

(3) Technical Assistance Letter(s)

- November 30, 1987
- August 4, 1995
- December 15, 1996
- December 16, 1997

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Tribal Government Services - AR

NOV 30 1987

Mrs. Joan Ortez
19614 Mountain Highway
Spanaway, Washington 98387

Dear Mrs. Ortez:

The documented petition of the Steilacoom has been given a preliminary review by the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research for significant omissions and obvious deficiencies as required by 25 CFR 83.9(b). The Steilacoom petition was received October 27, 1986. Revisions, additions and corrections were received by letters of April 10 and 29, May 13, 18 and 29, June 10, 18 and 24, July 29, and August 6 from Nile Thompson, Director of the Steilacoom Acknowledgment Project. This review takes into account all of these additional submissions.

The comments here are meant to define as adequately as possible, on the basis of an initial review, areas where there are significant omissions or deficiencies in the data presented. In addition, the letter has requested some additional information and suggested revisions that, although not representing major deficiencies, would, we believe, greatly strengthen the petition and provide answers to questions we anticipate will arise when the petition is considered.

It is important to note in reviewing the comments herein that while the petition is clearly the result of extensive compilation of data and analyses, it is also incomplete in some important material respects. Some sections are explicitly incomplete, i.e., the text indicates that additional materials are planned or are being prepared. Some other sections also appear to be incomplete, e.g., they are very brief where the text indicates that a major discussion is planned. In addition, only a very limited amount of the documentation relied upon for the petition was submitted. For these reasons, this review, while as complete as the materials allow, cannot anticipate as fully as would otherwise be the case all of the questions which may arise. We note that you anticipate providing a completely revised text to replace rather than supplement the document submitted. We also realize that some of the requested additions may already be planned or in preparation. The lack of comment in this letter about a given section should not be interpreted as discouraging the inclusion in the final petition of any revisions or additions already planned.

The obvious deficiencies letter is a requirement which is provided for in the regulations to insure that a petitioner is not rejected because of technical problems in the petition and that the group's status will be considered on its merits. The letter does not constitute any evidence that a positive conclusion has been or will be reached on the petition, or on

the portions of it not discussed in the letter. Nor does the fact that a petitioner responds to the obvious deficiencies review imply in any way that the group meets the seven mandatory criteria by simply submitting additional data. The obvious deficiencies review of the petition merely provides the petitioner the opportunity to submit additional information or clarification prior to the actual active consideration period, at which time the petition will be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated to determine whether the group is entitled to be acknowledged as an Indian tribe.

Additional information concerning the political system after the 1870's should be provided. This is an important deficiency which it is essential to address. The present description focuses largely on indirect evidence with little direct discussion of internal exercise of political authority, e.g., how authority was exercised or gained, and what the internal political structure of the group was. To the extent possible, the treatment of tribal political authority should describe the exercise of authority and influence by leaders outside as well as within the context of meetings, including what kinds of influence and how exercised. Examples of the exercise of such authority include, but are not necessarily limited to, dispute resolution, influence on what is considered correct behavior, and allocation of group resources. Further, how do the leaders communicate with and how are they influenced by membership opinion and influential groups or individuals within the Steilacoom. How does political news, opinion and influence flow from the membership to the leaders, especially outside the context of meetings? We note that several important additional sections and revisions of present sections of the petition are planned, including more detail about how leaders function within and through meetings based on a larger process of mobilization of support, development of consensus, influence on opinion, control of agenda, and the like.

There are some further questions the answers to which would greatly help elucidate the political system. While important, these do not represent significant deficiencies. What politically significant divisions exist and how are they manifested in the political process? Can more description be provided about the kinds of political conflicts that have occurred and how these have been dealt with? As a means of elaborating on political process, can additional description of political successions be provided, i.e., the process (beyond simply voting) whereby leaders are replaced? In describing the political process, can more be said about the role of organizers and of family groups in the political process?

In addition to these general questions concerning the political system of the Steilacoom, there are some additional, more specific, areas where additional description and analyses are important to strengthen the petition. The description of the 1880's and 1890's appears to be dependent largely on indirect evidence from the text of the 1975 petition. Can more direct evidence be provided on the nature of the meetings of this era? Can the description of the pre-1900 political system be clarified by indicating when the Steilacoom came to be considered a single political body and what the relationships were between the local leaders and apparent overall leaders whose names were cited? What were the functions of Sam Young and John Steilacoom as leaders in this era and what was the relationship between the two men?

The description of community from the 1950's through the early 1970's, and for the modern era, is very limited. It is essential that a more complete description of the modern and recent community be provided. Some of the relevant initial sections need to be expanded and scattered relevant data in other sections pulled together in a systematic fashion. We understand from your researcher that extensive additional research and revisions to these sections is planned or has been carried out.

The revised petition should include a systematic discussion of how, and to what extent, the members of the modern day Steilacoom interact with each other and in what contexts. Especially important are informal contexts such as family gatherings, weddings, funerals, parties, etc. This discussion should address contact between, as well as extended families and different family lines as well as within them. Please also describe how members are considered a distinct community from non-Indians in the area, i.e., what kinds of positive and negative social distinctions, beyond simple identification as Indians, are made.

The description of the modern community should include a brief description of the kinds of distinctions and divisions that are recognized within the group today. Possible examples of such distinctions include, but are not limited to, family distinctions, geographical distinctions, political alliances, and distinctions resulting from the earlier adoptions and incorporations within the group.

