Because the games are organized by and for the native people, everyone, contestants or spectators, has a good time in their own way. The games are not run for tourists or profits, but for the people's own enjoyment, as an expression of their own traditions.

COPE has a contract with CBC to provide weekly radio broadcasts in native languages. COPE is also collecting taped interviews with oldtimers about their own lives, so that the history and heritage of native people can be preserved. COPE has refinished Ingamo Hall in Inuvik and now operates it as a native community hall.

COPE has encouraged local native business ventures. It made representation on behalf of Reindeer Air Services to the Air Transport Committee so that this

local airline could grow as a service to northern communities. COPE organized an attempt by a group of Inuvik people to bid on the construction of a building for the territorial government in Inuvik which would also by occupied by native-owned and operated businesses. This bid was turned down by the territorial government in favour of an outsider, without adequate explanation. Since then, COPE helped to set up Namaktok Ltd., a native corporation with the purpose of getting native people into their own businesses. Namaktok Ltd. is now trying to get a similar building for native businesses. COPE also organized the Inuvik Housing Cooperative, which is trying to get land in Happy Valley to provide services to low income families, both native and non-native. This project got the approval of the territorial government, but, so far, not from the Inuvik Town Council, again, for reasons not fully explained.

The problems that these two projects have had show that although the government says it is encouraging native people to participate in new developments, in fact, native people are given a hard time when they actually try to do something for themselves.

In addition to these kinds of projects, COPE has helped many individuals in their personal dealings with government or industry and, sometimes, has helped whole communities. For example, in Arctic Red River in 1971. the saw-mill operation changed management and the workers were not getting their pay anymore. This interruption in income was very hard on the community and no one seemed to know who was responsible for the problem. The people asked COPE to step in and, in the end, everybody got their wages.

PROBLEMS FACING COPE

COPE has managed to do all these things in spite of many problems. It has always been very short of money. The federal government has never given COPE proper recognition or funding, which has made it hard for COPE to organize.

Many powerful interests are working against COPE and would like to see it fail.

Government Opposition

Some people think that if an organization has enemies, that is a bad thing. Surely, they say, everyone is really working for the same things, or that there isn't much choice anyway, and it only makes things worse to get into a fight. The problem is that outsiders have the power now, and native people don't. If there is one thing sure about human behaviour, it is that people, and especially groups, don't give up power easily. It is not that individual white people are against native people. But big organizations, like the federal and territorial governments, the chamber of commerce, and large corporations, always act to protect their own interests. All of these organizations are run by outsiders, mainly for outsiders' benefit.COPE threatens these organizations because COPE thinks they should have less power and native people should have more power. Therefore these organizations work against COPE and try to undermine it. If COPE had no enemies, it would not be doing a good job for native people. The same is true of Inuit Tapirisat and the Indian Brotherhood. Business and government try to get their own way against them.

It would be nice if everyone could work together. That is what native people are used to. They think it is very important for people to cooperate, and bad for them to fight and argue. Unfortunately the big, outside controlled organizations don't have quite the same attitudes. They say they do not want to fight and argue either, but they always want to do things in their own native way. And now they can do that because they have the power. So native people only have two choices; give up or fight back.

The federal government, and particularly the Department of Indian Affairs, has worked mostly against COPE. The reason for that is that Indian Affairs, even though it is supposed to protect the interests of native people and protect the environment, actually wants to develop oil and gas resources most of all, and

as fast as possible. That means that the government doesn't want anyone or any group to stand in the way. The government is against native groups and environmental groups, and will try to defeat them in any way that it can. Many ordinary Canadians in the south don't like to see the government treat native people that way, so the government pretends to give support and help to native groups by giving them some money, sometimes, to run their organizations, and by allowing their leaders to talk to government officials and cabinet ministers.

The Department of Indian Affairs was very unhappy when the Conference of Arctic Native People was organized in 1970. It was unhappy about Eskimos asking for formal government recognition of their aboriginal rights. That was against government policy. The year before, Prime Minister Trudeau said that the government would absolutely refuse to recognize aboriginal rights. Instead, native people were to be given the opportunity to participate in Canadian society by giving up their native identity and ways, and becoming just like other Canadians. But native people in the North do not want this. They are the majority in their own land. They don't want to become like the white people who come North. Instead they want white people who come North to cooperate with them and help native people build their own, truly northern society.

