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NISHNAWBE NEWS

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MARQUETTE, Mich. --Michigan's reservation area Indians are rapidly taking charge of their own affairs, and effects of the new "self-determination" policy are being felt throughout the state.

One of the first steps in this direction was made last week when the Michigan Inter-Tribal Council began administration of the educational scholarship program traditionally handled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The program helps finance post-secondary studies of Indians throughout Michigan.

Handling most of the administration work will be the newly-incorporated Michigan Inter-Tribal Education Association (MITE), the educational arm of the Inter-Tribal Council.

Michigan's four reservations are represented on the Council--Brimley, Hannahville and L'Anse-Baraga-Watersmeet in the Upper Peninsula, and Mt. Pleasant in Lower Michigan.

MITE's all-Indian board of directors includes Irma Parrish, Brimley; Gloria McCullough, Wilson; Ruth Antone and Mabel Peter, Watersmeet; Yvonne Davis, Mt. Pleasant; Loretta Rasanen, Baraga, and Gerald L. Rogers, L'Anse. It is headed by Donald A. LaPointe, an Ojibwa from Baraga.

Officers, besides LaPointe, are Mrs. Parrish, vice-chairman; Mrs. McCullough, secretary, and Sally Halfaday, Hannahville, treasurer.

MITE's aim is to "develop, implement and coordinate educational programs on federal Indian reservations in Michigan," LaPointe said.

"We want to advance and improve the educational status of reservation young people and adults," he pointed out.

LaPointe also said that the organization intends to apply for funding from federal, state and local governments and private foundations to help finance educational projects.

"Main purpose of such programs will be for personal and cultural improvement of Indian people," LaPointe said.

(more)

The end of the government's "big brother" relationship is probably nowhere more apparent than in areas of finance, and especially in administration of Johnson-O'Malley Act (JOM) funds, which were made available to Michigan Indians last year. JOM monies are earmarked for Indian educational programs in school districts having reservation area students.

Excluded from the benefits of Johnson-O'Malley funds since 1934, the state's four reservations are laying plans to administer the long-sought assistance.

The Michigan Department of Education has been administering JOM funds during the past year at the request of the Inter-Tribal Council, giving Indian officials time to organize their own administration, which will take over October 1.

JOM funds will be administered by the tribal council on each reservation, with coordination services provided by MITE.

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