Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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A plan for the distribution and use of more than $16 million awarded to the Chiricahua Apache Indians by the Indian Claims Commission is being published in the Federal Register, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson announced today. The plan, approved by Congress, has an effective date of March 16.

The award represents payment for more than 15 million acres of land in New Mexico and Arizona taken without compensation on September 4, 1886, when Apache Chief Geronimo and his followers surrendered to the United States forces.

According to the plan, the funds will be divided between the Mescalero Apache Tribe of New Mexico and the Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma.

The Mescalero Apache Tribe of New Mexico will receive 69 percent of the funds and the Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma will receive 31 percent. This division is based on the relative numbers involved in a 1913 division of the Chiricahua Apaches to form the two groups.

The funds accruing to the Mescalero Apache Tribe will all be utilized for tribal programs. $1.4 million will be added to an existing tribal Scholarship Trust Fund. $150,000 will be used for development and maintenance of an inventory of the tribe's human and physical resources. $500,000 will be used to establish a Resource Protection Fund for research, legal fees and other matters pertaining to the protection of the resources and rights of the tribe and its members. Another $500,000 will be used to set up a Retirement and Health Plan for tribal officials and employees. The balance of the award will be put into the tribe's Investment Trust Fund, with the income available for the benefit of tribal members.

The plan for the Fort Sill Apaches sets aside $170,000 to establish a Tribal Burial Fund and to provide for certain anticipated legal expenses. The balance of their share of the award will be distributed on a per capita basis to living members and lineal descendants of the original 1913 group, placed on a payment roll by the Secretary of the Interior. Regulations for the preparation of this roll exclude all persons eligible to benefit from the judgment funds due to the Mescalero Apache Tribe.