

# *Washington tribes sign Accord with state*

OLYMPIA — Washington Governor Booth Gardner and leaders of the state's 26 federally recognized Indian tribes made history Aug. 4, with the signing of the Centennial Accord, which formalizes a more cooperative relationship between state government and the tribes.

The Accord recognizes and respects the sovereignty of the tribes and has

become a national model for relations between state governments and Indian tribes.

The Accord calls for a government-to-government approach between the tribes and the state to work jointly on problems of mutual concern.

Gardner and tribal leaders said the agreement is the most significant, positive step taken since statehood

toward building a proper and positive relationship between state government and Indian tribes.

"The tribes are sovereign governments and should be treated as such," Gardner said. "It is in our interest to improve the ability of both tribal and state governments to perform as

(Continued on Page Seven)

# ● Washington Indians

(Continued from Page One)

governments, state government will no longer be an obstacle to tribal sovereignty."

"The Accord is designed to address issues through cooperation and negotiation rather than confrontation and litigation," said Joe DeLaCruz, president of the Quinault Indian Nation and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians.

Examples of the kind of cooperative relationship sought through the Accord include the Puyallup Land Claims Settlement and the Timber/Fish/Wildlife Agreement.

"The benefits and the obligation of the Accord form a two-way road. It won't always be an easy road, but in the end we believe it will be far more productive for all parties than paying lawyers to fight these issues in court," said Melvin Sampson, chairman of the Yakima Indian Nation.

"Too often court decisions cause more problems than they solve," he added.

The tribes and the Governor have identified three areas in which they hope to make initial progress: economic development, social services and natural resources.

"Working together on economic development strategies will help reduce unemployment on tribal lands, which currently runs as high as 50 per-

cent, and will also provide an economic stimulus to neighboring communities, many of which are economically distressed," said Larry Kinley, chairman of the Lummi Indian Nation.

Natural resource management remains the area with the most significant issues to be resolved between the tribes and the state. In the past, these issues have been aired and decided in federal court. With the Accord, the first effort will be to negotiate to resolve differences rather than letting the courts determine the outcome.

"I have no illusions that the state and the tribes will never face off in court again, but this Accord serves as a commitment and a recognition that ours is a shared future and that the courts should be the last resort," Gardner said.

State executive agencies are directed by the governor to establish formal procedures to carry out the principles of the Accord. Each tribe will also be expected to establish a system of accountability to implement the government-to-government relationships.

"Part of the state's challenge in implementing the Accord will be to standardize how our various state agencies relate to the tribes. Today some agencies have far more positive relationships with the tribes than others," Gardner said.