

# BIA may bend on ICWA rejections

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Twenty applicants for a small pot of Indian Child Welfare Act money have rejected a request that they agree among themselves on how much money each will get.

The applicants met with Bureau of Indian Affairs Commissioner Jake Lestenkof last week to discuss the BIA's rejection of their requests for federal money to implement the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in their various regions.

According to a report of the meeting from the Alaska Native Child Advocacy Board, Lestenkof admitted that the BIA ignored its own regulations by not giving technical assistance to the applicants when their applications didn't meet minimum BIA grant standards.

Under terms of the ICWA, the BIA must give any needed assistance to applicants to bring their applications up to the point that they would be accepted for awarded grant money.

The grant application was cut off in February, shortly after the cutoff date was announced and long before any technical assistance was given to an applicant.

Lestenkof told the group that he probably would be able to get the grant application period opened again and he asked the representatives to reach an agreement among themselves on the amount of money each would receive.

The applicants had a \$990,000 amount to divide but only seven applicants were awarded any money. The awards ranged from \$252,377 for the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope to \$50,000 for the Native Village of Tyonek.

But, after two days of meeting to discuss the situation among themselves, the applicants agreed that they felt the division or allocation of money to be the BIA's duty, not theirs, and they sent him a list of recommendations that didn't include the allocation of money.

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# Advocacy board tells BIA to take responsibility

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Those recommendations included a critical look at the panel of volunteer social service personnel which reviewed the grant applications.

The ALCAB recommended that that panel have a majority of Alaska Natives on it and that a minority of BIA employees be admitted.

Right now, the BIA review panel is made up of five volunteers who rotate on an annual basis. Their only task is the grant review process.

The panel should be knowledgeable about Indian Child Welfare problems, Alaska as a whole, the services delivery problem in the state, and the federal Indian program in the state.

The applicants also recom-

mended that the review panel have no direct association with any program that they are reviewing.

ANCAB was to meet with Lestenkof late Monday after the Tundra Times went to press, to discuss their recommendations and the decisions on the funding level.

The ANCAB was especially critical of the BIA's attempt to have them handle the division of money.

Although for a while, a recommendation was considered that each group would receive \$35,000 and compete for the rest, the panel later agreed only on a resolution that supported an equitable division of funds.

In a brief report from Jennifer Evans, chairman of the ANCAB, Evans stated "it

would appear that this whole process (of having the applicants decide the funding level) is a ploy to divide and conquer on the part of the BIA and our people in government to keep our people in a second-class status. The award process was at best gratuitous, this is particularly true if one were to take a look at how the federal regulations were not printed until late and the limited funding available, as well as time allotted to assemble grants for fiscal year 1982."

The report cautioned that "we must not fight amongst ourselves, we need but to join

together and present a united front so that all benefit from our actions."

Applicants and the amount they were scheduled to receive before the meeting were: Bristol Bay Native Association, \$149,900; Kodiak Area Native Association, \$150,000; Native Village of Tyonek, \$50,000; Copper River Native Association, \$39,640; Kuskokwim Native Association, \$88,468; Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, \$263,116; and the Inupiat Council of the Arctic Slope, \$252,377.

Rejected were: The Fairbanks Native Association which sought \$147,724; Sitka Community Association, \$150,000; Angoon Community Association, \$39,558; Metlakatla Indian Community, \$34,578; Tanana Chiefs Conference, \$227,298; United Crow Band of Tok, \$139,978; Hawaii Council of American Indians, \$64,841; Cook Inlet Native Association, \$300,000; APIA, \$150,000; Ketchikan Indian Corp., \$66,102; North Pacific Rim, \$149,998; Association of Village Council Presidents, \$139,489; and Nome Eskimo Community, \$73,834.

