

# Enrollment suit filed against Department of Interior

Five applicants for enrollment under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act have filed a class action suit in Federal District Court in Alaska alleging that the Bureau of Indian Affairs has illegally failed to process their applications. The suit, filed November 28, seeks to force the BIA Enrollment Office to "immediately process all pending enrollment applications,

certify all eligible enrollees, and make available any and all resources necessary to do so without delay."

The Settlement Act was adopted in December 1971, and required all eligible applicants for benefits to be certified by BIA as Alaska Natives within two years. In January 1976, Congress agreed to an

extension of the application deadline for one more year. According to the complaint filed in court, about 12,000 enrollment applications have not yet been processed by the BIA Enrollment Office.

The plaintiffs allege that as a result of BIA's delays, they have not received money distributed under ANCSA and have

not been able to participate as shareholders in the affairs of the Native Village and Regional Corporations. Further, they contend they are being denied legal recognition of their heritage as Alaska Natives which is important to them and their children. These injuries, say the plaintiffs, violate the Settlement Act, the Federal Administrative Procedure Act, the U.S. Con-

stitution, and breach the federal government's obligation to act as a trustee toward Native people of the United States.

Plaintiffs are being represented by Alaska Legal Services. Defendants are Cecil Andrus, Secretary of the Interior; Forrest Gerard, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs; and Myron Ig-tanloc, enrollment coordinator.