

# 'From Frying Pan Into the Fire'

The Tanacross Indians are afraid that, when the land claims settlement comes, their villages will have no land left for Congress to give them.

Thus, they recently appealed to the Alaska Federation of Natives for assistance.

"We feel we have already been tossed out of the frying pan into the fire, whenever we put a claim in for our land it is lost or rejected," wrote Chief Andrew Isaac in a letter to the AFN. Isaac is chief of the United Crow Bands in the Tanacross area.

The Indians feel that there will be no record of their claims when the land settlement comes and that, consequently, their land will be awarded to the state.

They thought that many of their lands were protected by a blanket claim filed in 1950. But when some of this land was later turned over to the state, they found that their claim had been lost.

At a December meeting between the Indians and the Bureau of Land Management, Burton Silcock, director of the BLM, encouraged the villagers to file applications on their land immediately.

The application must be rejected, he added, until the land claims issue is settled in Congress, but it will be noted in the BLM file and taken into consideration when a final settlement is made.

However, as Silcock stated at the meeting, the rejected applications are returned to the individuals and only a file copy of the rejection kept in the Lands Office.

Consequently, the Indians fear that, when the settlement comes, the Lands Office will have no description of their land on file.

"Our politician friends write to us and say do not worry, every trail you walked before, every where you fish and hunt, and your villages will be yours," Isaac wrote.

"We have written to Secretary Hickel many times, but we are ignored by the Department of the Interior."

The BLM leaves many of the Indians' questions unanswered, and the state says that once it gets patent to land, natives living on it will be considered as trespassing on state property, Isaac said.

Of particular concern to the natives is the land around Mansfield Village, the main fishing, hunting and trapping area of the Indians.

"We feel if we lose the other

land we must not lose this area for it is our life's blood," Chief Isaac wrote.

In the meeting with the Bureau of Land Management, Isaac explained that this land concerned a communal type claim rather

than individual claims and asked the BLM how such a claim might be protected since the BLM deals only with individual claims.

Silcock answered that the land claims legislation must settle such matters.