The government was also angry at COPE for defending its members in Sachs Harbour against the oil companies in 1970. The government refused to recognize COPE, and tried to stop COPE representatives from participating in meetings. But as all native organizations have grown in strength, the government has had to back down a little bit. When the Tuk people were fighting the oil companies in 1972, the government had to recognize Inuit Tapirisat as the peoples' representative.

Shortage of Money

At first, COPE did not want any government money. It raised money through membership fees and donations, and obtained a small grant from the Donner

Foundation, a private organization in Toronto. This was not enough money for staff salaries or offices. There was hardly enough money for travel, phone calls and legal fees. This meant a lot of volunteer work had to be done by people in their spare time. The advantage of this, however, was that only the most serious and dedicated people had positions of major responsibility. The people who were involved really worked hard. They did it because they wanted to serve the people, not to make a lot of money.

In some other places, where the local people themselves have not felt a real need for an organization and a paid staff, government grants have meant that a few people get to take a joy ride on public money, and don't do very much for the people. Also, unless the leadership and the members really know what they want, once their organization gets government money they might get afraid to talk back to the government. People can sometimes get more interested in keeping their jobs than serving the people. COPE was afraid of these things, and never wanted to take government money at first. But once COPE really got going, with a clear programme and dedicated workers, money became more necessary in order to serve the people properly.

In 1971 the government started a programme of funding native organizations, so they could have offices and staffs and meetings. This programme is run by a government department called Secretary of State. Sometimes it has arguments with Indian Affairs, because it wants to do different things. Sometimes this has been good for native people, because probably no money at all would have been available if it had been up to Indian Affairs. But sometimes native people get caught in the middle of these arguments. Unfortunately, that is what happens when people outside have the power, and native peoples' real needs come second to the interests of large outside organizations.

Secretary of State's policy for funding was to recognize only one Indian, one metis and one Eskimo organization for each province or territory, except that Eskimos could have regional organizations within the Territories. In most places this is alright. But in the Inuvik region, people are not separated like that. Indians and Eskimos all live together, some are even related by marriage. Therefore they want their own regional organization which will work for everybody. Unfortunately the government won't see it that way, and it won't change its rules to help people in a special situation like the Mackenzie Delta.

This has meant that other organizations were allowed to get money from the government, but COPE was not. Now that COPE wants and needs money from Secretary of State, it gets the run around from the government. It should be allowed to get money as a regional Eskimo organization, but the government is now backing down on this.

This has made it very difficult for COPE to organize beyond the Inuvik region. The Northwest Territories are very large, and it is very expensive for people to travel all around them. Yet other native people living in other parts of the North wanted effective organizations to fight for their interests too. COPE didn't have enough money or people to do that.

Other Native Organizations

Since COPE started three years ago, the NWT Indian Brotherhood grew and became a strong organization, no longer needing help from southern people. The Indian Brotherhood now represents all Indian bands, and has its own office and staff in Yellowknife. It is working particularly on treaty rights, and settling the land rights of the Indian people in the North. It is also associated with the National Indian Brotherhood in Ottawa, which is a federation of all Indian organizations in the provinces down south as well as in the territorial North.

Eskimo people in the central and eastern Arctic also wanted an organization.

COPE had some members there but was not able to do much because it was so far away. In August 1971, a National Eskimo Brotherhood was formed called Inuit Tapirisat of Canada. It now has an office in Ottawa and represents all Eskimo people in Canada. In some places, like the eastern and central Arctic, people are members of Inuit Tapirisat directly. In other places, like the Western Arctic and Northern Quebec, people have their own organizations which are affiliated with Inuit Tapirisat. When Inuit Tapirisat started, COPE turned all its members in the Eastern Arctic over to them.

More recently, the N.W.T. Metis Association has been established, with headquarters in Hay River. Most native people in the Inuvik region think of themselves as either Indian or Eskimo, not metis. But around Great Slave Lake there are metis people, and because they are not covered under the treaties, they wanted their own organization. So that was started in 1972.

New Ways of Leadership and Decision Making

For native people, one of the big problems in forming a political organization is to get people really involved in making decisions and taking leadership responsibilities. Many people find the structure of any kind of political organization, native or otherwise, unfamiliar. Traditionally, native people have valued equality and harmony among themselves. Therefore, they have tried to avoid conflict, and only give leadership powers to others with caution, almost grudgingly. The business of having to organize, to have committees and structures and meetings, is foreign. Some people feel it was better in the old days when there were no meetings, everybody minded his own business, and people got along with each other. In the past, native people judged a person on his own qualities and did not have to analyze more abstract political ideas and strategies the way they do now.

