Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Alaska Natives will begin to get one-twelfth of the land in their State, and a sizeable chunk of cash as well, under terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in early 1974. This will come about through a system of corporations that is uniquely Alaskan.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is now making up a roll of United States citizens who are of one-fourth or more Indian, Aleut or Eskimo ancestry or combination of these born on or before December 18, 1971.

The roll will show each person as a resident of a region and in most cases a village and thus eligible to become a stockholder in village and regional corporations.

Alaska now has 12 Alaska Native Regional Corporations. They reflect 12 geographic sections of Alaska and are composed of Native people with a common cultural heritage and common interests. Alaska Natives who do not claim to be permanent residents of Alaska are being enrolled in one of the 12 regions of Alaska with which they have personal or ancestral ties.

The 12 corporations were established by June 30, 1972. Each was advanced about $500,000 or more from the Alaskan Native Fund -- which includes $462,500,000 to be appropriated from the general fund of the U.S. Treasury and $500,000,000 credited to the fund by the State of Alaska and Bureau of Land Management of the Department of the Interior on a revenue sharing basis.

After the Secretary of the Interior signs the roll of the Alaska Natives December 18, the regional corporations will: 1. Identify their stockholders; 2. Issue shares to stockholders; 3. Elect a board of directors; 4. Receive their first major distribution of moneys from the Alaska Native Fund; 5. Select lands for conveyance to them; and 6. Make investments. Many of these events will occur simultaneously.

The 12 regionals have been formed as businesses for profits, and their articles of incorporation and by-laws have been approved by the Secretary of the Interior. A duly elected board of directors will be charged with responsibility for the management of the regional corporation and the investment of corporate assets. Such investments might include stocks and bonds and business enterprises in construction, tourism, and service industries.

In addition to 12 regionals there will be about 200 village corporations. While they, together with the regionals, will get title to a total of 40 million acres of land and a stake in the Alaska Native Fund, the subsurface rights to the land will go solely to the regional corporations.

Up to 22 million acres of land are available for selection of surface rights by eligible Native villages. The amount each village is entitled to is determined by the Native population of that particular village on April 1, 1970.

Where possible, 25 townships around each village have been withdrawn by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. A township is 36 square miles. From these townships, the village will make its selection.

This selection must include townships in which any part of the village is located. In many cases, however, circumstances -- such as an ocean, navigable river, national park, etc. -- restrict selection. The village must then make alternate selections from "deficiency areas."

Regional corporations are more restricted than village corporations in selecting their 16 million acres. They may, for example, select what have come to be known as "checkerboard lands" in the village withdrawal areas. They will get, in addition, part of 2 million acres of "hard lands."

Hardship land grants will be distributed to regional corporations for existing cemetery and historical sites, Native groups too small to qualify as villages (less than 25 Natives), individual Natives who apply for a primary place of residence outside of the village withdrawal areas or individual Native allotment, and Natives in Sitka, Kenai, Juneau, and Kodiak. These were originally Native villages but are now predominantly non-Native.
