



confluence

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February 19, 2021

RE: Chinook Indian Nation Restoration Bill and Clarification of Status

To whom it may concern,

The staff and Board of Directors of Confluence wish to express our strong support for the Chinook Indian Nation's generations-long effort to achieve federal recognition. Since their first negotiations with the United States government in 1851, Chinook Tribal members have sought to stay within their aboriginal territory, maintain access to natural resources, and remain in close proximity with the bones of their ancestors. These desires are as significant today as they were then. It is long since overdue that the federal government officially recognize the decedents of the people who cared for Lewis and Clark at the mouth of the Columbia River in the winter of 1805 and 1806.

Confluence is a community supported nonprofit headquartered in Vancouver, Washington with the mission to connect people to the history, living cultures, and ecology of the Columbia River system through Indigenous voices. Members of the Chinook Indian Nation were involved in our organization's founding in 2002 and played a significant role in the development of Confluence's first art installations by Maya Lin at Cape Disappointment State Park in 2006. It is a Chinookan creation story that is etched into the Confluence Fish Cleaning Table there, reminding fishers of today that Chinook people have been fishing there since time immemorial. It is a Chinook praise song etched into the pathway to the Confluence Cedar Circle, calling on the earth, water, mountains, land, forests, and animals to "teach us and show us the way." This prayer was recited at the site on November 18, 2005, the 200th anniversary of Lewis and Clark's arrival.

Over the years, leaders of the Chinook Indian Nation have been active in our educational programming. These include the Confluence Story Gatherings, designed to elevate Indigenous voices in our collective understanding of the Columbia River system. They have also lead discussions with educators for the Confluence Field School.

We are proud of this partnership with the Chinook Indian Nation and are proud to stand with them in their efforts to achieve the recognition they so well deserve. The traditional knowledge of Chinook Indian Nation members enriches us all and must be preserved and shared. It is time to put an end to this historical injustice once and for all.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Warmest regards,

Confluence Staff:

Colin Fogarty, Executive Director
Heather Gurko (Tlingit), Education Manager



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