

# NATIVES GET 2% OF ALL LAND

## If Regions Considered Single Corp. Would Be One of 10 Largest

By LAEL MORGAN

FAIRBANKS—Alaskan Native corporations collectively will own approximately two per cent of all the land in the United States when they clear title through their Congressional land claims settlement.

The Tanana Chiefs, alone, will own .6 per cent of the land which may put them ahead of any other Alaska based corporation.

If the regions were considered a single large corporation, it would be one of the 10 largest corporations in the world.

On the other hand, if you took the land settlement and shelled it out at about \$800 per native per year for 20 years there would be nothing left (based on current value of the land).

That's some lunch-time speculation by lawyer Barry Jackson. He doesn't claim to be an economist or even that this casual figuring will hold up under scrutiny by the Wall Street Journal, but simple math seems to back him up.

Jackson has been hired by the Alaska Federation of Natives to draw up state legislation to back the federal settlement.

Before regional corporations can be formed, the state incorporation laws must be made to conform with and "flesh out" federal statutes.

In addition, specific guidelines must be set for formation of corporations for villages, reser-

vations and villages which have been absorbed by white settlements like Juneau, Sitka, Kodiak and Kenai. In each case Jackson wants to leave the option of profit and non-profit corporations.

"I think the regions should continue to function as non-profit corporations and the Alaska Federation of Natives, too," he speculated. "It permits them to separate business functions clearly from social services. It will be easier for them to get grants and foundation funds and it may well be more politically oriented in speaking for the people."

In addition to incorporation forms required by federal law, Jackson also hopes to prepare guidelines for urban profit corporations.

"Natives not in a village region will receive from \$500 to \$600 per person in the third, fourth and fifth years and less after that," he explained. "They may want to reinvest the proceeds. It's not really profit or dividend. It's part of their

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capital and they may want to reinvest it for their children."

Another major problem is how to get the corporations running once they are legally formed.

"We aren't going to know who the shareholders are for two to three years, so how are we going to get along?" Jackson wonders. "I think we might issue the stock to the regions or existing village structures in trust for the stockholders when they come to be known. The trustee could select a board, get organized and get cracking on land selection."

He thinks the Secretary of Interior might approve such a plan but is not sure whether or not the trustees could start investing without stockholder approval.

Also in preparation is legislation that will allow villages to merge before incorporation.

"A number of villages have indicated a desire to consolidate with nearby villages in order to reduce costs," he explained. "The North Slope wants to consolidate all their villages within the region."

Legal loop-holes are a concern. As the bill now stands, some 20,000 under-age natives have the right to vote as stockholders and it's not clear whether or not their parents can vote for them. (Power to Head-Start!)

Jackson proposes giving the right to vote first to their legal guardians, then customary guardians (which would be the first time Eskimo customary guardianship has been legally recognized), then to parents. In case of dispute, the courts would have jurisdiction.

Settlement of estates is also up in the air. Under the bill, each would have to go through probate court. Jackson hopes to revise the law so land claims stock can be passed on routinely without the cost of legal proceedings.

Then there's the preservation of subsistence hunting and fishing rights.

"In the Senate bill there was ample provision for this but it was not adopted in the final bill," Jackson notes. "It was left to the state and federal government to protect these rights."

He thinks the state may have

the power to protect subsistence living because of jurisdiction given over federal lands in the statehood act.

Provision for amendment is allowed in the land claims bill but Jackson does not think the Interior Department would be currently too receptive to amendments after the exhausting work the passage required.

"And there is the serious danger that the opposition might use a technical amendment bill as a means of taking away some of the benefits the natives have obtained. It might be in both our interests to try and work it out in the state legislature as much as we can," he concluded.