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Tribal Government Services - AR

SEP 11 1986

Mr. Jerry D. Jackson  
P.O. Box 14  
Jena, Louisiana 71342

Dear Mr. Jackson:

As required by the Acknowledgment regulations (25 CFR 83), the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research has completed a preliminary review for obvious deficiencies and significant omissions in the petition for Federal acknowledgment submitted by the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians of Louisiana. This letter discusses questions raised by the staff and areas which we feel could be strengthened with additional information. This letter is not a notification of active consideration nor is it a denial of the petition.

Please provide a more complete description of leadership and other political processes between 1932 and 1975 and include supporting documentary or oral history evidence. Please include a chronological list of the group's leadership beginning as far back as known. There are several specific questions that should be addressed in the above description of leadership and other political processes. Was there a gap in leadership between the death of Bill Lewis in 1932 and the emergence of Will Jackson as the group's leader? An article in the New Orleans Times-Picayune on April 3, 1938, described the Band as being "leaderless" (see Petition Appendix, cxxxii). Riram F. Gregory has stated that after the death of Bill Lewis in 1932, the "unofficial" leadership of the Jena Indian community resided in the Lewis and Jackson families until Clyde Jackson was elected chairman in 1975 (Gregory, "The Jena Band of Louisiana Choctaws," American Indian Journal 3, #2, 1977, p. 9). Please comment on the statements made in the newspaper article and Gregory's article.

Please provide a comprehensive description of the contemporary community. In preparing this description, you should keep in mind the definition of "community" as it is defined in 25 CFR 83.1(o). Also, provide any evidence of communal endeavors, cooperative activities, institutions, and/or events which provided for community cohesion among the Jena Choctaws. Such evidence may include information about community celebrations, homecomings, or other mechanisms for maintaining and/or renewing social relationships.

Please elaborate on the governmental system; in particular its history since the turn of the century. Describe how the system operated in the past as well as in the present. Describe the process by which tribal offices are filled. Please provide copies of all available minutes of annual meetings as well as a sample of minutes of other meetings. Include in the copies of the minutes those meetings where the group adopted the by-laws of July 14, 1986, as well as the previous undated by-laws. What is the difference between the Board of Trustees mentioned in the incorporation papers and the Tribal Council referred to in the by-laws?

Please submit certification, signed by members of the group's governing body or appropriate tribal officials, that the membership list of December 1, 1984, is the list of all current members who consent to being included on the roll of the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians of Louisiana which is being submitted for acknowledgment purposes. If recognized, the membership list submitted with the petition will become the group's base roll for Bureau purposes and, as such, will be binding on the group for some time to come except for minor corrections.

The membership criteria as given in the Articles of Incorporation, Article Six, Section B, state that a member must be one-quarter or more Choctaw Indian blood. How does the group determine a member's degree of Indian blood? The membership criteria also state that members must be descended from those who settled in LaSalle Parish, Louisiana. Is there a time frame in which the ancestors must have settled in LaSalle Parish? Article 4, Section 3(g) of the by-laws concerns the establishment of annual dues. Does non-payment of dues affect the membership status of a member (such as voting rights, removal from roll)? How were members identified as such before the 1974 Articles of Incorporation?

A statement is made on page 30 of the petition that the local farmers opposed the education of the Choctaws. Please provide the evidence for that statement. Please expand on the social and cultural relationships of the Jena Band of Choctaw with the Mississippi Choctaw and the Oklahoma Choctaw.

If possible, please provide photocopies of the following materials:

1. All references to the Jena Choctaws found in the documents cited on pages 33-36 of the petition which have not already been submitted.
2. Copies of the original testimony as given by individual Jena Choctaws to the Dawes Commission, abstracts of which appear on pages 63-67 of the petition.
3. Transcripts of interviews referenced on page 102 of the petition.
4. The Albert Gatschet letters referenced on page 98 of the petition.
5. If a formal application is used for enrollment, please provide a sample.

Further information may be requested from the Tribal Council or its representatives should questions arise or additional data be needed during the active consideration period. The Acknowledgment staff will be in touch with you by telephone to discuss the information requested above. They will be happy to answer any questions you may have at that time.

Sincerely,

Deputy to the Assistant Secretary -  
Indian Affairs (Tribal Services)

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