Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer today signed a preliminary decision that proposes extending Federal acknowledgment to the Cowlitz Indian Tribe of Longview, WA. Assistant Secretary Deer said the petitioners meet the required criteria in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 25, Section 83.7 as modified by Section 83.8, which applies to petitioners who had prior unambiguous Federal acknowledgment.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe, concentrated in Lewis County, Washington, now will be subject to a 180-day public comment period, after which the Bureau of Indian Affairs will issue a final determination. If this final determination also is positive, members of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe will be eligible for certain rights and benefits accorded tribes that have federal recognition, which establishes that a special government-to-government relationship exists between the tribe and the United States. Currently there are 554 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes.

The BIA's Branch of Acknowledgment and Research found that the Cowlitz Indian Tribe represents the amalgamation of two separate bands, the Lower Cowlitz Indians and the Upper Cowlitz Indians. The Cowlitz negotiated a treaty with the Federal Government in 1855, but their chiefs refused to sign it because the treaty provisions would have removed them from their traditional homeland along the Cowlitz River. Both Cowlitz bands were headed by traditional chiefs from the mid-19th century through 1912. Since 1912, the group has maintained a single combined tribal organization that has elected officers and held regular meetings. The group has approximately 1,400 members.

The address of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe is 1417 15th Ave., #5, P.O. Box 2547, Longview, WA 98632-8594, telephone: (360) 577-8140. The chairman of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's General Council is John Barnett.