Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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For Immediate Release: October 10, 1980
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Secretary of the Interior Cecil D, Andrus said the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, scheduled to be signed into law late today by President Carter will be the basis for 1 growth and progress for all citizens of the Pine Tree State

"This Act is the result of a cooperative endeavor over almost a decade involving the members of the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot and Maliseets tribes, other State citizens, the courts, State officials .and legislators, the Congress and the Carter Administration," Andrus said.

"It is obvious that everyone involved worked with a real concern to restore equity to the three tribes in a way that promotes the common good and provides a base for economic growth and development," he said.

Interior Department officials will begin at once planning for the purchase of the more than 300,000 acres of Maine woodlands for the tribes as provided for in the Act, Andrus said. At the same time, work will begin on the establishment of a $27 million trust fund which Interior will administer for the benefit of the tribes.

The Act followed a Federal Court ruling in 1975 which held that more than 12 million acres had been taken from Maine Indians in violation of the Non-Intercourse Act of 1790. It provides $54 million for land purchases for tribal use and for the tribal trust fund in exchange for the tribal relinquishment of aboriginal title to the rest of the lands in question.

Andrus noted that the Act removes a cloud over land titles for about 350,000 persons living in Maliseets" which will not only help them plan for the future but should help them sleep better at night too."

A total of 300,000 acres to be purchased will be divided between the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot tribes whose 4,000 members live on three small reservations in northern Maine. An additional 5,000 acres will be purchased for the 600 members of the Houlton Band of Maliseets, Maine members of a largely Canadian tribe.