Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Interior Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ken Smith has appointed Jacob Lestenkof, an Aleut from St. George Island, Alaska, as the Bureau of Indian Affairs' area director for Alaska. The BIA's Alaska area office is in Juneau.

Lestenkof's appointment is Smith's first official action as Assistant Secretary, since being sworn into office May 15.

Smith said Lestenkof's "extensive experience with both Alaska Native organizations and the government demonstrated his qualifications for this position of critical importance to the Alaska Natives."

Lestenkof has been the executive director of the Cook Inlet Native Association in Anchorage since 1977. In this post he managed and administered one of the largest Alaska Native human services corporations in the state. He has also been the executive vice president and the director of manpower development programs for the Alaska Federation of Natives.

From 1959-1974 Lestenkof was in the United States Army National Guard, reaching the rank of colonel. During part of this time he functioned as a staff assistant for the Alaska Department of Military Affairs and for two and-a-half years he was the Alaska Representative for the Alaskan Command/Joint Chiefs of Staff worldwide exercises.

A graduate of the Mt. Edgecumbe High School, Lestenkof received further education and training as the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the U.S. Army War College. Before entering the military, he worked for the U.S. Public Health Service at Mt. Edgecumbe, Alaska.

Lestenkof has received the Army Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Alaska State Commendation Medal and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation. He has been on the board of directors of the Alaska Children's Services; United Way of Alaska; Hope Cottage and was on the advisory board for Northern TV.