

First community block grants begin arriving in Alaska

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The Hoonah Indian Association has received a grant totaling \$108,750 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to purchase fire protection equipment, it was announced last week.

The grant is one of the first of its kind to be awarded under the Reagan administration's new Community Block Grant Program which allows Native tribal government units to work directly with federal agencies, now contracting through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Earlier this month Sen. Frank Murkowski reported seven Alaska Native housing authorities received loan totaling more than \$28 million directly from HUD for planning and construction of single-family housing units throughout the state.

The Reagan administration's proposed 1982 budget call for the Indian programs now administered by the BIA to be combined in a block grant system to

be known as Consolidated Tribal Government Programs. Programs to be combined include the Johnson-O'Malley Program, Continuing Education Aid to Tribal Governments, Adult Education, College Student Assistance, Indian Action Teams, Community Fire Protection, Housing, Self-Determination Services, Direct Employment and Business Enterprise Development (to be phased out FY 1983).

Under the Consolidated Tribal Government Program "native government" bodies will be required to set their priorities according to projects needed and then apply for individual project grants instead of applying for general program funds. Tribes may also opt to allow BIA to administer the projects for them.

In a BIA budget positions paper released late last month, Interior Secretary James Watt said President Reagan's proposed budget amendments and consolidated program formulas should reduce the overall BIA budget by seven percent from \$1.083 billion to \$1.007 billion, increase management flexibility

and still meet tribal needs.

James F. Canon, Interior's acting deputy assistant secretary for Indian affairs said "the \$120 million allotted for the Consolidated Grant Program will have approximately \$40 million less than the total of all previous individual programs but offers greater tribal choice in allocating available resources to meet real needs of the tribes."

Reagan's swift BIA revisions came as a surprise to many Alaska Native nonprofit associations and traditional governments.

The Kawerak, Inc. board of directors sent a resolution to the BIA denouncing the agency for starting to implement the block grant system without giving the organizations time to adjust and figure out the mechanics of the program. Other nonprofit organizations have followed suit.

One of the reasons for the Kawerak board action is that Alaska's tribal councils and associations have been given the authority to apply for block grants. Kawerak does

not have tribal government status. Kawerak is now asking its member villages to grant Kawerak tribal status for the purpose of planning and administering the new grants.

Another problem confronting many nonprofit organizations is that they cannot plan ahead and develop funding proposals for new projects and general programs without working directly through each village traditional council involved unless they have tribal status. The village councils will have to apply for the project grants and then sub contract to nonprofit associations.

Village councils have problems too. Many councils do not have project development per-

sonnel who understand the federal grant system and can lobby for funds needed on an individual village basis. They will have to find a way to work as closely as possible with the nonprofit organizations.

According to Anchorage BIA Superintendent Albert Kahklen, Reagan's proposed Consolidated Tribal Government Programs budget is still in Congress. Kahklen does not expect to see an approved budget for a couple of weeks yet. Housing block grants from HUD are however, already available. Most of BIA's programs will become part of the Consolidated Tribal Government Program by October 1, 1981 if the president's budget is approved.