

12,000 in limbo at enrollment office

BY MARGIE BAUMAN

Upwards of 12,000 applications for enrollment under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act are still piled up in the enrollment office in Anchorage and there's no telling yet when the applicants will know whether they're eligible or not.

"I can't do anything but apologize for the delay and ask for their continued full cooperation," said Alaska Native Enrollment (ANE) coordinator Myron Igtanloc Tuesday. "We'll be sending out a letter as soon as possible to each applicant explaining the delay and asking for their patience."

Igtanloc said the letters would be going out within a month or two and would also include a request for confirmation of current names and addresses of all applicants. There have been a number of changes of last names and addresses since applications were first filed, he said.

Letters acknowledging the delay are just the tip of an iceberg of paperwork facing the ANE office in its effort to

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● 12,000 in limbo

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process applications filed during the extended enrollment period from Jan. 2, 1976 through Jan. 2, 1977.

"We have 130,000 names to check each application against," Igtanloc said. To date, 78,436 of the 130,000 who applied have been enrolled in one of 13 regional Native corporations, but many have also been found ineligible.

To compound the problem, in the extended enrollment period a number of duplicate applications were filed. "It seems that everybody under the sun has applied and every relative is sponsoring," Igtanloc said, "so the first thing we have to do is check for double enrollment applications."

Conversion Problems

Since the enrollment office opened in Anchorage in 1972, the paperwork has been piling up and the backlog just hasn't quit, even though the staff fluctuated between 40 to 70 people during its heyday. Now there are only 17 people charged with processing the 12,000 applications still pending and up-

dating quarterly rolls of stockholders to each regional corporation.

The latter involves constant changing of last names, as legal papers dictate, and the changing of thousands of addresses, upon request, so that stockholders in the 13 regional corporations will receive checks and information from their corporations on a current basis.

Due to computer problems, there were no quarterly reports issued to the regional firms from December, 1976 through March 1978, Igtanloc said.

Computer problems increased in January, 1976 when the initial attempts began to convert the old computer system to a new one, Igtanloc said. Until then, computer operations had been directed by Bureau of Indian Affairs headquartered in Albuquerque, N.M. Even under the new system, the automated data-processing center at the BIA in Albuquerque provides funding and coordinates all computer activities for the Alaskan enrollment, through Computer Sciences Corp., a Chicago firm.

By July, 1977, the enrollment office in Anchorage was busy trying to prepare for quarterly distribution of stock rolls to the regional corporations when the data base in the computers that handle further enrollment applications was damaged. Igtanloc was not with the enrollment office during that period, but when he returned after a year's absence in December, 1977, the office was 18 months behind on computer materials, he said.

On March 13 of this year, the office simply ran out of funds for the computer operation and was not funded again until June 5. "Now we are getting reports (again) and setting up for the certification review (of the 12,000 applications)" he said.

In conjunction with that, the ANE office will probably be returning a lot of applications with a request for missing information. "They'll all be going out registered mail and people will be given a certain amount of time to complete and return them," Igtanloc said.

Just when the final judgments will be made on whether those 12,000 applicants are eligible, however, is a question Igtanloc said he can't answer yet.