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Surrounded by more than 35 Cowlitz Indians from the State of Washington, Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs Kevin Gover today signed the final determination to federally acknowledge their tribe. With 1,482 members, the tribe is located in southwestern Washington state. Historically its villages ranged a distance of 60 miles from the source to the mouth of the Cowlitz River, with an important center at the well-known landmark of the Cowlitz Indian Mission.

The tribe submitted a request for Federal acknowledgment to the Bureau of Indian Affairs on September 17, 1975. After the Federal Acknowledgment Project was established in 1978, the CIT's petition was transferred to it for evaluation under the Federal acknowledgment regulations (25 CFR Part 83).

Today, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe is an amalgamated group, combining descendants of the Salishspeaking Lower Cowlitz Indians and the Sahaptin-speaking Upper Cowlitz, or Taidnapam, Indians. Its representatives took part in the Chehalis River Treaty negotiations with Governor Isaac Ingalls Stephens in 1855, but refused to sign the proposed treaty because the Cowlitz Indians did not consent to be transferred away from their traditional territory to a federally established reservation. During the Indian War of 1855-1856, many of the Cowlitz supported the American troops. In subsequent years, agents of the Office of Indian Affairs recorded the tribe's members on census and other records, but the tribe continued to refuse placement on a reservation. Between 1855 and the end of the 19th century, such chiefs as Kiskox, Henry Cheholtz, Atwin Stockum, and Captain Peter were well-known leaders.

In 1904, the surviving traditional chiefs, in cooperation with younger members of the tribe, began the process of filing a claim against the Federal government for compensation for the taking of its land. This claim was finally resolved by an Indian Claims Commission judgment award in 1973. This award has not yet been disbursed, awaiting determination of the tribe's acknowledgment status.

In 1910, the tribe reorganized itself with elected officers and a board of directors. In 1919, Bureau of Indian Affairs special agent Charles F. Roblin wrote:

> The Cowlitz tribe was a powerful tribe, ... They were independent, fearless and aggressive; and they refused to subordinate themselves to the white man by entering into a treaty with him. Their descendants have the same qualities which placed their ancestors in the position of leaders. They have been progressive and industrious, and there are very few of the present representatives of the tribe who are not in good circumstances. They have homesteaded lands, made good homes, raised families much above the average, are in good standing in the communities in which they live.

For many years after the structure was formalized in 1912, the chairman was chosen alternately from descendants of the Lower Cowlitz and descendants of the Upper Cowlitz. Through time, it has been called the Cowlitz Tribal Organization, the Cowlitz Tribe of Indians, and, since 1973, the Cowlitz Indian

Tribe.

The tribe received a positive proposed finding in 1997, which today's final determination upholds. The decision becomes effective in 90 days providing there is no appeal filed before the Interior Board of Indian Appeals (IBIA).
