



Borbridge Calls For Quick Land Settlement

By JOHN BORBRIDGE, JR.

President: Central Council
of the Tlingit and Haida
Indians of Alaska

1st Vice President
Alaska Federation of Natives

I. Alaska's native leaders and organizations, in a clear demonstration of statesmanlike consideration for the welfare of the entire state and on awareness of the lengthy litigatory process, are seeking a politically negotiated settlement of the land claims through the Congress of the United States.

Court proceedings, nevertheless, remain a viable alternative.

II. In accordance with the uniform federal policy to honor and protect lands held by aboriginal occupancy rights, Congress explicitly required the State of Alaska in the Statehood Act to "forever disclaim" all right or title to any lands held by Indian, Eskimo and Aleut groups.

III. Any state selection of lands which are held by native aboriginal title is violative of the terms, intent and spirit of the Statehood Act and contrary to other acts of Congress as well as federal policy.

IV. As repeatedly held by the Supreme Court of the United States, aboriginal title to lands embraces the COMPLETE BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP BASED

Borbridge Asks . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ON THE RIGHT OF PERPETUAL AND EXCLUSIVE USE AND OCCUPANCY.

Such title also carries with it the RIGHT of the tribe or native group **TO BE PROTECTED FULLY BY THE UNITED STATES IN SUCH EXCLUSIVE OCCUPANCY AGAINST ANY INTERFERENCE OR CONFLICTING USE OR TAKING BY ALL OTHERS, INCLUDING PROTECTION AGAINST THE STATE GOVERNMENTS.**

In short, as declared by the Supreme Court, aboriginal Indian ownership is as sacred as the white man's ownership. The established law is that **ONLY** the United States may extinguish aboriginal Indian ownership.

V. The "land freeze" and now the withdrawal order imposed by Secretary Udall on over 250 million acres of Alaska land have:

A. Given political leverage to Alaska's natives in their effort to achieve a prompt and equitable settlement of the land claims by focusing state and congressional attention on the matter.

The solution to this pressing issue has been deferred for over 80 years.

B. The above Secretarial action prevented the pernicious erosion of lands used, occupied and claimed by Alaska natives

pending a final settlement of the land claims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alaska natives and officials of the State and Federal governments should join in pressing for a speedy and equitable settlement to the Alaska native land rights question.

Pending the final resolution of this complex matter, every effort should be made to ensure the status quo by preserving native land rights from erosion.

If the revocation of the withdrawal order is anticipated, then it should be done only if (a) a congressional settlement has been achieved or (b) the alternative to leaving the status quo as to the withdrawal orders satis-

as to the withdrawal orders satisfies Alaska native organization leaders that their land rights are maintained.

We have more than a moral right to the land and the forthcoming compensation and our land rights should be equitably resolved not primarily because the proceeds will help to remove disparities in health, education, employment, etc.—but because we have legal or substantive rights and because United States policy and the national conscience demand that we be dealt with equitably.