

# Feds cautiously re-open Lubicon talks

EDMONTON - The federal government has opened new talks with the Lubicon Cree of northern Alberta with the hope of eventually settling the band's 64-year-old request for a reserve.

"What we're really talking about was their concerns with the last round of negotiations," said Brad Morse, adviser to federal Indian and Northern Development Minister Jane Stewart, after a meeting with Lubicon representatives late last week.

"What can we do to produce more productive negotiations?"

But band representatives say the talks will just stall again if all the government wants to do is examine where past discussions failed.

"We see no use in sitting around and talking about who did what last time around," said band adviser Fred Lennarson

"We want to talk about houses and roads."

The latest round of talks began two years ago, but there have been no meetings since March.

Cree living at Lubicon Lake, 400 kilometres north of Edmonton, have been seeking a settlement under Treaty 8 since the 1930s.

They filed a formal claim in 1980 and a resolution with the Alberta government appeared close in 1988. But the federal government would not meet Lubicon financial demands.

Morse, a University of Ottawa law professor who served as former Indian Affairs minister Ron Irwin's executive assistant, says that situation is part of the problem.

"Part of what's frustrating them is that they haven't been able to get both governments to agree at

the same time."

Lennarson maintains any new talks must begin on the basis of those earlier agreements.

The parties also discussed the Supreme Court's recent decision on aboriginal title. The court recognized that First Nations enjoy exclusive rights over lands they could prove they had occupied before the arrival of Europeans.

"All three parties at these negotiations (will) examine the decision to see what guidance they can get," said Morse.

Morse said he plans to confer with Stewart before the end of 1997 and to meet with the Lubicon early next year.

Meanwhile, Daishowa Inc. continues to seek a permanent injunction against the Toronto-based

Friends of the Lubicon, which launched a boycott in 1991 that the Japanese paper giant claims has cost it \$11 million in lost business.

The campaign pressured Daishowa into not acting on a licence to clear-cut an area that includes unsettled land claims by the Lubicon. The land also contains oil and gas leases.