

St. Regis Mohawk, Cayuga, Oneida Tribes —

Interior Solicitor Supports New York Tribal Land Claims

Interior Department Solicitor Leo M. Krulitz announced today that on June 29 the Department made a final recommendation

to the Justice Department to bring actions on behalf of three Indian tribes to recover lands in New York State. The Justice Department has agreed to bring the suits. Two claims were first referred to Justice in 1975 and the third was initially referred in 1976.

The proposed suits would be similar to actions now pending on behalf of the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot Indians with regard to land claims in the State of Maine. The New York suits would be based on the view that the lands involved were ceded to the State in treaties not authorized or formally participated in by the United States as required by the Indian Nonintercourse Act of 1790. The suits would seek ejectment and dam-

ages against those persons claiming an interest in the lands.

The three tribes involved are: the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe with a land claim of about 10,500 acres; the Cayuga Tribe with a land claim of about 62,000 acres; and the Oneida

Nation with a claim of about 200,000 acres.

"The position which we are now taking on behalf of the tribes is that, as a matter of law, the United States should pursue their claims," Krulitz

said. "However, we realize that the filing of a complaint may have an adverse effect on land transactions in the claimed areas and meetings have been held with the tribes and representatives of New York State to discuss alternatives to litigation."