

We are aware of the responsibility placed upon us. We feel that there is now a sound legislative format which can lead us safely out of the grave difficulties presented by the Native land claims problem.

We want to thank you for your concern and foresight in setting up this Task Force, so that we could participate directly in the process of policy making on a subject which affects the life of every Alaska Native. There has been failure in the past to recognize that the situation of the Alaska Native is a primary historic problem confronting the State of Alaska. It cannot be ignored without harm to the public interest of this State. A solution must be found now, as a lack of action will only bring a worse train of events in its wake.

We urge the adoption of this program as a proper and just solution on terms fair to all.

Respectfully,

WILLIE HENSLEY, *Chairman.*

Mr. HALEY. Thank you very much.

Who is next?

Mr. NOTT. Mr. John Borbridge, president of the Tlingit and Haida Indians.

STATEMENT OF JOHN BORBRIDGE, JR., PRESIDENT, CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TLINGIT AND HAIDA INDIANS OF ALASKA

Mr. BORBRIDGE. My name is John Borbridge, Jr. I am president of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska. I am also a director of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

I appear before this committee as a citizen of the United States. Also, I appear on behalf of other citizens of the United States who are natives of Alaska—persons of Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut descent.

I am proud to state my belief that there is no nation on the earth which has, during its history, set so high standards of dealing with native aboriginal peoples as the United States and no nation which has been more willing to rectify situations when it has fallen from those high standards.

It also gives me pleasure to state my belief that your committee has, in the best traditions of our country, sought consistently to act fairly and equitably in matters pertaining to the original native occupants of the lands of this country.

When the Europeans discovered Alaska in the mid-18th century, the natives of Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut descent had been in occupancy of the several parts comprising all of the territory of Alaska for several thousands of years.

Today, the descendents of these native groups still continue to hold, by "rights of aboriginal occupancy," the great bulk of the same territory.

Today, Alaska, the last great frontier of our Nation, is the sole remaining part of the United States which includes extensive areas, comprising several hundred millions of acres, still held by native inhabitants based on rights of aboriginal occupancy. Aside, possibly, from small tracts which may have been missed, the "original" Indian or native "title" to all lands in all parts of the country has, over the years, been extinguished by the Federal Government, except in Alaska.

Now there are a number of bills pending before Congress which propose to deal with the extensive occupancy rights of the native groups of Alaska.