



United States Department of the Interior

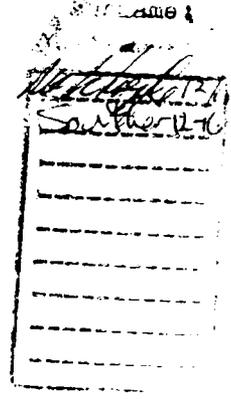
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, D.C. 20245



IN REPLY REFER TO

Tribal Government Services - AR
MS 4603-MIB

DEC 16 1997



Dr. Nile Thompson
2821 NW 63rd Street
Seattle, Washington 98107

Dear Dr. Thompson:

This letter follows the 2½-hour technical assistance meeting held in the Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. on November 4, 1997, to discuss the Steilacoom petition. In addition to you, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Steilacoom researchers were anthropologist Dr. Mark Schoepfle, historian Dr. Virginia DeMarce, and myself.

In opening the meeting, I told you that we would not be able to discuss or reveal any preliminary conclusions that may have been reached by the government researchers at the time of the meeting. It has been BIA practice to maintain confidentiality of the findings before peer and administrative reviews are completed and the decision is made public. This gives the peer reviewers and the decision-makers an unencumbered environment in which to weigh the evidence and come to their own conclusions. It is quite likely that opinions of individual researchers may change based on new analyses made by others, and we would not want to mislead you by prematurely releasing conclusions which have not yet been peer-tested or accepted as government policy. Also, at the beginning of the meeting, Dr. DeMarce gave you an inventory of the submissions we currently have on file.

I also told you that after evaluating the materials collected by Ms. Kay Davis, Dr. DeMarce concluded that a site visit would not be required for her. As you remember, Ms. Davis was the BIA genealogist assigned to Steilacoom, but who no longer works for the government. Dr. Schoepfle's anticipated schedule for a site visit begins the week of January 5, 1998.

We then stressed that we will not provide any written evaluation of the Steilacoom's prior recognition before publication of the proposed finding. We explained that under 25 CFR 83, the revised acknowledgment regulations, which became effective February 25, 1994, prior Federal acknowledgment is one means of reducing the research burden both for the petitioner and for the BIA. As we explained, establishing prior recognition is simply an administrative step that may be used to speed the evaluation. Thus, if the acknowledgment staff finds that determining prior recognition would not reduce the research required, as in the Steilacoom's case, then the government simply proceeds with active consideration. Any conclusions concerning prior

recognition will then be contained in the proposed finding. The STI's June 10, 1997, submissions, containing documents and arguments about previous recognition, will be considered in the proposed finding, without a separate letter or notification.

We also stressed that we will not at this time evaluate new submissions and additional information during active consideration. The STI has sent additional information to us, and may have more to send, which we will accept. It will be evaluated with other comments and responses after the proposed finding, during the final determination. We will offer the Steilacoom technical assistance after the proposed finding is issued. Such technical assistance may be provided either through teleconferencing, through an on-the-record hearing in Washington, D.C., or through an informal meeting in Washington, D.C.. It is left to the petitioners' discretion to decide what kind of technical assistance they would prefer. During these meetings you or others may want to ask questions based on the new information the Steilacoom have submitted, but which was not used in the proposed finding. We advise petitioners to utilize these TA opportunities early during the comment period, in order to have as much time as possible to apply the advice and information learned in them to the response.

In addition, Dr. Schoepfle told you that the field visit will concentrate on the modern community. His interview questions will be structured around the knowledge of the speaker, and straightforwardly ascertain his or her life as a member of the Steilacoom. He may speak to people outside the petitioner's group if circumstances warrant, but for the most part will concentrate on the membership. A site visit may last as long as two weeks. In any event, because he will be concentrating on modern community, the best way for the STI to prepare is to make sure that he has access to as broad a cross section of age and family groups as possible, in order to obtain as complete a picture as possible.

We also discussed that we would probably request an extension of the petition's active consideration period until Spring, 1998. This additional time will be required because the lack of an appropriation bill has stalled our progress, which was already behind schedule due to personnel changes. We realize that the findings are overdue and will push forward immediately when travel funds become available.

Finally, we stressed that our procedures are in keeping with BIA practice. In all evaluations, we first characterize the petitioner fully before determining whether the petitioner meets the seven mandatory criteria in 25 CFR §83.7, and then work with peers and administrators to craft the findings and recommended decision for the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, who makes the final decision. This practice explains our restraint in discussing specific conclusions with you during our meeting. We hope that the technical reports we provided to you on the Huron Potawatomi, Match-e-be-nash-she-wish, the Mohegan, and the Chinook will help illustrate our approach in greater detail. We will be available to discuss the proposed findings as soon as the decision is made final and the findings are made public.

If we can be of further help, please contact the BIA, Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, 1849 C Street, NW, MailStop 4603-MIB, Washington, D.C. 20240. The case administrator is Dr. Schoepfle and telephone number is (202) 208-2753.

Sincerely,

/s/ Holly Reckord

ACTING Chief, Branch of Acknowledgment
and Research

cc: Joan Ortez

bcc: Surname;Chron;400;Hold

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