

First \$12.5 Million--

Legislation in March

Alaskans can expect the appropriations bill for the first \$12.5 million authorized in the Native Land Claims legislation to be introduced in Congress in March of this year, according to Mrs. Janet Baird, Fairbanks representative for U.S. Rep. Nick Begich (D-Alaska).

Mrs. Baird made this disclosure to the Tundra Times today following her telephone conversation with personnel in Begich's office in Washington, D.C.

Expectations are, Mrs. Baird said, that the appropriations bill will clear Congress before July 1, 1972.

And, according to Mrs. Baird Begich's Washington staff members had just been informed by Morris Thompson, head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Alaska, that BIA officials and other officials from the Department of Interior are now working on rules and procedures for making a complete list of all Alaska natives who meet the requirements for receiving benefits from the legislation on the Native Land Claims.

Officials are considering "an

aggressive approach rather than a passive" one, Mrs. Baird said, to carry out the enrollment requirements. They will, she said, "actually search out the people who qualify."

And, she said, officials are considering the possibility of contracting this census taking to the regional and village corporations, rather than have it done by federal employees.

Under the provisions of the Land Claims Law, this enrollment must be complete within a two-year period.

This kind of census taking is going to cost money, Mrs. Baird said. For this reason BIA is going to ask congress for \$850,000 annually for the next two years to pay for the enrollment.

Also under consideration by BIA, said Mrs. Baird, is the possibility of making the census a "multi-purpose enrollment" to provide BIA with additional information about individuals and villages in Alaska.

Until the enrollment procedures and rules are worked out, Mrs. Baird said, there is little individuals can do to help in the enrollment process.

Washington officials told her, she said, that the most urgent work for Alaska natives to do at this time is to work out the details of incorporation for the villages and for the regional corporations.