

Asks Gov. to Freeze Tanacross Lands

Governor Keith Miller was requested Tuesday to "freeze" the disposal of state lands within the Tanacross and Mansfield village claim area. The request came from the firm of Jackson and Fenton, attorneys for the Tanana Chiefs.

"We are sure that you are familiar with the recent letter of the village of Tanacross to Secretary Hickel concerning their complaint that the federal government has allowed the state to select and possibly gain title to land that was and is occupied by the natives of Tanacross and

Mansfield, including land used for subsistence purposes, graveyards, and even the village of Mansfield," the request stated.

"The people of Tanacross and Mansfield continue to claim title to all of these lands," continued the attorneys.

"At the request of Chief Andrew Isaac of Tanacross and the Tanana Chiefs, this is a formal request to you to 'freeze' the disposal of state lands within the Tanacross claim area and at the very minimum the disposal of 'open to entry' lands near Tana-

(Continued on page 6)

Tanacross Freeze . . .

(Continued from page 1)

cross and Mansfield.

"Most of these lands now open to entry have been and continue to be actually 'used' and 'occupied' by the natives of Tanacross, even as restrictively defined by the BLM and clearly were not open to state selection.

"Further, as attorneys for the village of Tanacross and other villages in Interior Alaska whose lands have been selected by the state, we request that you establish as state policy a rule that these villages will receive the same settlement that they would receive from the federal government, under federal legislation when adopted, were the lands of these villages still under federal control," Jackson and Fenton concluded.

Recent issues of the Tundra Times have reported the anger and concern of Chief Andrew Isaac and the Tanacross natives at the 20-year history of inaction on the Tanacross claim. The original petition seeking title to the claim area was made in November of 1950.

It sat in the Juneau Realty Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs until 1961, when it was finally filed with the Bureau of Land Management.

The BLM dismissed the petition in 1962. Immediately, Tanacross filed an appeal and a national claims assertion. It was then sent to the BLM Director's Office in Washington, where it has

sat since.

Secretary Hickel recently received a letter from Chief Isaac which inquired as to the status of the Tanacross Claim. Hickel replied in stating that after checking with the State Division of Lands, the BLM, and the head office of the Interior Department, he could find no record of any native claim at Tanacross.

This directly conflicted with a file on Tanacross found in the Fairbanks Land Office which contains two 1950 petitions, a 1962 appeal and native rights assertion, and a 1964 blanket claim.

Despite the long history of the Tanacross claim, the state has received tentative approval or patent to 63,533 acres in the claim area and has taken action to dispose much of that.

The situation was not improved in 1964, when the state attempted to secure title and to sell vacant lots within the Tanacross village. Nor were the natives any happier when, in 1965, the state revealed plans to sell "wilderness estated" to wealthy patrons during the New York World's Fair.

Recent action to dispose more land in the claim area has brought more controversy and publicity to the Tanacross claim, and has now resulted in a request to Governor Miller to "freeze" state disposal of the lands.