

A quote from the speech of Dr. Muschenheim, M.D. delivered before the Fourth National Conference on Indian Health, November 30, 1966: "Public Health Service which has worked so effectively in the past decade to improve the health conditions of American Indians, and which has so very much more still to do. Even among physicians and among medical educators there is as yet little appreciation of the magnitude and the scope of the assignment which the Public Health Service was given by the Congress, or of the manner in which the task is being performed and how it is supported. Medical colleges have not been as active as they might well be in seeking affiliations with this branch of the Public Health Service for joint programs of many kinds."

How will the Native Land Claims enable the native health conditions in Alaska? "As a nation, therefore, we have not only to support the Public Health services by providing it with adequate appropriations to perform its part of the task. We have also to recognize that the Indian Tribes have particular and specific claims on the national government. They hold such communal assets as they still possess as, for instance, reservation land by virtue of direct dealings in the form of treaties with the government of the United States. Some of the Native peoples who have little or nothing (as the Alaska Native villagers) are without property because they have been unable up to now to obtain any settlement of rights and claims which have been recognized in principle by the United States for a hundred years. Inasmuch as this conference is a health conference, rather than simply a medical conference, I make no apology for speaking on these matters which are sociological, economic and political, but which have such an important bearing on the health situation. While the American Indians are citizens of particular states, as well as of the United States, and are entitled to equal rights and services in the states in which they reside, as are other citizens, there is in addition a special relationship to the Federal government which is the consequence of history, and not just of the circumstance that the several tribes and Native groups constitute impoverished minorities in their respective regions of habitation. These problems are therefore necessarily complicated because, while the individual states have responsibilities for the welfare of their Indian communities which some of them, however, do not recognize, so also does the nation have a special direct responsibility to them morally and legally. This is well known of course, to legislators and to probably most of the citizens of States in which there are sizable organized Indian communities. It is not well understood however, by most people elsewhere or by average citizens, even in some of the states like New York state, in which there are some Indian reservations. A fair settlement of Alaskan Native Land Claims is not, though few people outside of Alaska appreciate this, a matter for Alaskans (Native and white) to settle among themselves. The territory of Alaska before it became a state, belonged by purchase to the United States, and the Federal government still holds most of the land. The ceding, under the Statehood Act, of something like 20 per cent of the land to the State of Alaska without having made any similar definite commitment of land to the Native inhabitants, leaves those no better off than they were before statehood. When the territory was purchased there was recognition that the indigenous population had claims and rights to land they used and required for their subsistence but these rights and claims were never defined. To my considerable surprise, I found in talking to several young Public Service officers in Alaska that they believed the Indians and Eskimos to possess large reservations in various parts of the state. As a matter of fact, however, there is only one very small true reservation in the whole state, settled by a group who came over to Annette Island from Canada. There are in addition two larger reserves, withdrawn from the Public domain for their use, but to which the natives do not have title. As I understand it, aside from small parcels in villages, few Alaskan Natives own any land, individually or collectively. One of the difficulties of Native Alaskans is that they do not hold titles of sufficient validity to enable them to obtain loans from the Federal Housing Authority for housing construction. The question of Alaskan Native land claims, and all that this involves with respect to housing and health, is a National question but it receives little national attention. Were people more fully informed I have little doubt that a decent and generous settlement would be made. Land problems and housing problems confront Indians of other states too with great difficulties. That their collective land holdings in many areas have dwindled largely through allotments and multiple heirships is, of course, well known. But the shrinking land base is of course, not the only cause of economic depression. The absence