

Full Title Asked For 96 Million Acres

The Arctic Slope Native Association is in the process of filing with the state and federal government a huge land claim—for about 96 million acres in Alaska's North Slope.

The claim—the largest yet made in Alaska—encompasses lands on which there is much oil and gas exploration.

"We are seeking full title to the land so that by use of

the natural resources we may become an economically independent, self-supporting segment of President Johnson's Great Society," said Hugh Nichols, a member of the association's board, in an interview.

"By attracting potential industrial development, now foreseeable to the area, it will provide jobs, higher living standards and a positive future for the people," he said.

"The Eskimo people of the Arctic Slope feel that with title to the land and its rich resources that they are now capable of creating an area

Huge Land Claim Filed . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

of self-sufficiency with schools, hospitals, and sanitation facilities for all the villages free of government agency aid or assistance."

The area claimed includes all the lands north of a line running east from the Chukchi Sea along the 68th North Latitude to the 148th West Longitude and north of said longitude to 68 degrees, 30 minutes, North Latitude, then east along said latitude to 141st West Longitude which is the Canadian border.

The area generally includes all that north of the Brooks Range divide.

"Our people have been on this land for over 8,000 years, 3,000 years before Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and we feel by aboriginal right we have just claim to the land," Nichols said.

William L. Paul Sr., an attorney from Seattle, has been employed by the association to put forth the claim formally to the state and formal government. Paul, a Tlingit from Southeast Alaska, is a former president of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, an organization which pressed the aboriginal claim of Southeast Alaskans for lands taken by the formation of the Tongass National Forest.

Paul sent a letter of protest to Governor Egan and the Department of Interior last week.

Attorney General Warren C. Colver, in answering the letter to Governor Egan, said it was up to the federal government and not to the state to decide whether valid native claims existed on land selected by the state.

General Meeting

The people of Barrow held a general meeting on January 15 which was presided by Charles Edwardsen Jr. during which he presented briefly the history of Native land claims and their significance in the plans of the new organization.

He further reviewed the work that had been done by the organizing committee. A vote of confidence by the people affirmed the efforts of that group.

The pro-tem committee was composed of Rev. Samuel Simmons, Charles Edwardsen Jr, Hugh Nicholls, and Guy Okakok.

Edwardsen then turned the meeting over to the people for election of new officers.

New Officers

Those elected were: Sam Taalak, president; Abel Akpik, vice president; Charles Edwardsen Jr, vice president; James Nayak, secretary; and Fred Kanayurak,

treasurer.

Three men were then appointed by President Taalak to serve as Executive Directors and they were: Rev. Samuel Simmons, Hugh Nicholls, and Walton Amagouak.

Following this, the meeting again stressed the primary objective mentioned above.

Asks Support

Earlier, letters had been sent by the interim committee asking support from Point Hope, Point Lay, Wainwright, Anaktuvuk Pass, Colville, and Kaktovik.

Although the ASNA initially included that area where the people are most closely associated by dialect, family ties, historic whaling and hunting routes, other Eskimo villages beyond the area covered were asked to become allied and that they were welcome to contact the Association for information.

General Discussion

In a general discussion that followed the formal business of the meeting, such subjects as population of the Arctic Slope area were mentioned. The audience was told that according to stories handed down and according to anthropologists and archaeologists, that area supported about 30,000 Eskimos around the early 1800's.

That was generally the time when early voyagers from such countries as England, Russia, and the United States began to arrive in Alaska and its northern regions, and with them came the new diseases for which the Eskimos had no immunity.

These diseases descended upon the people and they died off by the thousands. Whole camps were wiped out. No family was spared. For more than a hundred years, death was the constant uninvited guest in every Eskimo home from Bristol Bay to the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

The spokesman said:

"Yet despite death, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and the depletion of his life's sustenance, the immutable Eskimo managed to persevere to retain his sense of self respect, his dignity and his culture.

"And how have the people been able to survive such calamity and still retain their ability to quickly learn new ways, to still be light-hearted, to be able to laugh at their own mistakes?

"Because the land in which they have lived for the past thousands of years, and which they claim as their own, has imparted to the character of the people a tenacity—a perseverance and a will to overcome adversities which few other races possess..."

Impassioned Speech

During the discussion period, Noah Itta gave an impassioned address in his own native Inupiat dialect to a hushed audience. He said in part:

"I am happy that there are, at last, people taking action to protect the traditional hunting lands of the Eskimo. In the past, they had always traveled the coast, the tundra, and the foothills of the mountains to the south in the ever shifting pursuit of game to feed their families.

"Now I see these lands would be retained for my people and their children's children. My heart is happy."