



NOOKSACK INDIAN TRIBE

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NEWS RELEASE

Nooksack Tribal Council Fully Recognized by U.S. Government

Department of Interior Supports Tribal Council Elected in December

Deming, WA, March 9, 2017—The Chairman of the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Robert Kelly, announced today that the U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) has restored full recognition of the Nooksack Tribe's governing authority. By letter dated today, John Tahsuda, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior – Indian Affairs, recognized the validity of the Tribal Council comprised of four members elected in the December Special Election and four members elected in 2014.

On August 25, 2017, the Tribe entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Interior Department to conduct a Special Election to fill open Tribal Council seats and to allow all individuals listed on the Tribe's roll as of March 2016 to participate. Per the MOA, the Tribe conducted the Special Election in December and four new officials were elected and certified.

Said Chairman Robert Kelly, “we are glad that the Department of Interior has followed through with its commitment to recognize our recently elected tribal officials and the full Tribal Council. All Nooksack tribal members, included those with disputed membership status, were allowed to vote in an effort to put this saga to rest once and for all. The Nooksack people have spoken and we look forward to continuing our responsibility to serve our people. I look forward to working cooperatively with the United States government in the future to achieve that goal.”

The action today by the Interior Department restores the Federal government's recognition that was jeopardized by former Acting Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Larry Roberts on October 17, 2016 following the postponement of the Tribe's March 2016 general election. While the action to postpone the election was consistent with Nooksack law, Roberts rejected without prior consultation the “holdover” status of four previously elected tribal council members who remained in office and all actions of the Tribal Council taken after March 2016.

Given the delay in recognizing the officials elected in December 2017, the Nooksack Council suspended the regularly scheduled March 2018 election until such time as the results could be recognized by the Interior Department. Now that that has occurred, it is expected that the Tribal Council will authorize resumption of the electoral process. Until that time, today's letter confirms that the Interior Department recognition of the Nooksack Tribal Council “shall extend until the results of the general election scheduled for March 17, 2018 can be certified.”

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