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*Document May Be Signed Today—*

# TCC-BIA Negotiate Contract

**FAIRBANKS — (October 14) —** The Tundra Times learned Tuesday that a negotiated contract between the Tanana Chiefs Conference and the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the operation of several BIA programs in the Fairbanks Agency is expected to be ready for signature Wednesday.

Melvin Charlie, president of the predominantly Athabascan regional non-profit association is reportedly in Juneau for the signing of the TCC-BIA contract and on other Conference business.

Thomas Richards, Jr., former special assistant to the BIA area director has been hired by the Tanana Chiefs as Director of Native Services in anticipation of the BIA contract.

He confirmed Tuesday that TCC President Charlie was in Juneau on business connected with the contract proposal. "We expect that a formal announcement concerning the status of the proposed contract will be forthcoming from Melvin Charlie very soon," he stated.

Richards indicated that some preparations had been made in anticipation of receiving the contract, including the leasing of space covering most of the ground floor of the Doyon Building, hiring of key personnel

to manage the contract programs, purchase of supplies and discussion of lease agreements for necessary equipment.

When asked why an announcement of the contract had not yet been made, he replied that the timing of this weekend's

Tanana Chiefs Conference convention and the visit of Indian Affairs Commissioner Morris Thompson to Alaska during the week of Oct. 19 may be influencing factors.

The Tanana Chiefs Conference

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first demonstrated an interest in contracting for the delivery of BIA services for Interior Alaska villages nearly five years ago.

The proposal submitted by TCC calls for the management of six program areas currently administered by the Fairbanks BIA Agency. These include Social Services, Career Development, Village Government Assistance, Credit, Housing and Administration.

Negotiations between the Bureau and TCC have continued for three months and reportedly hit a snag during discussion of the scope of the social services portion of the contract.

When asked the cause of the delay, Richards responded, "One factor which has concerned negotiators for the Chiefs is that there be no reduction in funding levels for these programs subsequent to the signing of the contract."

The TCC-BIA contract, when implemented, represents a policy shift in Indian Affairs signaled by the self-determination proclamations issued by the Nixon Administration some five years ago.

Among the first of its kind, the contract is expected to be the

most innovative approach to service delivery through the vehicle of BIA programs in any contract negotiated to date between the Bureau and any tribal organization.

"The Bureau's programs in Alaska have not been very adaptable to the special requirements which exist in Native affairs," Richards said. "I would expect the TCC to assign top priority to the redesign of these programs to make them as responsive as possible to Native people."

"I would not wish to deny Bureau officials credit for management of these programs over the years with limited resources." He concluded, "TCC will do a better job for the simple reason that a situation will exist where the people of the region will themselves manage their own affairs."

If TCC and the BIA sign the contract on Wednesday, it is expected that the Tanana Chiefs will begin delivering services to Native people from the first floor of the Doyon Building on Thursday with the possible exception of the social services programs.