Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Potawatomi Indians of Kansas now have a tribal constitution. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson gave formal approval February 19 to the document ratified in an election by the tribe on February 2.

The tribe has been without any form of tribal government since 1972 - and without an effective government for even longer. The new constitution provides for the prompt election of a tribal council and officers and is expected to meet the needs of the tribe for a sound governmental system.

In a brief ceremony in his office, Commissioner Thompson congratulated members of the tribe who worked to draft the constitution. He described the approval of the constitution is an "historic step for the tribe."

In October, 1972, the Federal Government withdrew its recognition of the tribe's governing body which had been crippled by a paralyzing factionalism. Recognition of the old tribal constitution, which provided no way for tribal members to resolve the deadlock, was also withdrawn. A constitutional drafting committee was elected in 1974 to draft a more modern document. The committee has been meeting regularly since that time. The ratification pf the new constitution culminates their work.

The tribe, which has its headquarters at Horton, Kansas, has an estimated membership of about 3,500.