

# SENATOR GRAVEL'S TUNDRA TIMES REPORT

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U.S. Senator, Alaska

Now that the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act has become a reality, with the first check having been delivered and the various regions having been certified, it's time to take a closer look at just what is involved in the law. Passed by Congress just over two years ago, the Act provides both land and money for Alaska Natives. First, I'd like to describe the system of corporations which have been set up\* to handle the \$962.5 million Alaska Native Fund—plus \$6 million in interest—and the land that is to go to Alaska's 80,000 Natives.

## The Regional Corporations

The Alaska Native Fund, as the lands, will be turned over to the 12 Alaska Native Regional Corporations. Every Native is a member is one of those 12 Regional Corporations—a "stockholder"—and thus has a say in all matters, including how the \$962.5 million is to be spent. Stockholders might decide, for instance, to invest their shares, to establish new housing and educational programs, or to create new business enterprises, for example.

In addition, the Regional Corporations will have a major say in the selection of lands which are to be turned over to them.

These Corporations coincide roughly with 12 Alaskan geographic regions, each composed of Natives sharing common interests. A regional Corporation is run by an elected Executive Board of Directors.

## Village Corporations

Within the 12 Regions are more than 200 Native villages. When a village organizes itself into a business entity, it then becomes eligible for additional land benefits. Many Alaskan villages have taken the necessary steps, and most individuals are members of one of the villages. Each village selects one citizen to represent it in the meetings of the Regional Corporation to which it belongs.

The amount of land each village receives is determined by its population, but the Village Corporations will decide in many cases, exactly which lands are to be turned over to them. Generally, these lands can be selected from adjacent townships.

It's crucial to remember that these are lands where Alaska Natives have lived for generations. Next week, I intend to continue this column with a discussion of just how these lands are to be returned to their original owners.