That has made it difficult for people to take on leadership positions

now, and to get involved in new forms of decision-making. It is also true that those things take time and many people do not have much time left over from their jobs and families. So the people who have accepted leadership responsibilities have had a difficult job because they have had to do things which were not old and familiar to them and their people, but new and different things. They have had to speak out, to organize, to make decisions and to take actions which affected not only themselves but their whole community. They have had to be pretty sure they are doing the right things, because afterwards they have to take the consequences. They know they can be criticized by some of their own people. It is difficult or impossible to do things which will please everybody. People just have to do the best they can.

What makes leadership even more difficult is the reaction from the white community, and particularly the government. When native leaders really start to speak up and put on pressure, the government attacks them. The government or hostile white people start saying that the leaders are bad or misguided people and do not represent native people or are even doing them harm. They will say that the native organizations are undemocratic and dangerous. They will say that native leaders are not doing their job properly.

This gets confusing for native people, and they are not sure who to believe, especially when some of these white people have been good to them in the past. The reasons outsiders say these things is because they are afraid of losing some of their power and privileges, as was mentioned before in this report. When they attack the leadership, really, they are attacking native people as a whole, and are trying to divide them. Tearing down the leaders is a sure way to keep native people confused and to keep power where it is, which is in the hands of outsiders. It is also very painful and discouraging for the leaders themselves, but it is something that any native person who takes a leadership role has to deal with nowadays. If outsiders really wanted

to benefit native people, they would give constructive advice, help native people develop leadership capabilities and help native people to run their own affairs. They would allow native people to develop these things in their own way, and not always try to force them into the white man's way of doing things all the time.

REORGANIZATION OF COPE

For a while, in 1972, COPE thought it might have to fold up and let the other native organizations take over. It looked, then, like COPE would not be able to do as much for the people as the other organizations, because it didn't have the money, offices and full time staff. There was more and more work to be done and it all seemed to be falling on the shoulders of a few people who were working voluntarily, without pay, in their spare time, after their regular jobs. It also seemed confusing to the people to have so many organizations, especially when COPE was originally set up in the hopes of representing all native peoplein the North in one united organization.

COPE's New Role

COPE workers went to all the settlements and talked to people about the situation. They explained what was happening, and listened to peoples' views. It turned out that people were pleased with the work COPE was doing, and did not want it to fold up. They were afraid to lose the one organization that was standing up for them. People thought there was a need for their own regional organization which served all the people in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic, whether they were Indians or Eskimos. There are about 4000 native people in this region, and at the same time, this is where most of the oil development is taking place. Therefore the people wanted a strong local organization to stand up for them, with its headquarters in the region and whose leaders region and its problems well, who come from the region and, therefore, are well known to everybody.

At the same time, many people wanted to know more about the other native organizations and how they could all work together. Many people were confused about why there were so many organizations, and how their own organization, COPE, fitted in. Part of that has already been explained in this report. The other organizations fill a need for people elsewhere that COPE could not handle. So COPE has revised its role in relation to other native organizations. It no longer expects to represent the entire NWT, although it was the first organization to see the need for a united voice for all native northerners. In a sense, that job can now be done by the proposed Federation of Natives North of Sixty. This would be a federation of all the native organizations in the NWT and Yukon, including COPE, which would speak for all on the most important issues where everyone is united. There have already been talks between the native organizations about doing this.

Relations with Other Native Organizations

What COPE wants to do now is to be a regional native organization for the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic. Therefore it will concentrate on local problems which can best be handled through Inuvik. The other organizations will handle broader problems facing all Indian or Eskimo people. For example, the NWT Indian Brotherhood speaks for all Indian people about their treaty and land rights, and any other matters which affect Indians only. Inuit Tapirisat is dealing with the land claims issue for all Eskimos, as well as providing services on a national basis for all Eskimos. Both these organizations want COPE to continue as a regional organization. They want COPE to act as their agent in the Mackenzie Delta and Western Arctic, and they want it to handle all local problems with government and oil companies. At the same time, they will represent local people on national issues. Inuit Tapirisat and the Indian Brotherhood recognize the need for a strong, determined organization like COPE with its head office

right in the region where there are so many problems with development. Therefore, COPE and ITC fieldworkers always work together and consult each other.

