

Stevens Wants Native Development Bank

The creation of a bank to loan money to natives or native villages for use in constructing local businesses, developing natural resources and other enterprises has been proposed by Alaska Senator Ted Stevens.

The Republican Senator has co-sponsored a bill which would create the American Indian Development Bank. Money awarded through the court system to pay various Indian claims would

go into the bank and would be available for loans to natives.

Stevens explained that currently the Indians do not receive such money until they have submitted a plan for its use and Congress has approved it.

Until that time, he continued, the money is held by the Interior Department and usually invested in government securities or Eastern banks.

For instance, the Tlingit and

Haida Indians were awarded about \$7 million in the U.S. Court of Claims in 1968 for forest lands taken from them by the U.S. Government. However, the money will not be released to them for expenditures until Congress passes legislation that establishes a program for which the money will be used. Such a bill has passed the House and, at last reports, was still in the Senate.

Meanwhile, the Tlingit and Haidas have invested these monies in U.S. Government securities

and government agency securities at interest rates ranging from 5.61 per cent to 8.45 per cent and have earned approximately \$430,000 per year.

Under the bill co-sponsored by Stevens, they could instead invest the money in native enterprises through the American Indian Development Bank.

The bill also provides that native villages or corporations can issue tax free bonds in the same manner as a municipality.