Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Ayres 202-343-7445
For Immediate Release: December 3, 1973
Print PDF

The largest cession of land to a group of Native Americans in the history of the United States is one way to describe the effect of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act passed by the Congress December 18, 1971.

Or, put another way, The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act will put about one-twelfth of Alaska into the hands of the Alaska Native corporations --an administrative device unique in the annals of solutions to aboriginal land claims.

And this transfer of jurisdiction from Federal to Native hands -- for 95 percent of Alaska belongs to Uncle Sam --will begin early in 1974.

Concurrently, as land is put into Native hands, the United States Government and the State of Alaska will contribute $962,500,000 to Alaska Natives through the Alaska Native Fund. The money will go to the Native regional corporations and indirectly to their stockholders and then to village corporations. Both the regional and village corporations are organized in accordance with settlement legislation.

Small wonder, then that the Bureau of Indian Affairs is employing unusual means to comply with provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Enrollment of Alaska Natives eligible to participate under the Act has been the responsibility of the Bureau. It has involved some innovations including:

1. Encoding and microfilming at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Data Center in Albuquerque.

2. Contracting with 12 Regional Alaska Native Corporations to conduct enumeration within their regions.

3. A world-wide newspaper, magazine, radio, and TV campaign to alert Alaska Natives who are scattered throughout the world that they should enroll in order to come under the Act.

4. Production of a 16 millimeter film to describe the Act.

Bureau of Indian Affairs tribal enrollment officers estimate that about 80,000 Alaska Natives will be found eligible and enrolled by the deadline of December 18, 1973.

For purposes of enrollment under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, any United States citizen born on or before December 18, 1971 who has one-fourth degree or more Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo ancestry or combination of these is considered eligible --no matter where he was born or lives or if he has died since passage of the Act.

The Act stipulates that the State of Alaska be divided into 12 geographic regions, each region being composed of Native people having a common cultural heritage and, sharing common interests. These regions are based partially upon the boundaries of Native organizations which had been formed prior to

the settlement and which has considerable influence upon it.

The completed roll will show each person as a resident of a region and in most cases a village. On that basis he or she will be eligible to become a stockholder in the regional and if appropriated, a village corporation.

Among those that may be residents of a region but not of an Alaskan village are Natives who live in Sitka, Kenai, Juneau, and Kodiak.

These were originally Native villages but are now predominately non-Native. Those who do not claim to be permanent residents of Alaska are being enrolled in one of the 12 regionals of Alaska with which they have personal or ancestral use.
