Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson today announced the first in a series of steps that must be undertaken by the nearly 3,000 Menominee Indians of Wisconsin to restore their tribal government which was terminated in 1961.

Tribal candidates for the Menominee Restoration Committee will be nominated January 19, with elections to be held no later than March 5.

The new procedures follow the signing of Public Law 93-197 "Repealing the Act Terminating Federal Supervision over Property and Members of the Menominee Indian Tribe" -- the Menominee Restoration Act -- by President Nixon December 22, 1973.

As it made its way through the legislative process the new law was supported by all Wisconsin Senators and Congressmen, State and local Wisconsin government officials, and Menominee Indians and other American Indian groups. Of it Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton said: "In his 1970 Message to the Congress on Indians, the President repudiated the policy of 'forced termination' in favor of self-determination on the part of Indians. Restoration of the Menominees to Federal status helps achieve the shift in policy advocated in that Message."

"It is with great pleasure that I am writing you to announce a general council meeting of the Menominee Indian Tribe," said Commissioner Thompson, in an individual letter sent each person believed to be a Menominee Indian tribal member.

The general council meeting will convene January 19, 1974 at 1 p.m. in St. Anthony Parish Hall, Neopit, Wisc., to nominate tribal candidates for election to positions on the nine-member Menominee Restoration Committee as provided in Public Law 93-197.

In Congressional debate preceding passage of the Menominee Restoration Act these points were made:

1. At the time termination was considered for the Menominees, the tribe had more than $10 million in trust and realized an annual profit from its lumber business. Because it was economically ahead of all other American Indian tribes in the Nation, it was encouraged to become like its non-Indian neighbors and terminate its special relationship with the Federal Government. It agreed to do this. In less than seven years after termination the tribe was on the verge of bankruptcy.
2. The total cost of the Menominee Tribe to Uncle Sam in the year preceding termination was $59,000. The tribe was reimbursing American taxpayers for all other services received. By 1966, nearly $2 million was authorized by Congress to be paid by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare over a four-year period to the State of Wisconsin to compensate for "extraordinary expenses occasioned by the Termination of Federal supervision over the affairs of the Menominee Tribe of Indians."
3. The Menominee Tribe owned 234,000 acres when termination proceedings began; today it owns 8,000 less.

At the time Congress approved the 1966 appropriation the Menominee Indians were troubled by an inadequate tax base, high costs of treating tuberculosis, high welfare and correctional costs, inadequate job training, and large numbers of school dropouts and juvenile delinquents.

Public Law 93-197 is an outgrowth of an investigation authorized by Congress upon expiration of this Act in 1971.

Commissioner Thompson congratulated members of a Menominee tribal delegation who visited him following passage of the restoration act to discuss methods of proceeding.

“We are happy that the Menominee Indian Tribe is being restored to Federal recognition and services, and that it will now receive health, education, and economic and community development programs it relinquished upon termination," Thompson said. We believe this will save Menominee land from further inroads, and give the Menominee a new self-image."

In explaining details of the January 19 meeting to those entitled to participate Thompson said, "Only the living persons listed on the final roll of the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin and all descendants, who on January 19, 1974 are at least 18 years of age and who possess at least one-quarter degree Menominee Indian blood, of persons on such roll, are entitled to participate in the nomination process or to be nominated as a candidate for a position on the Menominee Restoration Committee. Descendants are required under the law to take an oath that they are, in fact, descendants of enrollees and otherwise qualified."

Identification of those entitled to participate in the nomination process or to be nominated as a candidate for a position on the Menominee Restoration Committee will commence in the Parish Hall at Neopit at 10 a.m. At 1 p.m. the meeting will be called to order for the purpose of receiving nominations. Following the conclusion of nominating candidates, and if time permits, there will be a general tribal discussion period.

The general election to determine the membership of the Menominee Restoration Committee will be announced later.

Until a tribal governing body is regularly elected as provided for under the law, the Menominee Restoration Committee will officially represent the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin in those matters relating to the restoration of Federal services to the tribe and its members. Its immediate duties will include the drafting of a tribal constitution and by-laws and updating the tribal membership roll.