

BLM Land Issues

By JOETTE STORM

Q: A lawyer for a local village told me that the land claims act recognizes property rights within village withdrawals of persons other than Natives. Is this true?

A: Yes. Section 14(c) of the Act says that after a village corporation has received patent to the lands it has selected around the village, it must convey title to any Native or non-Native who has his primary place of residence, primary place of business, subsistence campsite, or reindeer headquarters within the village selections.

Non-profit organizations such as churches and schools must also receive title to the land they occupy. This may be conveyed freely or for the fair market value (price) of the land at the time the organization first settled on it.