Unfortunately there has been less cooperation from the Metis Association, which the government asked COPE to help start. Instead of putting all its effort around Great Slave Lake and the upper Mackenzie Valley, where most Metis people live, the Metis Association has tried to do a lot of organizing around Inuvik and has spent a lot of money in this area. Sometimes it has brought in organizers from outside, or have hired people who are not Metis. Some of its leaders, board members and organizers do not even come from the Northwest Territories. Some local people in the Metis Association resent the organization being governed by outsiders and would like to see it locally controlled. That, after all, is what the other native associations stand for and practice.

The Metis Association is working mostly on alcohol and housing programmes. These are good things, but it has also sold memberships to people who are not Metis. This has confused people. It could also be against peoples' interests. People who are classed by the government as Metis do not have all the same rights as people who are classed as Eskimos. It could be bad for Eskimo people, or treaty Indian people, to sign up in the Metis Association because they might lose their rights. Eskimo people with white parents or grandparents don't call themselves Metis, anyway. They are still Eskimos.

The Metis Association's alcohol and housing programmes are good ideas, but it is not good for most people in the Delta and Western Arctic to be members of the Metis Association. The Metis Association is not doing very much about land rights anyway. COPE, Inuit Tapirisat and the Indian Brotherhood have asked the Metis Association not to sign up Eskimos and Indians as members, and not to interfere with their own proper work in this area, and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the Metis Association does not cooperate with the other organizations as much as it could. At the back of this report are copies of two agreements in which the native associations have tried to work out how they will work together in this area.

CONCLUSION

Now the hard work that COPE has done for three years is showing results, to the benefit of native people in its own region and elsewhere, and to the benefit of other native organizations as well. COPE's leaders have always kept one main goal in mind: justice to native people through the realization of their rights. They have visited the settlements and encouraged people to fight for their interests and to participate in COPE's activities. They have gone house to house and talked to every family, especially in Tuktoyaktuk and Sachs Harbour, where the biggest problems with oil development have been. Recently COPE has been able to hire field workers, and Inuit Tapirisat also has a field worker in the Western Arctic.

Through this kind of patient, grass-roots political work of listening to people and explaining to people, the question of a land settlement has moved from just an idea to a serious movement. Two years ago, not many people knew about land rights and how they could get justice. Now nearly everyone in the region knows how important the land question is, and they want their native organizations to settle it as soon as possible. That is a tribute to the work COPE has done, and to the native people themselves. Not many political organizations have been able to unite people that way, and move toward such an important goal, anywhere in Canada. People everywhere can learn something about the values of determination, unity and courage from the people of the Western Arctic and the Mackenzie Delta.

The unity of native people is now showing up in election results. Wally Firth, running on the slogan, "Our Land, Our Man", got overwhelming support from native people in the last Federal election. Native people voted strongly in favour of his policies of slowing down development to suit the needs of the native people, and against the record of the federal government. Native people are more and more voting for their own people instead of outsiders. This was shown in the town council elections in Inuvik last December, too.

COPE is now working closely with Inuit Tapirisat on a land settlement for all Eskimo people. Inuit Tapirisat is starting a land use and occupancy study to document all the lands belonging to Eskimo people, and how important these lands are to them. Inuit Tapirisat is hiring the best technical and legal advisors for this project. Native people everywhere will be fully involved.

Outside organizations which are interested in protecting the northern environment and in seeing native people get proper justice, all know about COPE, and want to hear the views of native people on these matters. Within the region, government and industry know that they have to be more and more careful in their dealings with the people, because COPE is watching them.

With more and more cooperation between the native organizations in the North, and possibly a chance to get more financial support, COPE will be able to provide more and more help to native people. COPE's support of the Sachs Harbour and Tuktoyaktuk people in their struggles against the oil companies has given other settlements more courage to protect their own rights against powerful outside interests. COPE is showing the way for all native people to make development happen the way native people want it, instead of the way outsiders want it. That is a difficult struggle, and in some ways it is only beginning. If native people work together, they can become masters in their own land and masters of their own destiny. Native people have a chance to make their own vision of the future a reality.

COMMITTEE for ORIGINAL PEOPLES ENTITLEMENT
Post Office Box 1661
Inuvik, N.W.T.

APPENDIX I

FEDERATION OF NATIVES NORTH OF SIXTY

- RESOLUTIONS -

November 24, 1972.

