



NOOKSACK INDIAN TRIBE

5016 Deming Road • P.O. Box 157 • Deming, WA 98244
Administration: (360)592-5176 • Fax: (360) 592-2125

NEWS RELEASE

Nooksack Indian Tribe Completes Disenrollment Proceedings

289 Non-Indians Removed After Erroneous Enrollment 33 Years Ago

DEMING, WASHINGTON (November 22, 2016) -- The Nooksack Tribe has removed from its official tribal roll 289 non-Indians who had erroneously been enrolled in the Tribe. The long-delayed hearings were carried out following a referendum vote by the Nooksack people on November 4, 2016 that showed overwhelming support for finishing a process that was started in 2013.

“This has been a long and difficult process, and the Nooksack people are glad it’s finally over,” said Bob Kelly, Tribal Council Chairman. “Both tribal and federal law recognize that sovereign tribal nations have the right to determine their own membership. The individuals disenrolled today all failed to show that they are lineal descendants of Nooksack tribal members, or that they have at least ¼ degree of Indian blood. Each was provided a disenrollment hearing, with advance notice, as well as an opportunity to provide proof of membership to satisfy the enrollment criteria set out in the Nooksack Constitution. They either would not, or could not, prove their status as Native Americans, and in fact, they didn’t even try.”

The Nooksack enrollment problem began in 1983, when numerous individuals were erroneously or fraudulently enrolled who were neither Nooksack Indians, nor otherwise eligible for enrollment under the Tribe’s Constitutional requirements. Over the course of the following years, the initial group of erroneously or fraudulently enrolled individuals multiplied to the number reflected in today’s disenrollments.

The proceedings completed today remedied the mistake by removing all individuals who do not meet, nor were ever able to meet, the clear enrollment requirements identified in the Tribe’s Constitution. The Nooksack Tribal Council took this action to ensure that all current Nooksack tribal members are descendants of Nooksack Indians and that each satisfies the Nooksack Tribe’s Constitutional requirements for enrollment. “Today this Council, which was recognized by the Nooksack Tribal Court on November 17th as the governing body authorized under Nooksack law, carried out the will of the Nooksack people,” said Chairman Kelly.
