Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
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WASHINGTON – Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs Aurene M. Martin today announced she has issued a Notice of Final Determination to decline to acknowledge as an Indian tribe a group known as the Snohomish Tribe of Indians located in and around Edmonds, Wash. The Snohomish petitioning group did not demonstrate that it met all seven mandatory criteria for Federal acknowledgment as an Indian tribe under 25 CFR Part 83, Procedures for Establishing that an American Indian Group Exists as an Indian Tribe.

Federal acknowledgment of a group as an Indian tribe establishes a government-to-government relationship between the United States and the tribe, and makes it eligible to receive services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The decision to decline is final and effective 90 days after the publication of the Notice of Final Determination in the Federal Register unless the petitioner, or any interested party, requests reconsideration with the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA).

The purpose of 25 CFR Part 83 is to provide a means to acknowledge Indian tribes that have continuous social and political existence and to determine whether the group descends from a historical Indian tribe or tribes. However, the Snohomish petitioner did not meet criteria 83.7(a), (b), (c) and (e) of the regulations. The petitioner did not demonstrate that it was identified as an Indian entity on a "substantially continuous" basis for fifty years, 1900 to 1950; that "a predominant portion of the petitioning group comprised a distinct community" on a substantially continuous basis from first sustained contact with non-Indians to the present; that it had maintained "political influence or authority" over its members as an autonomous entity from first sustained contact with non-Indians to the present; and that its membership consisted of individuals who descended from a historical Indian tribe or tribes that combined and functioned as a single autonomous political entity.

The Snohomish petitioner met criteria 83.7(d), (f) and (g) of the acknowledgment regulations by demonstrating that it has a governing document; that its membership is not principally composed of members of an acknowledged North American Indian tribe and that neither the petitioner nor its members are the subject of congressional legislation that has expressly terminated or forbidden the Federal relationship. The evidence in the record revealed that the petitioner formed its organization in the 1950s, and currently maintains an office in Edmonds. The record further revealed that the petitioner is not the same as the historical Snohomish tribe that was involved in the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855 and that settled on the Tulalip Reservation. The historical Snohomish tribe organized a tribal government with other tribes under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. These historical tribes became known collectively as the Tulalip Tribes of the Tulalip Reservation located near Marysville, Wash. The Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department's trust responsibilities and promoting self-determination on behalf of the 562 Federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an agency with 10,500 employees nationwide, which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.4 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the Federally recognized tribes, and the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA), which is responsible for administering the Federal Acknowledgment Process.

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