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Tribal Government Services - AR

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

Dear Mr. Jackson:

The Branch of Acknowledgment and Research has completed a review of the Jena Band of Choctaws' response to our letter of September 11, 1986, concerning obvious deficiencies and significant omissions noted in the group's petition for Federal acknowledgment under 25 CFR 83. Your petition will be placed with those petitions that are ready for active consideration. Priority among documented petitions that are ready for active consideration, however, is determined by the date of the initial request for acknowledgment and the length of time the petition has been awaiting active consideration. The waiting time among "ready" petitions may be as long as two years.

We encourage you during this period to provide additional description and documentation regarding the social community and political processes of the Jena Band. These areas are discussed at length below, elaborating on the type of discussion and description that we were requesting in our obvious deficiency letter. We urge you to make every effort to provide the information requested below in as much detail as possible in order that we can evaluate the petition adequately.

Also enclosed is a list which includes a variety of documents and publications mentioned and/or cited and relied upon by the petition. The requested materials were not submitted with the petition. The materials were requested in the obvious deficiency letter, but copies were not provided in your response to the letter.

With the requested documentation, the Acknowledgment staff can fully evaluate the petition when it is placed on active consideration. The staff's research during active consideration is for the purpose of verifying and/or elaborating on an already complete petition. The Acknowledgment staff may be unable to do the research necessary to fill in gaps in the petition on behalf of the petitioner to the extent they have done in the past.

While your response to the obvious deficiency letter provided more information about the community, it was not very detailed. We would still like a discussion and description that demonstrates community cohesiveness. This should include descriptions of churches, if any, associated with the group, funerals, weddings, and visiting patterns and any other functions or social patterns that demonstrate the cohesiveness of the community. Mention is made on page 35 of the second volume of the obvious deficiency response that tribal tradition forbids "group sessions." Please elaborate on this tribal tradition.

Relationships with other Indian groups are mentioned, but there was little about such relationships other than that certain Jena individuals have occasionally interacted with other groups in the past and that other groups have had occasional contact with Jena. Both past and present interaction between Jena and other Indian groups, especially the Mississippi Choctaws, should be discussed in more detail.

More elaboration is needed on the governmental system of the Jena Band past and present. If the "elders" governed informally prior to the creation of the Jena Band's formal governing body in 1974, we would like to have more specific examples of what their governing functions were considered to be within the community, i.e., how these individuals maintained political influence or authority over the group's members. Were there other important tribal positions besides chief? Was there an informal council of elders? Did the chief confer with others and/or seek a consensus before making decisions? What, if any, sanctions could the chief impose on those who ignored or rejected his authority/influence (e.g., ostracism or forced exile from the community)? Also, more description of the current leaders' interaction within the group would assist in understanding the role of the leader in relationship to the rest of the members of the Jena Band.

We suggest that the group keep its membership list current by recording new births and deaths which will take place in the interim between December 1, 1984, and the date when the group's petition is placed on active consideration. When the group is notified that the petition is being placed on active consideration, a supplemental list should be submitted to be attached to your list of December 1, 1984. This list should include those additions to the membership, such as newborn infants, who are considered to be members and those individuals who were inadvertently omitted from the December 1, 1984, list. The supplemental list should also note those members on the December 1, 1984, list who are deceased. If recognized, the list of members submitted for acknowledgment purposes 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 Acknowledgment staff will be in touch with you by telephone to discuss the information requested above. They will be happy to answer any question you may have at that time. Should additional data be needed or questions arise in the future as a result of on-going research during active consideration, we reserve the right to request this information. Should you have any questions regarding this letter and the information that has been requested, please do not hesitate to contact the Acknowledgment staff at (202) 343-3568, or write Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, Mail Stop 32-SIB, 18th and C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240.

Sincerely,

David E. Wood

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

Enclosure

Documents and Publications which would be useful

The following list of source materials, cited on pages 33-36 of the petition, was not submitted with either the petition or the obvious deficiency response. Active consideration of the petition would be speeded considerably if the group could submit these references:

1775 Spanish map showing "Choctaw Territory" cited in the first paragraph on page 33.

John Sibley's Reports on Jena Band, 1803- , from A Report from Natchitoches in 1807 (New York: Museum of the American Indian, 1922), page 25.

Zebulon Pike's map indicating position of tribe from The Expedition of Zebulon Montgomery Pike ... , volume II, Maps.

Description of Choctaws on the lower Ouachita and Catahoula Rivers by William Dunbar and George Hunter, 1805, from American State Papers: Indian Affairs (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 1: 731-743.

Description of Choctaws in the above area by C.C. Robin, 1803-1805, from his Voyage to Louisiana, 1803-1805 (reprint, New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1966).

Francis Xavier Martin's location of Choctaws using 1805 census, from his History of Louisiana from the Earliest Period (reprint of the third edition, New Orleans, 1966).

In addition, we would appreciate all references to the Jena Band found in the following works:

Mary Joyce Purser, "The Administration of Indian Affairs in Louisiana," M.A. thesis, Louisiana State University, 1961.

Louisiana State University, Bureau of Educational Materials, Statistics, and Research, The Indians of Louisiana, 1945.

Caroline Dorman, unpublished fieldnotes, 1930-1941. Northwestern State University of Louisiana Archives, Natchitoches, Louisiana.

Julia K. Garrett, "Doctor John Sibley on the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1803-1914," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, 1942-1946.

Dennis A. Booker, "Indian Identity in Louisiana." M.A. Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1973.

cc: Governor Edwin W. Edwards
Attorney General William J. Guste
Senator John B. Breaux
Senator J. Bennett Johnston
Congressman Buddy Roemer
Congressman Richard Hugh Baker
Congressman Thomas J. Huckaby
Congressman James Alison Hayes
Congressman Billy Tauzin
Congressman Clyde C. Holloway
Diana Williamson, Governor's Commission on Indian Affairs
Jeanette A. Campos, Institute for Indian Development
Billie D. Ott, Eastern Area Office
Robert C. Benn, Choctaw Agency
Fred Benton, Jr.

cc: Surname:Chron:400:440RF:440B:
Holdup:BDThompson:msb:9/30/87:JENA-OD