

ASNA SUES TO OUST SLOPE OIL

SEATTLE—April 16—(courtesy of KFAR news department) Leaders of Alaska's North Slope

Natives say they will file suit against the State of Alaska to evict oil companies from the

North Slope.

Charles Edwardson Jr., Executive Director of the Arctic Slope Native Association, says the state and the oil companies have trespassed on native lands without consent.

The association's legal counsel says North Slope Eskimos were not given notice when the state sold \$900 million in oil and mineral leases in 1969.

He says there is no legal patent to any land on the North Slope. The counsel, Fred Paul, says the suit will be filed later this month in Washington, D.C.

The suit was announced at a news conference in Seattle today where leaders of the Association denounced the Interior Department's new land claims settlement proposal as meaning "cultural and ethnic genocide" to North Slope Natives.

In Juneau, State Natural Resources Commissioner Charles Herbert said he doesn't believe there is any legal question involving the North Slope land "unless the whole Statehood Act is illegal, and that's not likely."

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Herbert said the land, which includes the Prudhoe Bay oil fields, was selected under the Statehood Act in 1963 or 1964. The State selection won required Presidential endorsement and the Bureau of Land Management granted tentative approval, Herbert said.

Herbert said the Alaskan land freeze is holding up issuance of formal title to the state for the land, but said the state views tentative approval, under a State Attorney General's opinion, as giving the state "the right to buy and sell just as if the land were patented."

The Commissioner said it was the State's position that the native land claims of North Slope acreage had been filed after the State selected the land under the Statehood Act.

"If such a suit should be sustained and the oil companies evicted," he said, "then the oil companies would have good grounds for action against the state."

Attorney General John Have-lock declined to comment on the threatened lawsuit, but confirmed that the State regards tentative approval of its North Slope Land as equivalent to final approval.

According to Lester Suvlu, Mayor of Barrow and a member of the ASNA Board of Directors, Joe Upicksoun and Charlie Edwardsen have not spoken to the rest of the ASNA Board within the last few days. His first knowledge of the press conference came from a Tundra Times reporter asking for an opinion.

"I don't think I should make any comment," Suvlu said about the conference and the proposed suit.