Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson today announced a streamlined system for the use or distribution of judgments made to American Indian tribes and groups by the Indian Claims Commission or the United States Court of Claims.

In implementing a 180-day time schedule in accord with the Act of October 19, 1973, new Regulations published in the Federal Register January 15, 1974 include these provisions:

1. The earliest possible completion of research to identify the ultimate or present-day beneficiaries of judgments.
2. The affected Indian tribe or group is to hold a preliminary meeting of the tribal governing body, or a public meeting if it chooses, to develop a proposal for the use or distribution of its judgment funds. The Area Director or Superintendents will assist in meeting arrangements and make technical assistance available to the Indian people.
3. A public hearing of record will be held to receive testimony on the tribal proposal for the use or distribution of claims funds.

Within 180 days of the appropriation of judgment funds – or in the case of awards for which covering funds were appropriated before passage of the 1973 Act, within 180 days from the Act's passage -- the Secretary of the Interior will submit the final proposed distribution plan to the chairmen of the Senate and House Interior Committees and to the tribal governing body.

Thompson pointed out that the distribution plan becomes effective on the 60th day from its submission to the Committees unless either the Senate or the House of Representatives disapproves by resolution.

Disapproval of a plan will require the submission of proposed legislation for the use or distribution of judgment funds after further consultation with the affected Indian tribe or group.

Publication of the new Regulations follows public hearing in Denver on December 13, 1973. In addition to testimony given at that time, numerous oral and written comments and suggestions were given consideration by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior.