Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has issued a final determination to acknowledge the Duwamish Tribal Organization, hereafter referred to as the Duwamish of Renton, Washington, as existing as an Indian tribe within the meaning of Federal law. The Duwamish first filed a letter of intent to petition for Federal acknowledgement on June 7, 1977. The Bureau made its final determination based on documentary and interview evidence, which formed the basis for a 1996 proposed finding not to acknowledge the Duwamish, and an analysis of information and arguments received in response to the proposed finding by third parties and the Duwamish themselves. In addition, the Bureau reached factual conclusions after a review and analysis of the existing record in light of the additional evidence. Today's final determination reverses the negative proposed finding issued 1996.

The review established that the Duwamish Tribal Organization (petitioner) has satisfied the criteria under the 1978 regulations on recognition (25 CFR Part 83). The Bureau concluded that while the petitioner meets the seven criteria for recognition throughout the period of first contact to the present, as an alternative basis for recognition, the petitioner has also demonstrated prior Federal acknowledgement in the form of numerous statutory references of the "Duwamish Tribe" or the "D'wamish Tribe" beginning with the United States Senate's ratification of the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott in 1859 up until the final appropriation statute in 1923, and that the petitioner further meets the seven criteria for the period from 1923 to the present. Express statutory references also were found in an unbroken series of appropriations statutes beginning in 1860 and ending in 1923. The Bureau further concluded that the Duwamish met 1994 regulations requiring that a petitioner demonstrate historical continuity for the period commencing from the time of previous acknowledgement to the present. In light of the additional evidence, the Duwamish were determined to have met the criteria under both the 1978 and 1994 regulations. The final determination will become effective 90 days after being published in the Federal Register.