Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Geiogamah (202 343-7445)
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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Louis R. Bruce announced today the appointment of Morris Thompson, an Alaska Native, as the new Alaska Area Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Thompson's appointment was effective February 7, 1971.

"I am most happy to be announcing this appointment, “Commissioner Bruce said, “because Thompson is the first Alaska Native to be Alaska Area Director. The Alaska Natives have long wanted this. “

At 31, Thompson is also the youngest man in BIA history to be named as an area director.

Bruce pointed out that Thompson's appointment was endorsed by the executive committee of the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska in a meeting in Juneau January 30. Thompson is an Athabascan Indian, born in Tanana, Alaska.

Prior to his Alaska assignment, Thompson was an Assistant to Commissioner Bruce. He also acted as a special assistant for Indian affairs under former Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel and had been associated with administration of Indian programs for the State of Alaska.

He attended the first eight grades at Tanana Day School and was a 1959 graduate of Mt. Edgecumbe High School, where he was a member of the National Honor Society. He studied for two and a half years at the University of Alaska, majoring in civil engineering with a minor in political science. He continued his studies at the RCA Institute in Los Angeles, and after graduation worked as a technician at the RCA satellite tracking facility at Gilmore Creek near Fairbanks.

Thompson has a wide background of involvement in affairs of Alaska Natives and is a former chairman of the Board of the Fairbanks Native Association.

Thompson succeeds Charles A. Richmond, who has been named director of education for the BIA in eastern Oklahoma. Richmond formerly taught in BIA schools.