Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The tribal land of the Menominee Indians of Wisconsin once again became a reservation today when Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton in a ceremony in his office formally accepted the deed conveying it to the United States in for the tribe.

Ada Deer, Chairperson of the Menominee Restoration Committee, the tribe's interim governing body, described the transfer plan as "the epitome of Indian self-determination." She said, "It gives the tribe Federal protection without Federal domination.â

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson and Ms. Deer participated with the Secretary in the signing ceremony. Members of the Restoration Committee and other guests were present.

Fourteen years ago the United States terminated its special relationship with the tribe, removed the land from trust status and discontinued Federal services. For the tribe this was disastrous. The tribal resources, some 200,000 acres of forest land and a sawmill, became subject to taxation and the tribal corporation, established after the termination to hold and manage this property, encountered financial difficulties.

After years of legislative efforts by the members of the tribe, Congress passed legislation, signed by the President December 22, 1973, to restore the tribe to Federal status. Today's action was a major step in the implementation of the Menominee Restoration Act.

In addition to restoring the land to trust status, the Secretary signed three other documents related to the restoration. These were:

1. A supplemental bond indenture, shifting the payment obligation for bonds issued by Menominee Enterprises, Inc., the corporation established after the termination, to the tribe and making the United States secondarily liable for interest only;

2) A management and trust agreement, giving the tribe management authority over tribal properties and business;

3) A management plan calling for the establishment of a tribal enterprise for the operation of the business activities of the tribe.

The transfer plan, approved by Congress, provides for maximum tribal control over its own affairs, with the Secretary exercising his trustee responsibility over the tribe's lands and natural resources.