

Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs
Doug LaMalfa, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

February 2, 2018

To: All Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs Members

From: Majority Committee Staff
Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs (x6-9725)

Hearing: **Legislative hearing on H.R. 231 (Rep. Don Young),** To fulfill the land conveyance requirements under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act for the Alaska Native Village of Canyon Village, and for other purposes.
February 6, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. in 1324 Longworth HOB

H.R. 231 (Rep. Don Young), “*Canyon Village Land Conveyance Act*”

Summary of the bill

H.R. 231 was introduced by Rep. Don Young (R-AK) on January 3, 2017. The bill would amend section 14 of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act¹ (ANCSA), as amended, to require the Secretary of the Interior to convey to Kian Tr’ee Corporation, for the Native Village of Canyon Village, the surface estate of up to 6,400 acres of public land selected by the corporation. The Secretary would also convey the subsurface rights of the land selected to the Doyon, Limited Regional Corporation.

Cosponsors

None.

Invited Witnesses

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Aaron Schutt
Chief Executive Officer
Doyon, Limited
Fairbanks, AK

¹ 43 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.

Background

The aboriginal land claims of Alaska Natives were settled in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971² (ANCSA). Under the unique settlement, approximately 44 million acres of public land (in fee simple title) and nearly \$1 billion were transferred to private corporations owned and organized by Alaska Natives. Such corporations are organized by village and by region within the State of Alaska, and the Act specifies the criteria that individuals, groups, and villages must meet to organize and own the corporations. ANCSA further provides the process for selecting, awarding, and distributing lands and funds to them. The land and compensation awarded to the Native corporations are intended to meet the social, economic, cultural and other needs of Alaska Natives.

The land and monetary compensation were not awarded to tribes, clans, or families, but to eligible private corporations organized by Alaska Natives. There are generally two types of corporations: corporations organized by village and those organized according to 12 geographic regions. All Alaska Natives are shareholders of a regional corporation, but not all belong to a village corporation. The law also prescribes the process for selecting, awarding, and distributing lands and funds to qualified corporations.

Generally, Native communities in Alaska are qualified to form Native corporations only if recognized in ANCSA, or if they meet certain criteria.

Canyon Village

Recognized by Congress as a Native village under ANCSA, Canyon Village was originally established in 1962 on unappropriated federal land located on the Porcupine River in northeast Alaska. After the passage of ANCSA, the Kian Tr'ee Corporation filed its selection of land with the Bureau of Land Management in June 1976. However, according to Canyon Village, several unique and unfortunate circumstances hindered its ability to receive their land selections.

Canyon Village believes the land selections in 1976 remain of significant cultural and historic relevance and importance to the remaining founders and their descendants.

Major Provisions of H.R. 231

Sec. 1. Short Title.

Sec. 2. Canyon Village, Alaska, Land Conveyance.

Directs the Secretary of the Interior to convey up to 6,400 acres of land to the Kian Tr'ee Corporation on behalf of the village. It also states that Doyon Limited will be conveyed the subsurface rights to the lands granted to the Kian Tr'ee Corporation.

² *Id.*

Need for legislation

H.R. 231 would convey to the Kian Tr'ee Corporation, for the Native Village of Canyon Village, the surface estate selected by the Kian Tr'ee Corporation under Section 14(h), Paragraph 2 in ANSCA. By officially establishing Canyon Village as an available recipient of up to 6,400 acres surrounding the village, the citizens of the village can best address what to do with the surrounding land in terms of possible economic development. Furthermore, Doyon Limited (being the appropriate regional corporation) can increase the economic viability of a region that needs it.

Cost

Unknown.

Administration Position

Unknown.

[Ramseyer \(effect on current law\)](#)