

On Selection of 40 Million Acres— State Director of BLM Requests Cooperation

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
State Office
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Mr. Howard Rock, Editor
Tundra Times
Box 1287
Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

Dear Mr. Rock:

I am writing this "open letter" to all Natives of Alaska with the hope of explaining the Bureau of Land Management's role and our responsibility to them.

Our name tells the purpose of BLM. It is land management. Land has always been important to Alaskans and today with the passage of the Native Land Claims Settlement Act it continues to be of importance. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act provides for the selection of 40 million acres by the Native people of Alaska, located mainly around traditional village sites. BLM is involved in the transfer of this land from the public ownership to the Natives of Alaska. We are trying to do this as fast as possible and until Native selections are made, the BLM will continue management and protection of the lands withdrawn for selection.

The first part of our job is to check land records to see if more than one person or group claims ownership of a particular piece of land, and to decide which has the true claim. This is done so that the rightful claimant can be given a clear title. A clear title means that all other known claims to a parcel of land will be eliminated before ownership is awarded to the right person or group.

Secondly, before title to the land can be transferred, BLM must do two things. Whether it is an individual allotment, a village site, or regional corporation land, the area must be surveyed to determine its location and boundaries. Large areas of land are surveyed from the air by helicopters. Then small sections are surveyed and marked on the ground. This is called a rectangular survey.

During the next two years BLM field people will have completed field investigations on most of the land claimed as allotments. This is done to determine if they are located on the land the applicant actually used and if there are conflicting claims.

Beginning this month ground survey crews will be in three main areas of the State for the rectangular survey of allotments. The crews will be based in areas around Dillingham, Kiana, and Bethel and will remain there for about five months.

Crews, also, will survey allotments around Tangle Lakes, near Cordova, and along the main highways. Field examiners will be in these areas to look at Native allotments and other land claims to check their locations for the surveyors. They will try to learn if anyone in the area claims ownership of the land besides the person or village that has filed a claim for it in the BLM land office.

We hope that your readers will feel free to bring to us any questions they may have. Our Area and District Managers are available to explain BLM activities as well as our plans to transfer the land. BLM needs this kind of communication. We need to know your aims and desires in order to serve them. In turn we need their cooperation when our crews come into the villages.

All of this will take time. We will do our best with the men and money we have, but we need the assistance and cooperation of the regions and the people in the villages in order to do the job. Working together we can carry out the provisions of the law and see full native ownership of the 40 million acres in the shortest possible time.

Sincerely yours,

Curtis V. McVee
State Director

Lost VISTA Volunteer And an Old Eskimo Strange Encounter Leads Into Extensive Analysis of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act

Land's End Village
State of Alaska
May 25, 1973

Dear Howard,

The other night when we were reading the opening sections of AN ACT, where it has the STATEMENT OF POLICY, we came across Section 2(b) where it says that the settlement should be accomplished without establishing any racially defined institutions, rights, privileges, or obligations. Then in Section 2(c), after saying that the Alaska Natives shall not lose any rights as citizens of the United States, it goes on to say that the Secretary is supposed to make a study of all the Federal programs primarily designed to benefit Native people and to report back to Congress by December 18, 1974. I wonder if this is being done now, by the Secretary?

Wally and I have been worrying more and more about people's attitudes towards Natives ever since that travelling encyclopedia salesman passed through here last week. It seems that they think we are all millionaires and will no longer be able to rely on government aid and assistance any more. If that article in your paper about "modern and urban" standards for Native villages is any indication they may try and hold

even the little help we did get against us. Do you think that the Secretary might close down all the federal services to Native people like the B.I.A. schools, the Public Health hospitals, Manpower Training centers, and other programs like that?

The question, I guess, is, are these racially defined institutions, rights, privileges, or obligations that AN ACT is talking about? Wally says that if the Federal government doesn't fund these programs it's a very slim chance that the State of Alaska will pick them up considering how most people up here feel about AN ACT and the Native Claims. This claim money won't go very far if it has to cover all of these services.

Besides, it seems to me that this money is for the land that they have taken from us and it doesn't terminate all of the other relationships that we have with the Federal Government. Considering all they are getting, they aren't losing anything on this deal! Finally, if this study of Federal services to the Alaska Natives is being made, how many Natives are involved in it to see that our interests are going to be protected?

Your friend,

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