

Emil Notti
Commissioner

P.O. Box 110800
Juneau, AK 99811-0800

www.commerce.alaska.gov

SEAL OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
STATE OF ALASKA

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Angelina Burney
Special Project Manager
for Community Relations

907.269.8100

cell: 907.350.5451

angelina.burney@alaska.gov

Press Release

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Contact: Keith Jost, Natural Resource Specialist #269-4548

Bristol Bay Region Completes Land Claim Settlements

(Anchorage, AK) - The State's Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development announces a significant achievement on behalf of the Bristol Bay Region. Commissioner Emil Notti announced "This year's completion of the one year public notice of the filing of a map-of-boundaries displaying land claims in the Village of Igiugig marks the end of a long journey that began with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) villages and Native village corporations in the Bristol Bay Region in the mid 1980's to identify and adjudicate land ownership claims in the region's 29 villages."

Rather than have a federal agency determine the boundaries and validity of lands occupied in Native villages, ANCSA calls for Native village corporations, the local ANCSA land holders to adopt policy, accept applications and make the land claim determinations.

Section 14(c) of ANCSA set out that residents, businesses, non-profits, airport operators and the communities themselves would be transferred title to land they occupied as of December 18, 1971, the date of the passage of ANCSA. In the case of the communities the provision includes land for future expansion as well. While many village corporations in the Bristol Bay Region completed the task in the 1990's a few like Igiugig Native Corporation had to resolve problems created by earlier land transfers that had been done in error. The Corporation's staff had to seek out agreements and acquire land in order to properly reconfigure lot boundaries and street rights of ways. The recent completion of the public notice of the filing of the map with the Bureau of Land Management will now lead to the surveying of the remaining Igiugig land claims and the transfer of title as it has in other Bristol Bay villages. The settlement of ANCSA 14(c) claims is an essential step in clearing clouded land title and providing a land base for private and public development. Villages that have completed the process benefit by having greater certainty over land ownership and boundaries thereby encouraging investment.



The Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC), the regional corporation for the 29 village region was an important influence in guiding the local Native village corporation's through the task. By monitoring the progress and providing an annual leadership conference over the years, BBNC has been successful at encouraging the completion of initiatives like the ANCSA 14(c) land transfers. If it had not been for the BBNC and the willingness of the village corporations and communities, it is unlikely that all 29 Bristol Bay villages would have completed the ANCSA 14(c) requirement.

The Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development's, Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) staff participated in the process by preparing the maps of boundaries and providing assistance to the Municipalities, Villages and Village Corporations.

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