

**Editorial—**

# **Native Area Director**

Morris Thompson, an Athabascan Indian from the village of Tanana on the Yukon, has been approved by the Nixon administration and its Indian Affairs office of Commissioner Louis R. Bruce to be the area director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Alaska. This is the first time in the long history of the BIA in Alaska that an Alaskan native has been picked to head the complex and sprawling system of the agency in Alaska.

The new job Thompson is accepting should be a challenge of major proportions for him. He knows its complexity and he knows its vulnerability for attacks as has been shown in years past especially during the last five years. It might also be presumed that Morris Thompson is filling the shoes of his predecessors at a strategic time because of those past criticisms. Those attacks have had beneficial effects and the current BIA complexion is certainly more rosy than it was ten years ago. The agency, at last, is beginning to get into the business of working for the native people for which it was originally assigned.

Another contribution of vital importance is Morris Thompson's vision of the Bureau's contribution in the massive adjustments expected when the native land claims settlement is resolved in Congress. Done right, this assistance should be most valuable in the difficult transitions that must be made by the native people and their leaders after the claims settlement. This intention by Thompson is most commendable.

It is indeed flattering and satisfying that an Alaskan native has been appointed to head the BIA in Alaska. Morris Thompson must know, however, that he will be the focal point of many eyes, most of them native eyes perhaps, to watch over his performance. We have hopes that he will meet his duties well and benefit his people as well as the rest of the state.