While the sections on identification of the Steilacoom as an Indian group (i.e., relating to criterion a) are thorough, often extremely detailed, and have no immediately obvious deficiencies, we are requesting certain materials to strengthen and clarify identification as an Indian group for certain eras. These eras are the 1860's, 1890's, 1900 to 1920 and the 1940's. Much of the 1900 to 1920 discussion is based on oral reports of intertribal meetings where the Steilacoom were reportedly represented and distinguished as a group. We need further evidence to document and clarify this. Some of the cited materials are not directly relevant to identification of the group under criterion a. These include items which are essentially internal, self-identification rather than identification by an outsider as the criterion requires, and identification of individuals as Indian in contexts where it is not clear whether this reflects identification of the existence of the group.

In order to evaluate thoroughly the membership and enrollment processes of the Steilacoom, there are several very important questions which need to be answered. In addition, a number of technical questions have been outlined. The answers to these questions will greatly facilitate processing the petition when it is considered.

Provide a separate, written certification of the Steilacoom membership roll stating that it is the group's official roll. The certification should clearly identify the roll and be signed by members of the group's governing body.

Please provide documentary source citations that establish the tribal blood for the 19 families for whom family ancestry charts have been compiled. We note that a detailed, "family line" by "family line" discussion is planned, of which two examples were included in the petition, and that these include some of this information. For those families whose early ancestors were not Steilacoom, please include in the description when and how (i.e., by descent, by pre- or post-treaty association or adoption, or by other means) the family affiliated with the Steilacoom tribe. It is important that these descriptions be completed for each of the 19 family lines.

Enclosed with this letter is a list of 25 individuals whose names appear on the Steilacoom official membership roll who cannot be identified on the ancestry or individual history charts submitted with the petition. Ancestry and/or individual history charts will be needed to show how these individuals trace their ancestry to the historic tribe.

Please provide more information concerning the case-by-case review which lead to the creation of the 1986 roll. Documentation with this should include minutes and sample files relating to examples of individuals reviewed. How was social interaction determined? Who had not maintained affiliation between the creation of the 1984 list and the 1986 list?

Regarding the probationary roll, please describe further its function, and the processes by which an individual's name can be removed from it. What reinstatements have there been? Please provide information on the case-by-case annual review that is done on the current roll, i.e., examples of who is taken off, how it is done, and minutes relating to the process.

On what evidence does the Steilacoom Enrollment Committee base a determination that an individual who applies for adoption: (1) descends from a Western Washington Indian tribe, (2) has maintained his/her identity as an American Indian, and (3) can document North American Indian ancestry? Please provide a sample of the enrollment clerk's report on an adoption, along with supporting documentation and council certification. Have any appeals been filed? If so, please provide a sample of any records created during or as a result of the appeals process.

Please provide a more extended discussion of and data on the previous, informal membership criteria and "community knowledge" that now have apparently been "formalized." How and why were the 1951-3, 1955, 1961, 1974 and 1975 rolls prepared? Documentation should include minutes and Bureau and Steilacoom correspondence relating to the preparation of these rolls. Can more information be provided concerning the enrollment processes that are believed to have occurred between 1900 and 1910, in the 1920's, and during the 1940's?

Who of those listed on the official membership roll have been determined to meet the requirement in the 1975 constitution which states that "all persons of Steilacoom Indian blood whose names appear on the Roblin Schedule of Unenrolled Indians" are members?

Please elaborate further on the 1950's adoptions, particularly what the process was and what the reasons were for adopting specific families. Can further, and more definitive, information be provided concerning the pre-existing connections or other reasons for adoption of the non-Steilacoom adoptees? Please also provide additional information concerning the status of the adoptees who were apparently members in the 1930's before attempting to enroll with the Nisqually Tribe and the process by which the decision was made to enroll them again as members. This should be dealt with in more detail, preferably on a "family line" by "family line" basis, with available documentation.

Because of the limited documentation provided with the petition, this letter outlines a number of general areas of requested documentation as well as specific documents that appear to be essential. The request for documentation is presented as a separate document, as an enclosure to this letter. In all cases when general areas of documentation are requested, the request is meant to include the many key documents cited or referred to in the text, as well as important related documents that may have been relied upon.

It is important to provide detailed documentation in support of the petition. This may include transcripts of oral history or other interviews. It is not necessary to include complete copies of published works that are readily available, although you may wish to include selected pages from such works which most directly pertain to the arguments in the petition. It is important to include copies of unpublished primary documents such as letters, early tribal records, and the like as well as published materials such as newspaper articles which are only available locally.

Once the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research has received the requested materials, the staff will review them in order to determine whether they sufficiently respond to the obvious deficiency letter. The Acknowledgment staff will be in touch with you by telephone to discuss the information requested above. They will be happy to answer any questions you may have at that time. Should additional data be needed or questions arise in the future as a result of on-going research during active consideration, we reserve the right to request this information. Should you have any questions regarding this letter and the information that has been requested, please do not hesitate to contact the Acknowledgment staff at (202) 343-3568, or write Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, Mail Stop 32-SIB, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.

Sincerely,

Hazel E. Elbert

Deputy to the Assistant Secretary -
Indian Affairs (Tribal Services)

Enclosures.

cc: Nisqually Tribe
Puyallup Tribe
Nisqually Tribe
Portland Area Office (Tribal Relations)
Puget Sound Agency
Bell and Ingram
Attorney General, Washington State
Evergreen Legal Services
Tulalip Tribes

cc: ~~Submittal~~: Chron: 400: 44DRF: 440R:
Holdup: Groth: msb: 11/24/87: STLODLTR