



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

NOV 17 2016

The Honorable John Warren
Chairman, Pokagon Band of
Potawatomi Indians, Michigan and Indiana
58620 Sink Road
Dowagiac, Michigan 49047

Dear Chairman Warren:

More than four years ago, the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, Michigan and Indiana (Tribe) submitted an application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs requesting that we place into trust approximately 165.81 acres of land located in the City of South Bend, Indiana. The Tribe expended its own funds to purchase the property with a vision that the restoration of tribal homelands would benefit the long term health and welfare of the Tribe. I am honored to inform you that we have agreed to accept this land in trust.

The Tribe's journey to this point has been a difficult one. Our Nation's history with your Tribe has not always been honorable. While your Tribe has called the area of southwestern Michigan and northern Indiana home since at least the time of the first European contact in 1634, your Tribe was landless for decades. Nearly 100 years ago, the Federal Government did not abide by its treaty and trust obligations to your Tribe and as a result your people suffered. In 1994, the Federal Government worked to correct history, enacting the Pokagon Restoration Act (Act). In an attempt to place the Tribe on an equal footing with other federally recognized tribes, the Act mandated that the Department of the Interior (Department) accept land into trust for the Tribe so that the Tribe could regain a permanent homeland. More than 20 years since the passage of the Act, we are still working to ensure the Tribe receives the full promises of the law.

I know that this restoration of land in Indiana is important for your citizens. It will provide tribal governmental offices to better serve your citizens and economic development in the form of a gaming facility, which will provide jobs to tribal citizens and the surrounding community. This acquisition and development is particularly important considering that approximately 34 percent of Pokagon citizens in Indiana have an income below the poverty level, and approximately 50 percent are living without health insurance. A significant number of citizens live in substandard housing or experience considerable challenges in maintaining adequate housing. Elders are particularly hard hit due to a lack of nearby services. This restoration will provide housing, education, and health facilities for tribal citizens residing in the area.

The Tribe, in its approach to restoring tribal homelands, has gone above and beyond what is required by law. In 1999, the Tribe agreed to utilize our regulatory fee-to-trust process even though the law mandates that we accept this land in trust. You have worked with the

surrounding community and have formed partnerships to ensure that everyone is well informed of the Tribe's history and its vision for the future. I commend your leadership in this effort.

With this approval, we can further fulfill the intent of Congress to remedy the decades the Tribe endured as the Federal Government shirked its trust and treaty responsibilities. By accepting this land in trust, we are demonstrating the Department's commitment to embracing our trust and treaty responsibilities so that current and future generations have the benefit of a brighter tomorrow. Congratulations on the restoration of tribal homelands in Indiana.

Sincerely,



Lawrence S. Roberts
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary –
Indian Affairs