

Tlingits, Haidas Organize Central Council at Meeting

Tlingit-Haida dignitaries had a 5-day meeting in Sitka recently and elected a formal Tlingit-Haida Central Council that will take care of important business matters that arise between yearly conventions of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, a 50-year-old organization of Southeastern Indians.

Between 50 and 60 delegates from as far away as Seattle, Washington attended the meeting. The formation of the Council has much to do with the forthcoming Tlingit-Haida judgment fund that will be awarded the Southeastern Indians for historic rights lost when the United States government declared the Tongass forest area a public domain.

The Central Council will be given the duty of ruling how much of the "fund" will be set aside for per capita distribution among the qualified Southeastern Indian people and how much of the money will be set aside for "educational trust fund" for young

Indian people in the future. It is also expected that a good percentage of the money will be reserved for industrial development of the Indian communities in the Southeastern area.

"These percentages have not been worked out because we do not know how much the money will be," said Steve Hotch, former Grand President of the ANB. "It has been projected that it could be as much as \$80 million by the Tlingit-Haida council, or lawyers. We just don't know. The Claims Commission will decide that."

Since the judgment money proceedings have been in process, the Tlingit-Haida people have increased in number.

"We always thought there were about 7,000 of us in the Southeast but since the fund has been in the works, we now have upped our number to about 9,200," said Roy Peratrovich, himself a former Grand President of the ANB and who is now in charge of Tribal Operations for the

Bureau of Indian Affairs in Alaska. "They're popping out from all over the place. We even had an inquiry from somewhere in Africa."

When is the money expected to be awarded?

"An educated guess puts it that it might come about this summer," said Peratrovich.

The following men were elected to officiate in the Tlingit-Haida Council:

Theodore Denny, president, Seattle; Dennis Demert, secretary; Clarence Peele, treasurer; Henry Littlefield, 1st vice president; Alfred Widmark, 2nd vice president; Charles Olson, 3rd vice president; and Frank See, 4th vice president.