Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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WASHINGTON – Interior Associate Deputy Secretary James E. Cason today announced that the Indian Affairs Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development has given final approval for the Spokane Tribe of Washington State to participate in DOI's 477 Demonstration Initiative, a comprehensive employment, training and welfare program for federally recognized tribes to address economic and workforce needs in their communities. With an enrolled population of just over 2,300 members, the Spokane Tribe is combating a 50 percent unemployment rate.

"I congratulate the Spokane Tribe and its leadership on their participation in the 477 program," Cason said. "This initiative is designed to help tribes reduce high unemployment in their communities by allowing them to utilize Federal resources in ways that best meet their needs. It also can greatly reduce a tribe's administrative burden in coordinating Federal programs, thereby allowing more of the money to do more good."

The 477 Demonstration Initiative was established as a result of Public Law 102-477, the Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Act of 1992. The act allows federally recognized tribes to combine funds from up to 12 Federal employment, training and welfare reform programs administered by Interior and the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services into a single tribally operated program with a single reporting system.

Spokane tribal officials hope their program, which incorporates more than $9 million dollars from Interior, DOL and HHS, will improve coordination of tribal programs and services to their clients through 477's "one-stop shop" approach and its ability to foster innovation based on local needs.

The 477 initiative is built around three basic elements: a single plan for delivering services in an integrated manner, a single budget which commingles all funds and a single reporting system replacing 12 different reports. Federal programs which can be included in a tribal 477 program are DOL Work Force Investment Act adult and youth programs; HHS Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Native Employment Works and Child Care Development Fund (both mandatory and discretionary) programs; and DOI General Assistance, Tribal Work Experience, Higher Education, Adult Education, Johnson-O'Malley, Job Placement and Training programs.

The Interior Department has estimated that, with the addition of the Spokane Tribe, over $100 million will have been integrated under tribal 477 programs in Fiscal Year 2006.

Since it was established in 1994, the 477 Demonstration Initiative has enabled approximately 240 tribes to use Federal funds more effectively to educate and train an estimated 44,000 children, youth and adults. The program has been highly rated under the Office of Management and Budget's Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) for meeting Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) standards for accountability and efficiency. The Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development was established to provide high-level support for the Department's goal of serving communities by providing access to energy resources and by stimulating job creation and economic development.

The Office assists economic development on Indian lands by identifying economic opportunities, assisting development of workforce capacity, providing low cost loans for business development and facilitating partnerships between tribes and the Federal or private sector. The Office also supports the President's National Energy Policy by fostering development of domestic energy resources to reduce this country's dependence on foreign energy sources.

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