

**PART 83—PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING THAT AN AMERICAN INDIAN GROUP EXISTS AS AN INDIAN TRIBE**

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**§ 83.1 Definitions.**

As used in this part:

*Area Office* means a Bureau of Indian Affairs Area Office.

*Assistant Secretary* means the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, or that officer's authorized representative.

*Autonomous* means the exercise of political influence or authority independent of the control of any other Indian governing entity. Autonomous must be understood in the context of the history, geography, culture and social organization of the petitioning group.

*Board* means the Interior Board of Indian Appeals.

*Bureau* means the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

*Community* means any group of people which can demonstrate that consistent interactions and significant social relationships exist within its membership and that its members are differentiated from and identified as distinct from nonmembers. *Community* must be understood in the context of the history, geography, culture and social organization of the group.

*Continental United States* means the contiguous 48 states and Alaska.

*Continuously* or *continuous* means extending from first sustained contact with non-Indians throughout the group's history to the present substantially without interruption.

*Department* means the Department of the Interior.

*Documented petition* means the detailed arguments made by a petitioner to substantiate its claim to continuous existence as an Indian tribe, together with the factual exposition and all documentary evidence necessary to demonstrate that these arguments address the mandatory criteria in § 83.7(a) through (g).

*Historically, historical* or *history* means dating from first sustained contact with non-Indians.

*Indian group* or *group* means any Indian or Alaska Native aggregation within the continental United States that the Secretary of the Interior does not acknowledge to be an Indian tribe.

*Indian tribe*, also referred to herein as *tribe*, means any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, pueblo, village, or community within the continental United States that the Secretary of the Interior presently acknowledges to exist as an Indian tribe.

*Indigenous* means native to the continental United States in that at least part of the petitioner's territory at the time of sustained contact extended into what is now the continental United States.

*Informed party* means any person or organization, other than an interested party, who requests an opportunity to submit comments or evidence or to be kept informed of general actions regarding a specific petitioner.

*Interested party* means any person, organization or other entity who can establish a legal, factual or property interest in an acknowledgment determination and who requests an opportunity to submit comments or evidence or to be kept informed of general actions regarding a specific petitioner. "Interested party" includes the governor and attorney general of the state in which a petitioner is located, and may include, but is not limited to, local governmental units, and any recognized Indian tribes and unrecognized Indian groups that might be affected by an acknowledgment determination.

*Letter of intent* means an undocumented letter or resolution by which an Indian group requests Federal acknowledgment as an Indian tribe and expresses its intent to submit a documented petition.

*Member of an Indian group* means an individual who is recognized by an Indian group as meeting its membership criteria and who consents to being listed as a member of that group.

*Member of an Indian tribe* means an individual who meets the membership requirements of the tribe as set forth in its governing document or, absent such a document, has been recognized as a member collectively by those persons comprising the tribal governing body, and has consistently maintained tribal relations with the tribe or is listed on the tribal rolls of that tribe as a member, if such rolls are kept.

*Petitioner* means any entity that has submitted a letter of intent to the Secretary requesting acknowledgment that it is an Indian tribe.

*Political influence or authority* means a tribal council, leadership, internal process or other mechanism which the group has used as a means of influencing or controlling the behavior of its members in significant respects, and/or making decisions for the group which substantially affect its members, and/or representing the group in dealing with outsiders in matters of consequence. This process is to be understood in the context of the history, culture and social organization of the group.

*Previous Federal acknowledgment* means action by the Federal government clearly premised on identification of a tribal political entity and indicating clearly the recognition of a relationship between that entity and the United States.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of the Interior or that officer's authorized representative.

*Sustained contact* means the period of earliest sustained non-Indian settlement and/or governmental presence in the local area in which the historical tribe or tribes from which the petitioner descends was located historically.

*Tribal relations* means participation by an individual in a political and social relationship with an Indian tribe.

*Tribal roll*, for purposes of these regulations, means a list exclusively of those individuals who have been determined by the tribe to meet the tribe's membership requirements as set forth in its governing document. In the absence of such a document, a tribal roll means a list of those recognized as members by the tribe's governing body. In either case, those individuals on a tribal roll must have affirmatively demonstrated consent to being listed as members.

#### § 83.2 Purpose.

The purpose of this part is to establish a departmental procedure and policy for acknowledging that certain American Indian groups exist as tribes. Acknowledgment of tribal existence by the Department is a prerequisite to the protection, services, and benefits of the Federal government available to Indian tribes by virtue of their status as tribes. Acknowledgment shall also mean that the tribe is entitled to the immunities and privileges available to other federally acknowledged Indian tribes by virtue of their government-to-government relationship with the United States as well as the responsibilities, powers, limitations and obligations of such tribes. Acknowledgment shall subject the Indian tribe to the same authority of Congress and the United States to which other federally acknowledged tribes are subjected.

#### § 83.3 Scope.

(a) This part applies only to those American Indian groups indigenous to the continental United States which are not currently acknowledged as Indian tribes by the Department. It is intended to apply to groups that can establish a substantially continuous tribal existence and which have functioned as autonomous entities throughout history until the present.

(b) Indian tribes, organized bands, pueblos, Alaska Native villages, or communities which are already acknowledged as such and are receiving services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs may not be reviewed under the