

claims. It is an important chapter because the Alaskan Natives constitute a substantial percentage of the United States Native population and we are dealing with large quantities of valuable land. It is also an important chapter because we will be measured as a nation for all time according to whether we are able to profit from past mistakes and thereby achieve a just resolution of this difficult legal and moral problem - - the last major settlement of Native land claims in our history.

Several aspects of the Alaska Native lands problem are unique. The Alaskan Natives now live on and use the lands which are in issue in this dispute; for the most part, they are the only persons who use this land. Unlike the Natives in the lower 48 states, they have never been driven off of their lands or forced onto reservations and, with few exceptions, their claims relate to lands which they still use. For the first time in our history we are dealing with land of great value which has never been taken from the Native owners by treaty, statute, force of arms or anything else. Thus, without interfering with the rights of third parties, the solution of the Alaska lands problem can be (and should be) directly tied to the lands in question.

In the past, the aboriginal land problem has been dealt with in various ways. We have tried the Indian