Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior today gave copies of final draft litigation reports on the land claims of the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Indian tribes in the State of Maine to the Attorney General of that State and attorneys for the tribes. The draft report was delivered earlier in the week to the Justice I Department.

Interior Solicitor H. Gregory Austin said that these draft reports do not represent the final decision of the Department of Interior regarding the tribal claims. He said that because of the important nature of the controversy, his successor in the Carter administration should have the opportunity to review the research which has been done and make his own decision.

Austin said he agrees with the views stated in a Justice Department memorandum filed today in Maine Federal court that the serious consequences of the Indian claims to the non-Indian citizens of Maine may be alleviated only by means of legislation enacted by the United States Congress. In the meantime, the Interior and Justice Departments must act as trustees for the tribes in accordance with the order of a federal appeals court.