

Central Council Assumes Control of BIA Agency

"In signing this contract with BIA we become the first Alaska Native organization to assume the management of agency programs for Native people and to deliver the services with our own Tribal employees," stated Clarence Jackson, president, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska.

"We are now in a position to direct programs and control federal monies designated for the Natives of Southeast Alaska," he explained upon completion of contract negotiations between officials of the Central Council and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Juneau Area office on Aug. 20, 1975.

In affixing his signature to the contract documents BIA Area

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Clarence Jackson (seated), president of Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska and BIA Area Director Clarence Antioquia (left) sign contract in Juneau giving Central Council the authority to manage Indian programs for Southeast Alaska Native communities.

Director Clarence Antioquia said, "This is a significant and historic moment for Native people throughout Alaska—Indian people will administer and maintain Indian programs. This contract is a progression from partial control of direction to total administration with all Southeast Alaska Agency personnel now being tribal employees.

"We in the bureau are very pleased to see the Central Council take charge of program responsibilities; they have demonstrated the knowledge and expertise needed to carry on the services to Southeast Alaska Natives."

During the past four years Central Council has contracted with BIA to direct the agency management functions and the higher education grants staff, totaling five persons.

This year's contract, the first of its kind, marks the takeover of five programs—higher education scholarships, the housing improvement program, employment assistance, social services and general management—under the supervision of Native Agency Director Joseph Wilson who states, "Our estimated budget of nearly 2.5 million dollars will be utilized to manage programs and services to all the Native communities in Southeast Alaska."

The bureau will continue to administer trust responsibilities and a credit program for the agency.

Completion and signing of the contract comes after several

months of negotiations between the Central Council and bureau officials. Negotiable items hinged on the scope of program services, management-staffing plans and budgetary considerations.

Prior to July 1, 1975, federal employees working in the agency were given the option of relinquishing their Civil Service status to work as employees of the Central Council, or transferring to other federal or bureau positions if available. Most opted to remain with Southeast Native Agency as tribal employees. If the need arises, the bureau can loan personnel to the agency on a consulting basis.

"We envision adhering in general terms to the program strategies already in operation as they are relatively effective. Thus, no radical departure from current agency procedures is presently foreseen," Jackson pointed out.

"Obviously, we do plan, after a transitional period, to effect a number of program innovations. But, for now, we feel it is unwise to make radical program changes without further planning and evaluations."

According to the officials, "Every effort will be made toward working together as one team in problem solving, rather than working separately in various programs."

Native organizations, corporations and representatives from all communities in the Southeast Native Agency are—and will continue to be—involved in the development of program planning and evaluation of the fiscal budget.