Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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**For Immediate Release:** September 23, 1974
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A new director of Bureau of Indian Affairs activities in Eastern Oklahoma was named today. Commissioner, Morris Thompson announced the appointment of Thomas J. Ellison as Muskogee Area Director. Ellison, an Oklahoma Choctaw has been the Acting Area Director since the retirement of Virgil Harrington.

The Muskogee Area, one of the Bureau's 12 field jurisdictions is the second largest in Indian population and the smallest in geographic area. It includes 40 counties in Eastern Oklahoma with approximately 63,000 Indian residents. Most of the other jurisdictions are multi-state. The Area Director has responsibility, directly under the Commissioner, for all Bureau programs and services in the jurisdiction.

Ellison has worked for the Bureau for almost 24 years. A 1950 graduate of Colorado State University, with a major in agriculture, he began his career with the Bureau as a Soil Conservationist. He has held positions as a Loan Examiner, Finance Specialist, Tribal Economics Development Officer and Area Office Loan Specialist. In 1967 he was named Superintendent of the Standing Rock Agency in North Dakota. He was appointed Tribal Operations Officer for the Muskogee Area in December of 1968 and became Deputy Area Director in March of 1972.

Ellison was born in Choctaw County, Oklahoma, in 1924. He received his high school education at the Bureau’s Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kans. He is married to the former Carolyn Fry of Apache, Oklahoma and has two daughters, Glenna, a sophomore at Oklahoma Central State University, and Susan, a high school senior.

Ellison is a World War II veteran.