

T-H AFFILIATES WITH AFN

14,000 Tlingit and Haida Indians Join Statewide Native Group

John Borbridge, Jr., president of the Central Council of the Tlingit-Haida Indians of Alaska, announced the formal affiliation of the Southeastern organization

with the Alaska Federation of Natives.

The move is viewed as another step towards the unification in the efforts of Alaska natives to achieve a prompt and equitable settlement of the Alaska native land rights.

The motion to affiliate was passed in the April convention of the Central Council and recently ratified by member communities.

The Central Council of Tlingit-Haida Indians was organized under the provisions of an act of Congress of August 19, 1965 and is a body composed of delegates from the various local communities of persons of Tlingit or Haida descent.

Accordingly, the Central Council is an organization officially chartered and given status under the act of Congress.

Nineteen communities ranging from Anchorage, Alaska to San Francisco-Oakland area and Seattle, Wash. comprised

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Affiliation . . .

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the membership in an organization that represent the Alaska native land rights of more than 14,000 Tlingit and Haida Indians.

"The Central Council states that Alaska's native people have assumed a statesmanlike posture in demonstrating their willingness to compromise from claims totalling in excess of 290 million acres to 40 million acres," Borbridge stated this week.

"The \$500 million," he said, "represents compensation for the agreement to extinguish Indian title to the vast area and is a recognition that our Indian title has not been extinguished as of 1968. And, therefore, 1968 market value must be used in computing land values."

In what he described as Point Two, Borbridge said that in addition to its firm commitments of the 40 million acres and \$500 million the Central Council further advocate a maximum that:

—There should be no earmarking of funds by either the Secretary of the Interior or the State of Alaska.

Borbridge cited the recent remarks of Secretary Udall at the land claims hearings in Washington, D.C.

"Secretary Udall stated that 'minimal controls were desired' and that the emergence of Alaska native leadership was 'one of the very promising things in Alaska,' and that he had no doubt as to the 'abilities of Alaska natives to manage a corporation for economic development.' "

He said that the Central Council feels that confusion as to the basis for the land rights of the Alaska natives should be avoided.

As repeatedly held by the Supreme Court of the United States, he said, aboriginal Indian title to lands embraces the "complete beneficial ownership based on the rights of perpetual and exclusive use and occupancy."

He said that such title also carries with the RIGHT of the tribe or native group "to be protected fully by the United States in such exclusive occupancy against any interference or conflicting use or taking by all others, including protection against the state government."

"In short," Borbridge pointed out, "as declared by the Supreme Court, aboriginal Indian ownership is as sacred as the white man's ownership."

"The established law is that ONLY the United States may extinguish aboriginal Indian ownership. The Alaska natives could litigate on Indian title to all of Alaska—but we have chosen political negotiations through the legislative process in Congress.

"We insist that the terms of the final settlement must be arrived at through negotiations with the Alaska Native people and not by a unilateral determination."