Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: Nedra Darling, OPA-IA Phone: 202-219-4152
For Immediate Release: April 22, 2011
Print PDF

WASHINGTON – Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk today issued a final determination not to acknowledge the petitioner known as the Choctaw Nation of Florida (Petitioner #288) as an Indian tribe.

The petitioner, from Marianna, Fla., and which has about 77 members, claims to be a group of Choctaw Indians who migrated from North Carolina to Georgia and then to Florida following the Indian removals of the 1830s.

In July 2010, the Department issued a proposed finding against federal acknowledgment of the petitioner as an Indian tribe. The review of the evidence clearly established the petitioner did not meet mandatory Criterion 83.7(e), and the Department issued the negative finding under that one criterion as allowed by the regulations. For Criterion 83.7(e), the petitioner must show its members descend from a historical Indian tribe or tribes that combined and functioned as a single entity. The petitioner claims its members descend from a historical Choctaw Indian tribe. For the proposed finding, the Department examined an extensive body of evidence to evaluate this claim. All the evidence clearly showed that no record identified the petitioner's named ancestors as descending from a historical Indian tribe.

For this final determination, the petitioner had to provide evidence that it members descended from a historical tribe. It did not submit any materials for the final determination that established such descent. There was no evidence supplied by the petitioner or located by the Department for the proposed finding or the final determination showing that any of the named ancestors or members of the group descended from a historical Choctaw Indian tribe or any other tribe.

As a result, the Department declines to acknowledge the petitioner as an Indian tribe because the evidence does not show that the membership descends from a historical Indian tribe as required by Criterion 83.7(e).

The Department will publish notice of this determination in the Federal Register. This determination is final and effective 90 days after the notice's publication, unless any interested party requests reconsideration with the Interior Board of Indian Appeals.

The Assistant Secretary–Indian Affairs has responsibility for fulfilling the Interior Department's trust responsibilities to and promoting self-determination on behalf of the nation's 565 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes. The Assistant Secretary also oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which is responsible for providing services to approximately 1.9 million individual American Indians and Alaska Natives from the federally recognized tribes, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) and the Office of Federal Acknowledgment (OFA), which is responsible for administering the federal acknowledgment process.

Copies of the final determination and Federal Register notice will be posted on the Indian Affairs website at http://www.indianaffairs.gov/WhoWeAre/AS-IA/OFA/RecentCases/index.htm.