Whereas, the main intrusion of our lands, North of 60°, is now in the Mackenzie Delta and western arctic coast, thus requiring the presence of a strong and effective regional organization in that region, and,

Whereas, COPE has effectively organized the native people of that region and given them full support in achieving their goals, especially in such cases as Banks Island and Tuktoyaktuk, which have great significance for all native people of the North, and that its members wish COPE to continue these activities on their behalf, and,

Whereas, on November 1971, it was agreed by the leaders or authorized representatives of COPE, NWTIB, ITC and the Native Council of Canada that COPE fully and truly represents the native people of the Mackenzie Delta as well as Tuktoyaktuk, Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk, and Fort Good Hope, and,

Whereas, COPE now wishes to alter its original purposes in order to act as the regional organization of the Inuit people in the Western Arctic and Mackenzie Delta, and in view of the ethnic composition of the Mackenzie Delta population, to continue to represent the Indian and Metis people of that region in co-operation with the other organizations, and,

Whereas, COPE reaffirms the principle of unity and co-operation among native northerners, and wishes to participate as a full member of the Federation of Natives North of Sixty,

Be it resolved that the NWTIB, ITC, and Metis Association of the NWT support COPE in its intentions to seek core funds from the Secretary of State in 1973, and co-operate with COPE in reorganizing its activities in the COPE region so that COPE can give its members full service and support as is the case with the other organizations in their own areas.

APPENDIX

Agreement Between Native Organizations

1. Resolution passed unanimously at meeting of Federation of Natives North of Sixty, Inuvik, 24 November, 1972

2. Proposed agreement re COPE's operations. Signed Inuvik, 27 November, 1972, by COPE, NWTIB, and ITC. NWT Metis Association refused to sign

APPENDIX II

AGREEMENT RE COPE'S OPERATIONS

In view of the area which COPE serves composed of the Native Peoples of the Mackenzie Delta region and in view of the ethnic composition within the area being of Inuit, Indian and Metis origin, and, with its transport and communications network based in Inuvik serving the communities of Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk, Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, and Arctic Red River in terms of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada representing the Inuit of the Northwest Territories.

COPE will be the regional Inuit organization for the Western Arctic and Mackenzie Delta, specifically those settlements in which the native population is entirely or largely Inuit, Inuvik, Aklavik Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, and Sachs Harbour, working in cooperation with Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.

In terms of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories and Metis Association of the N.W.T representing the Indian and Metis people of Inuvik, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, and Arctic Red River, in cooperation with the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. and the Metis Association of the N.W.T.

It is clearly understood and recognized that the Native Peoples represented may wish to join the organizations (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T., and Metis Association of the N.W.T.) which respectively represent them due to their own special concerns, such as, in the areas of aboriginal and treaty rights. COPE will respect such wishes and work to ensure the Native Peoples of the Mackenzie Delta region are informed and contacted in cooperation with the head organizations in such areas as have been expressed.

In view of regional and local problems, such as Land Use and those areas in which COPE has been most effective by being based in Inuvik, in all cases, there will be complete consultation between organizations on matters of mutual concern to ensure ultimate benefit to the Native People of the Mackenzie Delta region.

In matters of financing and staff by these organizations to deal with local problems these will be initiated completely under the jurisdiction of COPE.

On these premises, the organization: COPE, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T., and Metis Association of the N.W.T. make the following agreements:

1. COPE and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T., and Metis Association of the N.W.T. agree that COPE as a regional organization will carry out programs initiated by these associations on behalf of the members of the organizations involved.

2. COPE and Inuit Tapirisat of Canada agree that as a regional Inuit organizations, COPE expects that actual negotiations with the government on a land settlement for their members will be conducted by Inuit Tapirisat of Canada on their behalf.

3. COPE and the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T. agree that all matters concerning treaty rights and negotiations of land settlements are entirely the responsibility of the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T.

4. COPE and the Metis Association of the N.W.T. agree that any research into such claims on behalf of the Metis people of the Mackenzie Delta will be the responsibility of the Metis Association of the N.W.T.

It is expressed by COPE that any input into these areas of concern which would be of benefit to the preparation and research of the Land Claims and aboriginal rights of the native people, that such input will be carried out under the direction of the organizations: Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T.and Metis Association of the N.W.T.

In view of ethnic origins, Metis does not include Inuit of partly white ancestry.

FEDERATION OF NATIVES NORTH OF SIXTY

Tagak Curley, President, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada.
James Wah-shee, President, Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T.
Dave McNabb, President, N.W.T. Metis Association
Agnes Semmler, President, Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement