Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Proposed regulations governing the procedures by which an Indian group would be acknowledged to be an Indian tribe were published June 1 in the Federal Register, Interior Assistant Secretary Forrest Gerard announced today.

The increased number of Indian groups requesting that the Secretary of the Interior officially acknowledge them as Indian tribes has necessitated the development of uniform procedures to be followed.

The purpose of the regulations is to facilitate the official recognition of those American Indian tribal groups which have maintained their political, ethnic and cultural integrity despite the absence of any formal action by the Federal Government to acknowledge or implement a Federal relationship.

Under the regulations as proposed, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs would acknowledge only those Indian tribes whose members and their ancestors existed in tribal relations since aboriginal times and have retained some aspects of their aboriginal sovereignty.

With these requirements, not every group of Indian people living in the same region or area would necessarily constitute a tribe, though they might be members of a club, corporation or other organization.

Proposed regulations on this matter were initially published on June 16, 1977. Because substantive changes were made on the basis of comments received, the revised procedures are again being published as proposed regulations.

Comments should be sent within 30 days after publication to the Office of Indian Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 18th and C Streets, NW, Washington, D.C. 20245.