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A Bureau of Indian Affairs concept paper on reducing costs at the central office and area office levels by consolidating administrative functions and making other changes has been sent to Indian leaders for review and counsel, 'Interior Assistant Secretary Ken Smith said today.

The concept paper on "streamlining the Bureau of Indian Affairs" has been sent to nine tribal leaders, appointed by NTCA and NCAI in March to function as an Indian Policy Review Team for Smith and Interior Secretary James Watt.

The concept paper was also sent to BIA area directors with instructions that it be distributed to every tribe within their areas.

Smith's instruction to the area directors states: "The consultation process on the option that is being proposed in the paper must begin as soon as possible". He added that when the area directors meet with the central office to prepare for the detailed work on the realignment, the tribes' initial reactions to this proposal should be brought along. The proposal submitted to the tribal leaders includes the following:

1) Merging the two Oklahoma area offices into one -- with Oklahoma City as a possible site;

2) Consolidating administrative support services -- such as personnel, budget and financial services -- at five locations;

3) On the Navajo Reservation, consolidating administrative support functions at the area office level;

4) Retaining the existing area offices, except in Oklahoma for program management and technical assistance;

5) Implementing various principles for improved management, such as the transfer of all operating functions to the agency level where economically and legally feasible; elimination of unnecessary paperwork and other wasteful management actions at the central and area levels; and redefining the central and area staff role to that of program review and support rather than supervision of operating programs.

The five locations proposed for administrative support functions are: Aberdeen, South Dakota, serving the Aberdeen and Minneapolis areas; Portland, Oregon, the Portland and Billings, Montana areas; Phoenix, Arizona, the Phoenix and Sacramento areas; Oklahoma City, serving the geographic areas currently served by the Muskogee and Anadarko offices and the Eastern area; and Albuquerque, serving that area and certain central office activities.

The concept paper suggests that the Juneau Area in Alaska and the Navajo area, covering parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, require special consideration. It indicates, however, that probably most of the administrative support for Alaska could eventually be provided from the Portland office. The volume of administrative transactions in the Navajo area, the paper states, "seems to justify the

retention of administrative functions at the area".

Members of the Indian Policy Review Team, all tribal leaders, are Phillip Martin, Choctaw of Mississippi; Joe DeLaCruz, Quinault; Wendell Chino, Mescalero Apache; Tony Drennan, Colorado River; Gordon Thayer, Lac Courte Oreilles; Cliff Black, Eskimo; Johnson Meninick, Yakima; Merle Garcia, Acoma Pueblo; and Newton Lamar, Wichita. Martin is the President of the National Tribal Chairmen's Association and DeLaCruz is President of the National Congress of American Indians.

The BIA's 1983 appropriation mandates a reduction of $8 million in overhead costs in the central office and area offices. A further reduction of $9.4 million is in the 1984 budget request.
