



CENTRAL COUNCIL

*Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska*

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **U.S. Department of Justice Awards \$880,493 to Central Council**

The U.S. Department of Justice recently selected the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska's Tribal Court as a demonstration tribe to receive \$880,493 in tribal justice assistance funds. Over the next three years, the Tribal Court will further its mission of supporting tribal families and protecting tribal children through its justice system by honoring ancestral teachings and culture.

The Tribal Court will embark on a cooperative effort to enhance family safety, with a more holistic approach toward providing access to Tribal Domestic Violence Protection Orders in accord with the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). With the recent groundbreaking decision in *State of Alaska v. Native Village of Tanana*, the Tribe will also work towards developing cooperative justice agreements with the State of Alaska for full faith recognition and enforcement of Tribal Court orders.

At present, the Tribal Court hears matters involving paternity and child support. The tribal justice funds are designed to strengthen the Tribal Court's capacity toward eventually hearing cases involving inter-family violence while laying the foundation for hearing a wide spectrum of tribal family law cases. Funds will be used to update court computers, develop a system for video conferencing, as well as updating tribal codes toward integration of tribal law with the wisdom of tribal elders. The ultimate goal is to provide an alternate venue to the State Court System in tribal communities; a less adversarial, family-based, culturally appropriate justice system crafted with the unique values of the tribal citizenry in mind.

This grant represents a historic transformation of Tribal Court services, and would not have been possible without the vision of the Chief Justice and the Tribal Judiciary Committee members who have worked tirelessly over the years towards revealing the strength of tribal sovereignty and expanding tribal justice services. The Tribe's successful proposal was further strengthened by the support of Tribal Family and Youth Services (TFYS), the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) Program, Alaska Legal Services Corporation, Juneau AWARE Shelter and former First District of Alaska Presiding Judge, Patricia Collins.

For more information regarding this award, please contact Judge David Avraham Voluck at 907.463.7347 or Eddie Brakes, Tribal Child Support Unit Manager, at 907.463.7340 or toll free at 1.800.344.1432.

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